

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 March 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Octavia Holland, Coral Howard, Caroline Kalu, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Kate Ward (Parent Governor Representative) and Monsignor N Rotheron (Church Representative)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liz Johnston-Franklin and Andre Bourne, Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor Representative) and Gail Exon (Church Representative)

ALSO PRESENT: Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) (London Borough of Lewisham), Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for School Performance), Catherine Bunten (Commissioning Manager), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access Inclusion and Participation), Councillor Alan Hall (Chair Audit Panel), Michael Roach (Head Teacher John Ball School) and Angela Scattergood (Assistant Director Education Services)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2019

1.1 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Monsignor Rotheron declared an interest in respect of Item 9 – Primary SATs and validated secondary results. He is a governor at Christ the King Sixth Form College.

2.2 Councillor Hilary Moore declared an interest in the same item. She is the council's representative at Lewisham College.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 It was RESOLVED that the response to the referral be noted without discussion.

4. In-depth review - Exclusions from school - third evidence session

4.1 The Chair invited those Members that had attended the visits to Abbey Manor College (AMC) - Lewisham's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – and Myatt Garden Primary School to share their observations.

4.2 It was noted that:

1. Attainment at AMC was higher than the national average for PRUs, although still lower than mainstream.

2. The new head teacher of AMC had worked hard with the local authority to achieve this.
3. Pupils at the PRU were expected to work towards a minimum of 5 GCSEs at KS4. Where a pupil had been excluded in Y11, AMC would try to match the qualifications of their school.

4.3 Ruth Griffiths, Service Manager – Access, Inclusion and Participation, introduced the report and the following was noted in discussion:

1. 80% of the primary school children at Kennington Park Academy (KPA) either have or are working towards an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). They will move on to mainstream or specialist provision, depending on their individual needs.
2. Managed moves had a high success rate.
3. Officers were currently geographically mapping exclusions but no real pattern was emerging.
4. There was insufficient capacity within the team to do any more deep-dive work on exclusions.
5. The percentage of BAME pupils excluded decreases between Years 9 and 11.
6. Some members asked to see a breakdown of exclusions by ethnicity for each school.
7. Ethnicity data for managed moves would only be available if the schools involved had provided it.
8. Although Lewisham primary schools have no permanent exclusions, the local authority commissioned 10 places in 2017/18 at KPA for children in crisis. This option was only used at the end of a graduated response where respite was needed. These places were reserved for children with the greatest need. Families had been very positive about the provision at KPA and the local authority was growing the relationship with KPA.
9. All schools referring children to AMC are expected to go through Fair Access Panel (FAP). AMC has a small number of assessment places but these are not a main route into the school for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Hospital Outreach Programme is the appropriate alternative provider for children with medical needs.
10. Some Members were concerned that the numbers of children that were permanently excluded comparative to the general school population were too small to statistically analyse.
11. Other Members felt that looking at the relatively small numbers over several years could help to identify any patterns or trends.

4.4 The Chair invited Janet G and Susan Rowe of Lewisham Education Group (LEG) to address the committee.

4.5 The committee heard that:

1. LEG is a sub-set of Ubuntu Social Living Networks, a group which looks at black children in the diaspora. LEG came about as parents came together in response to the Lewisham Education Commission report in 2016.
2. Daniel Pink of Ubuntu addressed the committee. He said that Lewisham has among the worst secondary school results in London and that black children make up a significant proportion of the school population. He quoted a statistic that appeared in a report to the CYP Select Committee on

5 September 2018 “If you were a Black African-Caribbean boy with special needs and eligible for free school meals you were 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded from a state funded school than a white girl without special needs from a middle class family” and stressed the need for a better future.

3. Susan Rowe is a parent of 3 children, one at a Russell Group University. She is a parent-advocate in exclusions. She explained that most parents do not understand the process, the jargon and felt that schools do work hard to keep children but lack the funds to support some children who are struggling in mainstream school and are at risk of exclusion.
4. The group’s motto was “nothing about us without us”. Ms Rower urged the committee and officers to involve parents in policy design and decision making.
5. Ms Rowe advised the committee that mental health needs were not being taken seriously and parents and schools were having to battle for diagnoses.
6. Whether called a managed move or an exclusion, the net result was that the child was being shifted between schools.
7. Many of the issues playing out at schools were problems in the community and therefore the community needed to be involved in solving these problems.
8. When asked about good practice, Ms Rowe read a long list of drivers that lead to Black Afro-Caribbean boys being over- represented in exclusions, as well as strategies for preventing or minimising exclusions. These included building self-esteem, tackling unconscious bias, providing mental health support, respectful discipline, building relationships. Full details are attached to the minutes at Appendix A.

