

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 12 January 2021
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Held Virtually

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Bowler, Carr, T. Cave, Clarke, Fielding, Frost, Gillis, Gollick, Hayward, Higginbottom, Hunt, W. Johnson, Leech, Lofts, Makinson, McCarthy, Newing, Noble, Phillips, Pickering, Richardson, Smith, Tattersall, Williams, Wilson and Wraith MBE.

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

The minutes of the following meetings were received and considered by Members: Full Committee, held on 8th September 2020; Thriving and Vibrant Economy Workstream, held on 13th October 2020; Special Call-in Meeting, held on 26th October 2020; People Achieving Their Potential, held on 3rd November 2020 and Strong & Resilient Communities, held on 1st December 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the above meetings be approved as a true and accurate record.

4 Provisional Education Outcomes in Barnsley 2019-20

Members were invited to consider a report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Children's Services in respect of the Provisional Education Outcomes in Barnsley for the 2019-20 academic year. The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Nick Bowen, Head Teacher at Horizon Community College and Joint Chair of Barnsley Alliance;
Paul Crook, Principal at Penistone Grammar School and Chair of the Barnsley Alliance Secondary Heads Group;
Yiannis Kouris, Principal, Barnsley College;
Toni Rhodes, Vice Principal Quality and Access to Learning, Barnsley College;

Mel John-Ross, Executive Director Children's Services, BMBC;
Nina Sleight, Service Director, Education, Early Start & Prevention, BMBC;
Darren Dickinson Interim Head of Barnsley Alliance, BMBC;
Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher, Looked After Children & Vulnerable Groups, BMBC;
Angela Stephens, Business Improvement & Intelligence Advisor, BMBC;
Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson for Children's Services, BMBC;

The Executive Director Children's Services, BMBC introduced the item, highlighting the very positive nature of the report which sets out what real improvement has been made in the Borough and expressing pride in this achievement.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge the following matters were highlighted:

It was highlighted by Nick Bowen that there were only a handful of appeals questioning the grades which secondary school students had received. Parents were only able to appeal about the procedure and that schools had followed the guidance. There were no changes as a result of these appeals. The Principal of Barnsley College also confirmed that two appeals had been received on procedural grounds and these were not upheld.

A member queried the number of Year 11 students who had become NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It was highlighted that Barnsley College had 7 Year 11 learners who had been referred to TIAG (Targeted Information, Advice and Guidance Service) and had not re-enrolled in education. Penistone Grammar School had zero NEETs. All schools work hand in hand with TIAG to make sure all transitions are monitored closely, particularly the most vulnerable, ensuring wrap around support is available for them. Close monitoring is done every year but with a heightened focus in 20/21 to ensure young people are on the right provision and are able to progress in that provision.

With regard to the examinations and centre assessed grades situation, Members queried what had been learned from last year's experience. Paul Crook explained that Secondary School Leaders had been challenged and are now in a much better position than previously and can provide ample evidence that the grades which students are given accurately reflect what they would have achieved in examinations. Schools are working hard to ensure nobody is at a disadvantage because they cannot take the examinations. Clear plans are in place to keep students motivated and to enable them to achieve to the best of their ability. Yiannis Koursis confirmed that Barnsley College is also better prepared this year. One of the challenges is that over 2000 vocational exams planned for January have been cancelled alongside GCSE and A Level examination and these are often overlooked. However, students will still receive a grade relevant to their ability and will be able to progress.

In terms of Barnsley College, it was highlighted that the Government has provided limited support for vulnerable students who may not have IT equipment/wifi at home and that the College itself provided devices with 4G connectivity for some students. Vulnerable students are also provided with a facility or a space at the college to work in.

