

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL 10 FEBRUARY 2015

7.20PM – 9:08PM

PRESENT: Councillor Jeff Hanna (in the chair), Councillors Linda Taylor, Dennis Pearce (substitute for Fidelis Gadzama), James Holmes, Joan Henry, Charlie Chirico, Katy Neep, Marsie Skeete, David Chung, Edward Foley
Co-opted members –Simon Bennett

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Maxi Martin (Cabinet Member for Children’s Services);
Councillor Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Education)
Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Yvette Stanley (Director of Children, Schools and Families), Heather Tomlinson (Interim Assistant Director of Education), Kate Saksena (Merton School Improvement Manager), Keith Shipman (Education Inclusion Manager), Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer)

1 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Connellan and Cllr Fidelis Gadzama.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2015

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Linda Taylor enquired about the scheduled item on raising the participation age that did not appear on the agenda, as outlined within the Panels work programme.
Councillor Jeff Hanna confirmed that this item had been included in the School Standards Report (item 5 on the agenda).

5 SCHOOL STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT

Heather Tomlinson introduced the report. Kate Saksena outlined the format of the report and highlights regarding attainment and achievement for 2013-14.

Councillor Marsie Skeete asked if this information was shared with the School Standards Committee. Kate Saksena confirmed that this information would be taken to the next meeting of the School Standards Committee.

Councillor Dennis Pearce enquired about the impact of the Singapore maths model on attainment. Kate Saksena explained that the department had yet to reach the end of a full

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year against which to assess standards and that this would not yet appear in national standards.

Councillor Dennis Pearce asked about the use of incentives in reducing persistent absenteeism. Councillor Linda Taylor also asked what approaches to absenteeism were being taken. Keith Shipman explained that there are a number of measures including:

- Classroom incentives;
- Whole school policies;
- Case work;
- Penalty warning notices; and
- Rewards and sanctions in schools

Keith Shipman explained that 62 families were taken to court last year for their child's persistent absence which sends a strong message to parents.

Councillor Marsie Skeete congratulated the department, schools and pupils on the results and levels of attainment achieved. Panel endorsed this comment.

Councillor Marsie Skeete asked how the council were communicating results. Yvette Stanley explained that attainment was shared at a meeting recently with London Councils and that the communications team undertake a publicity campaign to highlight achievement.

Councillor Charlie Chirico congratulated the department on their results for school exclusions which were below both London and National averages.

Keith Shipman added that historically the council had a high level of fixed term exclusions that are now below London and national averages which is a significant achievement.

Councillor James Holmes asked what measures were being taken to support schools that had not performed so well. Kate Saksena explained that the council provided guidance to schools on what makes a good school; how to make rapid progress; and on provided targeted intervention where necessary. The department also hold regular meetings with schools and use data held to identify with schools areas for improvement. Core documentation is shared with governors to support schools through this process. There is also an outstanding teacher programme for both secondary and primary schools in place and teaching reviews are undertaken by the school improvement team across every year group.

Councillor James Holmes enquired about leadership in schools. Kate Saksena confirmed that there had been some issues with securing the right calibre of applications for middle and senior management which has impacted on ensuring that there is strong leadership in some schools. Generic leadership and bespoke training is offered to individual senior leadership teams and advice given on the correct make up and capacity to ensure they have an understanding of their role. The school improvement team play a role in this but schools also have an option to engage external consultants. Improvements have resulted

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from these interventions.

Councillor Jeff Hanna passed on his thanks to Kate Saksena for a well presented report and welcomed more information on the more focused work to be undertaken at a future meeting.

Councillor James Holmes asked if the council could look at offering school improvement services to schools and other boroughs on a buy back basis. Yvette Stanley stated that there is a competitive market and other Local Authorities had school improvement services in place already. The council does host services for schools in Sutton at present and Sutton Council host the traveller education service for Merton. Research and information services are also sold by providing data analysis to schools. The council would require additional investment to build up capacity to operate as a commercial service and therefore is not being considered as an option at this stage due to financial constraints.

Councillor Linda Taylor asked about the forums discussed in the report. Kate Saksena explained that they were two separate forums and had representation from all schools in the borough. The Raising Achievement Forum focused on teaching and new ideas, engaging external representatives and providing opportunities for professional development and networking.

