

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

<p>EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20 JANUARY, 2016</p>
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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY, 2016 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3 AND 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

Councillors Uzma Ahmed, Sue Anderson, Matt Bennett,
Councillor Barry Bowles, Mick Brown, Debbie Clancy, Martin
Straker-Welds, Chauhdry Rashid, Valerie Seabright and
Alex Yip.

Samera Ali – Parent Governor
Richard Potter – Church Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Andrea Burns -
Kathryn Cook – Interim Head of Organisational Development
Seamus Gaynor – Link Officer
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member
Michael Innocenti – Pupil Placement Manager
Julie Newbold – Head of Schools Admissions and Pupils Placement
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager
Steve Nyakatawa – Assistant Director Education and Skills
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Tony Stanley – Chief Social Worker and Chair of Missing Operational Group
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

333 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent
broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and
that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole
of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt
items.

APOLOGIES

334 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Barbara Dring and Sarah
Smith for their inability to attend the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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- Page 5 - Seamus Gaynor clarified that the figures were one third of 1%.
 - Min 323, No. 11 – No information had been received about partnerships in the area however this had been requested.
 - Page 7 Councillors requested information on the number of schools not engaging in their Wards as follows:-

Councillor Mick Brown
Councillor Sue Anderson
Councillor Choudhry Rashid
Councillor Valerie Seabright
 - Councillor Alex Yip informed that he had visited COBS school to discuss the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Sue Barnett thanked him for his input.
 - Councillor Sue Anderson referred to BEP and the importance of District Councillors and the District Plan. She had not yet received a copy of the District Plan. She was also concerned about insufficient information and had yet to receive a copy of the BEP contract. The Chairman undertook to follow this up.
 - Councillor Martin Straker-Welds suggested that an executive summary should be available to Members so they could be more informed.
 - Councillor Rashid expressed some concerns about schools in Birmingham referring to Small Heath School in particular. The Chairman undertook to speak to Councillor Rashid following the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December, 2015, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

TRACKING:WORK EXPERIENCE FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN – THE ROLE OF THE CITY COUNCIL INQUIRY

The following progress report was submitted:-

(See document no. 1)

Kathryn Cook and Andrea Burns presented the report giving an update of progress made.

During the discussion and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. In reply to Councillor Bowles' request for colour copies to enable graphs etc to be better understood, the Chairman asked that if colour copies could not be provided an alternative method should be used.

2. Councillor Clancy advised that some work experience had recently been set up in the Conservative Office. He asked what happened to the feedback from BCC once the placement had ended also noting that the number of work experience per Ward was not available. Andrea Burns said that this could be included in the tracking data.
3. Councillor Clancy spoke of lack of places for students who ended up travelling further to attend placements.
4. It was suggested that this information be brought back on a regular basis.
5. Members agreed work needed to be done to ensure a good quality of work experience. Kathryn Cook advised they were looking at internships, placements etc and it was important to get them right.
6. Samera Ali referred to the graphs on page 17 and the unknown information. She stated that the information needed to be checked.
7. Councillor Yip commented on the information and it was agreed that it was difficult to interpret the data.
8. Councillor Brown welcomed the template letter for Members.
9. It was agreed that the recommendations be noted and that the Dashboard should be presented to the Committee every 6 months.

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RESOLVED:-

- i) That the information contained in the report be noted;
- ii) That members encourage the provision of work experience placements in discussions with officers;
- iii) That members encourage colleagues to participate in the provision of work experience; and
- iv) That Members show support for their local schools by attending Careers and other developmental Events.

PUPILS WHO LEAVE SCHOOL WITHOUT TRACE – CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 2)

During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. Julie Newbold outlined the action taken when a child left school without trace. The team received 30 enquiries per month which were shared with neighbouring authorities. They also had access to a database.

2. The Chairman had concerns about the numbers involved. The Committee was informed that there were robust systems in Birmingham and every child was traced. Appeals for school places were held in the summer.
3. Where there was a dispute the child was put back on roll until they had a valid school place. If a parent refused to send a child to school they were informed of their legal responsibility and if they did not send the child court proceedings could be started.
4. There was a West Midlands Gypsy Traveller Lead who engaged with a number of schools to support schools with children of traveller families.
5. Councillor Yip thanked the Chairman for bringing the item to the agenda. He was concerned about the time delay of 20 days during which children could disappear. Julie Newbold replied that the 20 days or more in the report meant that a child could not be removed from the school roll before 4 weeks. If there were concerns such as domestic violence, contact was made with the family and there was a lot of pressure on schools to recognise the signs. The majority of children missing from school were children moving abroad.
6. With regard to a comment from Councillor Bowles about home schooling and the legal implications, Julie Neal said that if a parent confirmed they wished to home educate a child they would be removed from the school roll.
7. Councillor Rashid asked whether there were statistics for children on eg extended trips abroad. Julie Neal said children could not be removed from roll unless they had not attended school for 20 days or more. They made contact with neighbouring authorities to check whether the child had moved.
8. In reply to Samera Ali, parents that were unable to gain a place for all their children in one school had the right of appeal. They were offered a place in a school within a reasonable distance. Children could not be admitted to a school if it was full. Julie Neal invited Samera Ali to email her details about a specific case she was referring to.
9. Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member informed that there were problems with lack of school places across the City. In the long term they were looking at schools where extra classes could be put. There were some schools that were unpopular.
10. Councillor Clancy said there was a language barrier for some parents and they were not aware of the information. Schools were formerly responsible for schools admissions.
11. Julie Neal was aware there was over 5,000 applications made to schools. The vast majority of schools informed them about the places. Schools also advised about offer of school places.
12. With regard to the definition of a reasonable distance to take a child Julie Neal said that parents may choose a school that was near their place of