BMBC did a lot of work last year to ensure that vulnerable pupils have access to devices and wifi connectivity. This was achieved through a variety of means but included donations from businesses and MATs (Multi Academy Trusts). Barnsley has a remote learning platform which is fit for purpose. Vulnerable and 'digitally disadvantaged' children can also access learning on site if they haven't got a device or a quiet study space at home. All Looked After Children are offered a school place, with £400 per Barnsley child put into school budgets in November to provide an appropriate device, which is carefully monitored. Looked After Children from other authorities have a similar scheme in place.

Barnsley has a Vulnerable Children's Tracker which closely monitors the attendance of vulnerable and key worker children. The tracker also provides information around which agencies have seen children face to face during the current situation. Remote learning access is also monitored. Work is underway to support families who are reluctant to send their children to school with Early Help and Education Welfare.

It is recognised that Covid has impacted on children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. A holistic support programme is in place with partners to address this. Vulnerable families are identified to ensure Early Help is in place through family centres. Before September it was envisaged that lots of children would struggle getting back to school after the lockdown, but this wasn't the case, with most really keen to get back to school. Covid has had an impact with concerned parents and families but a lot of support is in place.

The emotional wellbeing of teaching staff is vitally important and schools and colleges have staff wellbeing strategies in place. It seems that although some schools had staff absences of around 25 - 30% due to Covid, absence due to other issues has reduced, which indicates the strategy is working. It was highlighted that there are lots of resources available to staff to support their wellbeing and they have been incredibly resilient despite frustrations around the situation. Staff have risen to the notion that there are many people in the country who are much less fortunate than they are. Lots of staff are choosing to be in school to work and deliver lessons, with tea and cake essential to enhance camaraderie. Barnsley College has a staff wellbeing mobile phone app; access to counselling and support and an in-house wellbeing team. All schools and college staff also have access to wider mental health and wellbeing support offered through BMBC, with regular team meetings and contact with managers.

As highlighted in the report, there is a very positive trend in educational outcomes in Barnsley, with every school showing improvements. Only one school still needs to make significant improvements. When compared nationally, we can be confident that the results are a true reflection of Barnsley's direction. Core subjects of maths and english are a particular strength, with areas requiring further focus including history, geography, languages and science.

Everything is being done to minimise any disadvantage due to the pandemic for all children. There will undoubtedly be an impact across all year groups but this is being mitigated as much as possible. This includes 'live' learning every day, school assemblies and lots of pastoral contact with students, particularly years 10 and 11 to ensure appropriate transition to their next phase. Post 16 providers keep in close contact with schools and school leavers to help them to catch up, working closely

with students to quickly rectify any problems. This increased communication across partners is proving to be a great success to offset any 'learning loss' as a result of Covid, with the aspiration that by the end of their second A level year learners are able to progress to university etc., as they would have done prior to Covid.

It was reported that 10% of Penistone Grammar School students didn't get into the university of their choice due to the algorithm problem. When this decision was overturned the students in question had gone through clearing and their preferred university places had been filled. 5 students out of 135 had decided to take a year out from university with a view to going in September 2021. Some students decided not to go to university at all as it was felt that they wouldn't be able to have the full university experience whilst still paying tuition and accommodation fees. Barnsley College reported a similar situation with some students not getting in to the university of their choice and a large number of students also deferred their application.

At secondary school level parental involvement in home schooling is minimal as schools are doing it. Many parents have thanked the schools for what they have done. It was acknowledged that the situation may be different for primary schools.

RESOLVED that representatives be thanked for their attendance, contribution and the hard work they had done to improve the educational outcomes for Barnsley's children and young people in these very challenging times.

5 Measures to Strengthen and Support Barnsley's Exam Cohort for 2020-21

Members were invited to consider a report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Children's Services, co-produced with Secondary Heads, Barnsley Alliance and Barnsley College around the impact to the 2020/21 exam cohort. The report sets out how preparations for a change around exams going ahead was planned for and that Members should be assured that the strength of school leadership and the partnership arrangements put in place to minimise disruption for Years 11 and 13 in particular are robust.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge the following matters were highlighted:

Principles and standards with regard to the remote learning offer are agreed by Barnsley Alliance. There are a number of options regarding the remote learning platform which are agreed individually by MATs or governing bodies linked to their current IT systems and the support they receive. Schools are also supported to publish their remote learning offer by 26th January on their websites. The DfE sets out the detail of what should be offered. Primary schools may need additional support with putting together their offer but this is improving day by day.

