

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

# Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



**Monday 9 November 2020**

## **PRESENT**

**Committee members:** Councillors Sharon Holder (Chair), Lucy Richardson, Alexandra Sanderson and Asif Siddique

**Co-opted members:** Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), Matt Jenkins (Teacher Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

## **Cabinet Member**

Councillor Larry Culhane, Cabinet Member for Children and Education

## **Officers**

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)  
Bev Sharpe (AD Family Services)  
Mandy Lawson (AD SEND)  
Jan Parnell (Director of Education)  
Jo Pymont (AD Performance and Improvement)  
Sarah Bright (AD Children's Commissioning)  
Fawad Bhatti (Policy Officer)  
David Abbott (Head of Governance)

## **Guests:**

Denise Fox, Fulham Cross Girls School

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Loveday.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Lucy Richardson (she entered the meeting at 6.58pm).

## **2. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair carried out a roll call to confirm attendance. Attendance is listed above. There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked for an explainer of mental health provision in the borough be circulated to members – and also asked if officers could provide information on the demographics of people who were accessing mental health services in the borough. Mandy Lawson said demographic data would be covered by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment due to be completed by December and published in the Spring. Mandy Lawson also noted that officers were in the process of mapping local mental health provision and would be updating the SEND local offer soon. And officers were planning to do something similar for mental health services.

### **RESOLVED**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public questions were received.

## **5. H&F TEACHING COMMISSION**

Fawad Bhatti, Policy Officer, presented the item which introduced the new H&F Teaching Commission, looking at how to recruit and retain the best teachers and school staff for the borough.

Denise Fox, Headteacher of Fulham Cross Girls School and Chair of the Commission, and Councillor Larry Culhane, Cabinet Member for Children and Education and the Cabinet sponsor for the Commission, were also in attendance.

Councillor Larry Culhane said the Council was committed to giving young people the best start in life and teachers were key to that. He wanted to make H&F the best place to teach. He also spoke highly of the commissioners who included great local headteachers and leading lights in the education world.

Denise Fox, Chair of the Commission, said she was honoured to lead the commission. She had spent 40 years teaching in H&F and had been at Fulham Cross Girls School since 1985. The central issue for her was stopping the trend of teachers moving out of London.

Matt Jenkins welcomed the commission. He asked what the balance would be between looking at recruitment but retention. He noted that Ealing Council had looked at a 'workload kitemark' for schools which focussed on lowering unnecessary

workload for school staff. Denise agreed that retention was incredibly important. At Fulham Cross they had been doing a lot of work around the mental health of teachers and were developing a Health and Wellbeing charter looking at workload.

Matt Jenkins suggested the commission should invite the National Education Union (NEU) to take part. Denise Fox said the local NEU representative worked at Fulham Cross Academy and would be involved.

Nandini Ganesh asked if SEN was on the commission's agenda and if there was an SEN representative. Denise Fox said she would ensure that special schools were closely involved.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the statistics in the presentation included special schools. Fawad Bhatti said the statistics included all maintained schools.

Councillor Lucy Richardson thought the Ealing kitemark was a good idea and asked if the commission was looking at different policies across London. Denise Fox said they would be looking at good practice across the Country.

Jan Parnell, Director of Education, welcomed the commission and said it could incorporate existing initiatives like the workload reduction pilots endorsed by the NEU. She added that Teach First said H&F was the go-to borough for Teach First graduates.

Committee members asked what the key factor for retention issues in the borough was. Denise Fox said from her experience the key issues were workload, pay and housing. A number of teachers moved out of London when they started having children to places with more affordable housing.

The Chair summed up the discussion and said she looked forward to the commission's report next year.

## **6. FREE SCHOOL MEALS - OCTOBER HALF-TERM BRIEFING**

Sarah Bright, AD for Children's Commissioning, presented the update on free school meals in H&F over the October half term break. She noted that the Council had initially hoped for support from the Government but the Wednesday before half term they announced that no ongoing support would be provided. The Council quickly pulled together a plan for distributing vouchers to support families over half term. Now officers were looking at how to ensure families can be supported over the winter period.

Sarah Bright added that there had been an announcement over the weekend from the Government promising some support for the most vulnerable and a holiday activity scheme. Further details were due to be released shortly.

Councillor Larry Culhane said he was proud that the Council could step up and take action, despite years of austerity. He thanked Sarah Bright and her team for their

hard work, Tesco who turned around vouchers in hours rather than days, and schools who got the vouchers out to the families who needed them the most.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson gave her thanks to everyone who worked so hard on this. The Chair also gave her thanks – especially to schools and the businesses that supported the scheme.