work or apply a Secondary School place across the other side of the City. Parents must notify the team of any alternative education provision.

13. In response to Samera Ali, Julie Neal outlined the criteria for school places.
14. If a missing child was in a school in Birmingham but on a school roll in Solihull the 2 authorities were jointly responsible. All schools and academies had a legal obligation to coordinate with the local authority.
15. The Cabinet Member informed that there was a consultation on school's admissions each year, however in the past they had not received a response. This year they had received 6 responses.
16. Following questions from Councillor Matt Bennett, about the exact numbers of children missing from Education and reports in the press about unregistered schools and alternative providers, also whether the same standards applied for alternative providers to inform the Department, Julie Neal informed they were working close with colleagues to identify in total the numbers of children that were missing from Education. A more detailed analysis could be provided. The Department were notified by weekly returns of new applications to schools.
17. In reply to Councillor Seabright's concern about vulnerable children leaving school, Michael Innocenti replied that the statutory school leaving age was 17. Councillor Seabright said that the O & S Committee should consider issues with siblings and look at transport etc. and requested that this be included in the work programme for the following year.
18. In reply to Councillor Martin Straker-Welds, Julie Neal reported that Ofsted were notified of any children attending unregistered schools that they were aware of and the Team made contact with the family.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (HOME SCHOOLED)

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 3)

During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. Michael Innocenti outlined the report. They were aware of just over 800 children who were home educated. The Local Authority had 3 advisers in the team responsible for offering support and guidance to parents in the City for Home Educated Children. The reported back following contact with the families. Local Authorities had no statutory powers to enter homes etc to monitor the quality of education the children received, however they tried to work with parents to ensure the quality of education given was suitable. The majority of referrals were

received from schools when a child was withdrawn and they removed the child from the register. They asked the school to keep the child on the register for 20 days while enquiries were made.

2. Councillor Seabright commented that a number of children could be lost in the system and some work needed to be done with regard to the school roll. Councillor Barry Bowles was concerned that the Local Authority had no powers to investigate when a child was taken off roll. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds assumed there were no tests to monitor the quality or ensure that the curriculum was followed.
3. In reply to queries from Samera Ali, Michael Innocenti answered that some families migrated to the City and did not register with the universal services. Some work needed to be done in that area. There was no requirement for home schooled children to do SATs etc. A child could only be identified as not applying for a school reception class place if they were previously on record as having attended a nursery school. They had written to all nursery providers asking them to identify any child that had not applied for a school place and the details were passed to the Home Education Team.
4. Julie Neal said that if they became aware of a family not providing a suitable education they issued a school attendance notice.
5. Councillor Debbie Clancy informed there were a lot of home educator's networks and home educating was acceptable provided the education provided was satisfactory. She asked whether there was any data that could be accessed. Michael Innocenti explained that cases of concern were discussed at regular monthly meetings to ensure there were no safeguarding issues. They were currently seeking to issue 2 attendance orders on 2 families.
6. In reply to Councillor Mick Brown an outline of an attendance plan could be provided.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN SERVICES UPDATE

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Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member attended the meeting to give an update. During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. Andrew Christie had been appointed the Commission for Social Care for a year. He was currently working in London but she had met him on Monday.
2. The arrival of Tony Stanley, Chief Social Worker was key. There was a lead Social Worker for each area in Birmingham. The model for Child Social Care would ensure that children received the correct support.
3. She was pressing for a safeguarding briefing for independent schools.
4. A meeting had been held this week regarding the PREVENT agenda and Ofsted.

5. In reply to Councillor Matt Bennett there were limited powers regarding entering or closing unregistered schools.
 6. A suitable replacement should be found for the post of Chairman of the Safeguarding Board.
 7. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for her update.
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EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN O & S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The following work programme was received and noted:-

The work programme was briefly discussed. Councillor Seabright requested that home to school transport be added.

(See document No. 4)

340 **RESOLVED:-**

That the Work Programme be noted.

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

341 It was noted that future meetings were agreed for the following Wednesdays at 1400 hours in the Council House:-

10 February
23 March
20 April

REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

342 None were received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

343 There was no other urgent business.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

342 **RESOLVED:-**

That in an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1653 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON