



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 21 September 2015

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Caroline Needham (Chair), Alan De'Ath, Elaine Chumnerly, Caroline Ffiske (Vice-Chair) and Donald Johnson

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Dennis Charman (Teacher Representative), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Philippa O'Driscoll (Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative)

Other Councillors: Sue Macmillan (Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Officers: Andrew Christie, Richard Stanley, Steve Miley, Mike Potter, Dave Rogers, and David Abbott

Guests: Diane Dixon, Michele Barratt, and Nikki Pieniek-Jones

1. **MINUTES**

Updates

Page 5 – **Support to Multi-Lingual Families** – the Chair requested a written update on the outstanding actions related to supplementary schools and supporting learning English language skills for parents.

ACTION: Richard Stanley

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue Fennimore (who was attending CSERS PAC scheduled for the same time) and Nadia Taylor.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Dennis Charman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Governor of Melcome Primary School. Philippa O'Driscoll declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Chair of Governors at St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public questions during this item.

5. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Andrew Christie presented the report that provided an overview of recent developments of relevance to the Committee and took questions from Members.

Operation Makesafe

Andrew Christie noted that training was being developed for Council staff in areas such as environmental health and licensing enforcement. The police would also deliver training and support to businesses through their Safer Neighbourhood Teams. There will be a formal launch and roll-out of the programme in the borough in October. Members requested an update on the launch outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Andrew Christie

Provisional Exam Results 2015

Members asked if the results breakdown could include national benchmarking. Officers responded that a more detailed report would come to the Committee with benchmarking and next year would include the Progress 8 performance measure.

Summer Activities for Young People

Members noted that the offer was very good but the start and end times of activities varied considerably. If activities did not cover a full day they were not suitable for the majority of working parents.

Children and Families Act Implementation

Members had concerns about the eligibility criteria for Education, Health, and Care plans in light of the fact that 136 requests for assessment were received but only 76 plans were issued in the last academic year. Officers responded that they would provide more guidance on the information needed from parents.

ACTION: Ian Heggs

6. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE

Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Member for Children and Education, provided an overview of recent developments of relevance to the Committee and took questions from Members.

Since the previous meeting of the Committee, Councillor Macmillan had undertaken a number of visits to schools, children's centres, and FE colleges. Councillor Macmillan had also attended a workshop on the Focus on Practice initiative and suggested the Committee should consider the initiative at a future meeting.

ACTION: David Abbott

The SEN school transport service had been reconfigured with input from the Travel Care and Support working party and performance was being carefully monitored.

Councillor Macmillan had also visited Kidzania and was working with them to develop a careers programme for primary schools.

7. CHILDCARE TASK GROUP - 8-6 EXTENDED NURSERIES PILOT

Mike Potter introduced Diane Dixon from the Family and Childcare Trust who led the extended nurseries pilot in the region. Also in attendance were Michele Barratt (Head of Vanessa Nursery School and Cathnor Park Children's Centre) and Nikki Pieniek-Jones (Strategic Improvement Leader at Colville Primary School) who took part in the pilot.

Diane Dixon informed members that the pilot tested whether an extended, more flexible early education offer could be delivered in school nurseries, providing additional local placements for two, three, and four year olds between the hours of 8am and 6pm.

The pilot covered 21 schools across 8 boroughs. The first steps for schools was to conduct a demand survey of local parents (not just parents of that school). They also tested whether the current arrangements available to parents met their needs. It was clear that there was significant demand for a longer day. For parents, organising childcare is often a challenge and they have to rely on a patchwork of provision (from professional care to family support) that can change day-to-day. That fragmentation was not ideal for the parents or the children. Surveys showed that parents wanted to keep their children in the schools but they didn't want them to be in 'education' before and after the normal school day. Diane Dixon believed it was important to deliver the foundation stage but in a sensitive way that was not overly intensive for children.

A key pillar of the pilot was to support schools in looking at making their provision financially sustainable. Tools were developed with schools to enable them to produce clear financial modelling. A number of the schools found that going through that process was illuminating and in some cases highlighted serious cases of under-utilisation.

Michele Barratt noted that Vanessa Nursery found it very useful to go through business planning and financial modelling. As schools were already paying for general costs (buildings, energy etc.) they had an advantage over other

providers. They also looked at using a sliding scale for payment to partially subsidise lower income families and vulnerable children. She also noted that, while parents did not want to change established childcare arrangements, if care was provided at the Nursery in the first instance (through the 15 hours of free care) then it was likely they would continue using that provision.

Nikki Pieniek-Jones informed members that Colville Primary School were very keen to take part in the pilot. There was significant demand from parents and from January the school had opened after-school provision so the pilot just added flexibility in addition to what was already offered. Reception and nursery had been placed together to focus on early years content. Financial planning had been difficult at first but the costings showed that there was budget available for an extra staff member to support the nursery. Overall the pilot had been very successful.

Members asked how extended provision in schools would affect childminders. Diane Dixon responded that the Small Business and Enterprise Act allowed childminders to operate off domestic premises for half a week which allowed them to work with schools. A major challenge for schools had been how to staff the extra hours. There was potential for schools to use childminders to support their staffing needs.

Mike Potter reported that officers were attending the next meeting of the Heads Executive to talk about rolling out this provision more broadly across the borough. It was hoped that a viable group of schools would take up the offer.

Members asked if the extra provision would be suitable for children with SEN as childcare was often a challenge for those families. Michele Barratt responded that Vanessa Nursery offered a very high level of support for children with SEN and their families. Now the school was considering how to fund needs that required an additional adult to support. The school felt it was important for children to be able to access the same provision as their friends without their parents incurring huge costs.

Members suggested Governors could play a significant role in financial modelling and market testing. Governor recruitment could even focus on attracting individuals with business and accounting skills to better support Headteachers in those areas. Michele Barratt responded that some of the Governors at Vanessa Nursery had already contributed a lot in those areas but not all schools would have that advantage. Members reported that some companies actively sought out charity board roles for their staff and their performance in those roles was part of their internal assessment processes. Local businesses could be encouraged to place members of staff with relevant skills in Governor roles.

Members asked how do Academies factored into the new provision. Diane Dixon noted that she was working with ArkSwift to create a nursery for all three Ark academies in the area that would be 8-6.

Councillor Macmillan asked how the provision from schools compared with the PVI sector. Diane Dixon responded that, looking at the local market, the unit cost was around £2-3 as compared with a market rate of around £8-10. The low unit cost meant that some parents could be subsidised while still providing a reasonable rate to the majority of parents.

The Chair thanked Diane Dixon, Michele Barratt, and Nikki Pieniek-Jones for attending and stated that she hoped H&F would be at the forefront of providing flexible childcare that worked for children, parents, and schools.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

8. THE WORKLOAD OF TEACHERS

Richard Stanley and Dave Rogers presented the report that provided an overview of the issues facing teachers in the borough and national trends and concerns in relation to their workloads and the impact that has on recruitment and retention.

There had been a national response on this issue from Ofsted, titled 'Mythbusters' that aimed to clarify what was expected from an Ofsted inspection. The Secretary of State for Education also acknowledged concerns in this area and highlighted a number of actions that schools could take to mitigate problems.

Ultimately it was the school leader and the Governors who determined the expectations around what teachers should be delivering. The Council can influence through partnership groups and promoting the value of doing regular surveys on work-life balance and the importance of acting on those findings. The Council also promoted the Healthy Schools initiative.

Feedback was gathered from unions on the report and there was a sense that the national guidance had not been properly promoted within schools.

Dave Rogers noted that the schools HR team had built up strong working relationships with both schools and unions and they provided access to occupational health services, counselling, and promoted early intervention of managers to resolve issues of stress before they became a major issue.

Members asked if significant numbers of teachers had left local authority schools for Academies and if Academies treated staff any differently. Officers responded that movement data was not available as Academies did not have to publish turnover figures but unions reported that there was no significant movement in either direction. Teachers tended to either move school for a promotion or leave the profession entirely.

A Member who worked as a teacher noted that his school had lost six members of staff that had not been replaced, the work was simply spread to other staff.

Ian Heggs informed the Committee that a strategy on workload had been produced to take to Headteachers and he would feedback to a future meeting.

ACTION: Ian Heggs

Members asked how the Council supported individual teachers. Officers responded that a comprehensive training programme was provided in the NQT year that included organisation and managing of workloads. A framework of training was also available that focused on other key stages of a teacher's career that went all the way up to senior leadership.

Members asked if all schools were required to have wellbeing policies to support staff. Officers responded that they were but some were less formal than others, it was largely at the discretion of the school.

Philippa O'Driscoll noted that at St. Augustine's had a cross-cutting curriculum that encouraged teachers of different age groups to interacted and reduced isolation.

Members asked if teachers could do some form of job-sharing. Officers responded that due to the nature of the job there were constraints but if schools continued to struggle with recruitment they would have to offer more flexible packages to attract the right staff.

Dennis Charman noted that the pressure on school accountability had made schools more conservative in the way they hired. Performance management made job sharing difficult.

Members suggested that schools could be given guidance on how to write wellbeing policies. All schools policies could include the impact on wellbeing and work-life balance.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

9. SUPPORTING CARE LEAVERS - THE INDEPENDENT VISITORS SCHEME

Steve Miley presented the report that described the role of the independent visitor's scheme along with other support services aimed at supporting the transition of Care Leavers to independence.

Members were informed that independent visitors were only used in a minority of cases and that the service wanted the majority of young people in care to have their foster carer fulfil that role. It was an important service for those that used it though, giving young people a sense of self-worth that someone took an interest in them. Officers did want to expand the service slightly by recruiting more volunteers, particularly younger men.

Members asked how the service was promoted to young people. Steve Miley responded that it would be discussed with their social worker.

Members asked what steps had been taken to recruit more volunteers. Steve Miley responded that recruitment was in progress but it had been delayed due to problems with managed services.

The Chair noted that officers should explore publicising recruitment through social media and other online channels to attract younger people to the service.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair requested that the following items were added to the work programme:

- Summer holiday childcare provision (including SEN).
- An update on 8-6 extended nurseries for summer 2016.
- An update on SEN provision.
- The schools performance report in January should include information on Progress 8 and include national benchmarking.

The Chair requested that the next meeting of the Committee took place at Queensmill School so parents and teachers could attend for the SEN passenger transport item. It was also suggested that the headteacher could give an update on the work that the school has done around SEN.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 23 November 2015.

Meeting started: 7.03 pm
Meeting ended: 9.21 pm

Chair

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