

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 18 July 2018

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Beer, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Bowyer (substitute for Rebecca Smith), Derrick, Goslin, Mrs Johnson, Samantha Leaves and Winter.

Co-opted Representatives: Nicky Williams (Parent Governor Representative)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Rebecca Smith

Absent from meeting: Councillor Touhy

Also in attendance: Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Councillor McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), Neelam Bhwardwaja (Service Director for Children, Young People and Families), David Bowles (Head of Education), Nicky Walters (Early Years Advisory Teacher), Jayne Gorton (Head of Access and Planning) and Amelia Boulter (Democratic Support Adviser).

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.55 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

7. **Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the code of conduct the following declarations of interest were made –

Member	Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Sam Leaves	Minute 12	Husband works in the transport business but does not have a school contract.	Personal

8. **Minutes**

The minutes of 20 June 2018 were agreed.

9. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

10. **Appointment of Co-opted Representatives**

In respect of overview and scrutiny committees which deal with education functions there was a legal requirement to appoint parent governor representatives from maintained schools to sit on the panel. The Chair on behalf of the committee would like to appoint Mrs Nicky Williams as the Parent Governor Representative for a term of 4 years.

Agreed the appointment of Mrs Nicky Williams as the Parent Governor Representative onto the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a term of 4 years.

11. **School Readiness**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills), David Bowles (Head of Education) and Nicky Walters (Early Years Advisory Teacher) were present for this item. Councillor Jon Taylor stated that the report highlights serious concerns and recommends that this committee regularly monitor this issue. It was further reported that work on this had been initiated by the Maternity, Early Years System Optimisation Group (MEYSOG).

Judith Harwood further reported that MEYSOG had recently met and the group were using intelligence to look for a citywide definition on school readiness by looking at patterns and trends. A survey would be undertaken with schools and early year's settings to pull together the quantitative information around ensuring that children were receiving good nutrition, support with sleeping patterns and ensuring school readiness. However, there were parent groups that look at these types of issues and this was an opportunity to review the effectiveness of these groups to gain a citywide and holistic view to start planning the interventions that would have an impact.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (a) as an authority they benchmark against other authorities on data such as whether the rise in premature births and survival rates were having an impact on school readiness and the data showed that we were behind our comparators. Performance data around children centres would need to be looked at in more detail;
- (b) the support provided to families would depend on the level of need. Children centres, early years setting and schools advise families on how they might improve a situation and/or signpost to a wide range of services. However, for a statutory assessment to be undertaken the family must meet the eligibility threshold. A number of different agencies can put forward a family for an assessment such as health, social care, police, GP and the assessment of the family would be approached in a multi-agency way;

- (c) there were mechanisms in place to ensure children were school ready such as a transition plan from nursery to school and an enhanced transition where additional support would be more beneficial to the family;
- (d) good level of development (GLD) test was undertaken in reception year and the phonics test was undertaken in year one. By the time children undertook the phonics test they had a year to progress and this was a good news story. However, the testing methods for these measures were different;
- (e) a lot of schools were still visiting preschools and it was a joint decision on the baseline of the child when they start school.

It was agreed –

- 1. that the committee regularly reviews the measures in place to ensure children are school ready;
- 2. that the findings from the first meeting of the Maternity, Early Years System Optimisation Group (MESOG) are shared with the committee;
- 3. that the questions received from Youth Parliament are sent to the relevant officers for a full response.

12. **Transport - Home to School Contract**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation), Judith Harwood (Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills) and Jayne Gorton (Head of Access and Planning) were present for this item.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that –

- (a) they were made aware of this issue on the Friday and contact was made with the provider over the weekend and no children were being transported or were at risk over the weekend. On the Monday they saw the documentation which formed part of the investigation and at that point it was clear that they did not need to suspend the contract;
- (b) no school runs were undertaken with that vehicle whilst under investigation;
- (c) the vehicle was covered by insurance;
- (d) since the incident they had reviewed the contract and would continue to undertake spot checks to ensure drivers' licences against the appropriate public service vehicle licence (PSV). There was always a possibility when a contract was outsourced that the provider could run into a problem and as a local authority need to have the confidence in quality of our contracts;

- (e) the contractor concerned would be undertaking reviews on a monthly basis to ensure that MOT's were up to date on all vehicles. They had also sent communications and had meetings with all contractors and we made it very clear on what was expected and that the safety of children was paramount;
- (f) private companies were used to provide a range of vehicles and all credentials including DBS (disclosure and barring service), the right licences in place and vehicles were roadworthy were checked;
- (g) there were a range of measures in place if a contractor did not fulfil the contract under the agreed terms. Termination of the contract was a consideration and fines were issued if a contractor breaches the contract. The contractor concerned was fined;
- (h) back up plans were in place, so if an incident occurred whereby a vehicle was unavailable, then contact would be made to other contractors to provide the service and to transport children.

It was agreed that the committee are provided -

1. with the process for monitoring a transport contract and the sanctions in place when contractors do not meet the agreed standards.
2. with the current guidance for all schools when they hire coaches for school trips.
3. with a briefing paper on whether Plymouth City Council undertake competency tests for drivers carrying passengers and if not who provides this service and how this was monitored.

13. **OFSTED Focussed Visit to Children Young People and Families service**

Councillor Sue McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Neelam Bhardwaja (Service Director for Children and Young People) were present for this item. Councillor Sue McDonald reported that as Lead Member had a very active role when Ofsted visited and this was acknowledged in the subsequent report.

In response to questions raised, it was reported that -

- (a) with regard to parental consent it was highlighted that a social worker had been making the decision to override consent and this was not good practice. Changes had been made within the hub for a Team Manager to be make those decisions rather than a practitioner;
- (b) when a referral for a child at risk was highlighted then a strategy discussion would take place to plan the joint enquiry. Historically, this discussion only took place between the police and social services which was the minimum requirement. However, practice had evolved and what was now expected was that all partner agencies involved

with the child and all have a contribution to make should attend the meeting;

- (c) with regard to social workers not being able to access case files, it was reported that the information had been inputted onto the electronic system but the information could not be retrieved. This was rectified while inspectors were on site;
- (d) a number of placements had been tried and rejected resulting in these young people being put into bed and breakfast type accommodation. However, round the clock staffing suitable for their needs was put in place and this was evidenced to Ofsted. This was still not acceptable and an issue that affects the whole country but they were working with different agencies to look at possible options such as setting aside accommodation for our care leavers in a more organised and planned way.

Agreed that Safeguarding Hub and Gateway Integration Project Plan to be shared with the committee.

14. **Work Programme**

Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation) put forward a request to the committee to scrutinise behaviour and low level disruption within schools. Councillor Jon Taylor asked the committee to explore the different approaches across the schools, the evidence base and whether the interventions in place were working or leading to exclusions or children being isolated. It was also highlighted to the committee, the 'Ready to Learn' approach undertaken by All Saints Academy and asked scrutiny to come up with recommendations to formulate a policy.

The committee noted the work programme and welcomed the request from Councillor Jon Taylor to add to the work programme the approach undertaken by schools to deal with behaviour and low level disruption in class.

15. **Tracking Resolutions**

The committee noted that tracking resolutions which were either progressing or complete.