

Minutes

Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee

Wednesday, 8 July 2009

Meeting held at High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW



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Members Present:

Councillors Catherine Dann (Chairman), Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman), Judith Cooper, Peter Curling, John Hensley and Anita MacDonald

Officers Present:

Steve Foot, Head Teacher, Minet Junior School
Gerry Foot, Language Manager, Minet School
Joanne Harper, Associate Principle, Rosedale College
Clive Neathy, Executive Principal of Rosedale College
Sue O'Brien, Schools Improvements Officer for Inclusion
Heenal Oza, Children's Services Practitioner, Rosedale College
Charlie Taylor, Head Teacher, The Willows school

LBH Officers Present:

Natasha Dogra, Jean Knapp, Sarah Harty, Pauline Nixon and Chris Spencer

Public Present: 0

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Tony Little.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTER COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING

Councillors Catherine Dann, Brian Crowe, Judith Cooper, Peter Curling, John Hensley, and Anita Macdonald declared a personal interest in all items on the agenda due to their roles as a School Governors.

3. TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND ALL THOSE MARKED IN PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

All items were Part 1 and were considered in public.

4. TO RECEIVE AND AGREE THE MINUTES OF 10TH JUNE 2009

The minutes were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSION IN HILLINGDON SCHOOLS

The Chairman welcomed all of those present to the meeting, and asked Sue O'Brien (Schools Improvements Officer for Inclusion) to begin her presentation.

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Ms O'Brien said:

- The last local strategy was completed in 2003. A representative group of stakeholders were to meet under the joint chairmanship of Pauline Nixon, Head of Access & Inclusion, and Sue O'Brien to write a new strategy. Step one of the strategy had been sent out for initial consultation and step two would be in place for consultation at the beginning of the next academic year. The aim was to review current inclusion provision and to formulate strategic direction across schools and the local authority.
- Creating the post of Principal School Improvement Officer for Inclusion had raised the awareness of what should be seen in schools as "universal" and "targeted" when considering pupils with additional needs. It was only when this level of support was considered insufficient to narrow the progress gap between a pupil and its peers should wave 2 or 3 be deemed necessary:
 - **Wave 1** - Inclusive quality first teaching for all;
 - **Wave 2** - Additional interventions to enable children to work at age related expectation or above;
 - **Wave 3** - Additional, highly personalised interventions.
- The Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) was 3 year programme:
 - **Year 1** focused on Speech Language and Communication Dyslexia;
 - **Year 2** focused on Autism;
 - **Year 3** focusing on Behaviour.
- IDP was based on Quality First Teaching which were organised into three areas:
 - Understanding the area of difficulty
 - Being able to identify the barriers to learning for children having difficulties
 - Knowing how to overcome these barriers
- All schools were offered IDP training centrally and at these sessions the school-based training materials were distributed. Schools had been given support in delivery through whole staff sessions. An audit of "take-up" had been completed and the results would be available in the autumn.
- In 2007, 1.5m children were identified as having SEN (Special Education Needs) in England– 19.2% of all pupils. In 2007, £2.5 billion was spent on delegated and retained SEN budgets. Schools determined the use of delegated SEN budgets, providing opportunities to use funding flexibly to be more effective. Many schools developed holistic and strategic approaches to planning provision and monitoring impact.

The Chairman opened the floor to questions. Members asked Ms O'Brien whether the needs of the children in these schools were being met. Ms O'Brien said the whole strategy was based on meeting the needs of the children and accommodating their varying needs.

Members asked Ms O'Brien what steps were being taken to ensure school attendance was being kept on a high level. Ms O'Brien said that there was an attendance monitor at every school. The attitude of the child was monitored to uncover any underlying issues beneath their truancy. The attendance monitors worked in coalition with the education welfare officers, and were able to enforce

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the law in order to tackle parents who supported the act of truancy. Officers said that there was a very effective Education Welfare Service in Hillingdon, and the secondary and primary attendance had surpassed its target during the past few years. Members requested more data on this and Officers agreed to provide this information to Democratic Services for circulation.

