

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Committee
DATE:	Tuesday 10 January 2023
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Clarke (Chair), Bellamy, Bowler, Bowser, Cain, Denton, Eastwood, P. Fielding, W. Fielding, Green, Hayward, Lodge, Lowe-Fleello, Markham, Osborne, Peace, Richardson, Smith, Sumner, Webster, Williams, Wilson and Wray

35 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Due to the absence of Councillor Ennis, Councillor Clarke was proposed as Chair for the meeting.

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

36 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to co-partners and virtual school governance.

Councillor Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to co-partners and virtual school governance.

Councillor Lodge declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to virtual school governance.

Councillor Bowser declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to virtual school governance.

Councillor Clarke declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was the newly elected Chair of the Kendray and Worsbrough Steering Group.

37 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the following meetings were received and approved by Members as a true and accurate record:-

Full Committee – 13 September 2022

Sustainable Barnsley Workstream – 11 October 2022

Growing Barnsley Workstream – 1 November 2022

38 Provisional Education Outcomes Across the Borough 2021-22

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:-

Carly Speechley - Executive Director, Children's Services, BMBC

Nina Sleight - Service Director Education, Early Start & Prevention, Children's Services, BMBC

Anna Turner - Head of Service, Education & Partnerships, Children's Services, BMBC

Tom Oates, Virtual Headteacher, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups, Children's Services, BMBC

Jane Allen - Service Manager, Education Welfare and Inclusion, Children's Services, BMBC

Helen Collins - Senior Performance and Intelligence Officer, Core Services, BMBC

Angela Lomax – Group Leader – Raising Participation, Education Services, BMBC

Ken Merry (Barnsley College) - Co-Chair of Barnsley Schools' Alliance

Lee McClure (Springvale Primary) - Co-Chair of Barnsley Schools' Alliance

Councillor Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson, Children's Services

The Committee was provided with a report detailing the provisional education outcomes for children and young people in the borough across all Key Stages (KS), including those with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (SEND), children who are looked after, and those who are home educated. Members' attention was drawn to the Barnsley Schools' Alliance Education Improvement Strategy 2022-25 plan, which outlined the overarching principles of the Alliance and the priorities for driving improvements in education over the coming years.

Due to the impact of Covid, all GCSE and A level examinations had been cancelled during 2020 and 2021, and the outcomes for all students nationally had been awarded based on teacher assessed grades. The results highlighted within the report showed a comparison between 2022 and 2019, which was the last year that students had achieved results that were based upon the outcome of examinations.

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

The witnesses clearly recognised the pressures and anxieties faced by young people surrounding examinations. Class attainment and progress was monitored to enable learners to feel as prepared for examinations as possible, whilst ensuring that support was easily accessible. This included pastoral support to deal with such anxieties and challenges, or to signpost to out of school agencies where deemed necessary.

All looked after children were supported under the remit of virtual school which would move to an electronic personal education plan system later in the year. In the event that a looked after child was struggling with exam pressures, liaison would be made with a designated teacher with a view to providing additional support through CAMS.

During the pandemic work had been undertaken with Sheffield Hallam University to deliver their growth programme which had provided holistic support for examinations and revision techniques for KS 4 and 5. Many secondary schools continued to adopt the approach post-pandemic.

Over the last 2 year period, a reception baseline assessment had been undertaken by all four year old children, which set the progress and plan for their school journeys. All Y6 children sat the formal SATs tests before progressing onto secondary school. Primary schools were utilising breakfast clubs to manage the anxiety and stress levels of children that were caused by examinations. A number of strategies were also used in schools which focused upon the children's mental health.

Extensive support was available in educational settings at secondary schools and Barnsley College to prepare young people for work and adult life. Such support included interview technique preparation at secondary schools, and Barnsley College assisted in the development of a variety of skills which included construction, hairdressing and becoming self-employed. Support was also provided to all students regarding how to gain apprenticeships from level 2 through to degree level.

All schools and colleges across the borough formed part of the South Yorkshire Careers Hub. Funding had been provided for two co-ordinators to look at the progress made against the 8 Gatsby benchmarks. A personal development toolkit would be launched in March 2023, which would assist young people to overcome certain barriers.

A mixed and balanced approach to work experience had been implemented to ensure that young people had an opportunity to meet with a variety of employers from different sectors and settings. Each year, the enterprise team at Barnsley College would locate work placements for the 5,000 students aged 16 to 18 years old. The feedback received from the employers was exceptional. Barnsley College had realistic in-house working environments for the students which included a kitchen, working on the front of house, a functioning hair and beauty salon, a gymnasium at the sports village, together with an adapted environment within the café area for learners with high needs to work and interact with customers.