Maximum use is made of 'catch up' funding, including one to one work, group work, additional lessons, additional tutors and after school and Saturday sessions organised. Careers professionals are on hand in school to offer extra careers advice. There are also much improved resources on school websites. It was pointed out that Barnsley students work best with staff they know and trust rather than using the resources of large national tutoring organisations. 'Live' daily lessons are helping to

close any learning gaps. Youth workers are also helping support young people with advice around healthy eating, sleeping etc. to support schools to do what they do best.

An advert for the Programme Manager post to co-ordinate and support implementation of the programme is being advertised this week. Other resources are being redirected to focus on this project (which is time limited) and backfilling any gaps.

It was reiterated that some students had decided to defer a university place last year because of the disruption. It is envisaged that there may be more Year 13 students this year who also do this so that they can have the university experience they are dreaming of, both educational and social. Some students may take this as an opportunity to do voluntary activities to add to their CV. Indeed, some Year 1 students have been doing tutoring with current students although the current restrictions in place for volunteering in communities make this difficult.

There are no guidelines as yet regarding centre assessed grades and the appeals process, although it is likely to be an appeal against the process once again rather than the teacher assessment. Use of supply teachers varies from school to school but Horizon and Penistone Grammar school currently do not employ supply teachers, particularly as no visitors are allowed on school sites and it is not appropriate to use staff who are working across a number of schools during the pandemic as this could lead to more positive cases in school. There have been difficulties but these have been carefully managed through closure of 'bubbles' and other teachers covering online classes. The situation may be different around primary schools.

RESOLVED that representatives be thanked for their attendance and contribution.

6 Children's Social Care Performance

Members were provided with a redacted version of the Children's Social Care Performance Report, for information only.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7 Exclusion of the Public and Press

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the items so marked because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the specific paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, subject to the public interest test.

8 Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS): Annual Conversation with Ofsted

Members were invited to consider a report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Children's Services in respect of the annual conversation with Ofsted, the accompanying Self-Evaluation of Children's Social Work Practice in BMBC and the letter from Ofsted in response to the meeting and self-evaluation.

The Executive Director, Children's Services outlined the report, highlighting that Ofsted had confirmed that there will be a focussed inspection regarding assurance around the pandemic. It was felt that this will be challenging but Barnsley is confident when considering the context in which the sector is working. It will not be a full inspection so will not be graded and is welcomed as it will outline areas for improvement and will in readiness for the full inspection.

The results of a recent Peer Review regarding a 'front door' health check are currently awaited. Lots of work has been done on the 'voice of the child'. It was reported that the Targeted Youth Service and Early Help are doing fantastic work with Looked After Children and the Youth Council, moving from consultation to coproduction and making real differences, although there is still more to do around working with parents and carers of young people.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and thanks offered to all the teams who are working so hard, in challenging circumstances, for Barnsley's Children and Young People

9 Children's Social Care Performance

Members were invited to consider a cover report relating to Children's Social Care Performance in relation to the Data Report and the Explanatory Document.

Debbie Mercer, Service Director Children's Social Care & Safeguarding, BMBC, was welcomed to the meeting. It was highlighted that good performance has been maintained in the majority of areas throughout the report. Strengths were outlined, including Early Help and rate of re-referrals. Areas to note include the rise in the number of children in care and the length of court proceedings. It was reiterated that Barnsley remains committed to maintaining a stable work force and agency staff are not used. Reduction of caseloads is also a priority.

RESOLVED that Debbie be thanked for her attendance and contribution and the report be noted.

Chair