

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 in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone Kent on Thursday, 5th November, 2009.

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 A Wickham and Mr M J Vye (Vice-Chairman)

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: Mr S Parr (Substitute for Dr D Wadman)

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mrs J Huckstep and Mr J Walder

PRESENT: Mrs S V Hohler and Mrs J Whittle

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Baker (Interim Director of Learning), Miss K Phillips (Policy Officer), Mr R Silk (Gifted & Talented Adviser), Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

10. Declarations of Interests by Members in terms on the Agenda for this meeting
(Item A2)

Mr Wedgebury declared an interest regarding Item B2 as his child had been assessed as gifted and talented and Mr Ozog declared an interest regarding Item B2 as his child attended one of the schools mentioned in the report.

11. Future Meeting Dates 2010
(Item. A3)

(1) Mr Vye suggested that there was a need to have an 'Urgent Items' heading on future agendas of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees to give Members the opportunity to raise urgent committee business if necessary. Mr Wickenden advised that following the decision of the County Council on the new Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees (POSCs) there was work to be undertaken on how the committees were going to operate. An informal meeting of the Scrutiny Board (formally the Policy Overview Co ordinating Committee) would be held on 18 November 2009, this was one of the issues that would be discussed. The POSCs would be kept informed of progress.

(2) RESOLVED that the comments made in paragraph (1) above and the meeting dates for 2010 as set out below were noted by the Committee.

Friday, 15 January *(Joint meeting of all 3 POSCs)*

Tuesday, 23 February

Thursday, 20 May

Thursday, 16 September at 2.00 pm

(All meetings will commence at 10.00 am unless otherwise stated)

12. Minutes - 18 September 2009

(Item. A4)

RESOLVED that subject to the word 'Moral' being altered to read 'Morale' on page 3, paragraph 8 (1) the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

13. Deputy Lead Member's and Learning Director's Update

(Item. B1)

(Mrs J Whittle, Deputy Lead Member and Mr M Baker, Interim Director of Learning were present for this item)

(1) Mr Smith introduced Mr Baker, Interim Director of Learning and invited him and 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 Nationally Challenged Schools (those schools that had not reached 30% of students achieving at 5A*-C grades including English and Mathematics); Ashford Computer College, Swan Valley, Wilmington Enterprise College, Dartford, Astor of Hever, Maidstone and Aylesford Sports College, Maidstone. Mrs Whittle explained that there had been problems with the recruitment of and retaining teachers in these schools, which was stabilising.

(3) Mrs Whittle went on to highlight the 8% vacancy rate for School governors and appealed to Members who were not already Governors to apply.

(4) Mrs Whittle advised that during her visits to schools she was aware of the need to look at education as a whole from 4-14 years there was a clear interlink with all schools. The secondary schools could assist with identifying gifted children and those that would need additional help in secondary school.

(5) Members were advised that Mrs Merrill Haeusler had been appointed Director of Learning, Mrs Haeusler previously worked for the London Borough of Bromley. Mr Baker would continue in his role until March 2010.

(6) Mr Baker added that two Advisors had been appointed by the Secretary of State to visit 12 Kent Schools, over two weeks, as part of the "National Challenge". Part of the advisors work would include interviewing Members and school representatives. This work had to be completed and a report written by 16 November. Mr Baker said that at this time it was unclear when KCC would be able to make comments on the findings but he would be strategically involved as the report had to have the Secretary of States approval. Members noted that a report on the findings would be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

(7) Mr Baker highlighted that the key activity in schools at the time was focusing on target setting for sitting the Kent Test from 2011. The School improvement Partners would be setting targets.

(8) Members noted that an analysis of GCSE results was in progress and a report was being drafted.

(9) The Committee received an update of the transfer of the Learning Skills Council role to KCC and noted that 16 Members of the LSC staff would be transferring to KCC in March 2010. The 16 Members of staff would be interviewed separately to ascertain their skills and match those skills to the future needs of the service. A programme of work would then be made. The Transition Plan had been agreed. Mr Baker advised that an Executive Group had been set up that would meet on a weekly basis to ensure a smooth transition.

(10) Mr Baker advised that the measures had been taken to ensure school preference forms were submitted by 6 November by parents in light of the problems raised by the postal strike. Parents had been encouraged to apply online, which 50% had already done and submit the forms by hand into the schools. Details on the results of admissions will be submitted to a future meeting

(11) He concluded that Ms Rosalind Turner, Managing Director had met with Headteachers and briefed them on the Children Families and Education Directorate's Restructure and next week the Secondary Headteacher Conference was due to take place with guest speaker Charles Leadbetter; Mrs Hohler, Mr Carter Leader of KCC and the Mr Gilroy, Chief Executive will also attend.

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

(13) In response to a question by Mr Burgess, Mr Baker agreed to inform Local Members and Committee Members of the 12 school visits to be made by the National Challenge Advisors.

(14) In response to a question by Mr Burgess, Mr Baker said that the Headteachers, Governors and staff in the National Challenge schools that had been visited were significantly aspirational around the outcomes for the children and young people in their school and they were taking a broader view on the National challenge, that it is appropriate for all schools to have 30% of their pupils achieving A*-C in English and Mathematics, therefore responding to the entitlement for all young people on the quality of outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4. They were focusing on the learning and not just focusing on the outcomes. The schools are saying that the young people deserve the best qualifications in order for them to make progress.

(15) In response to a question by Mr Burgess, Mr Baker advised that the national data on variations at Infant, and JMI School in general terms say Infant schools do not out perform the Junior Mixed and Infant schools. There was a need to look at the individual schools. Mrs Whittle felt it started at 3 or 4 years old. In some areas there was a pilot on 2 year olds in the deprived areas. The Key stage 2 results were below the national average that was a key target for Kent.

(16) In reply to questions by Mr Wickham, Mrs Whittle advised that it was difficult to tease out parents that needed help with literacy but schools were working with Adult Education on this. Work was being undertaken by an Executive Headteacher on teacher recruitment especially on recruiting English teachers. There were particular problems with attracting teachers to those schools that had been put on 'special measures' perceptions of those schools could be a problem. Mrs Whittle considered

that the schools' profiles needed to be promoted to overcome those perceptions. Mr Baker added that a lot of schools were being innovative in advertising overseas for teachers. Schools to the North of the County had the additional pressure of being affected by London weighting. Mr Baker explained that the National Challenge Review looked at projects across schools and looked at recruiting across areas not individual schools.

(17) Mr Walder urged Mrs Whittle to speak to managers and staff. He had been asked to investigate the impact of the managers of a school who had broken the terms and conditions of the teachers contracts. The Chairman said that the management of the school was key to the performance of the school. The quality of Head teachers and teachers would be a future agenda item for this Committee.

(18) In response to Mr Jarvis' concerns on the expense attached to recruiting teachers from overseas and his preference to focus on incentives for teachers through award schemes, Mr Baker responded that there were a raft of measures/programmes already in place for teachers and gave an example where a neighbouring challenged school had been linked with a grammar school and raised the challenged schools attainment.

(19) Members requested a list of the schools with School Governors' vacancies. The Committee also agreed to receive information under the portfolio of this Committee between meetings.

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

14. Gifted and Talented Education

(Item. B2)

(Report by Roger Silk, Gifted and Talented Adviser, Advisory Service Kent ASK)

(1) Members of the Committee received a report that highlighted both the national and regional initiatives for gifted and talented young people, in particular a nationally funded pilot for Gifted and Talented pupils of which 5 Nationally Challenged schools in Kent were taking part. The specific aim of the pilot was to support students from disadvantage backgrounds during Key Stage 4 who would have fallen into the Gifted and Talented criteria if it were not for the circumstances that they face.

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

(3) In answer to the questions on the ethos behind Gifted and Talented education Mr Silk agreed to forward a summary to Members of the Committee as there was already a large bundle of published literature on the topic.

(4) In response to questions by Mr Vye, Mr Silk advised that Gifted was based on academic ability and Talented was based on ability in art, sport, music, drama etc. Mr Silk said that there was a grey area, at the age of 14 years, with the development of diplomas more high academic element. Within the annual census this information went into the same box, this meant a school may achieve 100% with their academic level but it could be only 70%, 30% may be the talented. Each

school identifies its top 10%, by schools identifying their own cohort. The teachers know which pupils had succeeded and who had improved and who would do well. Mr Silk said that it was his role to encourage schools to look at all areas of subjects. He advised that specialist schools were also reaching out in terms of outreach and working with Primary Schools. The links with higher education were supported through the links of the Regional Partnership. There was tremendous support through higher education institutions for Summer schools.

(5) The Chairman suggested there was a definite link with extended schools.

(6) Mr Burgess suggested to the Committee that all Members should check that their schools had the G&T programme and at least one governor was responsible for this. He advised that there was bespoke training for this role.

(7) In response to questions raised by Mr Burgess, Mr Silk advised that, the Gifted and Talented criterion on page 5 was provided by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCFS). Chatham House was a different Scheme and was a high achieving school. The school applied for the scheme under their redesignation. Mr Silk explained that the figure of 10% was a guideline, he advised schools to be flexible about this percentage. School Information was transferred with the child and with the transfer arrangement the child's ability was stressed, but their new school may have a higher bar for their 10%, however this did not mean that the child's ability changes, but it may mean the child would not be in the Gifted and Talented programme for that new school.

(8) In response to a question on Higher Education and University places at Oxford in particular for Gifted and Talented young people, Mr Silk advised that this was not an area of his expertise but added that he felt there was a need for effective links with Further Education and help for young people with interviews.

(9) In response to questions by Mr Cubitt, Mr Silk advised that a negative part of the Gifted and Talented programme was that young teachers do the course and then move on. The Rising Tide Lifts All Ships Initiative challenges all children so that they all raise their standard. It was a matter of changing where teachers were looking to challenge.

(10) Mr Silk explained that the monitoring of the Gifted and Talented programme was carried out in the individual schools by the Gifted and Talented Coordinator. They would identify for example 19 children with expertise and then they would be tracked using a data information spread sheet. In the new OFSTED Framework there was significant group looked at the Gifted and Talented. Colleagues are looking at this as a challenge. Mrs Whittle added that there needed to be good collaboration between Primary and Secondary schools. Every child had to be looked at as individuals and their progress tracked not just the Gifted and Talented pupils.

(11) In reply to a question by Mr Ozog, Mr Silk clarified that Gifted and Talented Programme identified children with hidden disadvantages. He gave the example of a Looked after child, Yugoslavian, placed in Kent that spoke Yugoslavian and Italian in year 10, the barriers were obvious but his aptitude to do well shone through and additional support was put in place, 18 months later he achieved the 2nd highest GCSE results in the school.

(12) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the comments made by Members be noted,
- (b) a progress report be submitted to this Committee in one year; and
- (c) the programme of activities which occur in Kent to support provision for Gifted and Talented pupils be noted.

15. Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) in Kent
(Item. B3)

(Report by Mr M Baker, Interim Director of Learning)

(Ms K Phillips, Policy Officer was present for this item)

(1) The Committee considered a report on the number of people who were Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) in Kent, and details of strategies in place to address the issues for this cohort of young people.

(2) Ms Phillips introduced the report highlighting the key issues. She advised that there was a move away from using the label NEETs as a noun as young people did not feel it was helpful to their needs and made assumptions about them. Many had qualifications and many had a level 2 qualification or above. There were 5.02% young people who were NEET in September 2009, which was better than September 2008's figure of 5.71%. Dover, Folkestone and Maidstone had the highest decrease. There was a strategy in place and a County Group with representation from the Children, Families and Education and Communities Directorates, the Learning Skills Council and Connexions. There were now effective NEETs groups at local level. The 'September Guarantee' Kent was ahead of the national benchmark. The plan was to look at a selection of key areas to establish why they are doing so well in NEETs or why they were struggling.

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

(4) Mr Burgess said that he felt the 'September Guarantee' was an excellent initiative as it had been proved that once a person had a job they were reluctant to take up training. He suggested that bespoke training to enhance/complement their work be looked into.

(5) In response to questions and comments by Mr Burgess, Ms Phillips explained that; in Part 1 of the Strategy there was a key focus on early identification. A lot of work was being undertaken with years 10 and 11 to start supporting young people before they reached 16 years old, a key transition stage. There was a need for more communication between schools and colleges in terms of making them aware of young person's particular issues too.

As well as a continued responsibility for reducing the young people who were NEET, from April 2010 the Local Authority would have the opportunity to scrutinize the quality of the post 16 provision, as the completion and succession rate could be improved. It was not enough to engage young people, then say the young people were off the NEETs register, there was a need to know what young people were

progressing 18 months on, how long they stayed in those positive opportunities. Ms Phillips said that she would be speaking to Connexions.

From now Schools would be monitored by OFSTED on Post 16 Progression Measure. The schools would be monitored on what the young people were doing when they leave the school and what qualification they had up to age 19 years. This was still being development by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). This was being piloted in other Local Authorities at present. Regarding early intervention, the Department of Children, Schools and Families had published an 'Information Advice and Guidance Strategy' (IAG), which looked at careers advice for primary school pupils, getting employers, local businesses involved and providing a personal tutor for each pupil. The Directorate would be taking this forward in future and how it implemented those. Kent Schools also had, through Connexions, an IAG health check on careers advice in schools, careers advice would be a key activity. There was an expectation that at least one member of the senior management team and a Governor had a lead role in this. Helping parents and families to get involved was key. Programmes to raise aspirations 'HE Compact' which worked with a number of schools mainly in Swale, was a programme where young people could gain UCAS points. Part of the events included the parents of those young people to help them understand the process.

(6) In response to a number of questions by Mr Wedgbury, Ms Phillips said that she would contact Connexions to acquire the specific data on the NEETs for the Committee outside the meeting. She advised that the proportion of long term NEET was low. Kent had a 'churn rate', ie those that were NEET for a few weeks or a few months. Connexions would be able to advise on those NEETs that were 'churn' NEETs that were on a revolving door. Ms Phillips concurred with Mr Wedgbury that a 50% failure rate in terms of completion was correct there was a need to look at the types of provision and the quality, the right providers in the right places needed to be looked at too. KCC would need to have a high level of rigour and scrutiny on the issues. At the age of 20 years they came off the NEETs Register and would transfer to 'Job Centre Plus'. There was work being undertaken on the transition to 'Job Centre Plus'. The Committee would welcome, in its monitoring role key indicators on what was happening.

(7) Mr Baker advised that when Connexions send a detailed report, a copy of the report plus officer commentary could be forwarded to Committee Members.

(8) Mr Vye referred to the work of a Community Youth Tutor, facilitated by the Youth Service in a school in his electoral division who he felt brought a different dimension for children who found the usual form of education difficult. This went a long way to helping disaffected young people. Ms Phillips commented that Canterbury had good examples of Community Youth Tutors of how they are trying to bring together education and curriculum together with Youth Services and integrated Youth service; we would like to extend these examples to other areas that would benefit.

(9) Mr Vye enquired whether the Voluntary Sector helped to provided young people with new skills. Mr Baker advised that the County was keen to increase the level of understanding of the level of engagement of the Voluntary sector to those that were NEET. Shepway Local Planning Forum, with colleagues from the Learning Skill Council, were in the process of mapping the level of involvement of the Voluntary Sector and understand what they were doing and apply this to other areas that may need it.

(10) In response to a question by Mr Ozog, Ms Phillips advised that the school would not have to track the child from 16 to 19 years. They would be judged on what the child was doing when they were 19 years. Connexions undertook in depth tracking of 16 to 19 years olds.

(13) In response to a question by the Chairman, Ms Phillips advised that Connexions were aware of NEETs and those becoming new NEETs. Connexions was tuned into the economic challenges. Connexions carried out a monthly monitoring report as well as a formal quarterly report which highlighted any changes which they would react to.

(14) RESOLVED that the suggestions made by Members and responses to questions and the progress made in reducing the number of Kent's young people who were NEET be noted.

16. Future Agenda Items - Verbal *(Item. B4)*

(Verbal report by Mr K Smith, Chairman of the Learning and Development POSC)

(1) The Chairman summarised the current list of issues identified where the POSC thought it would have impact on the work of the County Council at the last meeting held on 18 September as listed below, and the work that was due to commence on the Select Committee Topics; Extended Schools and Education Attainment of Pupils in Schools in Areas of high Deprived.

- Transition from Primary to Secondary School
- 14 -24 provision
- Universal coverage of Children's Centres.
- Performance at Key Stage 2 and reasons for low attainment.
- Support from KCC staff for early years settings.
- The creative curriculum.
- Safe and Secure learning environment
- Leadership in Schools
- Extended schools

(2) The Committee noted that the Select Committee on Educational Attainment had been agreed and would be lead by this Committee.

(3) The Chairman suggested that the Committee looked at the issue of Parents literacy and numeracy skills. The Committee was advised that the Chairman of Vulnerable Children and Partnerships had requested an in depth report on numeracy and literacy.

(4) Mr Pascoe suggested that the Committee revisited the Autistic Deficit Disorder Syndrome recommendations.

(5) Mr Vye suggested that there needed to be time given at each meeting for short update reports that had been previously considered by the Committee.

(6) It was suggested that there was a need for the Policy Overview Coordinating Committee to decide which POSC should lead on a particular issue to prevent duplication within the three Children, Families and Education POSCs.

(7) Mr Baker confirmed that progress report be submitted to a future meeting on standards and outcomes on 2008 and on the National Challenge.

(8) RESOLVED that the requests and comments made by the Committee Members be noted.

17. Select Committee - Update

(Item. C1)

(Report by Overview Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

(1) Members considered a report that outlined the progress with establishing a Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme 2009/2010.

(2) The Committee noted that the following topics would form part of the work programme for 2009/10

- Extended Schools
- Renewable Energy
- Dementia
- Educational Attainment of Pupils in Schools in Areas of High Deprivation

(3) The two Select Committees which were within the remit of the Children, Families and Education portfolio were Extended Schools (which would be a joint review with Communities POSC) and Education Attainment of Pupils in School in Areas of High Deprivation under the Learning and Development POSC.

(4) RESOLVED that the topics to be included in the Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme for 2009/2010 as set out in paragraph (2) above, be noted.