

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair

Councillors Foley, Hewitson, Nunney and Reid

CYP/OSG/22/04 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022.

CYP/OSG/22/05 Local Government Association (LGA) Permanence Peer Challenge

The Subgroup received a report of the Deputy Director of Children's Services which provided feedback from the recent LGA Permanence Peer Challenge.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The process;
- Key messages from the review; and
- Recommendations.

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

- To note the improvements made since 2014 when Manchester's Children's Services were judged as "inadequate" by Ofsted;
- The importance of Members continuing to undertake visits across Children's Services;
- Social Worker caseloads, including the variability of caseloads between Social Workers;
- The number of agency staff; and
- Whether Our Children and Young People (Looked After Children and Care Leavers) received priority for health services, for example dental appointments and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

In response to a Member's comment that the report did not mention the pandemic, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed Members that one of the peer reviewers had commented positively on staff not talking about the pandemic, reflecting that the service had continued to work face-to-face throughout, unlike many other local authorities. He reported that the average caseload for experienced Social Workers was about 17.6, with the highest number being 25 and Newly Qualified Social Workers having an average caseload of 12 or 13, whereas in 2015 some Social Workers had 40 to 50 cases. He advised that there were 36 agency staff across the Directorate and that this was the lowest level of reliance on

agency staff across the region. In response to a Member's comments, he provided an update on progress in providing staff with suitable IT equipment. He recommended that he and the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee have a discussion about future visits to the service, including making the visits more focused. Members discussed the need to ensure the voice of the child was heard and the role of Our Year in engaging with children and young people.

A Member suggested that training should be arranged for Councillors in the new municipal year covering a range of topics, including the journey that Children's Services had been on since 2014, noting that there would be new Councillors after the election. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services agreed that a session on Children's Services could be provided to Members in the new municipal year, also covering the future plans for the service. In response to the question about health services, he informed the Subgroup that Our Children and Young People had a designated team of health professionals, that they had a good relationship with CAMHS and that additional services could be commissioned where needed. He confirmed that Our Children and Young People were prioritised for access to health services, including dentistry. In response to a further question, he reported that when they became Looked After, children received an initial health assessment and a Personal Education Plan.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/OSG/22/06 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 Schools Quality Assurance Officer provided an overview of this information.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted report for St Patrick's RC Primary School, which had been judged as "good" at its most recent inspection in November 2021. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer reported that the school had been placed in special measures in 2009 then judged as "satisfactory" in 2011 and, following the change in the Ofsted Framework, judged as "requires improvement" on three subsequent inspections so, she advised, this inspection had been critical. She outlined how a formal partnership with St Edmund's RC Primary School had benefited both schools. She highlighted some of the key points from the Ofsted report. A Member welcomed the positive journey of this school to achieving a "good" judgement and suggested that the Subgroup could consider visiting the school. A Member reported that some schools subsequently reverted to "requires improvement" at their next inspection and highlighted the need for local authority support to ensure that this did not happen. A Member welcomed that phonics teaching was good at the school and that pupils were knowledgeable about climate change. In response to a Member's comments about the challenges faced by small schools, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer informed Members that the Diocese of Salford was exploring the option of academising all its schools. She advised that her team were conscious of the need to sustain improvements made and that the allocation of their time across different schools was regularly reviewed.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted report for Eden Boys' Leadership Academy which had been judged as "good". The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer highlighted some of the key areas within the report including that the school had been judged as "outstanding" for behaviour and attitudes and personal development. She reported that the school was open to engagement with the local authority, for example, communicating messages about vaccination, although not with the Quality Assurance Team. The Subgroup discussed single sex schools within the city, noting that there had been community resistance to a proposed move to make existing single-sex schools mixed-sex. In response to comments from the Chair, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer reported that the Director of Education had a positive working relationship with the Executive Principal, who was also the Executive Principal of the neighbouring Eden Girls' Leadership Academy. The Chair suggested that the Subgroup might want to visit Eden Boys' Leadership Academy.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted report for Rolls Crescent Primary School, which had been judged as "good". The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer informed Members that it had converted to an academy and that the predecessor school had also been judged as "good". She advised Members that the school worked collaboratively with the other schools in the same multi-academy trust. She highlighted the main points from the report. She advised that the school had been engaging with the Council's quality assurance processes from this academic year. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the universal offer to Manchester schools, which included a link person within the Council's Quality Assurance Team. She advised that, unless there were circumstances that warranted a higher level of support, schools which were judged as good or better were entitled to one visit from a quality assurance professional commissioned by the Council per year and that the Council received a written report with feedback from that visit. A Member who was the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee suggested that the Committee could look at One Education at a future meeting.

The Subgroup considered the letter from Ofsted following the recent special measures monitoring inspection of The East Manchester Academy. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer advised that this was the second monitoring inspection since the school had been placed in special measures and that this was the best outcome they could have received. She reported that the school was on a journey, making improvements, and that, if this work continued at the same pace, the school was on track for coming out of special measures. She reported that the school had an Executive Headteacher and interim management board in place and that there was very good engagement with the Quality Assurance Team. She outlined some of the improvements that had been made and steps being taken to secure further improvements. In particular, she stated that, at the time the school was placed in special measures, there had been serious safeguarding concerns but there had been sustained improvements in this area and pupils now said that they felt safe and well looked after. In response to a Member's question, she reported that Ofsted did consider parental views on the school and, if it had been identified as a concern, it would have been highlighted in the report. She reported that she would discuss the school's engagement with parents with her colleague who attended the interim management board meetings. A Member expressed concern that schools in

special measures often struggled to recruit and retain staff. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer acknowledged that this was an issue, also noting the restriction on recruiting newly qualified teachers, and that recruitment issues could result in teachers teaching their second or third subject. A Member suggested that the Subgroup consider visiting the school. In response to a Member's question, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer stated that she would check whether the school had a Local Authority representative on the governing body. A Member, who was also the Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, advised that the Committee should look at school governance at a future meeting. She also stated that she would ask the School Governance Lead about governor vacancies at Manchester schools.

The Subgroup considered the recent Ofsted report for Medlock Primary School. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer informed the Subgroup that the school had previously been judged as "requires improvement" and had been judged as "requires improvement" again at the latest inspection, but with two areas which were considered "good". She advised that this was one of the highest priority primary schools for her team and that the school was engaging well with her team. She outlined the support the school was receiving and highlighted some of the key points from the report. A Member suggested that the Subgroup consider visiting this school. In response to a Member's question about what powers the local authority had in relation to schools which were at risk of going into special measures, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer advised that her team built a relationship with school leaders to a point where they were comfortable with being strategically influenced because of the support the Council could provide to them. She advised that there were statutory powers that could be used where necessary, if this relationship had broken down, but that this was not needed in relation to this school. A Member asked what tools were available to support the school to improve its governance, for example, bringing in a national leader on governance to support the school. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer advised that, as Ofsted had identified governance as an area for improvement, her team could approach the school to encourage them to engage in an external review of governance by the national leader as a supportive measure and she stated that she would discuss this with the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer who supported this school.

Members discussed which schools they would like to visit and provisionally proposed to visit Medlock Primary School, The East Manchester Academy and Eden Boys' Leadership Academy, with arrangements to be finalised in the new municipal year.

Decisions

1. To write to St Patrick's RC Primary School, Eden Boys' Leadership Academy and Rolls Crescent Primary School to congratulate them on their recent Ofsted reports.
2. To arrange visits to a selection of the schools in the new municipal year.

CYP/OSG/22/07 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

Decision

To approve the Terms of Reference and Work Programme.