

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6 February 2019 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 2.45 pm

Present:

Voting Members:	Councillor Michael Waine – in the Chair Councillor John Howson (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Ted Fenton Councillor Mrs. Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor Councillor Jeannette Matelot Councillor Gill Sanders Councillor Emma Turnbull
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
By Invitation:	Mr Ian Jones, Council of Oxfordshire Teachers' Organisation (COTO). Mrs Carole Thomson
Officers:	
Whole of meeting	David Clarke, Deputy Director for Education; Diane Cameron, Deborah Miller (Resources)
Part of meeting	Deborah Bell and Kim James (Children's Services).

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

122/18 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

(Agenda No. 1)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

123/18 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 November 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Minute 117/18 – The Deputy Director for Education, David Clarke reported that officers were in the process of writing to schools where data had not been received.

Minute 118/18- The Chairman confirmed that Councillor Jeannette Matelot had agreed to be the third Member on the review of Educational Attainment.

Minute 120/18 – The Deputy Director for Education, David Clarke reported that the Swan School had now received Temporary Building Permission and that the Planning Application was expected to be approved later in the Month.

124/18 EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE KEY OUTCOMES 2017/18

(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee had before it the Annual Education Performance Report which set out a summary and overall analysis of key outcomes and progress measures, together with analysis by key cohorts for Oxfordshire Schools.

In introducing the report, David Clarke, Deputy Director for Education and Kim James, Head of Learning and School Improvement, stressed the importance of Oxfordshire having good schools and that those schools needed to be good for all groups of children. As a result of the data analysis, a new post had been put in place to concentrate on the tackling education disadvantage project, including projects on spelling, vocab and mathematics. There had been a good take up on the DfE funded projects, with 24 schools partaking in the math project and 17 schools in the writing project. Kim James outlined the key messages from the data as follows:

- Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes continued to increase and remained above the national average with 74% achieving a good level of development at the end of early years foundation stage.
- Phonics screening outcomes continued to increase and remained in line with the national average, with more than 8 in 10 meeting expected standards.
- Key stage 1 outcomes remained above national in both reading and mathematics.
- Writing had increased at a greater rate than that nationally and in 2018 was just below the national average.
- Key stage 2 performance in Oxfordshire in 2017 was at national, in 2018 Oxfordshire attainment rose by 1% but the national performance rose by 2% thus Oxfordshire was now 1% below the national average.
- GCSE average Attainment 8-point score was slightly above the national average.
- The performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) / disadvantaged continued to be an area of focus, remaining in the lowest quartiles for all key stage performance measures.
- The performance of pupils with SEND support increased at both key stage 1 and 2. Performance decreased for this group of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and phonics screening.

The Committee made the following points during discussion:

Concern was expressed that disadvantaged children had been flagged in every Key Stage. Ms James responded that Oxfordshire did fall below the national Average with regards to disadvantaged children and agreed that focus and improvement was needed in this Area. The Scrutiny Committee were due to undertake a Review of Education Attainment and attainment for disadvantaged pupils and officers expected that there would be reviews and more work carried out arising from the outcomes.

In response to Members' request, officers agreed to provide 'A Level' data for the review in numbers as well as percentages.

Following a question around what officers were doing in relation to vulnerable learners, Ms James reported that a new post had been put in place to focus on pupil premium and SEND. Lucy Mettyear who had taken on the role, was carrying out a lot of work with schools to try and improve the uptake of pupil premium, visiting good practice schools with a view to sharing good practice, looking at what the barriers to learning were and drilling down into Pupil Premium data.

The Committee noted that other authorities had an advantage over Oxfordshire if they were a Unitary Authority as they knew who the pupils were. Oxfordshire would benefit from looking at good models adopted by other authorities.

The Chairman commented that the committee needed to lobby Government on this issue as it was just about data exchange but was having a large impact on school finances.

The Committee noted that there was a clear demarcation in Oxfordshire of children with SEN or disadvantaged pupils and those without and that the gap was widening.

The Chairman commented that it would be useful to get trend data on schools that were achieving consistently above the national average including how many disadvantaged children attended the school and to get the same data for consistently under performing schools.

The Committee noted that Ofsted were looking at spend and linkage on education progress of children and that only 3 Ofsted inspections in the last year did not mention disadvantaged children.

