

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2020

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair
Councillors Reid and Stone

Apologies:

Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representatives

CYP/OSG/20/01 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019.

CYP/OSG/20/02 Feedback on School Visits

The Chair reported that Members of the Subgroup had recently visited Manchester Communication Academy, Abbott Community Primary School and Ashgate Specialist Support School, which, she advised, were all fantastic schools.

Members discussed the visit to Manchester Communication Academy, highlighting the recording studio, the breakfast club, the activities available, community engagement and the inclusive nature of the school. Members also discussed the challenges of open plan buildings, with the Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND commenting that most schools built as part of the Building Schools for the Future project had been built as open plan with flexible walls but that most had since made changes to create contained classrooms. In response to a comment from the Chair, she informed Members that the school was currently making some changes to address a budget deficit.

Members discussed the visit to Abbott Community Primary School, highlighting the pro-active headteacher, the breakfast club, which had improved punctuality, the links to the local community and the library. Members also discussed the proposed expansion of the school, the challenges that small schools faced when they expanded rapidly and the importance of the headteacher and the Council having an adequate voice in the process. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND outlined the process for this and how the Council and the school leadership team were involved. She reported that many schools had now expanded so the learning from these experiences would be utilised to better manage future school expansions. She advised the Subgroup that she would pass Members' comments on to the Director of Education and the Head of Access.

Members discussed the visit to Ashgate Specialist Support School. The Chair commented that it was an excellent school and that she had been very impressed by the progress that the children had made by Key Stage 2. She reported that the staff understood the pupils' needs and that the children learnt to manage their own

behaviour. The Subgroup discussed whether some children who were being supported in mainstream education would be better placed in special schools. A Member commented that, wherever possible, children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) should be placed in mainstream schools with additional support but that there were some children for whom a special school was the best option. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND informed Members about the work to increase the number of special school places in the city, while noting that places were being filled as soon as they became available. A Member commented that, while the funding for the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant had now been increased, it had previously been frozen for several years. The Subgroup discussed the co-location of special schools and mainstream schools, noting that in some cases this was working well but in others the schools did not engage with each other.

The Chair informed Members that she had written to the schools to thank them for accommodating the visits.

Decision

To note the oral reports.

CYP/OSG/20/03 Support to Schools and Early Years Settings

The Subgroup considered the information that had been submitted which provided an overview of the support available to schools and early years settings.

Officers gave an overview of the information provided including:

- The Council's offer to schools;
- School Quality Assurance Protocol;
- Early Years Quality Assurance Protocol; and
- The work of the Early Years Quality Assurance Team.

The Chair requested that this information be circulated to all Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

A Member welcomed the support that the Quality Assurance Team provided to Manchester schools, citing an example of a school they had helped. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND highlighted the positive feedback received from the Greater Manchester Peer Challenge review of Manchester's school improvement work.

A Member advised that, where schools were not engaging, officers should inform Ward Councillors who might be able to assist. The Chair recognised the importance of Ward Councillors being involved in school improvement and the role they could play. In response to a Member's question, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer updated Members on the work of the Manchester Schools Alliance.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer outlined how her team used its influence, brokered support for schools and

provided quality assurance of this. The Chair recognised the strategic thinking and quality of work taking place with reduced resources.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) informed Members of work to address school readiness, including promoting a shared understanding of what school readiness was as, she advised, nurseries, parents and primary schools could all have different expectations about what children should be able to do when they started school.

Decision

To request that this information be circulated to all Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

CYP/OSG/20/04 Ofsted Inspections of Manchester Schools

The Subgroup received a list of all Manchester schools which had been inspected since the last meeting and the judgements awarded. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer provided an overview of this information.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted special measures monitoring inspection report for Newall Green High School, noting that this was the third monitoring inspection since the school had become subject to special measures following the inspection that had taken place in March 2018. At the latest monitoring inspection, Ofsted had judged that leaders and managers at the school were taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer provided an overview of the findings, commenting that the school was engaging well with the Quality Assurance Team and had been receiving additional support from the team, due to being in special measures. She reported that the trust which ran the school had approached the Department for Education to discuss closing the school and that, if this went ahead, the Council would support parents through the admissions process to find new school places for their children.

