

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - PUPIL PREMIUM

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Pupil Premium held in the Swale 1 - Sessions House on Friday, 10 November 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mr A Booth, Mrs P T Cole, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT:

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

5. **Tony Doran, Headteacher - Virtual School Kent, KCC** (Item 1)

1. Mr Doran said he had been the Head teacher of the Virtual School Kent (VSK) since its foundation. Before that he had been involved in tackling disadvantage and underachievement and had been seconded to the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit as a behaviour expert during the 2008/09 National Behaviour Review. He said the VSK had been established in 2010 based on a two-year national pilot and the idea was to have either a senior officer or a head teacher in charge of the education of all children in care as if they were in a single school. The VSK was now the largest virtual school in the country.
2. The attainment of children in care (CiC) was significantly below the national average in every indicator in 2010 but following a virtual school improvement review CiC were now above the national average in every indicator. The VSK operated differently across the county depending on both the number of and the needs of the CiCs. There had been a significant positive improvement in numbers of children in care who were not in employment, education or training with 53% of CiC being considered as NEETs in 2014, 38% in 2015, 17% in 2016 and 13% currently.
3. The VSK had a good relationship with all schools including academies and provided support for schools which was free at the point of delivery. The VSK worked closely with schools to develop and support teachers and support teachers as well as developing projects for the children.
4. In April 2014, the Head of VSK was made responsible for some elements of the Pupil Premium Plus which was designed to close the learning gap and realise the potential of CiC wherever they may live. In addition from 2015 the Head of the VSK became responsible for the Early Years Pupil Premium.
5. Mr Doran said that each local authority administered the Pupil Premium differently. There had been a pilot scheme in West Sussex about 6 years ago in which 100% of

the Pupil Premium Plus funding was made available for applications from schools, other local authorities allocated the full amount per pupil and most went half way. Kent used the first approach in its first year, but some head teachers were reluctant to apply particularly where they had to make applications to several local authorities. Following a consultation with head teachers it was agreed that £900 would be allocated to a school for each CiC with any additional funding being provided according to the needs of the child following an application from the school. The VSK scrutinised all applications very carefully to ensure that the proposed intervention would have a positive impact based on evidence and it was rare to refuse an application. A copy of the application form was attached as Appendix 2 in the reports pack. No complaints had been received since the introduction of the scheme.

6. Mr Doran said the total funding available for the Pupil Premium Plus was based on the number of children that had come into care in the previous twelve months and amounted to £1900 per child. He also said that the VSK did not hold the Pupil Premium funding for children placed in Kent by other authorities. The authorities placing children in Kent retained their corporate parenting role and the Pupil Premium Funding allocation. He suggested that other authorities often provided funding to get a child into a school in Kent but there is numerous evidence of cases when their contribution after the point of entry has been extremely limited.
7. About 5%-7% of Kent children in care were placed outside Kent, most of out of county placements were in Medway and children were usually only placed further afield to access very specialist resources, to meet bail conditions or for other family reasons. If all London boroughs worked together they had sufficient capacity between them to place all children in care in London, however, about 40%-50% of London boroughs placed children outside their boroughs.
8. Mr Doran said there was no process for charging schools for advice on best practice or other support and while it would be possible to develop services for sale there were no plans to do so. Head teachers in Kent valued the VSK as “a real school with real pupils”.
9. In response to comments about the extent of the capacity of an individual school to meet the needs of large numbers of CiC, Mr Doran said:
 - Any child placed by an independent fostering agency in Kent would attend a Kent school
 - One of the wards in Thanet was more deprived than Toxteth in Liverpool and 60%-80% of pupils were in receipt of Pupil Premium Plus
 - Any child in placed in foster care has to be in education within 20 days and the VSK worked with the Education Admissions team and used local and national knowledge to ensure the best provision for the child
 - He, Mr Ireland (Corporate Director of Social Care and Health), Mr Carter (Leader of the Council) and others had spoken at numerous conferences, and to individuals, urging other authorities not to place children in Kent districts where there was pressure due to the high numbers of CiC.
10. Mr Doran said that the last report on Pupil Premium Plus set out an overview of spending. 81% had been allocated to schools and 19% retained for county-wide interventions such as paired reading which had been successful in raising the reading age of those involved by a minimum of ten months. Some funding was also retained for educational support officers (i.e. high level teaching assistants who were

paid for term time only). It was fortunate that four of the educational support officers were fully qualified teachers and they tended to specialise in building confidence of pupils in Maths and English.