## **7. OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Bev Sharpe, AD Family Services, and Jo Pymont, AD Performance and Improvement, presented the report which gave an overview of the Ofsted framework for inspecting Children Services, improvements from the last inspection of H&F Children Services and the feedback from the annual engagement meeting in September. This item was taken with Item 8 which provided an overview of the framework for inspecting of Children Services, including the interim arrangements put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked if there was a data dashboard for children's safeguarding. Bev Sharpe said officers had been trying to develop a multi-agency dashboard but it was complicated due to the fact it was a tri-borough service. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board held data but it was not as sophisticated as it could be. Councillor Richardson noted that the Adults dashboard was good and very accessible. Officers added that internally, the local safeguarding data available was quite sophisticated and weekly trend data was sent to senior leaders.

Nadia Taylor congratulated officers on the service's 'strong good' rating. She asked if the case of Jonty Bravery (who made international news after throwing a child from the balcony of the Tate Modern) was part of the inspection, as he was partly in the care of the borough. Bev Sharpe said Ofsted didn't look at the case when they completed their assessments. A serious case review was being conducted and was nearing its conclusion. It would come to the committee in the new year.

Members of the committee asked for more information on the self-assessment. Bev Sharpe said the self-assessment was an opportunity for services to talk about their strengths and areas for development. She said she was pleased with this year's self-evaluation and the service had shown good progress since the last inspection, despite the challenges of Covid.

Nandini Ganesh noted that the Haven children's home had previously received an 'inadequate' rating and asked for an update on progress there. Mandy Lawson said the Haven had an inspection in December 2019 and the rating was raised to 'requires improvement'. Ofsted visited again on 30 October 2020 for an assurance visit and the outcome was very positive. An improvement board had been in place for over a year now.

Councillor Asif Siddique requested that the report on the Haven be emailed to members. Mandy Lawson said she would take advice and would share it if she was able to.

**ACTION: Mandy Lawson**

**8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES INSPECTION FRAMEWORKS**

This item was taken together with item 7.

**9. EDUCATION SERVICE UPDATE REPORT 2020**

Jan Parnell, Director of Education, presented the report that provided an update on the OFSTED categorisations of schools prior to the pandemic and the 'Safe return to school' for the September / October half term. She highlighted some of the Education service's key priorities and progress against those areas, including:

- Peer to peer reviews
- Development of the Learning Partnership
- Supporting children with SEN
- Curriculum development

Matt Jenkins asked if the peer-to-peer work currently in primary schools would be extended to secondary and further education. Jan Parnell said she wanted to move in that direction because the outcomes were good, but the Council would need to ensure academies were willing to pay for the support.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked if there were awards or badges that could be adopted to show what schools were doing around the environment and recycling. She also asked if the Council had external partners for outdoor learning.

Jan Parnell said the Council had partnered with local partners like Urbanwise on the climate education programme and partners like Hammersmith Urban Garden Association on environmental education. Regarding accreditation, she noted that the Council had been working with the UN through Educate Global. Jan Parnell said she could provide a briefing note on their work with the UN.

**ACTION: Jan Parnell**

Committee members asked if there had been any change in numbers of parents and children taking up elective home education during the pandemic.

Jan Parnell said there had been a spike in elective home education since the Covid pandemic began. Since August 2020 there had been 97 new referrals compared with just 38 in the previous year's entire autumn term. But that spike had calmed since the half term. Officers were monitoring the situation and working to ensure that schools spoke to parents about the benefits of school education.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked if the Council had to maintain a register of home-schooled children. Jan Parnell said it was recommended and H&F had a robust register. Schools notified the Council when children came off their registers and officers followed up on any children missing from education. H&F had lobbied the Government to strengthen the law around elective home education.

Councillor Sanderson asked if officers expected a similar surge in the number of unregistered schools. Jan Parnell said the Council had a duty to report unregistered schools and had recently received some additional funding to investigate out of school settings. An evaluated report on this project was expected at the beginning of next term.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the Council could ensure home-schooled children were being fed. Jan Parnell said it was an area that should be looked at – when children were taken out of school, they were effectively opted out of any schools meals programmes.

Councillor Sanderson asked if there were routine checks in care homes and how often they were done. Mandy Lawson said Ofsted usually visited twice a year unannounced but not during lockdown. Officers also carry out regular visits during the year. Councillor Sanderson requested a report on Covid and care leavers at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Mandy Lawson**

The Chair thanked Jan Parnell and the officers in the Education team for their help in keeping the borough's schools open.

#### **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2021.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm  
Meeting ended: 8.18 pm

**Chair** .....

**Contact officer** David Abbott  
Head of Governance  
Tel 07776 672877  
E-mail: david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk