

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

16 January 2018

Commenced: 3.30 pm

Terminated: 5.35pm

Present:

Councillor L Travis (Chair)	
Councillor JM Fitzpatrick	
Councillor Peet	
Councillor M Smith	
Paul Jacques	ASCL
Jon Murray	Head Teacher, St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Sandra Stewart	Borough Solicitor
James Thomas	Director of Childrens Services
Bob Berry	Assistant Director, Learning
Tom Wilkinson	Assistant Director, Finance
Catherine Moseley	Head of Access
Julie Waterhouse	Access Manager
Helen Mellor	Head of Pupil Support Service

Apologies **for** **Councillor R Welsh**
Absence:

17. DEATH OF THE EXECUTIVE LEADER, COUNCILLOR KIERAN QUINN

The Chair announced with great sadness the recent, sudden death of the Executive Leader of the Council, Councillor Kieran Quinn, who passed away on 25 December 2017.

Those in attendance joined the Chair in a few moments silence to pay their respects and remember Councillor Quinn.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members of the Board.

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 24 October 2017 were approved as a correct record, with the removal of Councillor Robinson from the list of persons present.

20. EDUCATION WELFARE STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Learning, outlining the functions and statutory requirements of the Local Authority that the Education Welfare Service undertake.

It was explained that since 2011, the Education Welfare Service had been a traded service, offering support with attendance to schools in the Borough. This had meant that there had been a change to the nature of the relationship with schools. The Service had to be creative to be able to offer support and advice whilst trying to ensure good practice and that statutory requirements were met.

In terms of Statutory Functions of the LA, the report gave details of:

- School Attendance in both Primary and Secondary Schools in Tameside;
- Overall absence levels in Tameside, including reasons for absence;
- Free School Meals eligibility; and
- Penalty notices and prosecutions.

Information was also given in respect of Children Missing Education and the robust procedures in place to enable the LA to meet its duty in relation to these children.

With regard to Children Missing Education, it was explained that the number of Children Missing Education had increased significantly over the last five years and details were given of a recent Ofsted inspection which recognised that this was an area that Tameside met its obligations well.

The report also outlined work ongoing with other agencies to address the increasing numbers of children receiving Elective Home Education (EHE), including the recent introduction of a number of strategies and interventions, working with schools, other agencies and parents to enable and encourage pupils to remain in schools where EHE may not be suitable. Initial analysis of 2017/18 thus far suggested the number of EHE pupils in Tameside was reducing which was in contrast to the national picture. The most recent Ofsted for safeguarding acknowledged that this was also an area in which Tameside met its obligations well.

In terms of safeguarding, it was reported that the teams were an integral part of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). They worked very closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) delivering whole school child protection training to all primary and secondary schools as well as being part of the LSCB local training pool and sitting as lead or deputy on the sub groups for the board.

The team had responsibility for facilitating the education of asylum/refugees and one member of staff worked with the Gateway programme ensuring young people who come to the UK via the Home Office were supported in school with language and teaching techniques. They ensured the children and staff had information that would enable them to settle well in their local community.

With regard to Child Employment Entertainment/Chaperone Licences, Board members were informed that Education Welfare also had statutory duties in relation to children in employment and entertainment in line with current legislation by-laws and guidance. This included the issue of licenses for modelling, performing and body of persons for productions.

The Service raised awareness among employers, school and agencies about the requirements placed upon them if they wished to employ a young person or they were putting on a production for example pantomimes, dance shows, talent contests etc. It was explained that, in line with statistical neighbours, there had been a decrease in the amount of employment licences issued in 2017 and raising awareness of the need for all school aged children to have employment licences, was being explored.

Members were informed that supporting pupils/schools when they were unable to attend school due to medical needs was a recent addition to the team's work area. The Education Welfare Service had produced a local authority protocol for supporting pupils in school with medical conditions. This protocol set out the authority's statutory duty and explained how schools and agencies were able to access consideration from the multi-agency medical panels to consider the best pathway to support the pupils back into education.

Discussion ensued with regard to the above and in particular, Members commented on Elective Home Education and the reasons why parents may choose this option. The Borough Solicitor further explained the lack of robust regulations and poor legislative framework with regard to Elective Home Education and the difficulties this presented for the Local Authority when parents opt out of the education system.

The Chair and Members agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Education and the three local MP's, in particular Angela Rayner, MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education, to express their concerns in respect of the lack of robust regulation and poor legislative framework with regard to Elective Home Education.

Members further commented on school attendance in Tameside, and asked for the reasons why this was increasing.

The Access Manager explained that although Tameside figures were still below the national average, this was something which required further investigation and work was underway to develop a Red Amber Green (RAG) system of rating schools with regard to attendance levels.

Members also requested information with regard to attendance figures for Looked After Children.

The Head of Access explained that this information was sometimes difficult to collate, as some Looked After Children were placed out of the Borough and therefore, did not attend schools in Tameside. She added that a system was currently being purchased to enable the Local Authority to gain access to this information.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the presentation be noted; and**
- (ii) That the Assistant Director, Learning, on behalf of Board Members, write to the Secretary of State for Education and the three local MP's expressing concerns in respect of the lack of robust legislation and poor legislative framework surrounding Elective Home Education.**

21. AN UPDATE ON SEND IN THE LOCAL AREA AND INSPECTION PREPARATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Learning, which provided an update on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in the local area and inspection preparation.

It was reported that the Education Service had continued to improve the quality of collaborative working with schools, early years settings, and colleges. This was as a response to significant levels of misunderstanding in certain settings regarding the Code of Practice, the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

Drop in sessions had been held locally, which had been attended by twelve out of fifteen secondary schools and forty two primary schools. These had highlighted in particular the extent of the unmet need in schools at the level below EHCP, in other words, SEND support. The under-identification of need was therefore being addressed and, on occasion, the issue of over-identification. There were occasions when a young person was still categorised as SEND, when in fact, that need was longer valid.

A common point of learning for schools had been the extent to which challenging behaviour was, in itself, a manifestation of an unmet need, rather than simply 'naughtiness'. This was now triggering a more rapid response from the school to the SEND and Pupil Support teams for consultation, rather than starting the process for a statutory assessment.

Work with Early Years settings had been a key development. The Early Years Panels take place on a monthly basis, where staff from all areas of Early Help as well as practitioners from both mainstream and specialist settings were able to discuss young people and their needs and the most appropriate pathway for them.

A key decision was awaited in relation to the Educational Psychology Service and it was hoped that a long standing collaborative partnership arrangement with Salford, would enable the creation of a sustainable and quality service.

In respect of Neuro Developmental Pathways, collaborative work continued with staff from Health, Social Care, Tameside Families together and the 3rd Sector, in order to continue to develop pathways for Autism and ADHD.

A commitment to develop further connections post 16 and in particular Alternative Provision for young people was a priority.

A draft Tameside and Glossop, Children and Young People's (aged 0-25) Special Education Needs and Disability Integrated Commissioning Strategy (2018-2021) was appended to the report.

Discussion ensued in respect of the above and Members raised concerns with regard to gaining an understanding which children, by need, were doing well and those which were not and how the progress of Tameside children compared nationally. The Chair and Members requested that detailed national data be reported to the next meeting of the Board in order to gain an understanding of Tameside's progress nationally and ascertain that resources were being targeted in the right place.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the report be noted; and**
- (ii) That detailed national SEND figures be reported to the next meeting of the Board.**

22. PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS IN TAMESIDE

The Assistant Executive Director, Education, submitted a report and delivered a presentation in respect of the levels of permanent exclusions from mainstream Tameside schools and how Tameside compared in relation to other boroughs, both in GM and the North West. The report further explored the reasons for young people being permanently excluded and the key structural and historical issues that had had an impact for a number of years.

It was reported that, in the latest statistics on permanent exclusions, 0.22% of all pupils in the Borough (approx. 35,000) were permanently excluded from school. This was nearly three times the national average rate of permanent exclusions in schools. Tameside had been well above both the national and North West averages for the past three years. When compared to statistical neighbours, only North East Lincolnshire had a higher rate of permanent exclusions with a rate of 0.24%, which incidentally was the rate internal calculations for 2016/17 suggested Tameside's permanent exclusion rate had increased to. A rate of 0.24% was an increase of 0.08% since 2014/15.

Of the children excluded from school, 85% were excluded from secondary school with 15% from primary school. Over the three year period, there had been a year on year increase in exclusions from both primary and secondary schools.

More boys than girls were excluded; 76% versus 24% respectively and this pattern occurred in both primary and secondary. 86% of exclusions were of disadvantaged pupils. The main reason for permanent exclusion over 2015/16 and 2016/17 had been persistent disruptive behaviour.

The Assistant Director explored the link between permanent exclusions and SEND and outlined the external pressures on schools' performance, i.e. Ofsted and Progress 8 and the difficulties experienced balancing these pressures with the need to be inclusive.

Additional factors were also detailed, such as historical challenges with the Pupil Referral Service and the lack of choice with Alternative Provision in the Borough.

In respect of work ongoing to address permanent exclusions, Members were informed that the Borough was significantly improving the quality of its work in respect of special educational needs, with clear messages to schools that SEND needed to be identified as soon as possible and appropriate support given, if need be, through the Education, Health and Care Plan process. Board Members were further informed that the Pupil Referral Service had faced a number of challenges in recent years, and a new approach to working with schools and young people was currently under discussion. The Education Welfare Service had put strategies in place to look at alternatives for reducing permanent exclusions. There were extremely limited options for schools in Tameside in respect of Alternative Provision, and until very recently there was only one Alternative Provision provider in the Borough. A new provider had recently arrived in the Borough and work was underway with them to design a package that would meet the needs of students. A third provider had also been identified in Stockport.

It was concluded that the issue of permanent exclusions in Tameside was both historic and deeply embedded. The figures had been high for some 10 years or so and things were not going to change overnight. Over time, an improved SEND package for young people would help to reduce the numbers, but this would not be instantaneous. Providing more choice with respect to alternative provision would give schools other options, as would the improved capacity in Children's Social Care.

Members raised concerns in respect of the levels of permanent exclusions in Tameside and the pressures on schools in respect of Ofsted and Progress 8 and the need for a greater emphasis on inclusion.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted and the strategic approach to reducing the number of permanent exclusions in Tameside as detailed above and in the report, be supported.

23. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items received for consideration at this meeting.

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Education Attainment Improvement Board would take place on Tuesday 27 March 2018 commencing at 3.30 pm.

CHAIR