

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

18 April 2024



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor Heena Makwana (Chair), Councillor Becky Haggart OBE, Councillor Philip Corthorne, Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor Tony Gill, Councillor Rita Judge, and Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Co-Opted Member Present: Tony Little</p> <p>Officers Present: Laura Baldry (School Placement & Admissions Manager), Cathy Handley (Music Service Manager), Kathryn Angelini (Assistant Director for Education and Vulnerable Children), Georgia Watson-Polack (Head of Access to Education), and Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
78.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Peter Smallwood with Councillor Philip Corthorne substituting.</p>
79.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Judge declared an interest in item 6 in that she worked for Ealing Council, dealing with school finance, and there was an element of Ealing Music Service which she oversaw. Councillor Judge remained in the room for this item.</p>
80.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Labour Members proposed three amendments to the minutes, these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Page three, paragraph four. Labour Members requested that this should refer to 'one Member', not 'Members'.• Page five, paragraph five. Labour Members requested the reference to Key Stage Four be removed from this paragraph.• Page six, paragraph five. Labour Members requested that this should refer to 'one Member', not 'Members'. <p>The Chair noted that the minutes of the meeting were there to provide a summary of the meeting with key action points noted, and stated that the minutes would remain unchanged.</p>

	<p>Labour Members noted that they could not approve the minutes in this case. Therefore, approval of the minutes was put to a vote.</p> <p>The Committee voted, by four votes to three, with one abstention, to agree the minutes as written in the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed.</p>
81.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p>
82.	<p>SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Officers provided an update on School Admissions.</p> <p>The team had recently moved into the Access to Education area, under the Assistant Director for Education and Vulnerable Children. This was within the Education and SEND service area. This allowed a better alignment of services, while promoting closer collaboration on key aspects of education.</p> <p>A verbal update was given regarding Hewens College, where the number of vacancies in Year 7 was 22, not 55. These vacancies were accurate as of 24 March of the current year.</p> <p>Officers worked closely with secondary schools to ensure offers were being made. If a child met the Fair Access Protocol, they were presented at monthly meetings and a school was named for them.</p> <p>Since National Offer Day for Year 7, officers had been chasing parents who had not yet responded to an offer and reminding schools of children who had yet to apply. There are approximately 48 children who still had not applied for a secondary school place.</p> <p>Two rounds of late offers had taken place so far. The first round had 187 offers and the second round had 58 offers. Offers were made on a fortnightly basis until the summer holidays.</p> <p>There were over 260 vacancies within the system, equating to 7.1%. 60 places had been added through bulge classes across a small number of schools. Based on projections, this will be the last year that bulge classes will be required for secondary allocations.</p> <p>Moving on to Reception, National Offer Day was two days prior to the current meeting. Hillingdon had achieved the best in London on first preferences, and best in West London on first to third preferences.</p> <p>There were a number of schools that had one or more empty classrooms following National Offer Day for September. Officers were in communication with these schools to discuss possibly reducing their PANs formally or repurposing their empty classes.</p> <p>Officers were praised by the Committee for their hard work.</p>

It was highlighted that Haydon and Harefield schools continually had a high number of unfilled places.

Officers would continue to work closely with secondary schools to ensure offers were being made and children were placed in schools; continue to chase parents who had not responded to an offer and remind schools of children who had yet to apply; continue to make late offers on a fortnightly basis until the summer holidays; communicate with schools that had one or more empty classrooms following National Offer Day for September; and review the situation of Haydon and Harefield schools having many unfilled places.

It was noted that there was a bus that could take children living in Uxbridge to Harefield to school. However, Haydon was identified as a trickier school to get to for children in the south of the borough.

There was an issue of parents listing over-subscribed schools as their first and second preferences, leading to difficulties in securing a place. Officers encouraged parents to be realistic in choosing their preferences and provided information to assist with this.

Clarification was sought on the data, particularly the number of places in Haydon school for Year 7. Officers explained that the number reflected current vacancies and that there has been a shift in places due to various factors, including the location of the school and the number of children moving up through the system.

Waiting lists can vary and were often influenced by Ofsted ratings. There were sometimes difficulties in monitoring waiting lists as many schools managed their own admissions.

A question was raised about spare spaces in some schools and whether classes were being culled, or if there were just very small classes of children. Officers explained that schools were filling their classes up to 30 and then reducing the number of teachers they require.

Officers would continue to encourage parents to be realistic with their school preferences; continue to provide ample information to parents to help them understand the system; monitor the number of vacancies in schools and work closely with schools to fill these vacancies; and regularly review waiting lists to ensure they reflect children who still required a school place.

The Committee discussed the increase in surplus places in Reception compared to the previous year. Officers confirmed that the surplus had increased, but the degree of increase was unknown. The increase was expected due to projections of a reduction in birth rates. Officers had been reducing PANs in primary schools over the last couple of years to manage this.

Officers confirmed they would look into why there were more spaces available in Year 10 and 11 at Swakeleys School compared to Year 7 and 9.

The falling birth rate and its impact on future school places planning were noted. Officers confirmed that the birth rates were dropping and they were looking at reducing PANs. However, there were no plans for schools to be closed. Officers were managing the situation by formally or informally reducing PANs and repurposing empty classrooms for other uses.

Difficulties in finding places in Year 8 were highlighted. Officers acknowledged that there were fewer places available in Year 8 and 9. Officers explained the process of offering school places and the options available to parents if their child did not have access to a school place.

RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee noted the update.

83. **HILLINGDON MUSIC HUB ANNUAL REPORT** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Officers presented an annual report into the Hillingdon Music Hub.

The national plan for music education was a strategic framework set by the UK Government to enhance music education for all children and young people in England. It aimed to enable children and young people to learn to sing, play an instrument, and create music together, and to provide opportunities for them to progress their musical interests and talents, including professional pathways.

Hillingdon had embraced this vision and aimed to provide a cohesive music education that was accessible and inclusive, enriching the lives of all children and young people.

There were five strategic functions:

- Partnership: collaborating with various stakeholders to create a holistic music education experience.
- Schools: engaging with schools to integrate music into their curriculum.
- Progression and Musical Development: supporting students' musical growth and talent development.
- Inclusion: ensuring that music education was accessible to all, regardless of background or ability.
- Sustainability: fostering long-term viability and impact.

Hillingdon Music Hub had recently transitioned into Children's Services. Officers outlined the organisational structure. The Music Service Manager sat under the Head of Education and Lifelong Learning. Under the Music Service Manager there were:

- Progression and Ensembles Co-Ordinator
 - Activities and Events Officer
- Singing and Popular Music Co-Ordinator
- First Access & Curriculum Music Co-ordinator (and maternity leave cover for this)
- Inventory Officer
- Admissions & Learning Progression Officer
- Technical Support Officer

There were also approximately 60 sessional contract teachers.

An advisory group comprised partners, parents and other stakeholders to provide oversight and guidance.

External partners included:

- Examination Boards: collaborating to enhance music education.
- Collective 31: working in special schools.
- Software Providers (e.g., Charanga): supporting music education in primary schools.

- PSB (World Music Specialists): enhancing music diversity.
- Brunel University: developing a strong relationship and exploring career routes in music.
- ACS: funding key initiatives, including the Sing! Festival and emerging talent events.
- Voices Foundation: collaborating with teachers to cover various genres.
- Global Academy: hosting Saturday and Thursday music schools.
- Sound Connections: supporting youth voice and facilitating workshops.
- Bollywood Brass: enriching musical experiences.
- Schools Orchestra Symphony Orchestra: providing opportunities outside of the Council.
- National Youth Orchestra Auditions: guiding talented students.
- Royal Academy of Music: offering student-led programs. Royal Academy of Music recently provided students to run a workshop for young people.

Hillingdon's commitment to music education aligned with the national plan's vision. By fostering partnerships, inclusivity, and sustainability, Hillingdon was enriching the lives of children and young people through music.

Hillingdon Music Hub went beyond traditional music lessons and offered a range of programmes and activities. These included:

- One-to-One Lessons: these were conducted at centres including Manor Farm House and the Global Academy.
- Paired Lessons and Small Group Lessons: these occurred both at the centres and within schools.
- Whole Class Instrumental Lessons: schools could opt for recorder or ukulele lessons for entire classes.

The Hub also ran a number of ensembles and events, including:

- Ensemble Sessions: held on Saturdays and Thursdays.
- Ukulele Group and Steel Band: recent additions to their ensemble offerings.
- Theory Instruction: provided alongside practical lessons.
- Events: throughout the year the Hub held various events, including the recent Sing! Festival.
- Christmas Light Switch On: the Hub actively participated in community events.

Further performance opportunities included:

- Winter Concerts: hosted at venues like the Winston Churchill Theatre and the Beck Theatre.
- Workshops: engaging students in practical music experiences.
- External Events: participation in events like the Hayes Canal Festival.
- Open Rehearsals: encouraging community engagement.

Support for teachers included:

- Teachers' Choir: a platform for teachers to enhance their skills and well-being.
- Resource Sharing: teachers received resources to use in schools.
- Online Competition: showcasing schools' whole-class activities.

A number of progression and outreach opportunities included:

- Sunday Activity: a new initiative at the interfaith centre.
- Startups for Children: supporting young learners transitioning to the next stage.
- Foreign Tours: an annual tradition.

- Vulnerable Learners: focused efforts to support this group.
- ADS Scheme: targeted projects, including one during half-term.

In terms of engagement, all schools were offered participation. 64% of schools actively engaged. 252 children received one-to-one advanced lessons, and 664 children received standard small-group tuition. Whole class lessons were offered directly in 10 schools, while other schools received resources for self-delivery.

A significant portion of the Hub's funding came through Arts Council grants and parental contributions. School contributions were growing, and occasional external grants were secured for specific projects such as the King's coronation, funded by Youth Music.

Approximately 50% of the budget was allocated to paying teachers. Other costs included admin and management (including the core team's salaries), and performance expenses (such as covering concerts, running costs and related activities).

Schools would apply to participate in events such as the Christmas lights and carols. The Hub would email all schools, ensuring up-to-date contacts. Headteachers would also be contacted and there would be meetings with Senior Leadership Teams. The Hub encouraged teacher attendance at events and continuous professional development (CPD). Information was disseminated through Education Weekly and the Hub's website. In terms of the selection criteria, special needs schools were prioritised for engagement, and schools that attended twilight sessions were preferred. Comprehensive engagement ensured effective use of resources.

The Hub actively engaged with schools through various channels. Strategies included emails and website communication. Offering free programs garnered more interest and participation. It was noted that while the Hub had not yet offered DJ skills, external providers had conducted sessions. Music technology, including DJ skills, is an area the Hub aimed to develop further.

The Sing! Festival aimed to nurture schools that may not have their own choirs. Conductors could be upskilled to lead music sessions in primary schools. Many primary schools lacked music specialists, so conductors played a crucial role. Feedback from schools was positive, and workshops empowered teachers. The Sing! Festival was made free for schools using funding from ACS.

In terms of accessibility and support, The Hub actively strove to make music accessible to all students, regardless of financial background. It was ensured that Looked After Children did not pay for music lessons; concessionary rates were offered to children receiving free school meals, and a simplified sign-up process sought to address barriers to enrolment. Funding had been secured for Ukrainian refugees to provide free access to lessons and ensembles. Further collaboration with the Ukrainian school was being explored. Officers noted that vulnerable children often displayed great passion for musical instruments.

Music education was valuable not only as an introduction to musical art, but also as a means of forming lasting friendships and instilling discipline in young people.

While engaging with 64% of schools was a good achievement, there were a number of obstacles such as finance; some schools operated independently and may not feel the need to use the Hub; and the role of a music coordinator in primary schools varied from

school to school, from delivering music to simply ensuring its continuity. Certain secondary schools struggled with music and sought external assistance, but sometimes the demand exceeded what can be delivered. Dwindling numbers of students in GCSE and A-level music was of concern to universities. Furthermore, parents faced choices regarding their children's extracurricular activities, including instrumental lessons. Despite financial challenges, parental buy-in remained crucial, as the perception was that music careers may not yield substantial income.

Current instrument expenditure was small due to budget constraints. Recently, keyboards had been purchased for group tuition, but the Hub tended to rely on existing instruments that were historically acquired. While the Hub initially spent more during whole-class programs, the current proportion of the budget allocated to instruments was relatively small. Any anticipated government funding for instruments further influenced spending decisions. Balancing accessible instruments and music technology with traditional instruments was essential, but storage limitations also impacted the acquisition of instruments.

Repairing and refreshing instruments was crucial. It was noted that exploring partnerships with schools could help store instruments. Spare capacity in primary schools might accommodate music teams.

The music service traditionally focused on Western classical music, though there was an intention to expand inclusivity. Strategies included employing a diverse group of teachers and ensuring workforce representation. Collaboration with external partners, such as a spoken word artist, could enhance this. Inclusion and diversity training for staff was essential, and while curriculum control was limited, efforts focused on an inclusive repertoire. Primary network meetings educated schools about the importance of lyrics and cultural contexts.

The Music Hub employed both internal staff (hourly paid employees of the Council) and external partners. Partners were selected based on expertise and satisfaction criteria.

While some teachers were qualified, many had music degrees or a passion for music. The service aimed to develop early years programs and family-oriented activities in the future.

The service primarily operated from the Global Academy but was seeking more diverse locations. However, financial constraints impacted expansion possibilities.

The Music Hub actively sought student feedback through surveys after concerts. They also engaged with youth voice and aimed to establish a youth council. Passionate ex-students provided valuable perspectives, and feedback from all stakeholders was considered for program refinement. A new school survey was planned to gather input from children participating in lessons.

Work experience opportunities with universities were being pursued, and shadowing experiences for engaged students had been successful.

The Friends of Hillingdon Music Service raised donations through raffles, doughnut sales, and events. Funds raised had supported tours, sheet music, and parents in temporary financial need. The Friends of Hillingdon were previously involved but were currently focused on the Saturday music school. They attended some meetings by invitation but were not regular members.

Schools contributed to funding through direct billing for whole-class tuition. Secondary schools paid for lessons directly. Unlike other areas, the music service billed parents, not schools.

The Music Hub was part of the West London music hub, although details were confidential for now.

RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee noted the report.

84. **PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM REVIEW: WITNESS SESSION 2** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Officers considered a range of documents outlining how other Local Authorities were tackling the issue of persistent absenteeism.

Buckinghamshire County Council and the London Borough of Camden were undertaking similar reviews on this topic. It would be good to see the progress of their reviews and to make comparisons to the current review.

Some other local authorities were considering the geographical context. It would be good to incorporate this into the current review. It would also be important to consider cultural aspects, for example if absences occurred at specific times of the year.

The Camden Chatty Newsletter was praised.

Having an internal officer present at the Committee may have been useful to help steer through what Hillingdon was already doing in comparison to other local authorities.

It was noted that Buckinghamshire County Council had asked central government for additional resources.

Harrow Council's School Attendance Intervention Model's (AIM) approach to 'Demonstrating a strong attendance ethos', and the graph of 'guidance for schools on when a child is absent from school' were commended. The Intervention Model was commended as a helpful document that applied borough-wide so that schools did not have to do their own thing.

Schools were crucial to tackling absenteeism, and engaging with them would be an important part of this review.

It would be useful to break down absenteeism into those young people who want to attend school but cannot, due to health or religious reasons for example, and those who did not want to attend.

It was suggested that information on the Hillingdon website could be presented in a more accessible way for families who were multi-lingual. Suggestions for further signposting were noted.

Reference was made to the Attendance mentors programme, and it was suggested that this could be rolled out in Hillingdon.

Reference was also made to the Hillingdon LEAP website, which had lots of

information for schools and parents.

It was suggested that the Committee could hold a witness session with officers from the Participation Team.

A suggestion was made about implementing a Council slogan around promoting attendance and the importance of attendance.

It was highlighted that attendance was not a single number, but a result of a multitude of difference causes. It was highlighted that those needing the largest levels of intervention would require the most resources, and questions had to be raised of where these resources would come from.

A focus on prevention was needed within the review in addition to looking at the causes of absenteeism. Therefore, schools had a big part to play as they were more likely to know the causes of absenteeism.

A suggestion was made to get the Youth Council involved in the review, whether as participants in a witness session, or as observers at a session. It was noted that the Youth Council was currently being re-elected, and so engagement in the review would need to wait until after new members had been inducted.

Further on engagement with young people, it was noted that those that the Committee would most want to engage with were those who were less engaged int school, which could be difficult.

Further to this, it was suggested that employing different methods of engaging with young people may enable easier engagement, and this may include 1-2-1 sessions, virtual sessions or questionnaires. This could be extended to the parents/ carers. Making the sessions as informal as possible would further aid in this.

Discussions around attendees at future witness sessions was ongoing.

The Committee asked if it would be possible to get some geographical and cultural data ahead of the next meeting. It was noted that this would help in formulating the review and in making recommendations.

It was suggested this this review may not follow the timetable of other major reviews, given that the topic was being reviewed by central government.

RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee reviewed the attached information with a view to forming suggestions for how Hillingdon can continue to tackle the issue of persistent absenteeism.

85. **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Members considered the report.

RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee:

- 1. Noted the contents of the report; and**

	2. Approved the updates to the Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference
86.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Forward Plan.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.</p>
87.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Work Programme.</p> <p>There were a few items listed as TBC. Dates for these items would be confirmed.</p> <p>It was suggested that a school admissions update similar to that presented today be added towards the end of the admissions process on a more regular basis, separately from the School Organisation Plan (as opposed to a one-off item). This could give specific reference to Reception and Year 7 and unfilled places.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee considered the report and agrees any amendments.</p>
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.30 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell on democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.