

## **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2017**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Collins, Hewitson, Madeleine Monaghan [CYP/17/18 - CYP/17/19], Stone and Taylor

#### Co-opted Voting Members:

Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms M Neall [CYP/17/15 - CYP/17/16 and CYP/17/18 - CYP/17/22], Parent Governor Representative

#### Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

Ms J Gudgeon, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Bridges, Assistant Executive Member for Children's Services

Helen MacDougall, Head of the Sensory Support Service, Lancasterian School

Wendy McCracken, Professor in Deaf Education, University of Manchester

Mamta Jadhav, parent representative

Tracey Forster, Health Visitor Lead

Becky Clough, Health Visitor Lead

Paul Maher, Children's Society

#### **Apologies:**

Councillors Sameem Ali, Reeves and K Simcock

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

#### **CYP/17/15 Gerald Kaufman MP**

The Committee held a minute's silence for Gerald Kaufman MP who had passed away over the weekend. The Chair informed members that he had been a great MP for the Manchester Gorton constituency over many years. She advised that books of condolence had been opened at the Town Hall and across the constituency.

#### **CYP/17/16 Minutes**

##### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2017.

#### **CYP/17/17 Changes to Lancasterian Sensory Support Service**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and Skills which outlined proposed changes to the Sensory Support Service which the Local Authority commissioned from Lancasterian School. Members were invited to comment on the

report prior to its submission to the Executive on 8 March 2017. The Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion introduced the report across its main themes. The Committee welcomed Helen MacDougall, Head of the Lancasterian Sensory Support Service. They also welcomed Professor Wendy McCracken, Professor in Deaf Education at Manchester University and Mamta Jadhav, a parent representative, who had both requested to speak on this item.

Professor McCracken advised that there was no evidence to support the assertion in the report that the proposed changes would improve provision for children and young people with a sensory impairment. She reported that, while she supported the placement of deaf children in mainstream education, they needed an appropriate level of support to be fully included and that specialist training was needed to meet their needs. She advised that providing more limited training to mainstream teachers, who were responsible for a large class, would not be sufficient to effectively support the children, and neither would support from a teaching assistant who was not trained to meet their needs. She expressed concern about the room acoustics at Alma Park Primary School and that the school's focus on British Sign Language made it inappropriate to send children who were using a spoken language approach to this school. She also expressed concern that it was proposed to change some teaching assistant posts from Level 3 to Level 2.

Mamta Jadhav reported that she was the parent of a hearing impaired child and was also representing other parents. She informed members that she was grateful that the proposals had been revised to close one resource base for hearing impaired children, rather than the two originally proposed, but that she was still concerned by the proposals. She advised that change could be challenging for hearing impaired children and that she was concerned that being moved to a different, unfamiliar school could make children lose their confidence. She informed members about all the investment in her son, from the NHS in fitting him with cochlear implants and from herself as a parent, and expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on his development and his future. She asked that the Council consider whether the proposals were economical over the long-term if it made the children affected more dependent on government resources in the future.

The Committee thanked Professor McCracken and Mamta Jadhav for their contribution.

In response to Ms Jadhav's comments, Helen MacDougall acknowledged the importance of easing the transition to a new school and ensuring that children maintained their confidence levels. She advised that transition visits would be arranged prior to a move and staff that the child was familiar with would also move across to the new school. The Executive Member for Children's Services welcomed that there would be a carefully planned transition for pupils moving schools and also highlighted that pupils could remain at St John's C of E Primary School, whose resource base it was proposed to close, and receive peripatetic support.

The Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion advised that the proposals did not represent a significant change in approach as the Council was maintaining two primary resource bases for children with hearing impairments and a significant number of specialist teachers would be maintained. She reported that it was

important to train mainstream teachers to support hearing impaired pupils as pupils already spent most of their time without specialist support in a mainstream classroom and consultation feedback had indicated that this was important. She advised, however, that this was not intended to replace specialist teachers.

Members discussed school funding, in particular the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. A member reported that, while he welcomed the additional £1.6 million received this year, the level of funding had been frozen for 5 years, despite a significant increase in pupil numbers.

