

07a: Member Questions ST

From Cllr Stan Anderson to the Cabinet Member for Education

Further to the last Council meeting, can the Cabinet Member please give an update on the new Harris Wimbledon?

Reply

The council has now successfully completed the complex exercise of ensuring the entire site for the permanent school is vacant and it has been passed to the Department for Education (DfE) on a 125 year lease to build the school. Demolition work is progressing well, and the DfE's contractor is on course for August 2020 completion.

Harris Wimbledon opened in a temporary site provided by the council at Whatley Avenue, SW20 (former Adult Education building) in September 2018 and has proved popular with parents, being fully subscribed in its first year and for September 2019.

Since rolls at the other state funded schools have either remained stable or grown in this period the new Harris Academy Wimbledon School is currently meeting the council's objective of providing additional basic need places, increasing choice, and not adversely impacting on existing schools.

From Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the Cabinet Member for Education

Could the Cabinet Member for Education confirm the current proportion of schools rated **Ofsted** Good or Outstanding in our Borough?

Reply

Currently 91% of Merton schools are judged to be good or better by Ofsted. This includes all Merton secondary and special schools. Whilst 30% of all Merton schools are outstanding (above the national average of 21%, and just below the London average of 32%), 63% of secondary schools are outstanding which very much higher than the national average for this educational phase.

From Cllr Dave Ward to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Can the Cabinet Member please explain the safer school zones and what the plan is to introduce them?

Reply

Through implementing the Mayor's Transport Strategy over recent years, the Council has been implementing prioritised road safety measures as part of a rolling programme of investment outside schools. Schemes thus far have included localised 20mph speed limits, traffic calming features / informal crossing provisions such as

speed tables; school keep clear zig zag markings; school flashing beacons; road safety training; drop off zones; drive and stride etc.

As part of Council's objectives to reduce congestion, pollution, risk of collisions, promote sustainable and active transport and provide a safe environment within the vicinity of schools, the Council has given an undertaking to introduce part time road closures that will prevent non-resident traffic during the school morning and afternoon traffic peaks.

It is the council's intention to purchase the camera equipment and IT software needed to administer and enforce the zones over the coming months. The planned go live date is September 2019 to coincide with the new school year.

From Councillor David Simpson to the Cabinet Member for Education:

What are the Cabinet Member's stated priorities for Early Years education in our Borough?

Reply

The priorities for EY education in the borough are:

To support EY education providers to achieve good or above in Ofsted inspections

To commission quality, flexible and sufficient places so that families have choice as to where, and in what patterns they take up their free early education entitlements across the mixed market of providers.

To support EY practitioners CPD through the new Firm Foundations and schools training programme, focusing on Peer led improvement, SEND and how young children learn

To work in partnership with the range of partners and families so that children's SEN support needs are identified, assessed and supported as soon possible so that EYFS outcomes for SEN support are in line with London average.

To further improve the proportion of children achieving the Good Level of Development so that Merton's performance is stronger in relation to Outer London and statistical neighbours and to narrow the gap at the end of the EYFS, securing good outcomes for all young children so they are ready for statutory education

To work with strong local providers (including the English hub) to support schools to improve early language development.

To support the sector in responding to the proposed new Ofsted Inspection framework from September 2019

To roll out the Healthy Early Years Programme, improving practice and outcomes within EY education

07a: Member Questions ST

To increase the take up of funded early education places for vulnerable 2 year olds

To work collaboratively across the wider multi agency network and Children's Centres so families and their children have access to learning environments from birth, preparing them for formal early education

From Cllr Hina Bokhari to the Cabinet Member for Education

It is pleasing to see that there have been no permanent exclusions from primary or special schools in Merton in 2017-18. How many permanent exclusions were there in secondary schools and how many managed moves have taken place in primary, secondary and special schools in the last two years?

Reply

In 2017/ 18 Permanent Exclusion In secondary schools in Merton fell significantly to 8.

Managed moves are not used in special schools. If a placement can no longer meet a child's needs in a special school an interim review is undertaken and the child may then move school.

Between September 2017 and June 2018 there were 13 Secondary school managed moves.

Between September 2017 and June 2018 there were 4 Primary school managed moves.

From Cllr Marsie Skeete to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

In what ways does the Council work with schools to tackle issues in children's mental health?

Reply

The Mental Health of our children is vitally important. Schools have been supported in a number of ways to develop a range of approaches to support good mental health and where there are issues to help the child. We have worked with schools over a long period to develop effective support for children. Many schools Commission a Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TAMHS) service with skilled therapists working in schools. A group of schools in Mitcham have been working with Place to Be to develop provision and a whole school approach. The Behaviour Service also runs training for school to develop their own interventions - for example in 2018 we have been rolling out work on Theraplay and Attachment-Friendly schools.

The CAMHs improvement board commissioned Wishmore Academy to run training for schools on understanding mental health and develop individual school based

plans. In 2018 the majority of schools participated in 2 days of workshops run by the Anna Freud centre where schools and mental health workers worked together on ensuring the systems to support children are in place. The Camhs partnership runs regular Mental Health Networking events – these are themed i.e. Girls and Autism, ADHD etc. and are open to any agency including schools.

A group of schools are piloting a whole school approach to Mental Health supported by the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Council. We were successful in securing the Government's Trail Blazer bid for Mental Health in schools. This will include piloting a team of mental health workers supporting children and parents, as well as a whole school approach.

From Councillor Janice Howard to the Cabinet Member for Education:

What are the Cabinet Member's stated priorities for **Primary School** education in our Borough?

Reply

The priorities for primary school education are as follows:

- a) To continue to ensure all schools are judged to be at least good when inspected by Ofsted, through the effective use of the Merton School Improvement Strategy, including Support and Challenge groups.
- b) To ensure all schools currently judged to be outstanding achieve outstanding outcomes in their next Ofsted inspections (in light of the raised standards of the Ofsted Framework for Inspection). To continue to support schools to use maths mastery strategies to develop practice and building on existing strengths, including through liaison with the South West London maths hub.
- c) To continue to improve writing so that attainment at the expected standard is more in line with Outer London and statistical neighbour averages, including through liaison with the South West London English hub.
- d) To further improve outcome in reading by ensuring that schools' approaches are finely planned to meet the needs of all pupils and provide pupils with meaningful experiences to develop reading for pleasure, including through a focus on the development of whole class guided reading.
- e) To ensure that outcomes for Pupil Premium eligible pupils continue to improve, through the provision of targeted support for schools, and central training.
- f) To continue to improve provision and outcomes of pupils in receipt of SEN support through work with school leaders (including SENCOs and subject leaders) and teachers, so that they are correctly identified (avoiding over identification of some groups of pupils), their needs are met, and outcomes improve in relation to

Outer London and statistical neighbours. To develop an assessment approach for this group of pupils.

g) To support schools to develop their wider curriculum and their offer for pupils' personal development in light of Ofsted changes so that there is a clear idea of progression in all subjects; manageable assessment; a clear rationale for their curriculum meeting the needs of their pupils; and a strong offer of broader experiences (for example through educational visits).

From Cllr Russell Makin to the Cabinet Member for Education

What recognition has Merton Council recently had from the Department for Education regarding its schools?

Reply

Four congratulatory letters have recently been sent to Merton Primary Schools by the Secretary of State for Education, recognising the very high levels of progress their pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2018 Key Stage 2 assessments. These performances place these schools (Wimbledon Park, Harris Primary, St Mark's Primary and Joseph Hood Primary) amongst the top 3% of primary schools in the country.

From Councillor Andrew Howard to the Cabinet Member for Education:

What are the Cabinet Member's stated priorities for Post-16 provision in our Borough?

Reply

The priorities for post 16 provision are as follows:

- a) To ensure all Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding
- b) To improve outcomes for the most able pupils post 16 so that the proportions achieving the higher A level outcomes improve, and the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrow at this key stage.

From Cllr Paul Kohler to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

A number of other councils have set up voluntary council tax donation schemes. Will the Cabinet member look into establishing such a scheme here in Merton, for the use of particular projects such as an Education Innovation Fund, to help educational groups develop new services in the borough?

Reply

We have begun to explore the possibility of introducing a voluntary scheme in Merton by investigating the approach of other councils. The Council can, if it wishes, establish such a scheme, but it would need to be purely voluntary and must be administered outside our Council Tax System via separate payments. Payments could be enhanced via Gift Aid if channelled through a Charitable Trust.

In Westminster, for example, their scheme, has targeted residents predominantly living in Band H properties. Westminster initially embarked on a consultation with the Councils Band H residents seeking support and also views on where the money should be spent, but not on ongoing expenditure. The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea have also just announced that they will be launching consultation for a similar scheme.

It should be noted, however, that Westminster has 15,600 Band H properties and that, due to the unfairness and regressive nature of the council tax system, their council tax is only around £800.00 (excluding the GLA precept).

In contrast, Merton has just 1,740 band H properties who pay £2,338 council tax.

Westminster received payments from 540 residents (3.4%) and on average they contributed £1101.

Using Westminster's average payment the total payment to the council of those who made payments (including council tax) is less than £2000. For information, if Merton received 3.4% payments that would be just 59 donors. In addition, this may be an optimistic estimate as Merton's Band H residents already pay more than the total average payment of Westminster donors (donation plus council tax).

To deliver the scheme, Westminster created a trust, undertook consultation exercise and set up a small team to develop and implement. They also determined the priorities for the monies, in line with resident views gained from the consultation, so the impact of the scheme could be assessed. It is not clear at this stage what the cost of this exercise was, but it is clear that it was a significant exercise.

We are therefore sceptical about whether the business case for such a fund would prove to be good value for money in Merton. We also would not want a fund to pay for important or strategic services that should be paid for as a matter of course out of council budgets. As a result, Council may wish instead to draw residents' attention to

07a: Member Questions ST

alternative existing ways of donating to good causes in the borough, for instance through the Mayor's charitable efforts or our amazing local voluntary sector.

From Cllr Brenda Fraser to the Cabinet Member for Education

What are the current figures for children in pupil referral units in the borough?

Reply

As at end March 2019, 136 children are currently supported in alternative provision, of which:

- 38 Smart Centre
- 18 Alternative Education placements
- 19 Medical on site groups
- 19 Medicals off site tuition
- 29 Smart Choice – newly arrived year 11s
- 8 Progress Academy – transition group to schools
- <5 Induction
- <5 Dual Reg

The reasons for use of alternative provision are:

- 69 Behaviour
- 38 Medical
- 29 Year 11 new arrivals

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