Members welcomed the progress that was being made in improving the school and stated their opposition to proposals to close the school. A Member reported that the Council's Executive was opposed to the proposed closure of the school and that this issue would also be considered at the next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 5 February 2020. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND advised Members that schools which were judged as 'inadequate' could over time see a reduction in their school roll, which then made it more challenging to improve, and that the falling school roll was the reason given for the proposal to close Newall Green High School.

The Subgroup discussed the ability of other Wythenshawe schools to absorb the 360 pupils who would need a new school place if the school closed. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND advised the Subgroup that there were some places available at other Wythenshawe schools but some parents were concerned about siblings being able to attend the same school and parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) were concerned about finding another school which would meet their child's needs; however, she reiterated the

Council's commitment to providing support to the families who would be affected by the proposed closure and informed Members that the Admissions Team was already working to identify other school places for the affected pupils.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for St Anne's RC Primary School in Ancoats, which continued to be judged as 'good' by Ofsted. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer outlined the strengths and areas for improvement identified through the inspection. The Chair commented that this was a good report and recommended that the Subgroup write to the school to congratulate them.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for St John's RC Primary School. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that the school had last been inspected in November 2006, when it had been judged outstanding, and had then been re-inspected in October 2019 under the new Ofsted Framework, when it had been judged as 'good'. She reported that the senior leadership team and almost all of the teaching staff had changed since the last inspection and that the school had self-assessed as being 'good'. She informed Members that the school had been working with the Quality Assurance Team and outlined the support that was being provided to them. She highlighted some of the key points from the inspection report.

The Chair welcomed the subsidised trips abroad for pupils and praised the work of the headteacher. A Member expressed concern at the length of time between Ofsted inspections, which was due to the school having previously been judged as 'outstanding' and advised that, based on his knowledge of the school, the report was a realistic appraisal of the school. The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND welcomed the Department for Education's proposal that 'outstanding' schools should no longer be exempt from routine Ofsted inspections. A Member recommended that the Subgroup write to the school to congratulate them on their recent Ofsted report and support them on their journey back to 'outstanding'.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for Varna Community Primary School. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer informed Members that this had been a thematic inspection to better understand the school's curriculum and that the school's Ofsted judgement did not change as a result of this type of visit. She reported that the inspection had focused on languages provision (Spanish), which was a specialism for the school, and highlighted some of the strengths and areas for improvement detailed in the report. A Member welcomed the report and that Spanish was a strength for the school.

Decision

To write to St Anne's RC Primary School and St John's RC Primary School to congratulate them on their recent Ofsted reports.

CYP/OSG/20/04 Ofsted Inspections of Daycare Providers

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for Bubbly Bear Ltd. The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) informed Members that the

setting had been judged as 'requires improvement' for a second time; however, she advised Members that they now had a strong manager in place and that the Ofsted inspector had found that the setting had some strengths and had the capacity to improve. She also outlined the support that was being provided to help them to improve. In response to a question from the Chair, she confirmed that it was expected that the setting would improve.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for Foundation Years Nurseries Debdale Park. The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) provided Members with an overview of the setting, reporting that its Ofsted judgement had changed from 'outstanding' to 'good' under the new Ofsted Framework. A Member reported that the nursery was involved in the local community and that the children enjoyed their time there. He suggested that the Subgroup visit the nursery.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted inspection report for Tiddlywinks Out Of School Club, which had previously been judged as 'outstanding' and which had been judged as having 'met' the quality and standards of early years provision at its most recent inspection. The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Early Years) reported that all the standalone out of school clubs in Manchester had been judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' but that Ofsted now only judged out of school clubs as either having 'met' or 'not met' the quality and standards of early years provision. In response to a question from the Chair, she advised that this was because out of school settings were play-based rather than education-based.

Decision

To request that a visit to Foundation Years Nurseries Debdale Park be arranged for Members of the Subgroup.

CYP/OSG/20/05 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Subgroup considered the Terms and Reference and Work Programme.

Decision

To approve the Terms of Reference and Work Programme.