Following debate, the Committee thanked officers for the report and AGREED that the Chairman and the Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural to write a letter to the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education, copying in all local MPs regarding families not coming forward to declare their eligibility for pupil premium.

125/18 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS DEEP DIVE 6 MONTH UPDATE (Agenda No. 7)

The Scrutiny Committee had before them a report which provided an update on the progress on the implementation of recommendations from the Education Scrutiny Committee's deep dive into school exclusions.

Accordingly, Councillor Lorraine Lindsay Gale, Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services, together with Deborah Bell, Head of Learner Engagement attended the Committee to speak to the report and answer any questions the Committee may wish to ask.

In introducing the report, Councillor Lindsay-Gale explained that as a result of the review, a new Learner Engagement team was created as of 1 October 2018 in the Education service and a Head of Service, Deborah Bell, started at this time. The purpose of this new team was to focus exclusively on children missing education, and exclusions was a significant aspect of the team's interface with schools and partners.

Actions to meet the recommendations from the deep dive in relation to exclusions had started following its acceptance in July 2018 but there had been a more specific focus on the recommendations with the creation of the new team.

The report sets out against each of the 8 recommendations actions that had been implemented with completion dates. Significant strides had been made in working in close collaboration with schools and partners across Oxfordshire to collectively reduce exclusions both permanent and fixed term.

There remained much work to be done in being able to meet these recommendations and the team was clearly focussed to securing all children having access to full time education.

The Committee welcomed the progress against the Review recommendations and made the following points during discussion:

Members requested that they be invited to the Oxfordshire Schools Inclusion Team Conference.

There was a need to ensure that all schools were fully engaged and attended the Headteachers Meetings.

The Committee welcomed the learning engagement strategy and the Oxfordshire behaviour pathway – where exclusion was genuinely the last resort.

The Committee noted that schools not providing data on exclusions remained a challenge, but that the revised In-year protocol (designed to fairly distribute vulnerable children without a school place across schools and designed to manage 'move' pupils at risk of exclusion, should go some way to addressing the problem.

Local authorities needed to take a more proactive approach in encouraging In-year access with a view to reducing primary school exclusions. The Committee noted that the DfE would be providing a revision to the Statutory guidance on exclusions in September.

In relation to the Council taking steps to improve the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plan assessments (recommendation 3) the Committee noted that that

there had been a 26% reduction in fixed term exclusions for SEND and that the new lead on Exclusions was working on improving the number of plans produced in 20 weeks.

In relation to developing behaviour strategy that promoted inclusion (recommendation 5), the Committee welcomed the creation of the Duty Line for school staff to call when faced with behavioural challenges, seeking immediate help on a no names basis.

In relation to developing personal resilience of vulnerable pupils (recommendation 6) the Committee welcomed the 2 additional Mental Health teams but expressed some concern about the posts sitting in health and ensuring that the education side was being looked after. Officers gave assurances that they would be reporting to joint committees.

Following debate, the Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services for her report and AGREED to ask officers to notify the Committee of an appropriate time to look at the Exclusion data and to request a representative from Health to come and speak to the Committee.

126/18 EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (Agenda No. 8)

At a previous meeting, the Committee had asked for a report following recent significant change, both nationally and locally, which had meant that the Council's relationship with schools and colleges had evolved from being predominantly the sole provider for schools and colleges to one where it worked in collaboration with a range of partners.

Accordingly, The Deputy Director for Education, David Clark attended the Committee to give a brief presentation to explain the new role of the local authority (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the minutes).

In introducing the presentation, the Deputy Director explained that to meet the changing needs and structures, Oxfordshire County Council was realigning its ways of working with schools and colleges to reflect the complex educational landscape, whilst remaining true to its moral purpose of driving school improvement to ensure that children and young people and their families all had access to excellent schools.

The County Council, like schools, had undergone budget cuts which had meant that it had found it necessary to evolve its relationships with schools to be:

- a champion for all children and young people and their families by utilising its democratic mandate to ensure good outcomes for all, particularly those from vulnerable groups, and lead on educational transformation;
- a convener within the Oxfordshire education system to bring leaders together, connecting best practice and facilitate partnerships; and
- a commissioner for all schools, to bring the strategic picture to reality, utilise its unique position in relation to local knowledge, intelligence and countywide data and facilitate school improvement support and development.