11. Mr Doran also said that it would be very difficult to reduce funding to schools especially as the levels of challenging behaviour and special educational needs schools were expected to deal with before the pupils could be referred to a PRU or get a statement of educational need had increased in complexity. He said the Leigh Academy had introduced a “Strive to Thrive” programme based on cognitive behaviour therapy to improve the mental health of CiCs which in turn had resulted in improvements in the school’s performance.
12. In response to a question about accountability, Mr Doran said that schools had to publish information about how they had used Pupil Premium funding but the Pupil Premium Plus funding was for explicitly for the child. The VSK worked with schools to advise on appropriate interventions, the development of educational plans and to ensure value for money.
13. In response to a question about any changes he would like to see Mr Doran said:
 - The Early Years Pupil Premium Plus was very welcome and that he would like to see something similar for post -16s particularly as 85% of CiC nationally did not achieve five GCSEs. In Kent, colleges were resistant to taking young people without a GCSE in Maths and English so bespoke courses had to be developed;
 - Ring-fencing of the funds for the explicit benefit of children was essential to avoid any risk that it would be used to support schools’ budget to the detriment of the children
 - Changes in education such as the ending of modular GCSEs and course work, had had a detrimental impact on vulnerable

6. Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director - CYPE, KCC
(Item 2)

1. Mr Leeson said that the Pupil Premium had been introduced by the Coalition government in 2011 and subsequently extended to include children eligible for free school meals, children whose parents serve in the armed forces and looked after children. Its purpose was to close the attainment gap between these groups and their peers. The funding for the Pupil Premium in Kent was more than £55 million and while there had been welcome improvement in attainment in 2017 for pupils on free school meals more needed to be done to close the achievement gap for these less advantaged learners.
2. The English education system as a whole was poor at ensuring disadvantaged pupils did well at school; the impact of poverty on educational outcomes was greater than it was in comparator countries. In England social mobility was limited and it was difficult to escape the “poverty trap”. There had been some limited gains nationally as a result of the Pupil Premium. In addition it had also focussed attention on attainment and the attainment gap between vulnerable learners and others. Mr Leeson said David Laws, Executive Chairman, Education Policy Institute and former Minister of Schools had addressed the recent EduKent Conference. Mr Laws had said that the government needed to apply hard evidence when making decisions about the future of education in the UK and that the Education Policy Institute was developing a clear and detailed vision of how a world-class educational environment

should function to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people of all backgrounds.

3. Mr Leeson said the gap in attainment between pupils in receipt of free school meals in Kent was 23.7 months behind compared with 19 months nationally. He said the achievement gap was narrowing but it was still disappointing.
4. Mr Leeson said the schools in Kent used the Pupil Premium funding in a variety of ways. All schools were required to publish a strategy on their website setting out how the funds had been used and assess its impact over time. The practice among schools varied considerably, with many schools publishing very good strategies on their websites. The local authority supported schools to develop strategies, including regular conferences for schools, connecting schools with the best practices with other schools, producing toolkits for schools and ensuring that closing the attainment gap was a strong focus for school improvement advisers.
5. An analysis of results showed, however, that whilst attainment improved overall year on year, gaps in attainment for pupils supported by the Pupil Premium, Children in Care (CiC), and for pupils with Special Educational Needs remained wider than the national gaps.
6. There had been encouraging progress but more needed to be done to narrow the achievement gaps for vulnerable learners, particularly those supported by the Pupil Premium.
7. National data also showed that schools with high numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals tended to do better at reducing the attainment gap than schools with fewer pupils eligible for free school meals, suggesting that a focus on such pupils and targeted intervention made a real difference. The Education Endowment Foundation had carried out considerable research to identify the interventions with the greatest impact.
8. Issues relating to the educational attainment of children eligible for free school meals often manifested themselves in the Early Years' stage and included mental health, delay in the development of language, communication and social skills. Parenting in the early years had an impact. Investment in nursery and early years was critical and made a big difference, however, total investment nationally was insufficient. That said, in 2017 a gap of 10% in Early Years between the attainment of the poorest children and all children was the lowest it had ever been.
9. In response to a question about interventions that made the biggest difference, Mr Leeson said a focus on literacy and numeracy was key, but some pupils needed additional support to develop the skills to learn; too many started secondary schools with inadequate reading and writing skills and too many 16-year olds failed to get GCSEs in English and Maths thus limiting their opportunities to attend college.
10. In addition to using the Pupil Premium to improve literacy and numeracy, schools also had to focus on emotional and social development so that pupils became resilient learners. Children without such resilience remained fearful when approaching new tasks or when encountering difficulties which had a significant impact on their ability to learn. Small amounts of resilience building had a big impact on achievement.
11. It was difficult to separate the impact of the Pupil Premium from other activities and interventions; however, there had been small gains over the last few years even if the

attainment gap had not narrowed. Data for 2017 showed that the difference in delay in learning was 4.3 months nationally and in Kent it was 2.8 months. For Key Stage 1, children eligible for free school meals did better in all outcomes than in previous years. At KS1 the attainment of pupils in receipt of pupil premium went up and was better than expected although a gap remained between the attainment of this group and the attainment of all pupils. The attainment of children in care was significantly better in 2017 than it had been in 2016.

12. Secondary schools were not achieving as well for children eligible for free school meals. Attainment outcomes for FSM pupils improved in 2017 across all measures compared with 2016, but gaps remained wide because of improved outcomes for all pupils.
13. The attainment gap had not narrowed significantly over the last 2-3 years and was still around 33%. Overall secondary schools were less effective at closing the gap. While KS2 results had increased year on year for the previous 5 years, the benefit of narrowing the gap at that stage was not being reflected in GCSEs. The inability of secondary schools might be attributable to the fact that the curriculum had narrowed, all assessments were now by examination rather than by coursework and expectations were more academic. Secondary schools generally found it harder to divide pupils into small groups for a substantial proportion of the week. There was evidence to suggest that focussing the Pupil Premium on ensuring small group teaching in years 7 and 8 to ensure pupils caught up had an impact on attainment.
14. In response to a question about educational attainment in the UK compared with other countries, Mr Leeson said that the UK provides an excellent education for the most able youngsters and spends less on Early Years and more on University than other comparator countries. He also said it was a scandal that the post 16 and further education sectors were both underfunded and had been subjected to significant cuts in finance. He said that there was more child poverty in the UK than in comparator countries and referred to the value placed on education, culture and literacy in some countries. In particular, Finland had the most successful education system, and in Italy 70% of young people were expected to go to university compared with a relatively recent target of 45% in the UK.
15. Mr Leeson said that eligibility for free school meals was a useful indicator particularly as it was good at identifying individual children in need. However it excluded children whose families are just above the threshold and who might be disadvantaged. IDACI and other measures using indices of multiple deprivation based on post codes were more sensitive. Mr Leeson also said that some schools could do more to identify poorer pupils.
16. In response to a question, Mr Leeson said the Vulnerable Learners Strategy was scheduled to be updated in 2018. Its focus would be on: the closer integration of Children's Social Care and Early Years services; support for vulnerable families; and ensuring Early Help services were having a big impact. This recognised the fact that for children to develop and be successful it was essential they had a good home and parenting, a good school and good mental health and wellbeing. To this end, the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services had been recommissioned and had seen a reduction in waiting times; mental health workers were now embedded in Pupil Referral Units and Early Years Services; and £10million had been received for the Headstart Programme to develop resilience in children. The Vulnerable Learners Strategy would be "more of the same" but with a greater emphasis on integration and a continuous review to ensure resources followed a child's needs. Mr Leeson said

the work of the Select Committee should feed into the development of the Vulnerable Learners Strategy.

17. In response to questions Mr Leeson said that:

- The recommendations of a previous Select Committee on Social Mobility and Grammar Schools had resulted in grammar schools tweaking their admissions criteria as well as additional work in primary schools to encourage children to apply to grammar schools. Nevertheless, children who were eligible for free school meals were not well represented in grammar schools.
- Children eligible for free school meals were over-represented in the frequent absence figures. In order to address persistent absence the School Attendance Service was embedded in the Early Help Services.
- Ofsted spent very little time in schools and tended not to dig deeply into how schools used Pupil Premium funding. Ofsted could, however, downgrade its assessment of a school if outcomes for children eligible for free school meals were considered inadequate.
- School governors and parents should be holding schools to account for the use of Pupil Premium funding particularly where schools were failing to publish information about its use and impact on its website. Even where schools embedded Pupil Premium funding into the overall budget and invested it in whole class teaching they should be asked about the impact on outcomes for children eligible for it
- Holding schools to account for the use of the Pupil Premium funding was on par with holding schools to account for the use of any other budgets.
- Gaps in attainment became wider as children got older, particularly when they were not helped to “catch up”. This could suggest that it was necessary to front load support in the Early Years stages and retain a focus on catching up for Years 7 and 8.
- It was more difficult to have a comprehensive strategy for vulnerable learners in the post 16 sector. The Key Stage 4 curriculum was designed to ensure all young people could make a positive next step.
- Whether a school was an academy or not had no impact on Pupil Premium funding or obligations. Schools that had become academies in the first phase had often been failing schools and had made significant improvements following conversion. However, schools that converted to academies after 2015 were often already performing well and had shown little improvement since they converted. Improvement in performance and outcomes always depended on a school’s culture and its commitment to adopting evidence-based interventions and practices to improve the attainment of its vulnerable learners. It was important that Kent County Council positioned itself strongly to ensure successful outcomes for children in care and other vulnerable learners. Evidence had shown that if parents who were struggling had regular support, the lives of their children improve. New York City had halved the number of children coming into care by helping parents during a crisis or provide access to therapeutic support.

- Focussing resources on Early Years and primary education had the biggest impact
- Engaging vulnerable learners and their families needed to continue as a focus. A number of agencies had pooled resources to organise family fun-days in order to engage parents. It was however harder for youth hubs to engage with parents of adolescents.

18. In response to comments about the integration of Early Help and Specialist Children's Services, Mr Leeson said that Early Help Services should only close a case when there was a positive outcome unless the Police were involved. Most Early Help interventions lasted for between 12 and 20 weeks though some cases lasted longer. It was also possible to "step up" and "step down" between Early Help and Social Care and regular panel meetings which included representatives from the school, social workers and early help workers, were held to consider whether to "step up" or "step down" support.

19. In response to a question about Queenborough School's comments that it had noticed big differences in the readiness of children for school among children who had attended the nursery attached to the school and those who had attended other nurseries, Mr Leeson said it was important that children, particularly disadvantaged children, attended nursery. He said that 75% of children eligible for free nursery places for two-year olds had been taken up and although this was the best take up rate to date, it was a shame that not all children were benefitting. Mr Leeson further said that the provision of children's centres had not been significantly cut; there were 85 in the county and they had become Early Years' Hubs.

20. The Chairman thanked Mr Leeson for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

7. Interview with Steven Ackerley, Senior Improvement Advisor - CYPE, KCC *(Item 3)*

1. Mr Ackerley explained that, in his role as Senior Improvement Advisor for Special Schools, he worked with consultants in special schools to ensure that pupils were prepared so they could gain as much benefit as possible from their schooling.

2. The same eligibility criteria for Pupil Premium applied to pupils with and without Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and to Children in Care. SEND funding was designed to help pupils overcome barriers to learning. Pupil Premium was targeted in the same way as in mainstream schools to support pupils without SEND, but the support it gave SEND pupils would not necessarily be targeted directly at academic improvement, to help them close the attainment gap, but would seek to help them develop social and personal skills and give them the best preparation possible to tackle adult life and work, using goals and measures which were appropriate for them. The range of SEND covered a broad spectrum of need presentation, including Autism and physical disability, and their progress at key stages 1 to 4 should be measured in the context of progress from their starting point, rather than comparison with academic attainment for pupils without SEND. The work of Sir John Dunford, champion of Pupil Premium, applied equally to pupils with SEND.