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Members asked Ms O'Brien whether the idea of 'virtual schooling' had been developed any further. Ms O'Brien said that this idea was in its infancy, with a pilot scheme being built at the moment. Officers said that Hillingdon was part of a consortium with Hounslow and Buckinghamshire, which was working on developing this idea.

The Chairman thanked Sue O'Brien, and invited Mr Steve Foot (Head of Minet Junior School) and Mrs Gerry Foot (Minet School Language Manager) to begin their presentation. Mr Foot said:

- The school had an attendance rate of 94.7%.
- The school developed good parental links with children at risk and positive dialogue and with external agencies e.g. SEN.
- The school had strong links with The Meadows and The Willows special schools.
- Intervention Groups were pupil driven for those with special needs e.g. sensory difficulties.
- Exclusion and attendance - the school was committed to the principle of No Fixed Term Exclusions, and exclusion rates were rapidly improving.
- New arrivals at the school were assessed, with their parents, at an initial interview and given an (EAL) Evaluation Assurance Level. Information such as home language, country of origin, last place of residence, previous schooling and history, parental preferred language of communication (to include reading and writing), ethnic group, religion, date of arrival, position in family, SEN concerns, assessments in listening/speaking, reading/writing in first language, English and other languages was gathered. New pupils were "buddied up" with other students and their behaviour was closely observed.

The Chairman thanked Steve and Gerry Foot and opened the floor to questions. Members asked what interventions were in place for those children who liked to start school at 7.30 am. Mr Foot said that when children wanted to come to school earlier, there was usually an underlying issue and therefore their behaviour was monitored to uncover this issue. There were nurture groups which tended to those pupils who would rather be at school than at home.

Members asked about the layout of classrooms. Mr Foot said that inclusion was about dealing with disruptive children at all ages and in all schools. The layout of the room should not matter, but the teacher should be able to engage and control the class.

The Chairman thanked Steve and Gerry Foot for their presentation. Clive Neathy (Executive Principal of Rosedale College), Joanne Harper (Associate Principle) and Heenal Oza (Children's Services Practitioner) were invited to begin their presentation. Mr Neathy said:

- Rosedale College focused on raising the issues of quality learning,

vocational qualifications availability and workforce remodelling. Specialists were bought in for children who had fallen through the net and needed extra help. 71.5% of the children at the school were from ethnic minorities, and 25% of the children had special education needs.

- Nurturing a child with special education needs was of utmost importance. In usual circumstances, this child would be accustomed to being nurtured at primary school level and this continued into their secondary education. A balance and consistency needed to be struck to enable the child to be comfortable in their surroundings.
- Inclusion was based on understanding the child, their parents and their situation very well. It also concerned the community where the children were from and their school community.
- The Senior Management Team met every morning to discuss individual children, day to day tasks and arising situations. Some staff attended forums with other schools to share best practice and ideas.
- The school was open 50 weeks of the year, which meant children were not forced to take holiday periods, as many of them preferred being at school.

Members queried the school's opening hours. Miss Oza said the school was open on weekends, weekday evenings and during holiday periods. Activity clubs were held after hours, as well as a six hour teaching day. Learning sessions were broken down into 2 hour periods. Sixth form students were invited to take part in Community Leadership Programmes, where they were paid to take care of younger children, having completed the required training.

Members asked what information regarding the child's situation could be shared with other organisations. Miss Harper said all information could be transferred, with sensitive cases being the anomaly. In cases where child protection was a cause for concern, the child was assessed using the Common Assessment Framework, and was then passed on to Social Services if it was deemed necessary.

Members asked about staff and funding. Miss Oza said most of the funding the school received was used for teaching and learning. Teachers were contracted to work 1265 hours in 165 days a year. The teacher's associates were mainly graduate students who wished to gain experience in this area, and usually moved on to become teachers. Most teachers stayed at the school for 3 to 4 years and then moved on. Members requested further information and statistics regarding staff: pupil ratio. Miss Oza said all staff had a contribution to make to the school; staff understood that the number one priority of the school was their children. Staff were taught that their job was to deliver a bespoke service using creative solutions. Miss Oza said Rosedale College incorporated a distributed leadership model.

Members enquired about the acceleration of children who were learning faster than others. Mr Neathy said that children were moved into the next class up if they had shown signs of fast learning and capability to deal with more work. Children were never demoted.