However, he explained that, whilst the ways of working with schools and resulting budget cuts had significantly changed, the statutory duties in relation to the Local Authority had remained. These centred around:

- ensuring a sufficient supply of school places, including SEND;
- challenging underperformance in schools and ensuring high standards;
- supporting vulnerable children.

Local strategic feedback had resulted in shifting the vision of the Council's Education service to supporting vulnerable families, as it was uniquely placed to liaise and collaborate with all partners to support schools and colleges to meet the challenges and demands they face in providing high quality education for all.

Schools were looking to the Council to facilitate and lead on vision that would bring all schools and colleges into a 'One Oxfordshire' educational landscape. This was an exciting time for education and with a new structure and new staff, The Deputy Director felt that they were well placed to build on the existing relationships with schools to enhance the quality of education in Oxfordshire.

He went on to explain the local strategic positioning including the vision set out in the Corporate Plan and Children & young People Plan to increase school attendance; to help early, supporting prevention; to safely reduce the number of looked after children and managing demand and improving the confidence and capability of the whole workforce, together with the local vision on vulnerable families.

During discussion the following points were made:

Members welcomed the new structure that had been put in place in relation to Access to Learning, Learner Engagement, SEND and School Improvement and Learning.

Members expressed concern over the large numbers of children in care being placed out of County, (often for their own safety and often in the middle of term) as there was a great reluctance to take these children into schools. Members stressed the need to do everything possible for these children and to ask central government to do everything they could. In response, officers agreed to liaise with the virtual school to pick these children up.

Members noted that links with Adult Services would be needed to support 'vulnerable families'. Officers commented that work would be focused on the child, but that it was clear if the child was supported the family would need to be supported too.

127/18 NORTHFIELD SCHOOL

(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee had requested that the Deputy Director for Education provide an update on the recent Cabinet's approval for rebuilding Northfield School on the existing school site, following the school being put into special Measures by Ofsted.

Accordingly, David Clarke advised the Committee that the project was now underway and that a feasibility study was being undertaken. Officers were working closely with the school in scoping the feasibility study, looking closely at meeting the needs of the children, including break out and therapy rooms.

Officers were also working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner to identify a sponsor for the School. So far two sponsors had come forward. A statement of action had been sent to Ofsted, who had confirmed it was fit for purpose.

Officers recognised that this was a fraught time for staff and pupils and accordingly, additional support had been provided through therapeutic work and a special needs co-ordinator.

A further Ofsted visit was expected, and work continued around improving safeguarding, behaviour and management of the school. A further update would be given once a sponsor was in place.

The Committee thanked the Deputy Director for the update and all the work carried out to date.

128/18 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 10)

Members considered the forward programme of items and agreed items for the March and June meetings as shown below (changes shown in bold italics and strikethrough):

New Date 25 March 2019 (previously 3 April 2019)			
Ofsted Director	Regional	A question and answer session with the Ofsted Regional Director and/or representatives from Ofsted	Chairman
School Absence and Attendance		Recommendations from the committee working group on improving school attendance	Cllr Michael Waine
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy		To receive a report about the implementation of Council's SEND strategy.	Director for Education
Project Athens (Carillion) Update: School Building Maintenance		To receive an update report about how school building maintenance work is being prioritised and scheduled in maintained schools and academies who contract the Council following the liquidation of Carillion	Assistant Director for Major Infrastructure and Construction/Director for Capital Investment and Delivery

Post 16 Destination Management (moved from February)	A report about the destinations for post-16 pupils with a focus on studio schools and UTCs and the possible reasons for decreasing pupil numbers at these establishments.	Strategic Lead of Education Sufficiency
19 June 2019		
Regional School Commissioner	A question and answer session with Regional Schools Commissioner	Chairman
Educational Attainment	Recommendations from the committee working group on improving educational performance	Vice Chairman Cllr John Howson
Annual Academies in Oxfordshire Report	An update on academies' status, issues and trends across Oxfordshire	Strategic Lead for Education Sufficiency
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy	To receive a report about the implementation of Council's SEND strategy.	Director for Education
Looked After Children educational attainment	A review of attainment for a particular vulnerable group	

..... in the Chair

Date of signing