3. For pupils with an Emotional Health Care Plan (EHCP, previously called a Statement of Special Educational Needs), it was important to take account of their health and social care needs in the methods applied to measure their progress at school. In

special school settings in Kent, there were 3,884 pupils with EHCP, 30% of whom were eligible for Pupil Premium. This was three times the number of non-SEND pupils eligible in mainstream primary and secondary schools. These children would not necessarily be claiming Free School Meals (FSM), although there was a close correlation between families claiming FSM and those with children with SEND as these cohorts shared many of the same social and economic challenges.

4. Asked about pupils with SEND who were not in special schools, Mr Ackerley explained that 1,916 pupils with an EHCP (SEND) attended mainstream schools, as parents had the right to request that their child be educated in a mainstream school. Schools would identify their own SEND policy and criteria, which could cover issues such as autism, disability access, speech, language and communication issues or visual and hearing impairments, and would support pupils within the school. In Kent there were more than 900 pupils with an EHCP (SEND) attending mainstream schools with special resourced provision.

5. Asked if Pupil Premium was paid to the school or to the Improvement Officer, Mr Ackerley explained that it was paid direct to the school. He offered case studies of Kent schools at which Pupil Premium was being spent in an innovative way. In one of these, almost 50% of pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium.

6. For pupils with Profound Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN), the gap between them and non-PSCN pupils may never be able to be closed. However, Pupil Premium could still be applied and spent in an innovative and constructive way and could demonstrate an impact on pupils' progress in building a portfolio of skills, even if this did not include attainment of C Grades in Maths and English.

7. The SEN Code of Practice had been published in September 2014 and updated in January 2015 and included a commitment that all pupils with SEND would be supported and assisted during and after their school careers (for example, with training), up to the age of 25.

8. Asked about the level of uptake of this support, Mr Ackerley explained that it was difficult in some cases to provide supported education places that exactly met the needs of an individual pupil and so this was difficult to plan provision for. For instance, some pupils with SEND and complex needs would need a phased approach to independent access to appropriate training, employment or further education opportunities.

9. Asked what the County Council could do to improve the effectiveness of Pupil Premium and narrow the gap between SEND and non-SEND pupils, Mr Ackerley said it would first be necessary to understand the strategic approach to Pupil Premium and SEND, but data to help with this understanding was limited. For instance, last year at KS1, there were 180 pupils with SEND, of which 40 also had Pupil Premium. These had a spectrum of needs, from moderate to profound, and only two of them, both with autism, had made the progress in English and Maths which was expected of KS1 pupils. Narrowing the attainment gap between SEND and non-SEND pupils would be possible only when pupils had the appropriate skills to manage this, and schools would use the Pupil Premium funding to support children and young people in the most suitable way to accelerate progress from their starting points. This could include building confidence and self-esteem along with strategies to support socialisation, which may not result in the school to closing the gap to age-related expectations or national mainstream thresholds.

10. The basic notional allocation per pupil with SEND in mainstream schools was up to £6,000 per pupil, dependent on the level and complexity of their needs. Further High Needs Funding (HNF) was available, to provide additional resources or strategies to

enable them to remain in the mainstream school of choice. Some pupils in Special schools with Social and Emotional Mental Health needs (SEMH) were able to achieve at GCSE. The allocation last year for one such special school for 220 pupils with SEMH was a total of £145,000 (111 pupils – 50%), but this was not all directed to supporting them to pass English and Maths but to develop ‘soft skills’ such as engaging with their peers, undertaking projects like the Duke of Edinburgh Award and finding opportunities for work, so they could develop a sound platform on which to build further skills.

11. To optimise the impact of Pupil Premium in special schools, it would be necessary to make sure sufficient and suitable resources were available to allow these ‘skills platforms’ to be built. However, this would not mean that Pupil Premium would be able to close the gap, and the gap between SEND and non-SEND pupils could be wide and could remain wide. Special schools’ performance measures were not always aimed at closing the attainment gap compared to non-SEND mainstream peers but to measure the number of pupils successfully building ‘skills for working life’ and independence. Some SEND pupils would never be able to live independently, and for these the closing of the gap was simply not relevant. To achieve this progress would require good leadership within the school. Mr Ackerley emphasised that there was no typical Pupil Premium pupil, SEND pupil or SEMH pupil.

12. Asked if he was happy with the way in which Pupil Premium was used in Kent’s special schools, Mr Ackerley said that, measuring the progress made by Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium pupils in special schools, there was very little difference. This was because all pupils in Kent’s special schools received an extensive package of total support, which made it difficult to discern the contribution made by Pupil Premium. In a SEND setting, pupils were supported as part of a ‘learning community’ which might include parents who also had SEND and home settings which might be quite chaotic. Pupil Premium could be used also to support a pupil’s family in encouraging strategies and activities to embed those developing during the school day; it did not need necessarily to be linked to their schoolwork and could be about routine, personal responsibility and social interaction

13. Mr Ackerley read from a recently-published Ofsted report about Laleham Gap School in Thanet... Where appropriate Pupil Premium spending had resulted in good progress with SEND pupils. An example of how this had been achieved was ensuring improved attendance of reluctant learners by encouraging them to take part in, and enjoy activities at school such as music and drama and gradually re-introduce them to learning. Laleham Gap School received £67,000 of Pupil Premium for 57 pupils, and the way in which they had spent this could be seen from their website. Mr Ackerley added that, in Special schools, there were three times as many pupils eligible for Pupil premium, but this could be focused to support non-academic work to build a platform of engagement from which later academic progress could be made

14. Asked what more could be done to improve the uptake and effectiveness of Pupil Premium in special schools, Mr Ackerley said that schools could network and share best practice. The role of Lead Special School Adviser allowed him to work with all special schools. It was difficult to provide an increased level of support. The Consultant advisors could be objective when visiting a school and could challenge the school’s practice as well as support their work, and it was easier for an external visitor to do this. When visiting a school, Mr Ackerley would share examples of good practice, seek evidence of the school’s practice and effectiveness and challenge any shortcomings.

15. A special school in Canterbury was achieving some innovative work with pupils with a range of abilities, all together in one setting, each with the appropriate level of flexible, targeted support to meet their individual needs. The school was taking a flexible

approach to school organisation, for example by having flexible break times. Ofsted inspecting a school would see only a snapshot of the school, not the journey by which it had arrived at its current position. Increased resourcing of Pupil Premium was welcomed and was appropriate, and measurement of a pupil's progress should be from their own starting point, not a comparison of how they compared academically to pupils without SEND. Children had different barriers to their learning and academic development, and these needed to be considered in context..

16. Asked if Kent was typical of local authorities in its use of Pupil Premium for SEND pupils in special and mainstream schools, and how gifted pupils fitted into the picture, Mr Ackerley said that the Malling School's Tidyman Centre was larger than many special schools, so in that way was unusual, but operated very well. Mr Ackerley said working with gifted pupils was not part of his remit but he said that Pupil Premium would be used with guidance and support to accelerate their particular skills to make the most of them but would not be aimed at closing the attainment gap. There were very few pupils at grammar schools (approximately 2 – 5% of the grammar school population) receiving Pupil Premium, and even fewer SEND pupils, but the barriers to them attending grammar schools tended to be of social mobility rather than academic attainment.

17. In summary, Mr Ackerley said that, in evaluating the impact of Pupil Premium upon SEND pupils, the Select Committee should bear in mind that it was not necessarily an issue of closing the attainment gap between them and non-SEND pupils. The Select Committee should look flexibly at other progress. School leadership and the way in which progress was measured were important. Not being able to narrow the gap should not in itself be an accurate indicator of a lack of Pupil Premium spend impact, and attention should be paid to a school having made progress in other areas. Leadership of SEND learners tended to be seen as a 'forgotten area' as only 2% of SEND pupils in the UK were taught in non-mainstream schools. Use of mainstream indicators to measure progress in special schools needed to be addressed, and the need acknowledged for a flexible approach with different measures which would look at progress in areas other than narrowing the attainment gap.

18. The Chairman thanked Mr Ackerley for giving his time to attend and help the Select Committee with its information gathering.