4.6 The Chair thanked her for the solutions that she had identified and gave assurances that these would be fed into recommendations for the Mayor and Cabinet to steer their policy making.

4.7 The Chair then invited No More Exclusions (NME) to address the committee.

4.8 Zahra Bei, Alana O’Garro, Cedric Whilby, Joshua Moses, and Jonathan Bob-Amara gave a presentation (slides are attached at Appendix B) in which they gave their views as follows:

1. That exclusions disproportionately affect Black Caribbean boys was not a new problem. It had been the case for the last 50 years at least, and the issues highlighted in 1971 book by Bernard Coard “How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the British school system” were still a problem today.
2. Racial bias was systemic and a radical, complete overhaul of the education system was required.
3. A change in philosophy was needed to see the problem as being with the system, and not with the child.
4. There needed to be greater emphasis on:
 - restorative justice over punishment
 - relationships in schools
 - spending on training, pedagogy etc

- change the understanding of 'being in school' to 'being in lessons'.
Internal exclusions eg being sent out of the classroom, or time in an isolation block also keeps the child from learning
 - knowledge and learning over discipline and behaviour
5. Disruptive behaviour is the 'fruit not the root'. Behaviour happens as a result of unmet need or a trigger.
 6. schools need to communicate their internal interventions to parents so parents are aware of incidents in the classroom.
 7. Parents need supporting through primary to secondary transition.
 8. Although governors have the authority to quash the head teacher's decision to permanently exclude, they tend to trust the head teacher. The process needs to be changed to be fairer to the child.
 9. Do not build a community of rejected young people who find their tribe in the wrong places.

4.9 A discussion followed and the following was noted:

1. The Committee professed to be bold and ambitious in its strive for change and intended to produce a wide and deep report to inform and influence the Mayor and Cabinet to make policy changes
2. Thought needed to be given about what the council and schools could do to implement 'nothing about us without us'
3. LEG was run entirely by volunteers and received no funding.
4. NME called for greater black representation on council committees
5. Some issues would be best dealt with by lobbying central government, for example for funding
6. Generally, the Black Caribbean cohort in Lewisham performs well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but declines as they move through the Key Stages. 10 schools were bucking that trend and work needed to be done to replicate this across all schools.
7. The council's Corporate Strategy made a commitment to diversify representation on school governing bodies
8. Some Members felt the advocacy work provided by groups such as LEG should be available to schools through Lewisham Learning. It was acknowledged that the contentious nature of advocacy work may require it to have a separate funding stream.

4.10 The Chair thanked the representatives of both LEG and NME for their constructive input.

4.11 It was RESOLVED that the report and the content of the presentations be noted.

5. Early Help Review Terms of Reference

5.1 Sara Williams – Executive Director for Children and Young People introduced the item. She explained that a number of key contracts were coming to an end in March 2020 which provides a window to look at the service offering going forward.

5.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. Early Help needed to be clearly defined at the start of the review, and the distinction between Early Help and Early Years made explicit. Early help

means identifying need at the earliest opportunity, regardless of the child's age. Early therefore does not refer to age.

2. There were some concerns that the scope of the review was too wide. It was suggested that defining what is out of scope might be an easier starting point to defining what is in scope.
3. The draft Children and Young People's Plan would be brought to the next meeting of the committee. It was currently being used as a working document since the previous plan had expired.
4. It was not clear which issues needed to be address, therefore it was proposed that a thorough analysis of the data might be helpful.
5. Clarity was needed about the source of funding eg whether ring-fenced, out of the main local authority budget, or another source.
6. Early help is an approach rather than a service therefore any definition would be in terms of culture change
7. It was suggested that the review attempt to explicitly scope that it is trying to measure the impact of the reduction of resource ie what evidence is there of the benefits of Early Help and what would happen if Early Help services were not provided.
8. Many early interventions/ early help services are not statutory, whereas most acute services are, however Early Help services are valuable and play a role in reducing demand on acute services.
9. The political value in getting Early Help services right was acknowledged as was the fact that the impact on acute service demand might not be felt for several years.
10. The review should also consider EHCPs. EHCPs can be done at birth but most children with additional needs start nursery or school without them, and parents report battling to get an EHCP for their child. If it were easier to obtain an EHCP (even where no funding attaches to the EHCP) and the process carried out earlier and reviewed properly, then it would be easier to see whether interventions were having an impact.
11. Universal services are important, particularly for those children that are 'under the radar' e.g. do not attend nursery or childminder, but are looked after by a relative or are home schooled.
12. Officers were looking for externally procured services to come on board to help evolve the approach.

