

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 19 January 2023

PRESENT: Councillor M Hall (Chair)
Councillor(s): D Burnett, H Kelly, D Bradford, K McCartney,
E McMaster, J Mohammed, L Moir, M Ord and
D Weatherley

CO-OPTED MEMBERS Ayodele Akin and Rachel Walton

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor G Haley

F68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Caffrey, Cllr Clelland, Cllr P Craig, Cllr Davison, Cllr Robson, Cllr Waugh and Cllr A Ord.

F69 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

F70 PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS 2021-2022 AND OFSTED INSPECTIONS UPDATE

Committee received reports and a presentation outlining the results of Gateshead pupil's performance for 2021/22 and the results of the most recent Ofsted inspections.

It was reported that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, maths, grammar punctuation and spelling at the end of Key Stage 2 was above the national average. Progress in reading and maths is also above the national average.

The proportion of pupils achieving attainment 8 and a good grade in English and Maths GCSE was also above the national average for both male and female pupils.

In terms of Ofsted inspections it was confirmed that the proportion of schools with a good or outstanding judgement is above the national average. It was also reported that the majority of schools inspected have retained or improved their judgement. It was noted that 11 schools were inspected during the Autumn term and there were no surprises in the outcomes for those schools.

Committee was advised that there remains challenges around the impact of Covid

on the youngest pupils. It was confirmed that average outcomes in tests for 5,6 and 7 year olds was below average. The widest gaps between Gateshead and national outcomes are for those children who have English as an additional language. In addition, outcomes in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 has been most affected by Covid.

In terms of Ofsted inspections, it was reported that a lot of experienced inspectors have left and this has led to a lack of consistency when schools are being inspected. It was confirmed that the issue has been raised with Ofsted who has acknowledged the concern and states it is addressing this through training.

The steps in place to address the challenges include professional development and resources in place to support the youngest children to improve writing. There is also support continuing to develop leadership and curriculum in schools. Strong working relationships have been developed with the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, which includes 18 Gateshead Primary Schools within the Trust. In addition, there is tailored challenge and support for each school taking into account the individual circumstances of the school. For those schools judged as 'requires improvement' intensive targeted support is in place.

Committee raised concerns about new inspectors not being monitored effectively. It was noted that there is a lack of transparency with Ofsted, however Ofsted has advised that internal processes of monitoring are taking place. It was acknowledged however that this lack of consistency can add additional stress on school leaders.

It was questioned whether those pupils with English as an additional language are from Ukraine. It was confirmed there are a lot of pupils with English as an additional language and not just from Ukraine. It was noted that these pupils mostly catch up by the end of primary school.

It was questioned as to how long the impact of Covid is likely to last and when will there be stabilisation of learning. It was acknowledged that the biggest impact is affecting 7 and 8 year olds because they missed learning the basics. For those pupils under 5 the main issues are around social, emotional and communication skills. In addition, Key Stage 3 pupils in secondary school, current years 8 and 9, missed out on transition work and this left a lot of pupils not feeling comfortable going into secondary school. It was confirmed that attendance also still remains an issue and subsequently slows progress.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That Committee noted the contents of the report in relation to assessment, test and exam outcomes for the academic year 2021-2022.
 - (ii) That Committee noted the position of schools in relation to Ofsted inspections.

F71 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 2021/22

Committee received a report and presentation on school attendance in Gateshead for the academic year 2021-22.

In terms of current strengths it was noted that Children's Social Care team is looking at innovative ways to improve attendance in schools. In addition, there is the Social Worker in schools programme which supports individual schools to offer advice and guidance. The total outreach of the programme is in excess of 6,000 young people and their families. It was acknowledged that this approach has enabled a robust multi-agency safeguarding approach to wider factors that can affect school attendance.

The Team Around the School model works with pupils and families identified, including around improving school attendance. There is also a robust approach to legal intervention when there are persistent non-attenders. The legal team works well with schools to address this issue.

In terms of challenges, there is a DfE national strategy on addressing issues it has recognised across the country as a result of Covid. Therefore, work is ongoing internally to align strategies and approaches across the system to the government's strategy. There is also a challenger around ensuring stronger governance and performance management arrangements, as well as using data more effectively and developing internal approach for school colleagues.

In terms of next steps it was noted that there will be the development of a graduated partnership approach to make certain there is an integrated service offer. There will also be a review of existing partnership governance arrangements and an alignment of strategies and priorities. Recruitment of a data officer is underway to ensure performance management systems support the routine, robust interrogation of data. This will allow resources to be directed more efficiently and effectively.

It was questioned as to when a school would go out to speak to a family once attendance of a pupil was recognised to be a problem. It was confirmed that all schools have attendance policies and have a member of staff responsible for attendance within school. Thresholds vary from school to school and schools should consider each case on its merits, looking at the need for support or whether the case should be referred to the authority for prosecution. It was noted that all schools understand the needs of its community and therefore the approach to attendance should be school led. It was noted that once a case comes to the Attendance Panel they will look at what should be in place and make recommendations to the school if necessary.

It was queried as to how often prosecutions occur. It was confirmed that there are not many prosecutions, there were only two court cases this year and it is mainly penalty notices.

Concerns were raised that without visits from Education Welfare Officers any wider family issues are not being picked up as quickly. It was acknowledged that most schools would act quickly if there was no first day response and take a proactive approach to getting pupils into school. Schools are held to account through Ofsted in terms of attendance so do take it seriously.

It was questioned as to whether there were examples of parents using the system to

aid non-attendance, for example asking for a CAMHS referral through a GP. It was confirmed that schools need to consider their own attendance policy and if they feel a child cannot attend school this should be referred to the authority.

It was queried as to who would provide school work after 15 days for a child refusing to attend school. It was confirmed that this would be the authority, it would be 10 hours per week with a one-to-one tutor. The authority would liaise with the child's school to provide progress information as the child is still on roll there. This arrangement would be reviewed on a six monthly basis.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information presented.

F72 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS 2021/2022

The Committee received a report and presentation on the number of exclusions in Gateshead for the academic year 2021/22.

It was reported that the authority has an experienced officer who can advise and support schools with regards to legal aspects of exclusion including training for governors. An offer has been developed to support secondary school pupils with challenging social and learning behaviours and increasing exclusions, through an assessment placement within River Tyne Academy. There are 103 places within River Tyne Academy with places held back for these 12 week assessments. The assessments can take place at individual schools, River Tyne academy or through outreach work. The aim of this work is to support young people to develop tools to manage in a mainstream school environment.

There is strong individual and multi-agency work that supports avoidance of permanent exclusions. A model has been developed for the mental health team through CNTW to do intensive work with pupils.

In terms of challenges it was acknowledged that there are too many suspensions and permanent exclusions in secondary schools. Some behaviour policies are very punitive and do not reflect an inclusive approach. It was also noted that there is a lack of alternative provision for pupils that require small nurture support or trauma informed intervention or a vocational offer. The biggest gap in alternative provision is at Key Stage 2 and 3 for Social Emotional and behavioural needs and vocational offers at Key Stage 4. Work is ongoing around improving this vocational offer.

The next steps outlined were around developing a commissioning strategy for alternative provision and develop the ARMS provision across Gateshead to meet the needs of more pupils in mainstream settings. There will also be a review to refine support for schools around exclusions with the aim of reducing the rate of permanent exclusions by developing the outreach offer from River Tyne Academy.

It was requested that school names be provided for the next report in order to identify if any particular schools are not using permanent exclusions correctly. It was confirmed that officers would seek guidance on presenting this information in future reports. It was also requested that the Committee be made aware of the figures relating to managed moves across Gateshead. Committee was given assurances

that there is robust challenge in Gateshead and routes that officers can go down if challenge of individual schools is required.

RESOLVED - That Committee noted the information presented.

F73 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Committee received a report and presentation on elective home education in Gateshead for the year 2021-22.

It was reported that the authority has the expertise, knowledge and experience of the Elective Home Education Officers. These officers have a well established, supportive approach with families choosing to electively home educate. There is also a robust protocol to challenge those parents who are not providing suitable education in addition to strong multi-agency work with other organisations involved.

It was noted that there are increasing numbers of parents choosing to electively home educate where there may be limited capacity to do this sufficiently. There is a lack of local authority legal powers around this issue therefore this continues to be a challenge for the authority. There are also challenges around the timeliness of accessing mental health services once referrals are made.

In terms of next steps, a review of elective home education strategy will look to provide support to parents and encourage them to discuss the situation with the authority before de-registering their child. There is also a focus on families awaiting referrals to tier 3 mental health services around whether any additional support services can support the young person in the interim. It was also noted that a protocol for families wishing to home educate when open to children's social care will be explored.

It was questioned whether Ofsted look at elective home educated children. It was noted that this would only be through the ILAC inspection. Concerns were raised about some schools using this as an extension of a managed move, with schools encouraging home education if a child has complex needs. It was agreed that this would be picked up outside of the meeting to understand more specific cases.

RESOLVED - That the Committee noted the information presented.

F74 WORK PROGRAMME

Committee received the work programme report which included items requested for the next municipal year.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the provisional work programme for 2022/23 be noted.
 - (ii) That further reports on the work programme will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional policy issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.