The Chair questioned whether teaching assistants at Level 2 were being expected to do work that should be done by a Level 3 teaching assistant. Helen MacDougall confirmed that this was not happening within the Sensory Support Service. The Chair advised that it was important for teaching assistant roles to be consistent across all schools.

A member expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on vulnerable children and that some jobs would be affected, commenting that reducing the number of Family Support Worker posts could lead to a delay in children receiving appropriate support.

A member welcomed that the proposals had been amended to close only one primary resource base, rather than two, following the consultation. He advised that it would be preferable to maintain all three but changes were necessary due to budget pressures. He recommended that the Committee reluctantly support the proposals to the Executive but that, if the Executive approved the proposals, the Committee should request a further report in a year's time to monitor the impact of the changes. The Chair agreed to these recommendations.

## **Decisions**

1. To reluctantly endorse the recommendation to the Executive that:
  - The Executive agree that Lancasterian School is commissioned to deliver the Sensory Support Service as set out in this report.
2. To request that, if the Executive agrees to the proposals, the Committee receive a further report in a year's time in order to monitor the impact of the changes.

[Ms Neall declared a prejudicial interest as the Chair of Governors at Alma Park Primary School and left the room for this item.]

## **CYP/17/18 Consultation on the Closure of Buglawton Hall School**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and Skills which outlined a proposal to begin consulting on the closure of Buglawton Hall School which was a residential special school for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. Members were invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 8 March 2017. The Director of Education and Skills provided an

overview of the report. He highlighted that this was only a proposal to consult at this stage and reported that it was not a judgement on the quality of the provision.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that she had visited the school several times and, while she recognised the benefits of the provision, the costs were unsustainable in the current financial situation and the arrangement of spending the week boarding at the school and weekends with their families in Manchester did not work well for some of the young people.

A member asked where the children currently at the school would be placed if it closed. The Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion informed members that she could not answer this at present as the consultation process had not yet taken place. She advised members that parents, pupils and staff would be consulted and, following this, more detailed proposals would be developed. The Chair emphasised the importance of ensuring that the young people would not need to be placed in independent provision which was more expensive and might not be as good. The Director of Education and Skills advised that it was proposed to undertake a more detailed piece of work on the needs of individual children and identify what education provision and wider support would be appropriate for them.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Education and Skills advised that the Executive was being asked to agree that, following an informal consultation, the decision on whether to proceed be delegated to him in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services. He advised that, in this case, there would be a formal consultation period and then the full detailed proposal would be submitted to the Committee and then to the Executive for a final decision.

## **Decisions**

To endorse the recommendations to the Executive that:

It is recommended that the Executive approve the proposal to:

- begin informal consultation on the closure of Buglawton Hall School as required at stage 1 of the statutory process for the closure of a maintained school;
- delegate to the Director of Education and Skills in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services the consideration of the outcome of the informal consultation, and if the decision is to proceed to publish the statutory notice for the closure of Buglawton Hall School and a full proposal in line with statutory guidelines, as required at stage 2 of the statutory process and to conduct appropriate consultation as required at stage 3 of the statutory process.

## **CYP/17/18 Attainment and Attendance 2016**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and Skills which provided an analysis of the 2016 outcomes of statutory assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 along with a short summary of next steps in each key stage. The report also included a summary of performance according to groups by ethnicity and other characteristics

and an update on provisional data for absence and persistent absence. The Director of Education and Skills introduced the report, acknowledging the hard work of staff across the education system and highlighting that the gap between the achievements of Manchester pupils and the national average was narrowing across a range of indicators.

A member commented that these were positive results, particularly considering the challenges that schools in the city faced. The Committee thanked teachers and other staff for their hard work. The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that, despite the difficulties faced by some pupils, the outcomes demonstrated that Manchester schools were making a difference in their lives.

A member expressed concern that the pressure of testing was affecting the mental well-being of some pupils and their enjoyment of learning. Another member expressed concern that some children entering Key Stage 1 were not school-ready. The Head of Schools Quality Assurance and Early Years reported that 77% of two-year-olds were receiving their free early years entitlement, which helped to get them school-ready, and that Sure Start centres and schools were working together on school readiness courses. She advised that, where parents were reluctant to access the free early years entitlement, they were being encouraged to access Sure Start centres and sessions such as Stay, Play and Learn.

## **Decision**

To note the report and thank staff in the education system for their hard work.

## **CYP/17/19 Early Years Update**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education and Skills which provided an update on the roll out of the Early Years Delivery Model; an overview of the quality of provision in the sector; confirmation of changes in the rates of payment to providers and a summary of next steps. The Director of Education and Skills provided an overview of the report and introduced Tracey Forster and Becky Clough from the Health Visitor provider.

Members discussed the take-up of the Stage 5 (2 year old) reviews. Tracey Forster outlined the process for the Stage 4 (9 months) and Stage 5 (2 year old) assessments and the steps being taken to improve take-up. The Head of Schools Quality Assurance and Early Years advised that this was a national issue, and take-up in Manchester was now gradually increasing. A member advised that, as well as considering practical issues, such as appointment times, consideration should be given as to whether some parents were not engaging in the reviews due to a negative experience at one of the earlier assessments. Tracey Forster acknowledged that it would be useful to gather further information from families on why they were not attending the reviews. She advised that some feedback had previously been gathered from families and this had highlighted practical issues, such as not being able to attend appointments due to work.

A member expressed concern that nursery schools would be negatively affected by the change to a single funding rate for early years providers. The Head of Schools

Quality Assurance and Early Years reported that nursery schools would receive a government subsidy for the next two years and that the Council was working with Manchester's nursery schools on how to mitigate the impact of the funding reduction. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that the cuts were concerning as Manchester's nursery schools were highly regarded and well-used and Martenscroft Nursery provided a lot of training for other early years providers. The Chair advised that the Committee would be receiving a report on early years funding at a future meeting.

The Chair expressed concern at the length of time between the Stage 4 (9 months) and Stage 5 (2 year old) assessments. Becky Clough advised that all children in this age group would have a named health visitor and parents were able to access support and advice on any concerns. She also informed members that, where there were concerns about a child's development at Stage 4, the health visitor could continue to assess the child more frequently, depending on the child's needs.

The Chair advised that some parents were not using the time when their child was receiving their free early years entitlement constructively to take steps to access employment or training and that this work needed to be integrated with the early years offer.

### **Decision**

To note the report, subject to members' comments.

### **CYP/17/20 Post Ofsted Improvement Plan Update: Missing from Home, Care and Education**

The Committee received a presentation from the Strategic Head of Early Help and the Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion which provided an update on children missing from home, missing from care and missing from education. The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and the Committee welcomed Paul Maher from the Children's Society.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Head of Education Strategy, Access and Inclusion reported that, where Elective Home Education was deemed unsuitable, children would return to school and, if they did not, a school attendance order would be issued.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that some children were out of education due to the time it took to obtain a school place after moving address, particularly for children in Year 6 and Year 11 and children with special educational needs (SEN). The Chair advised that parents should consider this issue when deciding to move house.

In response to a member's question, the Strategic Head of Early Help reported that approximately 30% of children who were reported missing were Looked After so the Council undertook targeted work on this, linking in with children's homes and foster carers.

Paul Maher outlined the approaches being taken to engage with young people, prevent them from going missing and encourage them to take part in return interviews. The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that the number of return interviews taking place was increasing but that that in itself would not solve the problem of young people going missing and that it was important to address the underlying issues. She outlined some of the reasons young people went missing from care, such as wanting to spend more time with their family or friends, drugs and child sexual exploitation. The Chair advised that the Corporate Parenting Panel regularly considered this issue in relation to Looked After Children.

### **Decision**

To note the presentation.

### **CYP/17/21 Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

The Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group report was added to the business of the meeting after the agenda had been published and was published in a revised agenda. The Sensory Support Service report was received late and published in the revised agenda. The Buglawton Hall report was received late and published in a supplementary agenda. The reason the reports were late has not yet been confirmed.

### **Decision**

To approve the work programme.

### **CYP/17/22 Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group - Terms of Reference and work programme**

The Committee received a report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which set out the proposed terms of reference and work programme for the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group. The Committee was invited to agree the membership, terms of reference and work programme for the Task and Finish Group.

### **Decision**

To agree the membership, terms of reference and work programme for the Task and Finish Group.