

Overview and Scrutiny Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 23 November 2022

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair
Councillors Gartside and Reid

CYP/OSG/22/11 Minutes

The Chair reported that Members had visited King David High School and that it had been a very useful visit. The Committee Support Officer reported that she was following up the request for a visit to St Mary's RC Primary School and that the Executive Headteacher of Lily Lane Primary School had requested that the visit to her school be arranged for January 2023, as she had only recently started in post.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022.

CYP/OSG/22/12 Daycare Providers

The Subgroup received a list of all Manchester daycare providers which had been inspected since the last meeting and the judgements awarded along with copies of the inspection reports.

In response to a Member's question, the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) explained that out of schools clubs previously received outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate grades from Ofsted and that Manchester had had many outstanding out of schools clubs. Inspections of these clubs now resulted in a judgement of "met" or "not met". However, she highlighted that the reports for these clubs read well and that there were not any actions or recommendations that improvements were required. Therefore, she advised, that these recent inspections could be viewed as being at least "good" in terms of the previous grading system.

The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) provided an overview of the current situation and key themes from the reports. She reported that 95% of Early Years settings in the city were judged to be "good" or "outstanding", which compared well against other Greater Manchester authority areas. She informed Members that 12 inspections of daycare providers had taken place since September but that 6 had not been published yet. She informed Members that one Early Years setting had received an "inadequate" judgement and had subsequently closed. She outlined that recruitment and retention of staff and, in particular, qualified staff was a challenge for the sector. She highlighted the positive impact of out of school settings having good links with their feeder schools, which impacted positively on teaching and learning and outcomes for children. For the Early Years settings, she reported that key positive areas within the reports were the focus on communication and speech and language development

The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) informed Members about the actions being taken by her team in response to the published reports and feedback from the inspectors for settings whose report had not yet been published, including more targeted prioritisation of visits. She informed the Subgroup about two Department for Education (DfE) programmes that Manchester was involved in. The Experts and Mentors programme enabled seven settings to receive bespoke support from an expert or mentor, funded by the DfE. PDP3 provided 20 weeks of online training and development for practitioners, which was free to undertake with backfill funding available for practitioner's time. She advised that, in the previous year, eight childminders and a number of schools had completed the PDP3 course but that none of the practitioners in Early Years settings had completed the course, due to recruitment and retention issues. She advised that it was a high-quality course which had provided good outcomes and received good feedback. Her team wanted to ensure that more settings and childminders took up this offer at this time. A Member asked to be sent a link to information about the PDP3 course.

The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) informed Members that her team was delivering "ready for inspection" training to settings which were due to have Ofsted inspections soon. She reported that a Development Forum for early years settings and childminders took place three times a year and that this looked at lessons learned from Ofsted inspections, for example, safer sleeping practices and the sequencing of the curriculum. She advised that no safeguarding actions had been identified in the reports published so far, which were included in the papers for the meeting, but that any actions identified in future reports would be taken forward with the settings. She reported that her team supported Early Years Managers to support their staff's wellbeing and improve retention but also advised them on managing staff performance issues. She advised that, when a setting closed in an area, her team alerted other early years settings of the opportunity to recruit staff from that setting. She informed Members about work with Manchester College to get students ready for the workplace and reported that the College advertised vacancies at Early Years settings in the city to their students at the end of the year. She reported that the Manchester Quality Assurance Framework supported ongoing and in-depth leadership and management qualities in Early Years. She advised that all Early Years settings, including childminders, were receiving at least one visit a year from the Quality Assurance Team.

A Member who was also the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Committee receive a report on Early Years at a future meeting. She highlighted that the Committee would be considering an item on Early Years Buildings at its December meeting. The Chair of the Subgroup proposed that the Subgroup look at the childminding sector at a future meeting.

A Member expressed concern at pay levels within the Early Years sector and about the English and Mathematics requirements to progress to Level 3 T Level qualifications. She noted that many parents were choosing to send their young children to nurseries rather than schools due to the hours they were open. Regarding inspection reports which were due to be published shortly, she asked to be informed of those which were judged as inadequate to which the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) agreed.

In response to a question about what happened to funding for two-and-three-year-olds if a setting was judged to be inadequate, the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) reported that the setting could keep their current children but could not take on any more, which could affect their sustainability, and that some settings did decide to close. She advised that, if a setting was making enough progress but Ofsted had not been to re-inspect them, the Council did have discretion to reinstate their funding. In response to a Member's question about settings which were closing for other reasons, she advised that she was only aware of one which was closing as the owner was retiring and had not been able to agree a price to sell the business. In response to a question from the Chair about take-up of the Development Forum, she advised that approximately 40% to 45% of daycare providers attended and that all the information from the Forum was sent out to other providers. She reported that about 30% of childminders attended their Development Forums and that evening and weekend meetings were offered for these. She advised that a Forum meeting was also held for Out of School settings, which had been well-attended, although the last one had been less well-attended. She reported that staffing levels and maintaining ratios could be a challenge for some settings in attending meetings. In response to a question from the Chair about whether there was a sustainable level of daycare provision across the city, she suggested that the Access Sufficiency Manager could be invited to a future meeting to provide information on this. The Chair suggested that this could be part of the item going to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) explained the range of out of school settings, including settings which were located within schools but run by an external provider, some which were run by the schools themselves, and were either inspected as part of the school's inspection or separately if they were on the early years register, and some which were standalone providers in a building, serving a number of local schools. She explained that there were also other types of provision, such as homework clubs, study clubs or sports clubs which did not come under the same type of inspection. In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer confirmed that the monitoring of Homework Clubs sat under the Safeguarding in Education Team.

In response to comments from the Chair about engaging with settings attached to mosques, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer outlined the means by which the Safeguarding in Education Team could engage with settings and that signposting to services and other organisations was a way of maintaining this involvement. In response to a Member's comments about the cost of living, she advised that the Council and schools were looking at what more could be done to address this and outlined some of the actions that schools were already taking.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) confirmed that Collyhurst Nursery School and Children's Centre had not been judged as "outstanding" overall because the provider had not notified Ofsted of a change to registration details, although they had been judged as "outstanding" in all other areas.

Decisions

1. To recommend that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive a report on Early Years at a future meeting, including sustainability and sufficiency within the sector.
2. That the Subgroup will consider an item on the childminding sector at a future meeting.

CYP/OSG/22/13 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

Members agreed that at the next meeting the Subgroup should consider all the reports for schools and daycare providers which had been published since today's meeting but focus on the main themes that had emerged from the reports rather than going through each report individually.

Decision

To note the Terms of Reference and Work Programme, subject to the above comment.