

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 15 January 2025

Present:

Councillor E Bell – in the Chair

Councillors N Ali, Amin, Fletcher, Jafri, Lovecy, McHale, Mahamed, Muse, Nunney and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Reid, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Gaynor Stubbs, Executive Headteacher, Aiming High C of E Federation

Apologies:

Councillors Collins, Foley, Gartside and Mandongwe

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/25/1 Minutes

Decisions

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 23 October 2024.

CYP/25/2 Attainment Headline outcomes 2024 (provisional)

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the 2024 outcomes of statutory assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. It also provided a list of actions which were being progressed to address some of the gaps in learning following the pandemic.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- 2024 outcomes in relation to:
 - Early Years Foundation Stage;
 - Year 1 Phonics Test;
 - Key Stage 2;
 - Key Stage 4; and
 - Key Stage 5 and
- Next steps.

Gaynor Stubbs, Executive Headteacher, Aiming High C of E Federation informed the Committee about some of the steps their schools had taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children and their families. She outlined a range of steps taken, relating to the curriculum, including identifying and mitigating key aspects of teaching that had been missed through online teaching and provision for the increasing numbers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), pastoral support, support for staff and support for families, including parent workshops on a range of issues and SEND Local Offer parent meetings.

Some of the key points and themes that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- To welcome the work taking place and the progress being made, in particular in relation to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and global majority children;
- Meeting the needs of children with SEND, including making an earlier diagnosis and learning from best practice in other countries;
- Whether there were any particular areas of the city that were a cause for concern;
- Concern about the widening gap between Manchester and the national average in relation to Year 1 Phonics; and
- Availability of T-Levels.

The Assistant Director of Education advised that there were no specific areas of the city where outcomes were lower but that thematic issues had been identified. She highlighted writing as a skill which had been particularly affected by the pandemic and advised that it was being addressed through work with the Education Endowment Foundation on the Write Beginnings project, which was being rolled out to selected schools across Manchester. She reported that "a good level of development" had also been identified as a thematic issue for some cohorts of children, linked to disadvantage, and she outlined some of the work to address this, including the Kickstarter project providing speech, language and communication support to schools, as well as educational psychology. In response to a question about Phonics, she advised that there were pre-verbal children entering Reception and that speech needed to be developed before Phonics could be effectively taught and she outlined a range of programmes to address. She reported that the Manchester approach to SEND was to meet the presenting needs rather than waiting for a diagnosis. She informed Members that a tool for identifying early indicators of neurodiversity had been trialled in an area of the city and that discussions were now taking place with Health on how this could be rolled out across the city. She advised that Manchester was strong on early identification of needs but the increase in children with SEND presented a challenge in terms of capacity to meet that need. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the support provided to Early Years settings, including childminders, in supporting children with additional needs. In response to a Member's question on when the validated attainment data, including a breakdown by gender and ethnicity, would be available, she advised that this was dependent on the Department for Education (DfE) but it was hoped that this data would be available by the Spring or early Summer Term.

Gaynor Stubbs advised that, while children with additional needs were being identified early, the challenge was in having staff that were equipped to support them, noting the difficulties at a national level in recruiting Early Years staff. In response to a Member's question, she advised that some families did not want to engage with Early Help because of previous interactions with Children's Services which they had perceived as negative and, in those cases, her schools would provide support to the families.

The Director of Education informed the Committee that currently only The Manchester College provided T-Levels but that the Council had done a lot of work to increase post-16 places in the city and that from September 2025 a new provision opening in the city centre would be offering T-Levels and discussions were taking place with other post-16 providers about offering T-Levels, recognising the importance of having a balance of academic and technical courses. In response to a question from the Chair, she outlined how a range of partners were involved in work to improve school attendance, citing as an example the multi-agency approach to improving attendance in Wythenshawe. The Chair emphasised the important role of the wider community in children's education.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that Manchester schools were now the best they had ever been, while noting the impact of the pandemic on children and babies and that the north-west had been particularly badly affected. She congratulated schools and officers for their work. She advised that the two-year-old offer should be available to all families and that there should be qualified teachers in Early Years and she expressed concern about poor levels of pay in the Early Years sector. She encouraged the Committee to undertake visits to Children's Services teams across the city and to look at the detail of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill which was going through Parliament.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/25/3 Inclusion Approaches and Exclusions Data 2022/2023 and 2023/2024

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Education which provided an update on the development of inclusion support for all Manchester schools. It also looked at available exclusions data held internally in Manchester for 2023/24 and validated Department for Education (DfE) published school exclusions data for 2022/23.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- An overview of work to support inclusion in Manchester schools;
- Data on permanent exclusions in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024;
- Data on suspensions in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024; and
- Early indications in relation to the current school year.

Some of the key points and themes that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- Breaking the cycle of pupils being repeatedly suspended;
- Disproportionality regarding the pupils who were being suspended or permanently excluded;
- Sharing good practice;
- A suggestion that officers include a glossary in reports to make it easier for Members and the public to read; and
- Managed moves.

In response to a question about repeated suspensions, the AP Lead and SAFE Taskforce Lead advised that schools were encouraged to involve the Council's Outreach Services as early as possible where a pupil was at risk of disengaging to prevent suspensions from happening. She reported that, if a pupil was suspended, it was important to effectively re-integrate them back into school, which the Council could provide support on, and that this re-integration could include providing support to parents, mediation or other actions to demonstrate that it was a fresh start. In response to comments on disproportionality, she advised that there was a lot of variety of contexts between schools and that city-wide disproportionality might not reflect the population of individual schools but that the Council would provide support and challenge to schools as appropriate where there was a disproportionality of suspensions and exclusions compared to the demographics of that individual school. She advised that the Council had commissioned a study in relation to Gypsy and Roma pupils, noting that this group was an outlier, and that the Council was also working with Afruca and Dimobi to put together a strategy to address other outliers. In response to a Member's question, the Statutory Lead (Attendance and Exclusions) advised that the exclusion rate for Asian Pakistani pupils was 0.14 last year, informing Members that although the number of Asian Pakistani pupils excluded was quite high, the exclusion rate was quite low as there were a large number of Asian Pakistani pupils in Manchester.

In response to a question about the high number of White British pupils being excluded, the Assistant Director of Education advised that this was a national issue which was linked to disadvantage, low aspirations and negative feelings towards education and that a lot of work was being done by the Council and schools to engage with pupils and raise aspirations. She outlined how best practice, regarding inclusion and other issues, was shared between schools, including through webinars, Headteacher Briefings, through Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officers and the brokering of formal support between schools. In response to a Member's question, she advised that some of the local authorities with a lower exclusion rate were working in a different context from Manchester. She informed Members how the Council was working closely with other local authorities through its leadership of the North-West Change Programme for the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, including sharing best practice, adding that best practice was also shared through Greater Manchester Education Leads and informally.

The Director of Education informed Members that some of the schools which had had the highest exclusion rates were in areas with a predominantly white population, resulting in higher levels of white boys being excluded, and she advised that

interventions were determined at a school level. She advised that where there were concerns about either the overall level of exclusions at a school or disproportionality in who was being excluded, the Council would provide challenge to the school and support where needed. She outlined the purpose of Managed Moves, stating that it was a voluntary agreement between two schools to give a pupil a fresh start in another school and that a protocol for this had been developed between secondary headteachers. She advised that in a lot of cases it worked well but occasionally Managed Moves did break down. She advised that if the Managed Move did not work out, the child would return to the original school and that they remained on the roll of the original school until the receiving school decided that the move had been successful and agreed to take them on roll. She expressed caution about bringing this process under local authority arrangements due to its voluntary nature and the risk that it might deter schools from agreeing to it but advised that the Council could look at the numbers and in particular any pupil who had had a lot of Managed Moves which had broken down; however, she advised that the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill could change the local authority's role in relation to this. The Chair agreed that Managed Moves could work well but advised that it was important for the parents to understand what was happening.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that a lot of progress had been made on exclusions. She highlighted the challenges for teachers of dealing with disruptive behaviour in large classes. She commented on the issues relating to white working-class boys and emphasised the importance of Early Help in improving attendance and preventing exclusion.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor McHale declared a personal interest as Operations Manager for Navigators Alternative Provision.]

CYP/25/4 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.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.