

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION - LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children, Families & Education - Learning and Development Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 16th September, 2010.

PRESENT: Mr K Smith (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen (Substitute for Mr R B Burgess), Miss S J Carey (Substitute for Mr W L Richardson), Mr J M Cubitt, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr J M Ozog, Mr R A Pascoe, Mrs J Rook (Substitute for Mr N J Collor), Mr M A Wickham and Mr M J Vye (Vice-Chairman)

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: Mrs M Todd (Substitute for Dr D Wadman)

PARENT GOVERNORS: Mr B Critchley and Mr P Myers

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mr T Desmoyers-Davies, Mrs J Huckstep and Mr J Walder

PRESENT: Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Cabinet Member, Learning

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms M Haeusler (Director For Learning), Ms S Dunn (Head of 14-24 Innovation Unit) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

34. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010 were correctly recorded subject to the word 'Accrobac' in paragraph 26 (6) being altered to read Aqa baccalaureate and that they be signed by the Chairman.

35. Verbal Update by Deputy Cabinet Member and Director of Learning

(Item B1)

(Report by Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Cabinet Member (Learning) and Mrs M Haeusler, Director of Learning)

(1) The Deputy Cabinet Member and Service Directors' presented a report giving an update on the following topics; CFE Restructure, GCSE results, Ofsted inspections and academies.

(2) Mrs Whittle began by highlighting key issues that had happened since the POSC last met which included; 3 successful headteacher area based meetings were held to discuss what was happening nationally about the New Academies Programme and policy developments in planning for the future. Twelve district based briefings were being held with headteachers to introduce the newly appointed Preventative Services Managers and other standards officers, 2 meetings had

already been held in Dover and Tunbridge Wells with 10 more meetings scheduled across the county. Mrs Whittle spoke on the successful results in GCSE and A Levels within the nationally challenged Kent schools and the improving standards and work being undertaken by Mrs Haeusler and her Team on those areas that needed improvement. Mrs Whittle concluded by paying tribute to the staff in the nationally challenged secondary schools and local authority officers for all their work in achieving the improvements although she still had concerns that the funding that had been given to this area may not be available in the future and suggested other ways may need to be found to overcome this.

(3) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:

(4) In response to a question by Mrs Todd, Mrs Haeusler advised that within the next two months the results would be validated and an update on those results would be reported in the Standards report. The detailed list of the unvalidated results was available and could be viewed by Members of the Committee but was not for publication at this meeting.

(5) In response to a follow up question by Mrs Todd, Mrs Haeusler advised that there would be an analysis on the results and reasons why 5 schools remained under the national challenge threshold as well as an analysis on those schools that did improve and whether the best practise could be shared. Mrs Whittle added that two of the 5 schools had a large number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and the results from the SEN units were recorded with the GCSE figures. A concern was that schools with SEN units may be discouraged from inclusion because of this issue of reporting, there needed to be a balance of encouraging SEN students within mainstream settings but not for the school to be penalised for doing so in the reporting if those children were unlikely to get GCSEs in English and Mathematics at grade C or above.

(6) Mrs Haeusler then spoke on topics relating to the Learning Group which included; the CFE restructure, the national testing and issues emerging from the government including the new academies and an update on Ofsted inspections.

(7) Mrs Haeusler highlighted that the twelve districts were in place and the headteachers were very positive on the ways that the districts were beginning to shape. The Learning Group was reconfiguring support into the twelve districts for primary and secondary schools and special expertise in those areas to support challenge and intervene in schools to improve outcomes for children and young people. Mrs Haeusler then referred to the new academies advising that Westlands School linked to Woodgrove Primary School became an academy in September and there was to be a phased transfer of 15 further Kent schools to academy status. Mrs Whittle added that KCC still had oversight of 95% of the schools in Kent and continued collaboration and partnership with the new academies was important.

(8) In response to a question by Mr Critchley, Mrs Haeusler explained that the policy and strategies were in place to support all schools to be outstanding and keep those that were outstanding at that level and those that were good to become outstanding. The current Framework was rigorous and had uncovered a range of issues in schools with the quality of teaching, work was being undertaken with

teachers by running a range of professional development opportunities to improve teaching and learning, to look at leadership in schools and ensuring that every child in the classroom had the right learning activity.

(9) The Chairman requested that the Ofsted results be presented at each meeting of this POSC in context nationally.

(10) Mr Walder commented on the new academies saying that he was disappointed to see Kent schools becoming new academies but he was pleased that the new academies had all, so far, agreed to keep teacher's pay and conditions of services the same. He then reported that one of the academies (previously a school that was in special measures) was undergoing negotiations to bring the teacher's pay and conditions in line with the rest of the County.

(11) In response to a question by Mr Desmoyers-Davies, Mrs Haeusler explained that there were many reasons why a school may be outstanding. Ofsted looked at two aspects; the leadership of the school, in particular the security of that and the quality of teaching and learning. The aim was to work with colleagues in the secondary and primary schools to improve the working relationships between the primary and secondary schools for them to provide support and expertise to each other.

(12) RESOLVED that:

(a) the responses to questions by Members be noted; and

(b) at each meeting of this POSC a report be submitted on the Ofsted results with the percentages and in context nationally and the report be noted.

36. Attainment in 2010 - Unvalidated Results (Item B2)

(Report by Ms R Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families & Education Directorate, Mrs M Haeusler, Director of Learning and Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education)

(1) The Committee considered a report that provided a summary of the Kent Early Years Foundation Stage Assessments, KS1 and 2 SATs, GCSE and A level results for 2010 with the understanding that they were provisional results that may change slightly following formal DfE validation in October 2010.

(2) The Chairman agreed to take this issue one assessment stage at a time.

Foundation Stage

(3) Mrs Haeusler introduced the report advising the Committee that the report was based on provisional unvalidated data results, there were no schools named as there were still a number of schools that were undergoing an appeal on their SATs results at Key Stage 2. Foundation results were improving with a reduction in the achievement gap by 2.5% to 28% and 60% of the children at that level were achieving the expected level.

(4) In response to a question by Mr Jarvis, Mrs Haeusler explained that the national figures were not available for Foundation Stage at present. There were a number of reasons why children had not reached the expected level of education. She advised that development did not start at reception class, it was about looking at settings and what we were doing in Children's Centres, helping with parenting skills and parents and carers to understand the importance of speaking, listening and talking to children and reading to them.

(5) In response to a question by Mrs Rook, Mrs Haeusler stressed that under the restructuring it was part of the strategy to have early intervention prevention and to be proactive. All of the teaching and learning advisors had been realigned focusing on early years.

(6) The Chairman referred to page 38 paragraph 1 (3) that referred to an increase of 250 more children in the cohort than in 2009 a figure that had been increasing for 4 years and suggested that figures on this trend could be forwarded to Members outside the meeting.

Key Stage 1

(7) Mrs Haeusler said that she had focused on the attainment of boys at Key Stage 1 within the report as nationally boys reading and writing often was behind the expected level at this stage. Kent had been particularly focused on this and there had been improvement for boys on their reading and writing.

(8) Mrs Haeusler explained that Key Stage 1 was a crucial time for providing early support where this was needed. She suggested that it may be one of the reasons that those children were not being identified early enough which relates to the concerns of attainment at Key Stage 2.

(9) She also highlighted the attainment of the gifted and talented children at Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics, which was above the national average.

(10) The Priority for Action was the move to Key Stage 1 from foundation stage and looking at the interventions that were in place in schools, which met those children's needs.

(11) In response to a question by Mr Critchley, Mrs Haeusler explained that individual tracking for every child was key to the outcomes. The School Improvement Team was looking at every school's tracking programme and schools ought to be able to identify vulnerable learners from that tracking and be able to identify whether that child was on track to achieve level 4 in year 6. They should be able to do this at Key Stage 2. The Chairman asked whether Mrs Haeusler could submit regular information to Members who wished to monitor the results for children at Key Stage 1 and 2 as they felt that they were unable to set priorities unless they knew what was happening. Mrs Haeusler agreed to submit a report to the POSC on pupil tracking.

(12) In response to a question by Mr Cubitt, Mrs Haeusler advised that the report was not meant to be an analysis but a report on the SATs and the national testing on provisional results supplied by the DFE. Officers were now undertaking analysis looking on a school to school level to see if there were any drops in attainment and

the causes and which children had this affected and if a school had improved, looking at what had made the difference in that result. Mrs Haeusler advised that this information would form part of the Standards report. Mrs Todd felt that this lead to a wider debate on succession planning, how we recruit, retain, ensuring that they were the right quality.

Key Stage 2

(13) Mrs Haeusler advised that there were provisional averages for Key Stage 2. Kent improved by 2% in Key Stage 2 2010 but was still 4% below the national average and that there seemed to be a long tradition since 2002. The focus was to be why this was happening in Key Stage 2.

(14) The 'below floor' target schools, was explained as schools with English and Mathematics combined, 55% of the children reaching a level 4. There was a reduction in the below floor target schools with a concerted effort in looking at the 78 schools that were below floor target by looking at why they were below floor target and looking at how every individual child was travelling towards level 4. This had lead to improvement but then other schools went below floor target. Intense support for those schools would continue. Mrs Haeusler confirmed that 24 schools, 6%, boycotted the SATs in Kent.

(15) In response to a question by Mrs Rook, Mrs Haeusler explained that the coalition government had put a halt on the national curriculum and was saying that the schools could develop their own curriculum. She anticipated that schools would need support with that undertaking. There was a move in the primary schools to look at how language moved through all of the curriculum areas especially reading and writing.

(16) In response to a question by Mr Vye, Mrs Haeusler felt that sustainability should be embedded into the schools and a need for a culture to strive for excellence which was a leadership role. She advised that headteachers made visits to the classrooms and in doing so were aware of the teachers that needed support or where intervention was needed, it was not about more visits to the classrooms but a whole school ethos to continually raise the standards.

(17) Mrs Whittle said that headteachers and teachers were put under a lot of stress with Ofsted inspections but it was worth exploring unannounced inspections so long as they were carried out in a constructive way. She questioned who would carry out the inspections suggesting, the local authority SIP or one district looking at another district as a critical friend on how teaching and learning could be improved at a particular school. Mrs Haeusler advised that the Schools Improvement Partners along side the headteachers were already holding joint lesson observations followed by talking through what they had observed. She felt that this was a powerful development tool for the headteacher.

(18) In response to a question by Mr Wickam, Mrs Whittle explained that it was easier for a headteacher to teach in a larger school, as that school was likely to have more administration support, than a headteacher in a small school.

GCSEs

(19) Mrs Haeusler advised that the Kent GCSE results overall improved on 2009 performance by 5.3% bringing the 5+ A*-C results to 78% but felt that there was still a need to keep pushing for improvement. She stated that the focus and energy in

the quality of teaching was second to none and that pupils were being tracked and that where intervention was in place made the difference in the challenged schools. The issue would be in maintaining the momentum for the secondary schools.

(20) The Chairman suggested that work could be carried out on the standards that were being achieved on size and critical mass and the way that the local authority could federate 6 forms etc. The local authority could then give guidance on whether a school should have a 6th form or not.

A Levels

(21) In response to questions by Mrs Rook, Mrs Haeusler advised that work was being undertaken on the BTEC results. She then spoke on the impact of age, suggesting that the issue for A levels was the curriculum. The subjects had to attract young people to stay on at school or in education and had meaning for whatever pathway they wanted to take. One of the priorities was to look at the curriculum for 14 -19 year olds.

(22) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the responses to questions and comments by Members be noted;
- (b) a report be submitted to a future meeting on pupil tracking; and
- (c) the unvalidated results of the recent public examinations be noted.

37. Planning and Commissioning 16-19 (24) Provision *(Item B3)*

(Report by Ms R Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education Directorate and Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education)

(Ms Dunn, Head of 14-19 Entitlement Team was present for this Item)

(1) The Committee discussed a report on the response to recommendations following a review undertaken by this POSC into the Planning and Commissioning of 16-19 provision.

(2) Ms Dunn advised that the local authority had a statutory responsibility to plan and secure all 16-19 and up to 24 year olds Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disability (LLDD) with appropriate provision for Kent resident learners had not changed. However, from 20 July what had changed was that the local authority no longer directly funded colleges and work based learning providers although the relationship with schools remained the same. She added that the detail in the Education White Paper was due to be published by the government in November. The Minister for Education had announced that a root and branches review on qualifications would be carried out and an interim report would be published in the Spring 2011.

