

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 JUNE 2019

Report by Deborah Bell Head of Learner Engagement Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Education Scrutiny Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to

- (a) Continue to support the implementation of the revised In Year Fair Access Protocol.**
- (b) Support the development of the Alternative Provision Commissioning Strategy with a view to developing effective alternative provision for all age groups in the county**
- (c) Continue to support the offer for schools regarding developing inclusive practice and multi-agency intervention including early help.**
- (d) Ask officers to highlight the important role that governors have in constructively challenging schools around exclusion figures to continue to drive improvement through the governor service team.**
- (e) Ask for an update on placements through the In Year Fair Access protocol in March 2020 including timeliness of alternative provision and timeliness of placement.**

Executive Summary

2. The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that - outside the normal admissions round - unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a school place quickly, so that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to the minimum. Oxfordshire County Council policy states that all children must be placed on school rolls within 15 days. This is why Oxfordshire and every local authority is required to have in place a Fair Access Protocol, developed in partnership with local schools.
3. Following a Members deep dive into exclusions in 2018 the In Year Fair Access Protocol was reviewed by OCC officers and secondary school Headteachers and inclusion leaders from across the county in a task and finish group convened for this purpose. Working with the Oxfordshire Secondary Headteachers Association, Headteachers were consulted about changes during the review process. This raised awareness of the reasons for placing children in a timely fashion and schools' responsibilities in this. The reviewed document was put out to consultation for all schools (including primary schools) and published for implementation from 1st April 2019.

Introduction

4. School leaders and LA officers need to work together to ensure places are offered in a fair manner in accordance to the Admissions Code 2014. The Code gives local authorities and schools, including Academies, the freedom to

develop and agree Protocols which best serve the needs of children in their area. It is for participating schools to ensure that the local Protocol works for them and is reviewed as required with the LA. Participation is mandatory for all state funded mainstream schools.

5. Reducing exclusion of children from school remains a focus for all stakeholders in the area. This includes the number of children needing school places following permanent exclusion through In Year Fair Access processes.
6. Inclusion processes have also been reviewed with key stakeholders alongside the In Year Fair Access Protocol. This has resulted in new terms of reference for the meetings, new processes that support schools to work together across the county to cultivate inclusive practices and challenge exclusive practices involving key partners from Policy, Health and Social Care.

Fair Access placements between 01/04/18 and 31/03/2019 under previous Protocol

Primary	12 (7 to community and 5 own admission authority schools)
Secondary	52
Total	64

7. There have been 5 meetings in all four areas under the new protocol. Ways of working have been revised and the first primary IYFAP has been held with a school identified who has agreed to take the pupil.

Fair Access placements between 01/04/19 and 20/05/19 under current Protocol subject to Members' scrutiny

Primary	1
Secondary	5
Total	6

8. New processes will be reviewed with school leaders in July 2019.
9. As the current In Year Fair Access Protocol will have been operational for 8 school weeks at the time of Education Scrutiny Committee meeting, Members are invited to note the contents of this report and require further update in 6 months' time when a fuller picture of progress and challenges will have emerged.

Financial and Staff Implications

10. Admissions Team and the Exclusion Reintegration Team need to work very closely together to place vulnerable pupils in schools using In Year Fair Access Protocol as a vehicle for this. A review of this interface to ensure timescales are legally compliant is planned for September 2019.

ESC12

Deborah Bell
Head of Learner Engagement Services
21th May 2019

Background papers:

Contact Officer: Deborah Bell, Head of Learner Engagement Services

June 2019