

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024

Present:

Councillor Lovecy – in the Chair

Councillors Fletcher and Reid

Mr Y Yonis, Co-opted Member (Parent Governor Representative)

Apologies:

Councillors Bano and Bell

CYP/OSG/24/01 Minutes

The Chair provided an update on the visits that Subgroup Members had recently undertaken to Rodney House School, Prospect House Specialist Support Primary School and Manchester Montessori House, which were all judged to be outstanding. She advised that they all had fantastic strengths and welcomed that, as a new-build special school, Prospect House's building had been designed to meet the needs of their pupils. She reported that she had attended the Childminders' Forum, advising that it had been very well-attended and that the childminders were very engaged and appreciative of the training and support they received.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023.

CYP/OSG/24/02 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. She highlighted that Grange School had been judged to be inadequate a few years ago but was now judged to be outstanding. She reported that, overall, 87.8% of Manchester schools were judged to be good or outstanding and that this applied to 88.9% of primary schools and 82.8% of secondary schools. She informed Members that a mix of different areas for improvement had been identified in the reports published and outlined some of the recurring themes, which included attendance, particularly reducing persistent absenteeism, reading for older pupils, the implementation of the curriculum and assessments to identify and then address precise gaps in knowledge. She reported that these themes had been shared with Headteachers, who had been signposted to resources and training. She advised Members that Headteachers had also been informed about changes to Ofsted, such as the mandatory mental health training for inspectors, the policy on pausing an inspection and how to request a deferral, and the support which was available from the Council during an inspection. She stated that her team had reassured Headteachers that there was a wealth of support available to them during an inspection and that the vast majority of

inspections were carried out fairly and were not like the worst-case scenarios shared on social media.

The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that a webinar on adaptive teaching had taken place in January, that it had been very well-attended and had received positive feedback and that follow-up sessions were being planned to showcase good practice. She informed Members that the rate of Ofsted inspections had slowed down considerably this school year, compared to last year, but that there had been an increase in inspections of schools which had previously been judged to be outstanding and had been exempt from inspection for a number of years. She reported that the series of webinars on the curriculum had now concluded, that these had been well-received by school leaders and that her team was evaluating the success of these webinars and looking at what further training and support should be provided, noting that this might involve a focus on the implementation of the curriculum, given that this had been a theme in recent Ofsted reports.

In response to a Member's question about sharing good practice on attendance, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that one of her colleagues, who led on attendance for the Council, sat on boards at both a regional and national level which explored and shared good practice on attendance. She informed Members about targeted support provided to schools, which took a whole school approach to attendance and provided advice on individual cases, and about a pilot project to address attendance issues in Wythenshawe, noting that school attendance in the city was improving. A Member commented on the impact of the pandemic on attendance and on the number of viruses that were currently in circulation. The Chair commented on the different attitudes towards school from different demographic groups, including parents who had not had a positive experience of school themselves, and how these families could be engaged with, noting that this was something that Ward Councillors could be involved in.

A Member expressed concern that there were schools which had not been inspected for 11 years because they had previously been judged to be outstanding and had been exempt from inspection for many years. She advised that the purpose of Ofsted needed to be reviewed. She highlighted some of the issues which Manchester schools faced, including high levels of deprivation, the number of different languages spoken and children arriving from war-torn areas.

A Member advised that it was important for Ward Councillors to be informed about Ofsted outcomes and that schools should be discussed at Ward Co-ordination meetings. The Chair suggested that wards could have a Ward Co-ordination meeting focussed on education, with a representative from the local school attending.

The Chair reported that Members asked school leaders about their experiences of recent Ofsted inspections when carrying out school visits and that there seemed to be a variety of different styles from Ofsted inspectors but that there had been positive comments from schools about recent inspections. In relation to the Ofsted report for St Aiden's Catholic Primary, she commented on the challenges for small one form-entry schools in meeting the curriculum requirements.

The Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that there had been a directive

from the Bishop for all Roman Catholic schools to join an academy trust, which was Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust for schools within the Diocese of Salford and Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust for schools within the Diocese of Shrewsbury. She reported that St Aiden's would be joining the latter in the next academic year and that the Church's view was that joining an academy trust should help to address the issues in relation to small one-form entry primary schools as they could then access that support network. She reported that the areas for improvement identified for St Aiden's included support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), assessment, management of bullying and discriminatory behaviour and children's understanding of British Values and she informed Members that the school was accessing training and support from the Trust. She highlighted some of the support that the Council was providing, including carrying out a SEND review, brokering support from another school on SEND and increasing the number of Quality Assurance visits. She reported that her team was confident that the school was making progress. In response to a Member's question, she advised that she was not sure whether Ward Councillors had been involved, advising that local Members were briefed when a school was judged to be inadequate but that this had not historically been the case for schools which had been judged as requires improvement. She stated that she would check this with her colleague who provided support to St Aiden's. A Member commented that he was aware that the three Ward Councillors for Brooklands were interested in the school and in helping to secure improvements, which the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer stated she would communicate to her colleague.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Senior School Quality Assurance Officer reported that, although the overall judgement did not change at an ungraded inspection, the quality of education was still fully scrutinised as part of these inspections. She advised Members that more graded inspections had taken place this year compared to recent years.

A Member requested that the Subgroup write to Grange School to congratulate them on their outstanding judgement. The Chair reported that letters would be sent to all schools judged to be outstanding.

Decisions

1. To note the reports.
2. To write to the schools and settings judged to be outstanding to congratulate them.

CYP/OSG/24/03 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. She informed the Subgroup that 95.5% of settings in Manchester were judged to be good or outstanding. In response to a Member's question about Kids Allowed MFT, she

reported that this setting had previously been judged to be outstanding but had been judged to be requires improvement at its most recent inspection. She reported that there had been a number of changes in managers at the setting and that consistency of staffing was an issue, informing Members that recruitment and retention of staff was particularly challenging in Wythenshawe. She informed Members that, once the Quality Assurance team had been made aware of the judgement, the setting had been put on their requires improvement pathway and they were working with and providing support to the setting to address the areas of concern highlighted in the report. In response to a Member's question, she highlighted how Dingley's Promise training supported staff to work with children with SEND, advising that her team was sharing some elements of the training through their forums and encouraging managers in Early Years settings to break it down into smaller segments to share through their team meetings, if staff did not have time to complete the training course.

The Subgroup discussed the reasons for recruitment and retention issues, in Wythenshawe specifically and in the Early Years sector more broadly, and how to address these. A Member expressed concern about the sector being able to cope with the increased demand due to the expansion of the free childcare entitlement, advising that pay in the sector needed to be reviewed. The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead informed Members about new government initiatives to recruit to the sector. She reported that the level of pay was a key issue, as people were able to earn more working in a coffee shop, as well as the working hours and a preference for jobs where it was possible to work from home. She informed Members about a recruitment event at The Manchester College to attract more people into the sector and about a low-cost recruitment agency which had been set up funded through the Greater Manchester Innovation Fund. A Member commented that childcare workers would also be eligible for the free childcare entitlement which would make working in the sector more financially viable and that this could be promoted to them.

The Early Years Quality Assurance Lead reported that changes to Ofsted inspections also affected the Early Years sector and that childminders and settings were being encouraged to identify to someone to support them during their inspection. She informed Members about positive feedback from settings which had been inspected recently, including that the process was more transparent. In response to a Member's question, she reported that new settings were inspected within 30 months of opening. She reported that challenges for the sector included recruitment and retention of staff, rising costs in comparison to income, and the number of children with additional needs or vulnerabilities. She informed Members that, in recent inspections, safeguarding had been less likely to be raised as a concern and that education and the curriculum were the main issues now for those judged to be below good. She outlined the work taking place to address this, including supporting Early Years leaders to focus on the continuing professional development of staff. She highlighted the training which was available from the Department for Education (DfE) including free online child development training which all staff could access and the Early Years Professional Development Programme (PDP) Phase 3. A Member requested that a link to the training referred to be circulated to the Subgroup Members.

Decisions

1. To note the reports.
2. To request that the information on the DfE training be circulated to Subgroup Members.

CYP/OSG/24/04 Terms of Reference and Work Programme

Decisions

1. To note the Terms of Reference and Work Programme.
2. To arrange visits to Grange School, Winstanley Day Nursery and Early Explorers (Ardwick).