

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair
Councillors Gartside, Hewitson and Reid

Apologies:

Councillor Bano

CYP/OSG/23/01 Minutes

The Chair updated Members on the recent visits to King David High School and St Mary's RC Primary School.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022.

CYP/OSG/23/02 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 Members with an overview of the inspections which had taken place since the last meeting, most of which had been positive, adding that some further inspections had taken place for which the reports had not yet been published. She outlined the key themes which had arisen from the reports, stating that key messages from these had been shared with schools across the city and the Quality Assurance professionals working with schools. She reported that the quality of the curriculum had been a key emphasis in the recent inspections, including ensuring that teachers were clear on all the essential knowledge and understanding pupils needed to have gained by the end of a particular unit of work and that they were planning the work in a logical sequence. She stated that activities needed to have real purpose and that pupils and other adults supporting the class needed to understand what that purpose was. She also advised that the training needed to be put in place to support teachers to be able to effectively do this. She advised that teaching needed to be adaptive to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). She highlighted the role of the leadership in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and the assessment of its impact and the role of governors in holding the leaders to account in relation to this, stating that this was often stronger in English and mathematics but could be weaker in subjects such as art and history. She reported that reading had been a key area in recent Ofsted reports, including phonics and the choice of books which supported that learning. She informed Members that reports had highlighted that the planning of the curriculum should start at the earliest entry point, mapping out the curriculum for each subject leading seamlessly from Early Years into the National Curriculum.

In response to a Member's question on the personal, social and health curriculum, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that this feedback was specific to the Secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and that the PRU had made adjustments in response to the inspector's feedback. She reported that the school was engaging with the Quality Assurance team and that the Quality Assurance professional who was working with the PRU was a former Ofsted inspector who had expertise in working with PRUs and would be ensuring that the issues raised were being addressed. She outlined the support provided to schools including how Quality Assurance professionals worked with schools to secure improvement, looking at both the broad themes across the city and specific areas raised by Ofsted in relation to that school.

The Chair highlighted the issue for smaller primary schools in having subject leaders across a broad curriculum and the role of networking and schools forming clusters. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer outlined the networking opportunities available to school and how school-to-school support was brokered for schools which required it, highlighting how this had worked very successfully for All Saints Primary School in Gorton which had gone on to form a federation with Armitage Primary School. She reported that, although the plans in the Schools White Paper for all schools to join a multi-academy trust had not been passed as a Bill, the Council was still emphasising the importance of and supporting discussions around collaborative working. In response to a Member's question, she provided an update on academisation in relation to faith schools in Manchester, in particular that the Diocese of Salford, which was responsible for the majority of Roman Catholic schools in Manchester, expected all its schools to join the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust and, as this would be a very large academy trust, that schools would work in smaller clusters around a high school.

In response to a Member's comments, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer stated that she shared their frustration about the lack of detail provided in current Ofsted reports; however, she reported that more detailed information was shared with school leaders throughout the inspection and her team encouraged them to take detailed notes at all meetings with the inspectors as that level of detail would not be in the report. She reported that her team and the Quality Assurance professionals would then discuss and follow-up on this more detailed feedback when they met with the schools.

Members discussed the importance of Ward Councillors being aware of and involved in school improvement in relation to schools in their ward. In response to a question about alerting Ward Councillors about concerns arising from Ofsted inspections in relation to schools in their ward, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer advised that her team could not inform Ward Councillors about the outcome of an inspection until the report had been published as, until this point, the report was still subject to quality assurance and could be changed. She stated that information on which schools had been inspected and were awaiting the publication of the report could be shared and she offered to provide this information for the next meeting, to which Members agreed.

In response to concerns from the Chair that some inspectors were not sympathetic to the way schools had been affected by the pandemic, the Senior School Quality

Assurance Officer reported that Headteachers were asked throughout the inspection if they were happy with the inspection and the conduct of the inspectors and were informed of the complaints process at the final meeting. She stated that it was recognised that there were challenging circumstances but that the emphasis was on closing the gap for children and having a curriculum that was ambitious for all children.

Decision

To request that information on which schools have been inspected and are awaiting the publication of the report be provided for the next meeting.

CYP/OSG/23/03 Ofsted Inspections of Daycare Providers

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

The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead provided Members with an overview of the inspections which had taken place since the last meeting, reporting that two settings which had been judged as “inadequate” by Ofsted had subsequently closed. She reported that overall 94% of daycare providers in the city were judged to be “good” or “outstanding”. She highlighted some of the challenges facing the sector, including the recruitment and retention of staff and sustainability, with rising costs within the sector. She outlined the key themes from recent Ofsted reports relating to daycare providers, including a fully embedded curriculum design which was having an impact on children, high aspirations for children, children who were thriving and making rapid progress, the quality of provision for children with SEND and supporting children’s independence. She reported that a number of reports had highlighted issues around health and safety and risk assessment, relating to the safety of the environment and hygiene, which was being focused on with settings. She advised that reports for a couple of settings had highlighted inconsistent staff knowledge on safeguarding, which the Early Years Safeguarding Lead had been working with them on, and settings not having a named deputy. She highlighted how Anson Cabin had worked to address the issues raised in their previous Ofsted report, with support from the Council, which had led to them moving from “requires improvement” to “good”.

In response to Members’ concerns about the findings from the inspection of Early Explorers, the Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that the setting had had staffing issues and the Quality Assurance professional had not had previous concerns about the quality of the provision; however, she advised that the setting was working with the Council to address the issues raised, that they were getting a lot of support and that she was confident that they had capacity to improve. A Member expressed concern that this outcome had not been anticipated and asked how the Council could ensure that settings which were of concern were on their radar, particularly if they had not been inspected for some time. The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that the prioritisation of quality assurance visits to settings was being tightened up and outlined some of the factors in how settings were prioritised, including changes at the setting, a new manager, having a “requires improvement” judgement and being due an Ofsted inspection. She advised that all settings were offered at least an annual visit.

In response to a Member's question, the Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that settings which had been judged as "inadequate" received at least a monthly visit, focusing on the actions arising from the inspection. She reported that the Council provided challenge and support to these settings, advising that it was a bespoke package of support depending on what was needed. In response to a further question, she advised that settings judged "inadequate" were re-inspected within six months and did usually improve within this time. In response to a question about what happened to funding for two-and-three-year-olds if a setting was judged to be "inadequate", she reported that the setting could keep their current children but could not take on any more, which could affect their sustainability, but that the Council did have some discretion in relation to this.

In response to a question about Tiny Turtles, the Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that they had been getting a lot of support and that the report had judged them to be "good" in some areas but that there had been issues around safeguarding knowledge and that this might be related to changes in staffing and the inspector speaking to newer staff. She advised that they expected this setting would be able to achieve a "good" judgement in future, with support from her team. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the quality assurance support provided to childminders.

The Chair proposed that that Subgroup consider an overview of childminding inspection reports in the next municipal year.

Decision

To consider an overview of childminding inspection reports in the next municipal year.

CYP/OSG/23/04 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Subgroup discussed which schools and settings they would like to visit.

Decisions

1. To note the Terms of Reference and Work Programme.
2. To arrange visits to Early Explorers, Heaton Park Nursery, Manchester Academy and Manchester Secondary PRU.
3. To arrange a further meeting of the Subgroup for 15 March 2023, focusing on Schools and Early Years inspections.