5.3 The time being 9:22pm it was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Standing Orders be suspended to extend the meeting beyond 9:30pm to allow for the completion of committee business.

5.4 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6. New arrangements post-Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board

6.1 The Executive Director for Children and Young People introduced the item.

6.2 The committee heard that:

1. Although this was a statutory change, there was flexibility in how the new arrangements could work.
2. The proposed model was similar to that in Greenwich

3. The role of the Independent Scrutineer was distinct from the role of the scrutiny committee. The Scrutineer would play a similar role to the current Independent Chair of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board. In some boroughs the Chair would stay on to fulfil this role. The current Chair was stepping down so it was not yet known who would fulfil this role in Lewisham.
4. Cllr Hall urged the Chief Executive to take up the role in conjunction with the CCG and the Police.

6.3 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Corporate Parenting and Looked After Children Annual Report

7.1 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted without discussion.

8. Recruitment and Retention of School Staff - 6 month update

8.1 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted without discussion.

9. Primary SATs and validated secondary results

9.1 Angela Scattergood, Assistant Director – Education Services, and Michael Roach, Interim Director – Lewisham Learning introduced the item.

9.2 The committee heard that the officers had commissioned further data analysis, which would take time and therefore were not available in time for the committee meeting.

9.3 The following was noted in discussion:

1. 'Disadvantaged' refers to pupils eligible for Pupil Premium
2. Disadvantage seems to have a significant impact on the white British cohort in terms of attainment.
3. Raising attainment of Disadvantage pupils is a key priority area for Lewisham Learning.
4. Ofsted inspections of previously outstanding schools were being triggered by a delve into data on progress and attainment of disadvantaged children. Lewisham Learning was working with schools to help them prepare for this.
5. One of Lewisham's primary schools bucked the trend and saw a higher than average percentage of Black Caribbean pupils achieve the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths. Best practice and lessons learned would be shared with other schools.
6. It was suggested that some of the factors that had contributed to bucking this trend included
 - a. Leadership
 - b. Challenging unconscious bias
 - c. Diversity in the workforce
 - d. Curriculum design

- e. Partnership working with parents, especially around secondary transition.
7. Lewisham Learning was providing curriculum advice on inclusion, especially Pupil Premium and Black attainment.
8. Key Stage 5 improvement was an emerging priority, and work was being done to improve communication and marketing of the post-16 offer across Lewisham, both A-levels and vocational qualifications.
9. Focus had previously been on improving Reading and Maths at KS2, and now focus was turning to improving Writing. The Rathfern Research Hub would look into reasons for the decline.
10. There was suggestion that some schools had over-focused on getting children to the expected level, and that more needed to be done to challenge the most able children.
11. One Member cited difficulties in retaining A-level students in Lewisham, in part due to Sedgehill no longer offering A-Levels, as well as referencing the experience of another 11-16 school in the borough whose most able students were poached for scholarships to a local independent school.
12. The financial sustainability of Lewisham Learning was questioned. Some £300k of funding was available from the local authority in the next financial year which would not last long into the next academic year. Lewisham Learning would look at what had been most impactful. Schools had indicated that they would be prepared to fund support from Lewisham Learning.

9.4 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10. Select Committee work programme

10.1 The following suggestions for next year's work programme were offered:

1. CAMHS
2. Early Help Review
3. Follow up on Exclusions review
4. CYP Plan
5. Children's Social Care Improvement Plan
6. Lewisham Learning

10.2 Members also requested that:

1. The length of reports be shortened and executive summaries provided
2. External speaker times be limited
3. Evidence sessions happen in the day as a sub-group rather than at the committee meeting

10.3 The Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that subject briefings can be provided on request.

10.4 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

11. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

11.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

Chair:

Date:
