

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 25 March 2019

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Alan De'Ath (Chair), Lucy Richardson, Alexandra Sanderson, Asif Siddique and Mark Loveday

Co-opted members: Vic Daniels (Parent Governor Representative), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), Matt Jenkins (Teacher Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers:

Kevin Gordon (Head of Assets, Operations and Programmes)
Christine Edwards (Principal Officer, School Place Planning)
Mandy Lawson (Assistant Director for SEND)
Steve Miley (Director of Children's Services)
Jan Parnell (Assistant Director of Education)
Lesley Leak (School Advisor)
Keith Tysoe (School Advisor)
David Abbott (Scrutiny Manager)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Eleanor Allen.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018

Jan Parnell (Assistant Director of Education), Lesley Leak (School Advisor), and Keith Tysoe (School Advisor) presented the annual school performance report that detailed the outcomes of the Summer 2018 assessments and examinations in the borough's primary and secondary schools. The report also gave an overview of the current position with regard to Ofsted school inspections. Jan Parnell noted that this was the first set of results since the education service had become a sovereign service in April 2018.

Lesley Leak took the Committee through the report and highlighted the following key points:

- Overall performance at Key Stages 1-4 in schools continues to be above national averages for state funded schools and in line with national at Key Stage 5.
- In primary schools, at Key Stage 1 and 2, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average in all three subjects.
- Hammersmith and Fulham ranked 6th nationally and third in Inner London for the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- In secondary schools, the percentage of students achieving all key indicators is above the national average, and furthermore Hammersmith and Fulham was ranked top in Inner London for performance in: the English Baccalaureate (GCSE grades 9-5) as well as for GCSE grades 9-5 with English and mathematics; and is joint top for Attainment 8 and second for Progress 8 in Inner London.
- The gap in outcomes for children in receipt of the pupil premium remains smaller than the national gap at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
- The proportion of schools judged to be good or outstanding has improved and is currently above the published national average.

Lesley Leak noted that the borough had relatively high proportions of pupils receiving free school meals (22% in primary and 19% in secondary), pupils speaking English as an additional language (48%), and pupils from an ethnic minority background (73%). The Council saw this diversity as a key strength and that was supported by the strong performance figures.

Lesley Leak informed the Committee that, regarding Ofsted inspections, almost all schools inspected since March 2018 had either remained 'good' or moved up to 'outstanding'. Only one school, Burlington Danes, had moved down. Overall it was an extremely strong picture.

Keith Tysoe addressed the Committee to speak about the attainment of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). He noted that the borough's progress in this area had been commended in a recent Local Area Review. There was further work to do on inclusion - and that would be a focus over next year - but overall SEND was doing well and was well supported.

Jan Parnell outlined the Council's key priorities for schools for the upcoming year. Since becoming a sovereign service there had been a period of intense work with schools and the team had established really close working relationships with them. There was now full participation at Schools Forum and 30 schools regularly attend primary partnership meetings. A lot of effort had been put into working together with schools and this co-working or co-production would continue into the future. Part of this included seconding some headteachers from both the primary and secondary phases to work with the Council on key education projects and programmes.

Together with headteachers, the service had set up a programme of peer support and review called the Learning Partnership. Lesley Leak added that the team had been promoting the idea of 'self-improving schools' - and a pilot was running with 17 schools involved.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and said he would like to write to all schools on behalf of the Committee congratulating them on their successes.

ACTION: Jan Parnell

The Chair noted that it would be good to include not just A-Levels but other qualifications like NVQs. Jan Parnell said officers would get the latest vocational figures and add them in - but commented that very few sixth-forms offered other qualifications now. Vocational education was the subject of a national review and locally it was part of the Council's 14 to 19 strategy.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson congratulated officers and schools on the impressive results. She asked about the work of the Learning Partnership and if it would trickle down to all levels of school staff. Jan Parnell said the pilot was focussed on headteachers, but they wanted it to move down to other levels too - there was huge value in linking-up across different levels and different schools.

Nandini Ganesh commented that parents of SEND pupils warned each other against applying to 'outstanding' schools because there was a feeling they wouldn't have many SEND pupils there and wouldn't be able to provide the necessary support. Keith Tysoe said there was an issue with inclusivity at some schools and Ofsted were beginning to make it more of a focus of their inspection framework. Jan Parnell said the SEND team and the school improvement team worked very closely together and were committed to improve inclusivity and pathways for children.

Matt Jenkins asked how the new Ofsted framework would impact on future inspections. Lesley Leak thought, based on anecdotal evidence, that it probably wouldn't make much difference. Schools are really on board thinking about improving the depth and breadth of their curriculum. She felt it should be better in some ways - there was less of a focus on data. The team would be monitoring and supporting schools throughout the transition.

The Chair asked how schools had settled into the new systems. Jan Parnell said schools had adapted well overall, but officers were keen to spread good practice across all schools. Lesley Leak said primary schools were very solid on core subjects - the challenge was on broader subjects. Schools would have to come up with creative ways of showing progress.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the performance figures included special schools. Keith Tysoe said they included all pupils who took GCSEs or A-Levels. Nandini Ganesh asked that BTECs were included in future as many SEND pupils took them.

Councillor Lucy Richardson, asked how the Council was working with the new careers guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions. Jan Parnell said she was getting the 14-19 group together to look at implementation. Councillor Richardson said she was keen to hear more about this area and suggested it as a future item.

ACTION: David Abbott

Councillor Mark Loveday congratulated the borough's schools, pupils, staff, and parents for a powerful set of results. He highlighted the secondary school table on page 26 of the report - and asked what officers were thinking of in terms of improving attainment at Burlington Danes, one of the borough's largest schools. Jan Parnell noted the school was an academy, but the Council did have a good relationship with Ark (the academy sponsor). There had been a change of headship last Easter and Ark had put in additional support at strategic levels. Officers had met with the Dioceses and Ark's senior leadership - and the school improvement team were asked to sit on their improvement board. Officers were confident that the school would find a solution.

Councillor Loveday asked when the next Ofsted inspection would be. Officers said it could be any time between 2 years and 30 months but there would be a monitoring visit in-between that would give a sense of direction. Ark had a good track record of improvement. The Chair requested an update on the situation after the next monitoring visit.

ACTION: Jan Parnell / Lesley Leak

Councillor Asif Siddique asked if the Council had the resources to maintain this work. Jan Parnell said the team's approach was to harness the wealth of talent and expertise in the borough's schools as effectively as possible. Steve Miley added that there were fewer resources in the education system today - headteachers would say they were stretched. The Council's role was to support schools and there was a great team in place who were able to target support where it was most needed and most effective.

A resident and Governor of a school in the borough commented that since H&F came out of the Tri-borough arrangement she had seen a huge improvement in the quality of support from the Council.

Nandini Ganesh asked why William Morris was given a 'requires improvement' judgement by Ofsted when they offered a wide range of courses and were very inclusive. Jan Parnell agreed that they were a great institution but there was room to improve. There were some issues at the school such as teachers putting pupils forward for very hard A-Levels without the necessary support - and some issues with teaching in certain areas. The school improvement team were working intensively with them. Lesley Leak noted that the school had come a long way since that inspection.

RESOLVED

That members of the Policy and Accountability Committee reviewed and commented on the school performance details in the report and the school improvement priorities identified.

5. SCHOOL ORGANISATION STRATEGY 2019

Kevin Gordon (Head of Assets, Operations and Programmes) and Christine Edwards (Principal Officer, School Place Planning) presented the Council's draft School Organisation Strategy for 2019 which provided the Council, schools, and residents a five-year strategic plan on the delivery of school places through all phases across the borough. Kevin Gordon noted that this was the first organisation strategy to be produced since the department became a sovereign service in April 2018.

Kevin Gordon gave some historical context, noting that in past years the GLA had inaccurately forecast an increase in the pupil roll which led a number of Councils in London, including H&F, to build additional schools in preparation. In 2018 the GLA had identified problems with the forecast and the updated figures showed lower pupil numbers for the borough.

The Chair asked if officers were confident of the latest projections. Kevin Gordon said the GLA had been very open about the methodology that they got wrong - and since then a number of independent groups had verified the latest figures. There were however various factors that impacted these things that were almost impossible to predict (e.g. policy changes, the impacts of Brexit).

Councillor Mark Loveday said the Council should take the figures from the GLA and apply our own experience. He gave the example of the recent riverside development where large numbers of children were predicted but, in reality, relatively few families occupied the units. Kevin Gordon said officers were taking those issues into consideration - particularly for the ongoing Old Oak development. Officers had asked for more precise projections of the number of units and sizes of homes to make more accurate predictions.

Kevin Gordon informed the Committee that within five years there would be a significant primary surplus of 26.4%. The secondary roll was within expected levels with a 6.3% surplus by 2023. In terms of financial planning, the Council would be supporting schools over the next five years to help them deal with these issues. There had been a real terms reduction in school funding nationally - calculated by the IFS as a reduction of 8 percent. Officers were working with them on methods to share costs and perhaps reduce their pupil admission number (PAN).

Vic Daniels asked how reducing the PAN reduced costs for a school. Officers explained that a school with a one and a half forms of entry each year would have to pay for two teachers but would only get 75 percent of the funding that a school with two full forms of entry would get. Education funding was largely driven by pupil numbers.

Matt Jenkins asked if falling rolls would lead to redundancies. Kevin Gordon said officers and schools were looking at solutions like sharing roles when they become vacant.

Vic Daniels noted that school funding lagged behind actual pupil numbers as it was based on the previous year's census. He asked if this gave schools enough time to consider cost savings. Kevin said this was part of the reason for the strategy - to get it in front of schools as soon as possible so they can think about the future and plan to remain viable.

Kevin Gordon informed the Committee that part of the solution would be better marketing for the borough's primary schools. Officers wanted to better understand parent choice and hoped to encourage more to use the excellent community schools available. The strategy also gave the Council an evidence base to show the DfE there was no need for new Academies or Free School to be built in the borough - as they would put further pressure on the system. Kevin added that officers would be carrying out further modelling on our special schools to ensure they were viable in future years.

Councillor Mark Loveday noted that nearly 1 in 3 primary schools places were surplus in the south of the borough - and that had been the situation for a number of years. He asked why officers were confident that could change dramatically, given the historical trends. Steve Miley said this report represented a projection, based on GLA figures, assuming nothing else changes. There were a range of assumptions built in to the model. The commitment from the Council was that it would support schools to increase the numbers on roll and help them become more sustainable. There would always be challenges given the boroughs location - London had significant mobility and the independent sector was very strong in certain areas. A number of children who lived in the borough were educated outside - but they could come back with the right incentive. The Council would be working with local schools to make them 'schools of choice'.

The Chair asked for more detail on what the Council could do to get parents to send their children to community schools rather than private schools. Steve Miley said it was common to see private primary school children to go to community secondary schools and there was no reason why that couldn't be flipped around. Parents were faced with so much choice and often first choices weren't driven by real data but by perception. The Council was confident of the quality of schools in the borough - the challenge was to do more to market our schools to parents and really show off their strengths.

Councillor Mark Loveday asked what officers considered the appropriate PAN numbers for the north and south of the borough for the next five years. Kevin Gordon said the general guidance from the DfE was that an acceptable level of surplus places was between 5 and 15 percent.

Councillor Loveday said one of the recommendations was to reduce the PAN of various schools and asked what numbers officers thought were appropriate. Steve Miley said the Council would be looking to reduce the surplus to around 10 percent.

Vic Daniels supported the idea of marketing the boroughs schools better - the borough's schools were consistently high performing so there was a lot to work with.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson said she would like to understand the impact of the private sector on the school economy - particularly in the south of the borough. She went on to ask if the development dividend mentioned in the strategy was from development on school sites only or all developments. Kevin Gordon explained that for all major developments, the developer had to make CIL contributions and the department would be looking to use some of that money to improve the school estate.

Councillor Sanderson asked what happened if developments move more quickly than expected. Kevin Gordon said the Education team worked closely with the planning team to avoid any surprises. Major developments typically had long lead in times.

Councillor Sanderson asked if there had been any interested parties looking to open new academies or free schools in the borough recently. Kevin Gordon said there had been a number of enquires. Steve Miley added that now the DfE do require that there is a local need. That wasn't always the case and the borough had suffered from unplanned growth of schools in previous years. The Council was in a better position to control growth now.

A resident raised concerns about the projections for new families coming into the borough. They said projections had been made for the Imperial Wharf development but families didn't move in. The Council needed to learn the lessons of the past. Kevin Gordon said officers were working closely with housing colleagues to understand these issues. It was also Council policy now to increase social housing. There was a real challenge to provide genuinely affordable housing in London but the Council and the Mayor of London had strict rules and requirements in place which should help.

Councillor Lucy Richardson said she was interested in the work to make schools more attractive to parents - e.g. promoting partnerships with Imperial. She asked what the Council was doing to make sure local children were the first to benefit - and ensure there were visible pathways for parents. Steve Miley responded that this work was still in the early stages but officers and headteachers had recently met with Imperial to discuss expanding on the Fulham College Boys model. Officers and headteachers also wanted to involve the wider business and arts community to inspire young people and get them to see the opportunities available.

A resident asked if the Council had considered the needs of the borough's foreign population. There were many families who wanted to send their children to schools like The Fulham Bilingual school which taught in both English and French. Kevin Gordon said the team knew how popular The Fulham Bilingual was and it would definitely be considered. Councillor Larry Culhane added that part of the research was looking at what schools need to do and look like to attract parents. The Council had changed the way it worked with schools to be a true partnership - led by headteachers. Marketing schools was area that headteachers said was important so the Council was committed to working on it. Councillor Culhane also said that he

knew first-hand how disruptive the closure of a school could be and the Administration would not do it.

Nandini Ganesh noted that the borough's special schools had a large non-resident population. She asked if that was of financial benefit to the Council. Mandy Lawson confirmed that H&F was a net importer as the borough had such good special schools but it was cost-neutral.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the Council prioritised H&F residents for special school places. Mandy Lawson said all special schools in the borough were maintained schools, so the Council was the admissions authority. As part of the move away from the shared services arrangements the team had really improved its processes and pipeline so officers knew what places were needed and when. That allowed them to do everything they could within the law to reserve places for residents.

Councillor Mark Loveday said he couldn't support the document. Stark figures had been presented on falling rolls and there were real concerns about place planning in the south of the borough. He felt the solutions offered had been tried before and hadn't made a significant difference. Councillor Loveday said he couldn't endorse the strategy without seeing the figures that sat behind it and some targets for some of the solutions mentioned.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson said she supported the strategy and didn't share concerns about shared sites as she assumed that would only be considered as a last resort.

Councillor Lucy Richardson noted that, as a parent, she had seen the real disruption that closing a school could have on children and sharing a site was preferable to closing a school.

The Chair said he welcomed the comments from colleagues but noted the report presented a draft strategy that would be modified before being agreed by Cabinet. He asked that officers sent a final version of the report once it was formally agreed and highlight any changes.

RESOLVED

The Committee reviewed and commented on the draft Schools Organisation Strategy 2019.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.30 pm

Chair

Contact officer David Abbott
Scrutiny Manager
Governance and Scrutiny
Tel 020 8753 2063
E-mail: david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk