

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2011

Present:

Councillor Carmody – in the Chair
Councillors Chamberlain, Tavernor

Co-opted member:

Mr David Arnold

Councillor S Newman – Executive Member for Children’s Services

Apologies:

Councillors Reeves and Reid

CYP/OSG/11/01 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2010 were submitted to the Subgroup. A member asked for an update on developments on St Patrick’s RC Primary School. The Acting School Improvement Partnership (SIP) and Intervention Manager said that interviews for the position of headteacher were on the Thursday following the meeting.

Decision:

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2010 as a correct record.

CYP/OSG/11/02 Ofsted Reports

The Subgroup commented on a range of Ofsted reports which members selected at their previous meeting.

St Peter’s RC High School

The school was inspected on 19 – 20 November 2010 and had been rated by Ofsted as outstanding. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the headteacher of the school was a very strong leader and had high aspirations for the school. The attainment, which was in line with the national average in 2009, had increased to 55% achieving 5 A*-C grades, including Mathematics and English. The Executive Member for Children’s Services added that she had recently visited the school and been particularly impressed by the gardening therapy they provided, which seemed a very effective way of encouraging children’s interest in school.

The Subgroup discussed how the new attainment measures and English Baccalaureate would impact on the results of St Peter’s. The SIP and Intervention Manager explained that in the 2011-12 academic year, schools with fewer than 35% achieving GCSEs at A*-C in English, Mathematics and a science would be counted

as below the national floor standard. It was proposed in the Education White Paper which was published in November 2010 that the floor target would at some point after the 2012-13 academic year be changed to 35% of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate. The English Baccalaureate is 5 GCSEs A*-C, including English, Mathematics, a science, a language and a humanities. The consequences of not meeting these standards might be that the schools are forced to become academies.

The Subgroup discussed how St Peter's had achieved above average attendance. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the care, guidance and support at the school was very good, which can correlate with high attendance. The Subgroup asked for the statistics for post 16 destination of students from St Peter's after their GCSEs to be circulated to members of the Subgroup.

A member asked how faith schools fared in attainment compared to non-faith schools, particularly in Religious Education. The Executive Member for Children's Services said it was mixed, with no clear correlation. The SIP and Intervention Manager said faith schools generally had more pupils studying Religious Education GCSEs. In Manchester there are strong support networks between the leaders of faith schools.

St Anne's RC Primary School, Crumpsall

St Anne's RC Primary School was inspected by Ofsted on 18 – 19 May 2010, and was rated as inadequate. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the school was improving. The Local Authority had intervened and set up an interim executive board. Securing a good headteacher was proving to be a challenge, although this was not unusual for small Roman Catholic schools in north Manchester. The school had been found to be inadequate largely because of the leadership and management. The headteacher from Holy Name RC Primary School was seconded to the post part time, and a School Effectiveness Officer (SEO) has also been acting in the role. The SEO was unable to apply to the role permanently as she was not Catholic. Roman Catholic schools were usually required to advertise three times before a headteacher from outside the faith could be appointed. A member informed the Subgroup that in her experience the Diocese was becoming more flexible on this rule. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the headteacher from Mount Carmel RC Primary School would be the interim executive Headteacher at St Anne's after the current interim leader in February.

The SIP and Intervention Manager drew the Subgroup's attention to the fact that attainment at St Anne's was above the floor target in the 5 to 6 age group in English and Mathematics, which emphasised that the problem was leadership, not standards.

A member asked if the concerns over staff had been addressed. The SIP and Intervention Manager said there had been some improvement. The School Improvement Partner had been working with the staff, however the funding for this was set to end in April 2011.

The SIP and Intervention Manager explained that the new headteacher would be appointed by the interim executive board. Once the local authority is satisfied the school is improving, a permanent governing body will be formed.

A member noted that the school had below the average number of children with special educational needs (SEN). The SIP and Intervention Manager explained that every cohort was different, and there was a possibility that the numbers were inaccurate, because assessment was an area Ofsted identified as needing improvement.

A member asked how the Council identified issues in schools when statistics did not reveal anything of concern, as had been the case at St Anne's RC Primary School. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the Council's systems of monitoring were very strong so the Council was aware of concerns prior to inspection and in this case had put the interim executive board in place. However, from April onwards it was unlikely they would continue to have the staff to maintain this. The Executive Member said that members of staff should make governing bodies aware of their concerns, but the Council would not be able to continue to maintain the system of school improvement officers to support this. She added that the Council was investigating the option of using a company for schools to employ to fulfil a similar role.

The Subgroup discussed the levels of attainment in science, which were lower than average. The SIP and Intervention Manager said the school had concentrated on English and Mathematics as they were counted in the government targets.

Chorlton Park Primary School

Chorlton Park Primary School was inspected on 25 – 29 November 2009. The school was rated as overall outstanding by Ofsted. The SIP and Intervention Manager informed the Subgroup that there was a partnership between this school and Old Moat Primary School, which currently had no headteacher and was not achieving its targets. She explained Chorlton Park was committed to early intervention methods in reading, writing and mathematics.

The Subgroup were impressed with the results, and members wondered what lessons could be learned by other schools from its practices. The Executive Member for Children's Services said the school worked well with other schools in Chorlton, and the headteacher was already doing a great deal to spread good practice.

St Kentigern's RC Primary School

This school was inspected on 20 – 21 April 2010, and was rated by Ofsted as being good. The SIP and Intervention Manager told the Subgroup there was a new headteacher in the school since the inspection, and the school had a strong focus on creative subjects, such as astronomy and philosophy. Achievement in mathematics was lower than average.

The Subgroup discussed the challenge that primary school teachers faced with teaching mathematics. Members noted that it was often came less naturally to teachers than other subjects. The SIP and Intervention Manager said improving teaching of and attainment in mathematics was a priority for the school. Members also acknowledged it was often more of a challenge for parents to support early development of skills for mathematics than for literacy.

Meade Hill School

Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit of Meade Hill School on 20 April 2010, following a full inspection on 13 – 14 May 2008, in which the school was found to be satisfactory. The monitoring report found the school had made inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory improvement in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The SIP and Intervention Manager explained that there had been another monitoring visit since the 20 April 2010. This had yet to be published, but the early indication the Council had received was that the school had made significant progress. Members welcomed this news.

Decision:

To request the statistics for post 16 destination of students from St Peter's after their GCSEs to be circulated to members of the Subgroup.

CYP/OSG/11/03 Work Programme

Decision:

To request that the Subgroup receive the following inspection reports for consideration at the meeting on 22 March 2011:

- Victoria Avenue Community Primary School
- Buglawton Hall School
- Charlestown Community Primary School
- Burnage Media Arts College
- The Divine Mercy RC Primary School