

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair
Councillors Fletcher and Reid

Apologies:

Councillors Bano, Bell and Ludford
Mr Y Yonis

CYP/OSG/23/09 Minutes

In response to a Member's question, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer confirmed that a monitoring inspection of St Matthew's RC High School had taken place since the last meeting; however, the report had not yet been published.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023.

CYP/OSG/23/10 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. She stated that Ofsted had carried out 64 inspections of Manchester schools this academic year, which was unprecedented, but a large proportion of the reports had not yet been published. She reported that 89% of Manchester schools were judged to be good or better, which was higher than the averages for England and the north-west. She stated that 90.4% of Manchester primary schools were judged to be good or better, which was higher than the average for England, although slightly lower than the average for the north-west. She reported that 82.8% of secondary schools in Manchester were judged to be good or better, which was higher than the averages for England and the north-west.

The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer explained that her team was regularly identifying the key areas for improvement from Ofsted reports and sharing the key themes with school leaders, who had found this useful, and with the Quality Assurance professionals that the Council engaged to support school improvement. She highlighted some of the key themes, including the curriculum and its specific component knowledge, the sequencing of the curriculum and the knowledge they wanted pupils to build up over time, pedagogical choices, adaptive teaching, staff training, school leaders monitoring how well the curriculum was being implemented, assessment and ensuring that phonics teaching matched the choices of books for pupils. She reported that, where a school was struggling significantly, the areas of safeguarding, behaviour and attitude and attendance were also key themes. She

outlined the support provided to schools, both universal and targeted support, based on a termly risk assessment. She informed Members about a series of forthcoming training sessions for school leaders, including a webinar in July on adaptive teaching led by Adam Sproston (His Majesty's Inspector and Specialist Adviser for Special Educational Needs and Disability and Alternative Provision at Ofsted). She also informed the Subgroup about an intensive attendance pilot in targeted schools across the city, subject leader networks and the development of a programme of sessions for senior leaders on the key recurring themes from Ofsted inspections, which would be implemented in the autumn term.

A Member asked whether Subgroup Members could observe the forthcoming webinar training and the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer agreed to this. In response to a Member's comments about safeguarding, she informed Members that schools, including academies, were required to complete an annual safeguarding audit, under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, and that these were collected and analysed by the Council and followed up through the Council's Safeguarding Team if there were any issues. She reported that more targeted support on safeguarding was provided in response to local intelligence or a reach out from a school or could be triggered by Ofsted complaints, public complaints or Councillor enquiries. She advised that, where safeguarding was raised as an area of concern in an Ofsted report, a full local authority safeguarding review would take place, leading to a report with recommendations.

In response to a Member's question, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that the cultural capital element of the curriculum should be incorporated into the planning stage of the curriculum, taking into account the context of the school and the experiences of pupils, and that school trips should have a specific focus and rationale, related to the curriculum. In response to a Member's comments on the costs to parents, particularly in light of the cost-of-living crisis, she reported that some costs could be subsidised through the Pupil Premium but, where some of the cost needed to be passed on to parents, schools gave parents as much notice as possible so that they could save up and that school leaders were very resourceful in getting things free or at reduced cost. She also highlighted the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme which provided activities such as arts and sport during school holidays for children in receipt of Free School Meals and other children identified as being vulnerable or whose families were struggling. The other Senior School Quality Assurance Officer in attendance informed Members about work the Council was doing with school leaders to poverty-proof the school day.

Noting that there were three Greater Manchester local authorities with better Ofsted judgements than Manchester, Members asked about sharing good practice and working together at a Greater Manchester level. The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer stated that the Council was part of a Greater Manchester network of local authority officers in education, which had half-termly meetings to share good practice and also had an email group to share knowledge and ask for help.

The Chair asked whether there had been any surprises in the reports, for example, in relation to the four schools which were likely to receive an early Section 5 graded inspection and the attendance issues raised in specific reports, including Baguley Hall Primary School.