Councillor James Holmes asked how successes to date could be utilised by schools that were not performing as well to ensure their improvement. Kate Saksena explained that secondments are offered to Headteachers to successful schools and also to schools requiring improvement to ensure that they can learn from one another. Shadowing opportunities are offered amongst primary schools at present and will be extended to secondary school deputy heads this year.

Councillor Dennis Pearce asked what action had been taken that had resulted in SEN pupils on school action plans performing above the national average. Kate Saksena explained that this was partly due to expectations and different ways of working. Staff are also more determined to create independence in SEN pupils and there is now better training for teaching assistants supporting SEN pupils. Teaching overall has an impact.

Simon Bennett enquired about the variance in attendance for post 16 pupils. Kate Saksena explained that this resulted from the comparison made with both London and National performance data in this area. A recent report has highlighted that young people are more likely to drop out of certain courses post 16 years of age; for example, Level 3 BTEC courses have a high drop out rate. Yvette Stanley added that a disproportionate number of Further Education colleges are underperforming across London.

Councillor Linda Taylor asked about the action taken to increase the number of apprenticeships available, how many employers had signed up to offering apprenticeships and the percentage that had been offered employment upon completion. Keith Shipman explained that the Chamber of Commerce and Future Merton participate in a working group which looks to increase opportunities for young people, including the recent Take 1 campaign. There is also work underway to look at how best to support SME's that choose to take on apprentices.

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Keith Shipman highlighted to the Panel that some young people are not yet ready to apply for work or apprenticeships as they need to develop certain skills. Pre apprenticeship courses are now offered to equip and prepare young people with the relevant skills to enable them to apply for apprenticeships. Keith Shipman added that this work is being supported by the Future Merton team and that data on the number of young people engaged in pre apprenticeship courses could be shared with the Panel outside of the meeting.

Councillor Katy Neep stated that there should be a range of pathways for young people post 16 years of age and that apprenticeships are an important part of alternative routes into employment for young people. She added that there is an upward trend on young people applying for apprenticeships.

Councillor Katy Neep asked if the council uses Labour Market Information in full data and shares this data with schools to show what the labour market is like in Merton and any forecasting the council has undertaken on future employment opportunities and need. She also asked if the council negotiate with developers and companies when setting up contracts to secure employment and apprenticeships for young people.

Councillor Katy Neep also enquired about the role of schools and partners in offering careers advice and guidance to prepare young people for the transition from school to work or college and if the various routes that could be taken were highlighted.

Keith Shipman responded that schools are not as strong on careers advice and guidance as they could be and that the wider partnership had created an audit tool that schools could use to look at their effectiveness in this area and determine any improvements to be made. Schools also need local labour market information and young people could be better educated on the routes available.

Keith Shipman added that the Chamber of Commerce are working with Future Merton to support the provision of additional routes into employment and training and with secondary schools on their careers advice and guidance services. Councillor Katy Neep stated that the Panel should look at this issue in more detail. Councillor Jeff Hanna agreed that this be added to the list of topic suggestions for the Panels 2015/16 work programme.

Kate Saksena added that schools are judged on this provision as part of their OFSTED inspection. Keith Shipman explained that opportunities for work experience nationally are offered in Year 10 and that work experience, as part of sixth form studies, provided an opportunity to identify young people at risk of becoming NEET's. Work is being undertaken to support these young people.

Yvette Stanley informed the Panel that there had been an increase in the number of apprenticeships, particularly in the Environment and Regeneration Department. Work experience tasters are being offered for the long term unemployed and those with mental health problems. 3 apprenticeships had been offered to looked after children to date and two new apprenticeships established this year. Councillor Dennis Pearce stated that the range of apprenticeships offered needed to include more vocational, hands on, manual work opportunities. Paul Ballatt added that for those young people that are less academic, there is an opportunity to create work experience and apprenticeship placements with

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contractors that the council procures. Councillor Linda Taylor stated that the council should look to build apprenticeships into contracts wherever possible. Paul Ballatt agreed that the process of procuring these companies should include negotiation on increasing the number of apprenticeships available to young people in Merton.

Councillor James Holmes reminded the Panel that a task group had previously been appointed by this Panel and conducted a review of post 16 career pathways.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked how confident the council was that children in care were receiving satisfactory support for increasing their educational achievement. Yvette Stanley responded that, if a school is seen to be failing, a decision is taken as to whether or not it is appropriate to move the child. Consideration is given to what is in the child's best interest and what is required to meet their needs. Councillor Jeff Hanna expressed his appreciation to the department for all their work on the Virtual School.

Councillor James Holmes asked that the panel be updated in due course on the implementation of the recommendations resulting from previous scrutiny task groups, but in particular, on the post 16 career pathways review.

Councillor Charlie Chirico suggested that apprenticeships may be generated from the AFC Wimbledon development.

Paul Ballatt highlighted that securing apprenticeships through the procurement process was a corporate issue and that the Panels comments would be taken back to colleagues in Corporate Services and Environment and Regeneration.

RESOLVED:

The Panel made a formal recommendation that all contracts, when negotiated, request that apprenticeships, work experience and jobs be offered to Merton residents by the contractor.

The Panel requested an update on delivery of the action plans resulting from the task groups undertaken by the Panel, including on Post 16 career pathways, be brought to a future meeting.

6 THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN PROMOTING THE BROADER WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Keith Shipman introduced the report and commented on the following:

- Guidance provided by National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE);
- Absence of national data for measurement of wellbeing;
- Positive feedback from OFSTED on the measures in place in Merton schools to support wellbeing; Significant uptake of GCSE R.E in Merton and potential impact on wellbeing;

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- Targeted work with individuals; and
- Development of the curriculum

Councillor Marsie Skeete asked about the take up of safer schools police officers.

Councillor Katy Neep asked if there were sufficient measures in place to support young people in their transition from primary to secondary school, and if secondary school pupils go into primary schools to support young people and share their experiences.

Keith Shipman explained the police model is effective and provided free to schools. Secondary schools are offered the opportunity to fund a full time police officer presence in their schools if they feel it is helpful. The presence of police offices in school has had a positive impact. Young people tend to disclose issues to police officers. This model has also had a significant impact on street crime levels. Secondary Schools will have a 3 year model that will be funded solely by each school this year.

Keith Shipman informed the Panel that there is a transitions working party that looks at how best to support young people within primary school that are identified as requiring additional support. When they move, any issues are flagged up with the secondary school receiving them. Targeted casework is also undertaken to support transition and pupils from secondary schools visit primary schools to offer support ahead of the move.

Councillor James Holmes wished to commend Keith Shipman for his hard work and for the support he provides to governing bodies. Panel endorsed this comment.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

7 REPORT ON THE SURVEY OF BAME TEACHERS IN MERTON

Councillor Marsie Skeete thanked officers for their work. Councillor Jeff Hanna passed on his thanks to Kate Saksena and stated that he supported the recommendations that had been made and welcomed the action to be taken. He thanked officers for their work to date. Councillor Jeff Hanna asked that an update be brought to the Panel on the progress being made on implementation of the agreed recommendations resulting from the School Leadership Succession Planning task group.

The Panel proposed that this would be timed to allow the Co-Chair of the Review, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, to be present for the update.

RESOLVED: That Panel receive an update on the delivery of the recommendations resulting from the task group review of school leadership succession planning as part of their 2015/16 work programme.

8 UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Katy Neep asked why an interim head had not been appointed at Liberty Primary School in place of the arrangements that are currently in operation. Yvette Stanley

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confirmed that a recent round of recruitment of interim heads had demonstrated that this field was quite narrow and that there wasn't anyone with the relevant expertise that was identified to appoint to manage this school at this stage. The arrangements in place give the school immediate capacity and expertise.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked how long these arrangements had been in place and what plans were for management of the school in the long term. Yvette Stanley agreed to update the Panel in due course.

Councillor James Holmes asked what percentage of the need for school places would be met if the Harris Academy application was approved. Paul Ballatt explained that projections for school places are constantly under review and that the latest position was that an additional 10 - 17 Forms of Entry would be required by 2018/19. If the Harris development went ahead this would deliver 6 forms of entry. A number of secondary schools had also expressed a willingness to expand. The feasibility of expansion on St Marks and both Harris' sites was being explored. The expansion of St Marks would generate a potential 2 forms of entry and a further 2 forms of entry at both Harris Morden and Merton schools. This, along with the Harris Academy projected forms of entry, would be sufficient to meet projected need by 2018/19 and result in 12 forms of entry. However, caution needs to be exercised in these projections.

Yvette Stanley added that the council need to look regionally as well as locally at options for meeting the demand for school places.

Councillor James Holmes asked if the council owned the land that the Academies would sit on. Paul Ballatt confirmed that the council lease the land to Academies on a long term basis.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

10 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

RESOLVED: Panel noted the work programme.

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