

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - PUPIL PREMIUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Pupil Premium held in the Swale 2 - Sessions House on Monday, 6 November 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chairman), Mr A Booth, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr J P McInroy, Dr L Sullivan and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough and Mrs S Prendergast

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny), Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

3. Children, Young People & Education - Linda Pickles (Principal Adviser for Primary School Improvement) & Celia Buxton (Principal Adviser for Secondary, PRUs and Special schools)
(Item 1)

1. The Chairman welcomed the Select Committee Members and the two guests; Linda Pickles and Celia Buxton to the Select Committee meeting and she invited all those present to introduce themselves.
2. Linda Pickles and Celia Buxton gave Members a presentation which is appended to these minutes.
3. Celia Buxton explained that Pupil Premium was additional funding given to publicly funded schools to raise attainment for disadvantaged pupils and to diminish differences. It was introduced in 2011. Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium included Children in Care, Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) or who have been eligible within the last 6 years (Ever 6).
4. For a child in reception to Year 6 the school receives £1320 for each child, from year 7 to year 11 this reduced to £935.
5. Mr Booth asked why the money reduced in secondary school. The level of funding and allocation was determined by central government and it was suggested that higher funding for younger pupils could be the front loading of support available, before it was too late to diminish the differences between disadvantaged children and their peers. It was also suggested that secondary schools were larger and more financially secure than many primary schools.
6. The Chairman commented that children could be in low income families who were not eligible for Pupil Premium but could still be vulnerable and in need of additional support – the guests agreed with this comment.

7. Celia Buxton explained that the Pupil Premium funding was designed to ensure that all children had the same access to learning against the identified groups. It was confirmed that Pupil Premium funding was not for supporting children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or with English as an Additional Language (EAL) although these pupils may be eligible for Pupil Premium funding.
8. Mr Whiting commented that there was a potential disconnect in identifying vulnerable children and targeting the correct children. This was a national problem and could he be assured that Kent were dealing with this potential problem? Linda Pickles explained that eligible pupils were identified against FSM eligibility. It was correct that there were a different number of pupils who were FSM eligible against the measures for the numbers of pupils against the FSM Ever 6 criteria. This had also been affected by the universal free school meals offer for all KS1 children and had meant that families could be going under the radar if they didn't want to claim.
9. It was confirmed that schools were required to publish how their Pupil Premium funding was being spent and there was a pool of knowledge to allow schools to share best practice.
10. Linda Pickles explained the KS2 data for Kent. East Kent schools had the highest number of FSM ever pupils with schools in Thanet having the highest (599). West Kent schools had the lowest number of FSM ever pupils with schools in Tunbridge Wells having the lowest (206). Mr Booth commented upon the huge variances across Kent and asked why Kent was improving faster than other counties. Linda Pickles explained that one reason was that there had been a number of schools with a judgement of 'Requires Improvement' in Kent who had moved to good which was a reflection of the strong leadership in raising standards. Mrs Dean commented that, nonetheless, there were 6 boroughs where gaps were widening. It was explained that this was in part because the attainment of non-disadvantaged pupils was also rising.
11. Mrs Dean asked Linda Pickles and Celia Buxton to provide the table setting out "KS2 – FSM ever Gaps by Area" broken down into Districts/Boroughs. Regarding KS4 and secondary schools, the gaps were significantly wider than the national average and only a small number of vulnerable pupils (311) accessed selective schools.
12. Linda Pickles discussed with the Committee the 12 areas of focus noted by Sir John Dunford, the National Pupil Premium Champion. Members also noted the Education Endowment Foundation/Sutton Trust Teaching and Learning Toolkit which provided a list of effective strategies to raise attainment and set out the cost and potential gain. Members queried some of the areas of the toolkit, particularly the Feedback element which came at 'low cost'. Schools had been most effective where there was a whole school approach and focus, participative decision making, shared expectations and recognition of pupils' individual needs.
13. Members were referred to page 10 of the presentation which set out 5 themes in common to the 7 schools in Kent at which best practice had been identified with disadvantaged pupils outperforming non-disadvantaged nationally and with attainment above national in all areas. These 5 themes were:
 - a. Setting the vision
 - b. Investment in Early Years
 - c. Relentless focus on Quality First Teaching
 - d. Designing a curriculum that meets the needs of the learners
 - e. Communication and Literacy

14. It was confirmed that schools could use the funding to support the needs of their disadvantaged pupils against the barriers and challenges they had identified. Schools needed to be able to demonstrate the impact of the funding on the outcomes for their pupils/students.
15. The Chairman spoke about Cliftonville School in Thanet which had been rated as outstanding, the school had improved its engagement with parents and was also holding workshops with parents, this was one of the strengths of improving schools.
16. In response to whether the take-up of the Kent Pupil Premium toolkit was low, with 126 primary schools using this, Linda Pickles explained that this provided guidance for school leaders and governors. The Kent Primary and Secondary toolkits would be shared with members of the Committee.
17. Referring to the word 'feedback' on the toolkit coming at low costs there were concerns that this was a high cost in terms of teacher time. Linda Pickles explained that feedback should have an impact but it was up to schools to determine how they provided this, it could take a range of forms and did not have to be solely restricted to written feedback.
18. Members commented that parental involvement should be encouraged with a view to increasing aspiration within families. There were problems with generational poverty and a lack of aspiration. Whilst teachers should be aware of Pupil Premium children they should not be labelled and should not encourage differences.
19. Q – Page 14 of the agenda pack, 'social mobility'
A – This referred to people moving in and out of the area such as Gypsy families and Looked After Children.
20. A member asked what the experts would like to see come out of the Select Committee? Linda Pickles explained that head teachers reported that the level of need of children entering schools was increasing; the reasons behind this were unclear. Schools were strengthening links with early years settings and key elements of good practice were being shared as well as a multi-agency approach to supporting parents.
21. There needed to be more support for the primary to secondary transition for Pupil Premium pupils to ensure they developed and were able to find employment or further education when they left school. KS1 data was most indicative of KS4. A school's success depended on the quality of the teaching and the ability of Kent schools to recruit and retain quality staff. What could KCC do to help recruit and maintain staff?
22. Q – Were the best practice/more successful schools larger?
A – Referring to secondary schools larger academies could often offer better pay schemes and bonuses to help with the recruitment and retention of staff. Many primary schools found it challenging to recruit and retain quality staff. Those schools with a continuing professional development programme in place often attracted better candidates for recruitment, this was an issue that could be raised with the head teachers of schools on visits.
23. Q - Referring to supporting young people on their transition from primary to secondary school were schools using their Pupil Premium money to help retain teachers?

A – Celia Buxton explained that there was a requirement to show how the funding was impacting upon pupil premium children and how the resource was actually being used. It was thought that some secondary schools were using the funding for year 6 transition to prevent future exclusion of young people. This was also an interesting question to ask schools.

24. Linda Pickles and Celia Buxton committed to provide the table setting out “KS2 – FSM ever Gaps by Area” broken down into Districts/Boroughs to Select Committee Members.

25. The Chairman thanked Celia Buxton and Linda Pickles for attending the session, for their excellent presentation and for answering Members’ questions.

4. **Mr Roger Gough (Cabinet Member for CYPE) and Mrs Shellina Prendergast (Deputy Cabinet Member for CYPE)**
(Item 2)

Ms L Pickles remained in the meeting for this session and answered questions from the Select Committee.

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr Gough and Mrs Prendergast and asked them for an overview of the Pupil Premium, the main aims of the Kent Strategy for Vulnerable Learners and their views on the direction and work of the Select Committee.

2. Mrs Prendergast said her aims in requesting that the Scrutiny Committee support the establishment of this Select Committee had been clear, and there were two areas on which she thought the Select Committee should focus – **Free School Meals** and **Early Years Pupil Premium**. Her reasons for identifying these two areas were as follows:

3. **Free School Meals** was used as a tool to identify children who would be eligible for Pupil Premium. However, this was not a precise measure as only those registered for Free School Meals were counted, and there were potentially many more who were eligible but had not registered and hence were not counted. It had been estimated that, nationally, some 14% of pupils (approx. 200,000 pupils) eligible to receive Free School Meals were not claiming them. Many factors would affect a pupil’s eligibility for Free School Meals, and other vulnerable learners, eg those affected by domestic violence, would not show up as part of this cohort. Eligibility for Free School Meals was highest at the younger and older ends of the spectrum, but it was estimated that, in Kent, 21% of eligible 4-year-olds and 22% of eligible 15-year-olds did not claim, so a large portion of Kent’s eligible pupils simply did not show up in the figures. The highest figures for eligibility were often in the more affluent areas of the county. A Bill in Parliament in 2016 had sought to introduce auto-enrolment for Free School Meals but had not been pursued due to data collection issues. Data on Universal Credit should be easier to collate but there was no trigger in Universal Credit to identify vulnerable learners.

4. For **Early Years Pupil Premium**, Kent scored highly against its statistical peers. However, there was a clear attainment gap between those claiming and not claiming Early Years Pupil Premium and this gap widened from primary school level onwards. The Select Committee had an opportunity to make a recommendation about Early Years Pupil Premium which would contribute to closing the attainment gap. There were approx. 1,400 pupils aged 4 – 5 who were eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, and Kent’s Early Years Pupil Premium funding was some £400,000 or £302 per eligible pupil. The Select Committee could question the sufficiency of these sums and ask if pupils might

require additional funding at some stages of their schooling. Mrs Prendergast said that, in her opinion, there was need for radical change and redistribution of Early Years Pupil Premium funding.

5. Mrs Prendergast and Mr Gough responded to comments and questions, including the following:

- a) concern was expressed that there may have been no progress since 2012, when the information about eligibility for Pupil Premium in the briefing pack (published with the Select Committee agenda) had been collated;
- b) in response to a question, Mr Gough said that he hoped that a family's eligibility for Pupil Premium would not be affected by a claim for Universal Credit but said there were technical issues to be overcome. When Universal Infant Free School Meals had been introduced in 2014, there had been many questions to be addressed which would affect take-up. Data had shown that applications for Free School Meals had declined, and some schools had reported that Universal Credit had had an effect on the take-up of Free School Meals. It was known that take-up of Free School Meals had declined at all key stages. Ms Pickles added that schools had reported that the impact of parents not having applied for Free School Meals at KS1 would be felt later in a pupil's schooling;
- c) a question arose about how often parents would need to re-apply for Free School Meals and it was agreed that the Select Committee would need to be given information about how parents would apply for these, how often they would need to renew their application through their child's schooling, the criteria by which applications were assessed and whether or not Free School Meals could start or end part-way through a child's schooling; and
- d) a question was then asked about the effect that a claim for Universal Credit would have on a family's eligibility for Free School Meals and it was agreed that this was also something about which the Select Committee would need to have information. *The Chairman confirmed that a briefing covering these points would be prepared.*

6. Mr Gough summarised what was currently known about the effect of Pupil Premium, nationally and locally, and how the Select Committee might approach this. There was much data and evidence being collected by a range of different bodies, including government departments and government-appointed committees, and keeping track of this was a challenge. The Kent Strategy for Vulnerable Learners had set out a coherent approach and the next step would be to work out how best to apply this in practice. Much resource had been put into delivering Pupil Premium, which had had some beneficial effect but left some gaps. Major changes to KS2 in 2016 had further hindered the consistent measurement of the effect of Pupil Premium. Attainment in Kent had generally been good but the gaps which did exist had proven to be very stubborn. For Early Years Pupil Premium, Kent's take-up was generally better and its gap smaller than those of its peer South East authorities. However, at KS4, Kent's performance was below that of its peer authorities and the gap widened dramatically, although relative deterioration in take-up tended to take place throughout primary as well as in secondary school. A range of research had been undertaken into how best to improve take-up and this had produced a consistent message that good leadership by school governors and senior leaders was important. In addition, good staff training could support impact. For example, teaching assistants working with pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) must be properly trained and could provide a valuable extra

resource, if used properly and the same also applied to pupils with Pupil Premium. Also important were good family engagement, with clear strategies of how this could be achieved, good evidence of what worked and what didn't and constant reviewing of data, including that drawn from initiatives such as Headstart and the Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service. In schools where Pupil Premium and narrowing the gap were not viewed as being a shared challenge – 'everybody's business' – outcomes were generally not as positive. In summary, improving outcomes was a combination of gathering and examining all available data and working with schools to see how well evidence and knowledge were being applied and what barriers there were to spreading good practice.

7. Mr Gough and Mrs Prendergast responded to comments and questions, including the following:

- a) asked if, as the current Kent Strategy for Vulnerable Learners covered the period from 2016 – 2019, it was perhaps too soon to try to assess how well it was being put into practice, Mr Gough explained that the Strategy was currently being reviewed to see how closely it reflected the latest research. Inconsistences in practice were a national rather than a local issue, and, while there had been progress, this was patchy and incomplete;
- b) asked what was the next step to improve the Kent Strategy for Vulnerable Learners, Mrs Prendergast suggested identifying examples of best practice and sharing them with schools. The County Council was in a good position to do that as it had a good relationship with schools via its Area Education Officers. A comment was made that this was surely already being done, as the toolkit being used had arisen from work being done in schools and between schools. The toolkit was supplied free of charge to Kent schools but any non-Kent school wishing to use it could be charged;
- c) this view was supported and it was suggested that the Select Committee could recommend that all schools use the toolkit. However, the Select Committee would need to be clear of its scope as some of the issues listed above would be beyond its terms of reference. Because the County Council was not a recipient of Pupil Premium money, and hence had no direct control over how it was spent, it could only make recommendations and seek to influence how schools spent their Pupil Premium;
- d) Mr Gough added that some schools would take a broader or more radical approach to how they used their Pupil Premium, would look at where it might be possible for them to influence activity at the edges of school life and how school activity could tie-in to activity outside school. Ms Pickles added that relationships beyond school, between professionals working with Early Help and Family Support services and Universal Credit could help with spreading best practice, but finding a best way to achieve this would be a challenge for schools. Asked how it might be possible to evidence the impact of other organisations' work upon Pupil Premium, Mr Gough explained that examples of this could be found;
- e) asked how links between different areas of activity would show up, for example, how young people's attendance at a youth centre outside school could be identified and linked to their use of Pupil Premium within school, Ms Pickles explained that existing multi-agency working between professionals in youth services and in schools would make these links, either formally or informally;

- f) asked if Pupil Premium could be used to purchase speech and language therapy, Ms Pickles confirmed that this was possible. Pupil Premium would need to be used creatively to make best overall use of it in hard financial times. Asked what restrictions there were upon the use of Pupil Premium, Ms Pickles said that schools could and would use it how they saw fit, to meet the needs of individual pupils, but would need to be able to demonstrate to Ofsted what benefit had been gained. Schools were very creative and innovative about how they used Pupil Premium to meet these ends, and some schools did use Pupil Premium for speech and language therapy. Use of speech and language therapy tended to reduce after KS3 and would have differing degrees of priority at different stages of a pupil's school career;
- g) the Select Committee discussed if and how it could approach issues which were beyond its terms of reference, and if some areas of work which it wished to cover but may not have time to could be undertaken by a separate group, for example a task and finish group. The Select Committee was advised by the Research Officer and the Democratic Services Officer that it could indeed identify future work and include in its recommendations that this work be undertaken as part of a separate project;
- h) a view was expressed that all the evidence required may well prove to be already available and what the Select Committee needed to do was identify and collate it and find a way of sharing it between schools, to spread best practice; and
- i) asked if it would be possible to compare Kent's level of Free School Meals with that of other local authorities which used the selective school system, eg Buckinghamshire and Northern Ireland, Mr Gough replied that in Buckinghamshire, pupils claiming Free School Meals did well but that the attainment gap between Free School Meals and non-Free School Meals pupils was wider than in Kent. In Hampshire, which was comparable in size to Kent but non-selective, performance was worse than in Kent. Members asked to be supplied with comparison figures for these other authorities.

8. The Chairman thanked Mr Gough and Mrs Prendergast for attending to help the Select Committee with its information gathering.