The Chairman invited Charlie Taylor (Head Teacher of The Willows school) to begin his presentation. The Mr Taylor said:

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- The school exercised a 'First Steps' class for children aged 3yrs to 5yrs who had shown clear signs of needing special education or nurturing.
- The school performed a lot of outreach work with mainstream schools in the borough. This was to ensure that children who had left The Willows were able to settle back into mainstream education and the chance of them returning was decreased.
- The Willows was able to keep up an interface with mainstream schools while a child was making the transition between the two, which allowed the school to monitor the child's behaviour and maintain consistent nurturing of the child.

Members asked whether there was a waiting list to join the school. Mr Taylor said The Willows was made aware of children who were on their way to them by the mainstream school. Currently there was no waiting list and the school was matching demand levels. Mr Taylor said many cases could be solved within mainstream schools if they had the skills and capacity to deal with them. However, because they did not have these skills the children had to join The Willows.

The Chairman thanked Mr Taylor for his presentation.

6. MATHS UPDATE REPORT

The Chairman invited Jean Knapp (Education and Youth Learning officer) to begin the update on Mathematics performance in Hillingdon. Officers stated that the statistic on student performance in the field of mathematics seemed to have remained constant in recent years. However, there was a need to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the system and what had been done to improve the performance in recent years. There was a need to improve the maths performance. Hillingdon supported the plans for addressing these issues of improvements in Hillingdon schools, which was due to begin next year.

Members asked officers how useful the Policy Overview Committee's recommendations had been during their review of maths performance in 2003. Officers said the recommendations had been helpful at the time and were taken into consideration when addressing issues of improvement. However, as performance was ever-changing, it was very important for the recommendations to be up to date.

Members asked about staff knowledge of the subject. Officers said a large number of maths teachers in the borough lacked subject knowledge. Teacher training programmes had been introduced in areas where teachers lacked knowledge and expertise, and a minimum academic requirement in mathematics had been enforced on all those who wished to teach the subject. Teachers also took part in online self evaluation tests, and were encouraged to broaden their use of Information and Communications Technology during their teaching sessions.

The Chairman thanked the officers for attending.

Agreed:

That officers from the Education and Children's Services directorate

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<p>elaborate on acronyms used in their reports. The Committee agreed that the first time an acronym was used in a report its full name should also be included. Officers agreed to practice this in future reports.</p>	<p>Education & Children's Services.</p>
<p>7. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE REPORTS 2008/09</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Chris Spencer, Director of Education and Children's Services to present the Performance & Finance and 2009/10 Budget reports. The officer said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council was well placed to deal with the economic challenges ahead and had exceeded the £12 million target for balances by the end of 2009/10. • A clear HIP programme had been established that had helped steer the Council from a position of having low balances to one of having healthy balances at the same time as dealing with significant external challenges around asylum funding and reduced general funding from central Government • The timetable for the budget had been brought forward from previous years so that a balanced budget could be presented to the Cabinet/SMT (Senior Management Team) away day in November. • There were a number of cost pressures for the group, particularly around recruitment issues within Children's Services, where the cost of agency cover was a continuing issue. Officers were working with Corporate Human Resources to endeavour to address this issue. • The group was also working towards delivering the savings identified as part of the Service Review, with the focus on furthering the work on preventative services. However, it would be particularly challenging to find additional savings over and above these targets. • The funding of Asylum remained a significant issue. Officers were continuing to work with Home Office officials and ministers to seek additional funding to ensure that the full costs the Council incurred were reimbursed through the grant regime. Officers had amended a UK Border Agency template to enable all Asylum costs to be clearly identified. This had been circulated to authorities by UK Border Agency. The findings should help further discussions on full funding and around specialist status. <p>The Chairman thanked the officer for attending the meeting.</p>	<p>Action By:</p>
<p>8. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10</p> <p>The Committee agreed the Work Programme for 2009/10.</p>	<p>Action By:</p>
<p>9. FORWARD PLAN 2009/10</p> <p>The Committee agreed the Forward Plan.</p>	<p>Action By:</p>
<p>The meeting closed at 22:30</p>	