The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that the four schools the Chair referred to had been highlighted through her team's risk assessment. She stated that the inspections for these schools had not given complete assurance to Ofsted's inspectors that the schools would retain their good judgement if they were subject to a full graded inspection. She reported that her team told the schools concerned that they had an opportunity over the next 12 months to prove that they were still a good school and that her team and the Quality Assurance professionals were working with the schools to support them with this. She informed Members that Baguley Hall Primary School had had a support and challenge meeting with the Director of Education and stated that additional support on attendance was being provided, including commissioning an audit of attendance, which would look at attendance issues holistically. The Chair expressed concern about schools being able to afford the additional staff to undertake outreach work with families.

In response to a question from the Chair about the impact of the pandemic, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that school leaders recognised the impact of the pandemic and had worked, with support from the Council, to adapt the curriculum to plug the most significant gaps, as well as accessing other sources of support to help their pupils. She reported that Ofsted inspectors were still asking schools about the impact of the pandemic but were expecting there to be fewer issues than 12 months ago and to be able to see what school leaders had done to address these issues. A Member highlighted a discussion at a recent meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee about identifying children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) at a young age and how it was difficult to differentiate them for children with delays in their development caused by the pandemic.

Decision

To note the reports.

CYP/OSG/23/11 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, stating that there were a few additional ones which the Scrutiny Support Officer would circulate after the meeting. She reported that 94% of Manchester daycare settings were judged to be good or outstanding. She highlighted the recruitment and retention issues that many early years settings were struggling with and the impact of not having a consistent workforce in terms of training, having a key person for each child and meeting the specific needs of individual children.

She reported that the main themes from reports about outstanding settings were that the children's independence was supported well, children's needs were understood, with the curriculum being built around that, and that staff read regularly to children and encouraged a love of reading. For settings which were judged to be less than

good, she advised that some of the key themes related to staffing, including lack of stability in the workforce, the need for a more robust staff induction and continuing professional development, safer recruitment practices, which training would be rolled out on, as well as issues related to the curriculum. In relation to recommendations concerning safeguarding, she stated that there had been a reduction in the number of recommendations related to risk assessments and hygiene practices since the last meeting, although there had been one report where hygiene practices had been raised as an area of concern. She stated that work was taking place to promote better hygiene practices in settings and that this was improving. She informed the Subgroup about the support available to settings, which included a wide range of training, including the Department for Education (DfE) Experts and Mentors programme, the professional development programme and training on supporting children with SEND. She expressed concern that some settings were unable to attend development forum meetings due to staffing issues; however, she advised that information was also sent out to settings and discussed during visits to individual settings.

In response to Members' questions, the Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that the settings which had been judged as inadequate were still operating, that they were having at least a monthly visit from her team, who were providing support and feedback, and that they could continue to care for existing children who were eligible for the two-year-old and three-year-old offer but could not take on any additional eligible children. In response to further questions about the two settings judged as inadequate, she advised that Little Angels was a very new setting, which her team was providing support to, while Building Blocks Blackley was an established setting. She advised that, following the departure of Building Blocks Blackley's manager, the area manager was now running this setting, they were working closely with her team and it was expected that they would potentially be judged as good by the time of their next inspection. She supported a Member's comments about settings learning from other settings in the area which were judged as outstanding and outlined the support being provided to settings judged as inadequate, including peer support.

The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead outlined some of the changes that the government was proposing in relation to early years staff, including removing the requirement for Level 3 practitioners to hold a GCSE in mathematics and changes relating to staff to child ratios. The Chair requested that Members be provided with information on these changes, including the consultation. A Member asked whether Ward Councillors were informed when a setting in their ward was judged as inadequate. The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People was informed but that she did not know whether he passed this on to Ward Councillors. The Member stated that she would discuss this with him.

Decision

To note the reports.

CYP/OSG/23/12 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

The Chair requested that the Subgroup receive a report on childminders at a future meeting.

Decisions

1. To note the Terms of Reference and Work Programme, subject to the above addition.
2. To arrange visits to Xaverian College, Brighter Beginnings Newton Heath and Building Blocks Blackley.
3. That the Chair will consider any additional school visits to be arranged and inform the Scrutiny Support Officer.