(3) Ms Dunn reported that six Planning Officers were in post and would be taking forward the recommendations made by Members as detailed in the report.

(4) The Committee noted that Ms Dunn had evidence on the GCSE results at Key Stage 4 and the reasons on the trajectory in A to G was due to the introduction of the vocational programme in 2004 and those results had an impact on the results from 2006 onwards. The vocational centres and the vocational work carried out in schools were there for learners who would not have traditionally succeeded in the traditional school environment had thrived and received equivalent qualifications through the vocational programme; there was evidence to track that analysis. This was a positive outcome of Kent's decisions to invest and promote vocational qualifications (*now being called technical and practical education*).

(5) In response to a question by Mrs Todd, Ms Dunn said that with regard to 6th Forms, Members should to be mindful of the notion of autonomous schools, academies and the local authority's power to influence the planning. The local authority had to produce a robust case for providers to say that the current provision a) did not meet the learners needs because it did not offer positive progression into employment or further higher quality training; and b) in the use of the public purse e.g. 3 students for e.g. a biology course was not good use of public money. The local authority had the power to influence and persuade, it had to have area planning and a common buy in to local programmes. Ms Dunn felt there was a need to look at the inadequate provision and ineffective use of resources.

(6) In response to questions by Mrs Rook, Ms Dunn suggested that being champions of parents and learners in careers guidance and choice was an area that would be explored. In relation to employability skills, the Kent Skills Framework picked up a number of skills and areas that had been raised and was a way for young people receiving recognition of other activities and attributes over and above the academic when preparing for the open job market. Ms Dunn agreed to submit a report on the development of the Kent Skills Framework to a future meeting.

(7) In response to a question by the Chairman, Ms Dunn explained that the strategic priorities were being shaped through working with the Strategic Forum Committee which would be signed off by Cabinet and would be reported to this POSC at a later date. Ms Dunn suggested that the emerging issues/successes in the localities could be reported back to this POSC in relation to the progressive pathways. The Committee was offered the opportunity to attend the Local Strategic Planning Forums, once they were up and running.

(8) In response to a question by Mr Myers, Ms Dunn advised that the Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disability (LLDD) was the most difficult to transfer as the local authority had a responsibility for 14-19 and 24 year old LLDD with a 139A statement. The local authority had a responsibility for agreeing a placement although the local authority did not hold the funding, this sat with the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), it was intended that the funding for the LLDD 19-25 year olds would transfer to the local authority next year.

(9) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Officers' responses to the Committee's recommendations arising from the review into post 16 years activities be noted;
- (b) a report on the development of the Kent Skills Framework be submitted to a future meeting;

- (c) the Committee be invited to attend the Local Strategic Planning Forums in the future; and
- (d) detailed reports on 16 to 19 year olds Planning and Commissioning Strategic Developments, be submitted to this Committee as part of the annual planning cycle be noted.

38. Gifted and Talented Education

(Item B4)

(Report by Mrs M Haeusler, Director of Learning and Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education)

(1) The Committee was advised that Mr Silk was unable to attend the meeting and if the Committee agreed he would be happy to receive questions on the report and reply in writing outside the meeting.

(2) Mr Critchley requested the results of the gifted and talented at Key Stage 2. The Committee agreed to Mrs Haeusler suggestion that the information received in the response should feature as part of the Standards Report in February 2011.

(3) RESOLVED that:

(a) Agreement be given to the results of the gifted and talented at Key Stage 2 be forwarded to Members outside the meeting and the information received in the response be featured as part of the Standards Report in February 2011;

(b) the programme of activities which occur in Kent to support the provision for gifted and talented pupils be noted; and

(c) the response to Members questions be provided outside the meeting.

39. Select Committee - Update

(Item C1)

(Report by Mr P Wickenden Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

(1) The Committee considered a progress report on the Select Committee for Extended Services and invited suggestions for the Select Committee Topic Review Programme.

(2) The Chairman advised that he would be submitting a suggestion for a joint topic review with Regeneration and Economic Development POSC on the links between the progression of education, skills and regeneration.

(3) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee on Extended Services be noted; and
- (b) the suggestion for a joint topic review with Regeneration and Economic Development POSC on the links between the progression of education, skills and regeneration be noted.