

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Full Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 11 January 2022
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	The Civic, Barnsley - The Civic

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Bowler, Bowser, Cain, Clarke, Coates, Fielding, Green, Hayward, Kitching, Lodge, Lowe-Fiello, Markham, McCarthy, Mitchell, Noble, Osborne, Smith, Stowe, Sumner, Tattersall, Wilson, Wraith MBE and Wray together with co-opted member Ms. G Carter

37 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

Due to the absence of Councillor Ennis, Councillor Noble 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.

38 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Tattersall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute Nos. 40, 41 and 43 due to her role as Cabinet Support Member for Children's Services, membership of Barnsley Schools Alliance, Corporate Parenting Panel and her role as school governor. Councillors Bowser, Lodge and Wilson also declared non pecuniary interests in the same Minute Nos. above due to their roles as school governors

Gemma Carter (Parent Governor Representative) declared an interest in Minute Nos 40, 41 and 43 due to her role as Director of alternative provision.

39 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the following meetings: Full Committee – 7 September 2021; Sustainable Barnsley Workstream – 12 October 2021 and Growing Barnsley Workstream – 2 November 2021 were deferred to the next full meeting of the Committee.

The minutes of the Healthy Barnsley Workstream meeting held on 30th November were approved as a true and accurate record.

40 Provisional Education Outcomes Across the Borough 2020/21

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Mel John-Ross, Executive Director Children's Services, BMBC
Jane Allen, Service Manager for Education Welfare, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
Helen Collins, Business Improvement and Intelligence Advisor, Core Services Directorate, BMBC
Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher, Looked After Children and Vulnerable Groups, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
Nina Sleight, Service Director, Education, Early Start & Prevention, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
Neil Wilkinson, Projects and Contracts Manager, Place Directorate, BMBC
Anna Turner, Interim Head of Education and Partnerships, Children's Services Directorate, BMBC
Yiannis Koursis (CEO and Principal of Barnsley College)
Lee McClure, Headteacher at Springvale Primary School and Joint Chair of Barnsley Alliance
Ken Merry, Vice Principal for Quality, Barnsley College
Councillor Trevor Cave, Cabinet Spokesperson for Children's Services, BMBC

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee were provided with a report detailing the provisional education outcomes for children and young people in the borough for Key Stage (KS)4 and Key Stage (KS)5. It was explained that due to the impact of Covid, all GCSE and A level examinations were cancelled, and outcomes for all students nationally were awarded based on teacher assessed grades. Results are therefore not directly comparable to results from 2020 and 2019. Teacher assessed grades considered a range of evidence, including practice exams and coursework, whereas in 2020 GCSE students were awarded centre assessed grades based on what their teachers expected them to achieve in exams. 2019 was the last year that students achieved results based upon the examinations they sat.

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

T levels are being offered as an alternative to A levels as a pilot in 2020/21 in Barnsley. Students can access gold standard qualifications highly regarded by employers, which will add value to the workplace, introduce higher level skills to the area and mean that more students will be accessing university degrees in subjects they have already studied at T level 3, such as engineering. Entry requirements for T levels are currently 5 x GCSEs at grade 4 and above plus an assessment. In the future there may be options for awarding T levels at 4/5. The overall aim is to find entry placements with employers for all T level students. This can be challenging but can be overcome by working creatively and collaboratively with partners.

The % of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) was 5.1% in January, February and March. This compares favourably to regional figures (6.3%) and national (5.5%). Numbers are kept low due to collaborative working between the Local Authority and partners such as Barnsley College. The TIAG team supports every single young person who is NEET and provides targeted intervention. Current year data was taken during the time when the country went into lockdown, which hindered work as staff were not able to visit young people at home. 99.8% of young people are offered some form of education and training, a figure which has been consistent over a number of years.

The top skills required by employers are: working in teams, work readiness, communication, collaboration, readiness to learn and having aspirations. Through the Barnsley Alliance these skills are built into the curriculum, with close collaboration between all phases of education, from primary through to College. By starting in primary school with 'apprentice' type initiatives and experiences, this provides a fantastic opportunity for secondary education to work with.

Numbers of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) has risen by 35% during the pandemic, which is a concern as children may be missing out on social interaction and engagement and there may be safeguarding concerns. School attendance orders to enforce a return to school are required if education is not deemed efficient and suitable however in most cases these are not required as either the education improves or children return to school. A EHE advisor visits families, and if education is deemed to be unsuitable families are supported and the advisor will work alongside them. 84 former EHE children have returned to school in the last academic year without the need for a legal order. Families are visited at the point of notification and support is offered in partnership with the schools involved. A parental guide and a guide for young people is available setting out what EHE means and what resources and support is available. There is a suite of resources which parents are directed to, but it is parental choice. Health services remain in place for those with health needs and/or safeguarding plan. In the case of children with an EHCP or disability, the EHE advisor will support families in the annual review meeting and works alongside other professionals. EHE is overseen by the safeguarding partnership as it is a concern, particularly with the most vulnerable. Safeguarding relies on partnership working and information sharing. Children not in the school system are identified through health and the voice of the child is always captured. A review is currently underway, looking at how the young people are supported and if increased capacity is needed.

Reasons for EHE as a choice vary. It may be for philosophical reasons; due to health concerns since the pandemic or dissatisfaction with school. Lots of work takes place between the school and the family to find a way back. Children will be returned to their original school but if this is not appropriate the Local Authority would work with parents and the Barnsley Schools Alliance. Families do not always fully understand their responsibilities with regard to education whilst some children have thrived in the home environment during the pandemic.

The EHE advisor gets to know the families well and works with them to understand the reasons for their choices. Where there are no concerns families are fully supported and signposted to various community groups. The EHE advisor has recently been nominated (by a parent) for a national award.

During the first lockdown, disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils became a priority. A tracking system was introduced, working alongside Education Welfare, to ensure pupil safety, with a result that more vulnerable children were seen in school in Barnsley than elsewhere. The breadth of the curriculum is on offer to these children, including staying fit and healthy, citizenship and PHSE. The Barnsley Alliance shares assessment and prediction data in clusters. Pupils re assessed by schools and support targeted where appropriate.

Throughout the pandemic schools have been supporting each other, sharing best practice and working creatively to ensure pupils are in the best position to mitigate effects of the disruption. Most children are enthusiastic to be back in school. There will be a mental health impact but work is ongoing with emotional wellbeing projects developed in partnership with the CCG to minimise this. Collaborative work with youth services takes place and schools are supported to access digital resources which have been developed. There is a collective focus on all children but particularly the most vulnerable. A full CPD and leadership programme is in place for staff. Children are supported through educational psychology and trauma informed practice. The Literacy Launchpad closes the gap in primary schools for disadvantaged children, alongside SALT programmes so that children catch up as soon as possible. Results for Looked After Children continue to improve year on year and every child is tracked closely. Children are taught in smaller groups in school, which has led to increased progress for some, particularly in phonics and reading skills. Adolescents have found the return to school based learning challenging, but are helped to readjust and integrate, with a personalised service for every child.

Disadvantaged children are identified in a number of ways: through Pupil Premium, those accessing social care support and those with an EHCP. Pupil Premium is triggered by receipt of free school meals - parent have to self-identify and apply. It was felt that schools should promote Pupil Premium as it helps both children and schools. Looked After Children (and previously Looked After) and Forces children are automatically identified. Pupil Premium for Looked After Children is specifically for that child, whereas for other children it is given to the school for them to support the whole cohort, not just the individual child. It can help with a myriad of things and when used effectively will close the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. The introduction of universal free school meals removed the incentive for parents to register for Pupil Premium. Once a child receives this, it stays with them throughout their education and can help a school enormously.

A Post 16 Education Advocate works closely with TIAG to ensure that each looked after young person is supported individually, targeting specific interventions for those who are struggling and broader than focussing on education. There is a clear gender and attainment gap, with girls outperforming boys on a number of indicators. This has been a trend for some time and has not been helped by Covid. Specific strategies in Early Years, Primary and Secondary are needed, with early intervention and tracking essential. A key line of enquiry is looking at remote learning. Schools are able to track remote learning and who is engaged with it, inviting those who are not able to access remote learning are invited to stay in school.. Staff absence during Covid has had an impact and this is a national issue. Data will be available by the end of January and where concerns are identified Barnsley Alliance will intervene. Girls outperform boys in subjects such as engineering, but the data is skewed by student numbers.

Mental Health support for staff is available along with a wellbeing network for peer to peer support. The Local Authority is keen to ensure support is in place for employees. CPD is available through webinars. Barnsley Alliance meets weekly with cluster leads and representatives from their area.

It was felt that there is a consistency of approach across the Borough. Low numbers of appeals indicate strong communication with fair and accurate judgements. Internal monitoring and support takes place within schools and with peer challenge. Monitoring and assessment activities are built into schools' calendars. Assessment processes will recommence within the primary sector shortly.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution;
- (ii) Data relating to the number of NEET young people who have received interventions (and how many have been positively impacted) will be provided to the Committee, and
- (iii) For those families entitled to free school meals, schools should be advised to look at ways to increase the number that take them up.

41 Children's Social Care Performance Cover Report October 2021 (Redacted)

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

RESOLVED that the report be noted

42 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.

43 Children's Social Care Performance Cover Report October 2021 (Redacted)

Members were invited to consider a cover report relating to:
7a – Children's Social Care Performance Cover Report October 2021
7b – Children's Social Care Performance Report October 2021
7c – Understanding Children's Social Care Performance Public Document Pack
7d – Outcomes of the Annual Ofsted Conversation Between the Director of Children's Services and Ofsted

Mel John-Ross introduced the report, explaining that the service was last subject to a full OFSTED inspection in October 2018 and received a judgement of 'good'. A letter from Ofsted has now been received, following the most recent, annual engaged meeting with Ofsted. Items discussed within the letter included Ofsted inspection activity, care leavers in unsuitable accommodation,

school attendance (including persistent absence and exclusion) for Looked After Children, sector led improvement, social worker recruitment and retention, wellbeing and caseloads. The next inspection activity could be either a focused visit, a JTAI or a short inspection. Additional Family Support Workers (assigned to Social Workers) have been recruited whilst we recruit to the new and additional Social Worker posts. Barnsley is recognised as an 'Employer of Choice' for Social Workers.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The performance report be noted;
- (ii) Members be provided with a breakdown of children not in suitable accommodation, and
- (iii) Members be provided with national and regional comparator data for caseloads.

Chair