As part of the inclusive offer, close working was undertaken with educational and training providers as an overarching piece of work which included the youth employment programme and project search working with the NHS in supported internships. Over the past year, a total of 388 children had been supported to participate in the inclusive offer. It was the intention to work with additional larger local companies to share the knowledge and expand upon the offer to provide further opportunities for the most vulnerable to gain associated skills and experience of working in the workplace, with a view to moving into employment.

It was noted that the pandemic had not afforded the opportunity for many children to benefit from the earlier developmental stage experiences. A meeting would shortly be held regarding how to provide support to those children within the school setting. It was envisaged that the effects of the pandemic would continue to be an issue in some settings for the next 4 – 5 years.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance was attended by all schools in the borough together with public health, which had met on a weekly basis for the last 2 year period since the first Covid lockdown period in March 2020, with focus made on Covid and risk management. The meetings had been invaluable to share best practice. It was considered that the correct measures had been implemented to ensure that children received the appropriate provision from nursery through to Y6. Through data analysis, it had been identified that academia for girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), KS 1 and 2 had declined greater than for boys. The reason for which could be attributable to higher deprivation amongst girls or greater special educational needs. However, the girls continued to outperform the boys overall. An intervention strategy group had been established to support the 12 schools which had struggled on the quality of education since the pandemic. Those schools would receive external governance support to ensure that they were sighted on the areas to make rapid improvements.

In relation to digital poverty, the borough had been fortunate to receive Department for Education support to provide learning equipment. Gaps had been identified across all schools, and devices had been purchased to ensure that no child was disadvantaged; the laptops remained within those settings. At Barnsley College there was a 3 year arrangement in place for students to be issued with computers. A total of 4,500 devices had currently been circulated to the college students.

The Board noted that 98% of EYFS settings within the borough were either good or outstanding. Work would be undertaken with the schools to address the drop in achievement levels since the pandemic, with a view to continuing to push beyond the national average.

In relation to the Progress 8 benchmark which measured the performance of learners at GCSE level, the borough had been behind the measures for a while. However, the figures were now increasing and becoming closer to reaching the national average. Measures had been implemented at the underperforming schools to ensure that they reached the required level as soon as practicable. Barnsley Schools' Alliance was building upon strengthening the practice across the borough to include art, sport and music.

The cost of living crisis and energy crisis continued to impact upon the schools across the borough. At Barnsley College, the forecast for gas and electricity for the year totalled £6m which would put pressure on other areas. Teachers at secondary schools and post 16 years settings were also feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis on their life styles, with some choosing to leave the sector. The issue remained high on the agenda at primary schools, with some schools now offering free breakfast clubs and recycle uniform shops.

Councillor Clarke expressed his thanks to the witnesses for the comprehensive responses to the questions raised.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.
- (ii) The report be noted.
- (iii) Witnesses to analyse girls' performance at EYFS, KS1 and KS2 to understand why performance levels have fallen.

39 Children's Social Care Performance Report October 2022 (Redacted) FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Members were invited to consider a cover report relating to Children's Social Care Performance October 2022. The redacted report was provided for information only.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

40 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.

41 Children's Social Care Performance Report - October 2022

Members were invited to consider a report relating to:-

- 7a – Children's Social Care Performance Cover Report October 2022.
- 7b – Children's Social Care Performance Report October 2022.
- 7c – Understanding and Challenging Children's Social Care Performance.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Children's Social Care Performance Report for October 2022, which indicated a fairly significant increase in demand. There had been an increase in the number of looked after children for the fifth consecutive month, which had created a level of challenge to establish appropriate placements within the borough. The number of child protection numbers remained relatively stable.

The adoption performance for the borough has remained well above its neighbours, regional and national benchmarks statistically. However, the number of children leaving care via the adoption route has reduced significantly, which has reflected a national decline.

In addition to the monthly performance report, Members were provided with an outline of the Children's Services Development Plan, detailed information relating to the present and future challenges facing Children's Social Care, and the service's plans for a refreshed Performance Management Framework, including a new look data report which is planned to be presented to the Committee from October 2023.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.
- (ii) The report be noted.
- (iii) Witnesses to share up to date benchmarking information with the Committee.

Chair