

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### **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 Tuesday, 23rd February, 2010.

PRESENT: Mr K Smith (Chairman), Mr R B Burgess, Mr N J Collor, Mr J Cubitt, Mr P J Homewood, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr J Ozog, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr W Richardson, Mr J Wedgbury, Mr M J Vye (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs A D Allen

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

PARENT GOVERNORS: Mr P Myers

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mr T Desmoyers-Davies and Mr J Walder

PRESENT: Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Lead Member

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer), Mr A Foster (Lead Curriculum Adviser, Subject Adviser for PSHE, Citizenship And RE), Ms P Harris (Head of Service) and Mrs G Bromley (Strategic Manager, Libraries and Archives)

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

##### **18. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2009**

*(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2009 were agreed subject to the wording in Minute15 paragraph (4) being altered to reflect that Mr Burgess was suggesting "that there was very little incentive when a person had a job to acquire qualifications for that job and suggested that money should be used from 'Train to Gain' for bespoke training to enhance or compliment the work that they were doing" and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **19. Director of Learning and Deputy Cabinet Member's Verbal Update**

*(Item B1)*

*(Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Lead Member, learning, Mrs P Harris Interim Head of Standards Improvement were present for this item)*

(1) The Chairman explained that Ms M Haeusler, Director of Learning and Mr M Baker, Interim Director of Learning were not able to attend the meeting due to the launch of the formal consultation for the Children, Families and Education Directorate Restructuring Review that day. He invited Mrs Whittle to give a verbal update.

(2) Mrs Whittle outlined the work that she had undertaken since the Committee last met, this included; visiting a mixture of secondary, special, Grammar and primary

Kent schools where she was pleased to see the enormous work being undertaken to improve both Key Stage 2 results, which had been a primary focus of attention and what hoped to be a significant increase in the 5 A\* to C in mathematics and English examination results achieved which meant reaching the 2011 target a year early.

(3) Mrs Whittle advised that various campaigns had been launched which included; improving teachers pay in Kent with an aim to narrow the gap between their colleagues in outer London and the wider issue of teacher recruitment and retention, which linked with the pay and expanding the 'Teacher First Programme' which encourages bright young graduates to the teaching profession. The launch of restructuring CFE Directorate started today with a 3 month consultation, one aspect of this was looking at the role of the School Improvement Partner (SIP), Ms Haeusler would give an update on this at the next meeting. There was also a lot of work being undertaken to improve the links with Primary and Secondary schools she gave the example of a secondary school mathematics teacher in Swale teaching mathematics in primary schools to help improve those schools that were struggling to reach the floor targets with Key Stage 2.

(4) Mrs Whittle went on to advise that she and Mrs Allen met with the Children in Care Council to discuss how to improve educational outcomes for children in care. She advised that 6% of children in care reached 5A\* to C at GCSE in English and mathematics which was too low. The focus would also include Gypsy/Traveller children whose attainment was also too low.

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

(6) In response to a question by Mr Richardson, Mrs Whittle advised that the increase in teachers pay if achieved would be for every grade.

(7) Mr Demoyers-Davis suggested that Mrs Whittle should be mindful of the areas in the County where the 'Fringe Area Allowance' applied; Dartford Gravesend and Sevenoaks and Westerham, which aimed to cover the differences in housing costs, when looking at teachers pay. He was fully in support of Fringe Area Allowances being substantial and not spread too thinly. Mrs Whittle agreed that the Fringe Area Allowance should not be spread thinly and aligned to housing costs. She agreed to report back to an appropriate POSC meeting.

(8) Mr Demoyers-Davis suggested that Local Government needed to speak with the Government regarding the National Conditions of Service. He advised that the Academies were not bound by the National conditions of Service and were able to set their own levels of pay which meant that there were some that matched the National conditions of Service and others that had introduced a pay scale where junior and senior levels received more but those on the middle scales received less.

(9) In response to a comment by Mr Burgess, Mrs Whittle explained that the Schools Improvement Partners (SIPs) did know their schools but there were cases where SIPs covered up to 17 schools, her aim was to reduce the amount of schools they covered so that they were able to visit schools that were not reaching their floor targets more often. Mr Collor stated that the issue needed to be looked at over a period of time with all the changes for the whole of Kent.

(10) In response to a question by Ms Todd, Mrs Harris advised that the report before Members was a summary. There was extensive detailed data available in

the public domain on all schools and Academies which could be made available. At Key Stage 4 in secondary schools, Kent was above national and our statistical neighbours, such as East and West Sussex, on 5A\* to C in English and mathematics. There were 33 high schools in National Challenge Programmes that were making substantial improvements on that level. Since 2008 they had moved on the 5A\* to C significantly and now all the attention was on English and mathematics. Our Grammar schools, wide ability schools and high achieving high schools and those in the more vulnerable communities were moving in the right direction.

(11) Mr Demoyers-Davis suggested that the input of money on the nationally challenged schools was making an impact on standards, if this was the case then the standard pupil cost could be the root of the issue, in the amount of money received for students by the school to get them through the 5A\* to C including mathematics and English as some pupils cost more to get to that standard.

(12) RESOLVED that the responses to questions and comments made by Members and the verbal update be noted.

## **20. Educational Performance for Children and Young People 2009**

*(Item B2)*

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

*(Mrs P Harris, Head of Service – Advisory Service Kent, and Mrs J Whittle were present for this item)*

(1) The Chairman advised the Committee that he felt that the content of the report was the basis of the Committee's function. There were 2000 teachers in Kent and it was the Committee's responsibility to measure the outcomes of their teaching. This meant having confidence to rely on Mrs Harris and her Team for data and for them to submit items for Members to celebrate achievements when appropriate and to scrutinise when necessary.

(2) Mrs Harris explained that her role was to oversee that work had been undertaken to look at how best to share the headlines, vast validated data and national data on primary and secondary schools. It was suggested that for the new cycle the new area would be the priorities of the Department. Other suggested options were; identifying primary schools that were not achieving, Secondary schools in the National Challenge Programme and children receiving free school meals. It was possible to look at the impact during the summer months, as well as sending the Committee regular summaries of OFSTED outcomes, this information could be sent to Members between meetings.

(3) Mrs Whittle reminded the Committee that any request for confidential information would need to be held in closed session or instigate a Member Monitoring Group.

(4) Mr Vye referred to a document sent to a Cabinet meeting that detailed trends and suggested that there needed to be data of at least 5 years to view trends, although he did find the information in the report valuable and asked that Members receive the data/information in the same format as in the Cabinet papers and requested that the number of schools on special measures be included in the

report. Mrs Harris explained that there were 3 Primary Schools that were on special measures, Bellwood Primary, Maidstone, Milton Court Primary, Sittingbourne and St Georges Primary, Wilmington Enterprise College.

(5) Mr Vye referred the Directorate staff restructuring with the loss of 65 back office staff in the Learning Group. He felt that in order for the front line staff to operate there was a need for back room staff. He sought assurance that the same level of staff would remain in the schools.

(6) Mr Vye declared an interest advising that he was the Chair of Governors at a Canterbury School that was not reaching the floor target even with very good leadership and teaching and asked what more could be done. Mrs Harris advised that there would be an increase in targeting schools with one to one teaching.

(7) Mrs Allen congratulated Mrs Harris and her team on the work already carried out in raising the attainment of looked after children (LAC) and Gypsy and Romany children. She suggested that there was a common thread that some of the those children moved by choice and some not, and as a key target, discussions should be had with other local authorities on the effect of placing a child without making any provision for the child's education, which meant that the child could be out of school for a long time and then possibly move on. Mrs Allen suggested that there should be an education package made up for those children, where they can work from home if necessary but would more importantly would travel with them if they had to move on. Mrs Allen also highlighted that it was the case that often many LAC entered a school in a particular area which had the effect of bring down the attainment and achievement of the school, which needed to be borne in mind.

(8) In response to a question by Mrs Todd, Mrs Harris advised that the inspectors looked at the quality of the teaching and learning and look at trends of data. She explained that the validated data for 2009 was not published until January 2010, which was very late, as it was normally published in October but for schools, particularly secondary, they were at a disadvantage. We could lobby OFSTED and nationally but unless they published the validated data earlier there would always be vulnerable schools.

(9) Mr Burgess suggested that there was so much information it may be better, as local Members received local education briefings on the local schools in their electoral areas, for those schools to be left to the local Member to deal with and for the Committee to deal with a summary of the statistics. He suggested that data for East Kent needed to be considered as there was a lot of movement within the schools with the large intake of children from; Service personnel, Eastern European families and LAC. Mr Burgess felt that money should be spent to allow each individual pupil to reach their full potential/ability and suggested that Members should be pushing for all Kent schools to be signed up to the Gifted and Talented Programme.

(10) In response to concerns raised by Mr Wedgbury, the Chairman advised that there would be a progress report on 'Gifted and Talented' later in the year.

(11) Mrs Harris explained that in schools where there was strong leadership and the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, all abilities of children do well, although there was funding to develop those who were under achieving with that context the challenge at every level and the differentiation being made was exceptional. Mrs Harris gave the example of King Ethelbert's, Thanet where the

school's ethos had changed because of the new Leadership and the focus on the National Challenge, which had raised the performance across all ability age groups. There was a need for underachieving, vulnerable groups and borderline children to achieve but the aim was to have those expectations across the board. Our School Improvement Partners were tracking with the Leaders and the Governors the target setting and the targets for 2011 had been set.

(12) In response to a question by Mr Homewood, Mrs Harris explained that from September 2009, there were 3 Primary schools and 1 Secondary school that were judged inadequate. Those schools had been already identified for significant improvement. More schools were now judged satisfactory as the goal post had changed. This meant that as a lot of the Kent schools had been moved from being good to being judged as satisfactory. The good schools now needed to be consistently good and the schools at the far end of the continuum that were inadequate were very few but the key area was that there were now too many in the band of satisfactory.

(13) RESOLVED that the responses to Members question and their comments and the report be noted.

## **21. SACRE Annual Report** *(Item B3)*

*(Report by Merril Hauesler, Director – Learning Group, Mrs R Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families & Education Directorate and Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education Directorate)*

*(Mr A Foster, Lead Curriculum Adviser and support to SACRE was present for this item)*

(1) The Committee considered a report that presented the Annual Report (2008-2009) on the work of Kent's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education that highlighted particular developments and the need to commence the review of the locally agreed syllabus for RE in September 2010.

(2) Mr Foster introduce the report and in response to a question by Mr Ozog advised that religious education was a statutory subject but within the legislation parents had the legal right to withdraw their child from religious education. In Kent, schools are required to comply with the legislation. It was the role of OFSTED to inspect that the schools are providing religious education and report back on the schools compliance or lack of compliance with the legislation. The School Improvement Partners were also encouraged to ensure that the schools comply. School governors are also expected to ensure that schools meet the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus for RE..

(3) In reply to a question by Mr Jarvis, Mr Foster advised that at present the Government was taking forward the Children Schools and Families Bill, one clause of which was about the statutory provision of sex and relationship education. Last week the Secretary of State for Education introduced an amendment which had been causing disputes as to whether it was going to water down the requirements for sex and relationship education and enable faith schools to interpret sex education to reflect their ethos and their belief. Mr Foster said that he did not feel that this had any implication on religious education as there was new guidance this

month which had been circulated to schools and there were no comments in that guidance on sex and relationship education. Schools were expected to reflect a broad and balanced view on matters relating to sex and relationships education.

(4) In response to a question by Mr Desmoyer-Davis, Mr Foster advised that every year all efforts were made to fill vacancies, in the interim members were co opted to fill the vacancies on SACRE. He advised that it was a national issue to find members for SACRE.

(5) RESOLVED that:

(a) the responses to questions from Members be noted;

(b) the Kent SACRE's annual report 2008-09 be noted; and

(c) the work of the Kent SACRE be noted.

## **22. The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading: a strategy to engage the whole community**

*(Item B4)*

*(Report by Ms M White, Head of Extended Services and Mrs G Bromley, Strategic Manager/ Project Manager Libraries and Archives)*

*(Mrs G Bromley, Strategic Manager/ Project Manager Libraries and Archives was present for this item)*

(1) The Committee considered a progress report on the development of a Community Strategy for Reading and Literacy in Kent, known as the "Kent Approach", endorsed by Cabinet on the 30 March 2009, Chief Officers and the Kent Partnership.

(2) The Chairman advised that the report had cross cutting issues for the Children, Families and Education Directorate and the Communities Directorates and had already been considered by the Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(3) Mrs Bromley said that she viewed this as a corporate piece of work and as a long term strategy. The strategy recognised that there was enormous good practice in schools and other educational establishments but recognised that there was a need to raise standards in literacy and English and achievement within the communities in Kent. There were a wide range of agencies that would be working in partnership with KCC to test and try new approaches including those outlined within the report. The priorities included; Key Stage 2, Looked After Children, Gypsies and Travellers needs, people with dyslexia and others with special needs.

(4) RESOLVED that:

(a) the activity that had taken place and the continuing momentum of this work be noted; and

(b) the advice on ways in which KCC elected Members might act as ambassadors for literacy and reading in their local communities be noted.

**23. Short film of the Young People interviewed on the visits to the Skills Centre Thamesview, Gravesend and Leigh Academy, Dartford**  
(Item B5)

(1) The Chairman advised the Committee that those Members who attended the visits to the schools on 2 February 2010 would be gathering around the webcam to thank the pupils of schools for sharing their views. Following this the Committee would view a short film from the Leigh Academy, which could not be broadcast as permission was withheld. The film from the visit to the Skills Centre, Thamesview, was not available in time for the meeting.

(2) Mr Pascoe introduced the 4 minute film from Leigh Academy explaining that the Academy was a group of 4 schools under on roof. Members had visited one of the schools and received a tour of the school and met with 6 year 11 pupils for a discussion. Mr Pascoe felt that the pupils were smart and articulate and shared a great bond with, and respected, their teachers. The Chairman added that what seemed to work well at the school was the one to one sessions for pupils with their teachers as the students were fortunate to have a high teacher to pupil ratio. The pupils also had a clear view of what they wished to do in the future, although this did not seem to feature apprenticeships.

(3) Mr Burgess referred back to Minute15(5) 2009 and suggested that pupils should all receive independent advice and guidance in year 10 on career paths, the earlier the better, to enable the pupils to match their life skills to what they wish to do.

(4) Mr Richardson suggested that as some of the pupils on the visits did not know what they wished to do in the future it may be that more work experience opportunities could be offered in the curriculum. Mrs Todd advised that in practice it was logistically difficult for pupils to attend work experience as there were many areas that had to be secured such as health and safety and safeguarding before they were allowed to accept the placement. She felt that the culture of the work place accepting work experience pupils was difficult and needed to be made easier through legislation.

(5) RESOLVED that the Committee noted the content of the short film.

**24. Interviews with Kent Employers**  
(Item B6)

RESOLVED that the evidence received from four Kent Employers; Mr P Carter, Carter Construction, Dr Liz Hoult, Canterbury Christchurch University, Mr John Casey, Mainstream Training and Mr Martin Atkinson HR Manager, Aylesford Newsprint (attached as appendix 1) be noted.