

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 7 February 2018, County Hall, Worcester - 11.00 am

Present:

Minutes

Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), Mrs J A Potter (Vice Chairman), Ms P Agar, Ms R L Dent, Mr P M McDonald and Mr S M Mackay

Also attended:

Mr M J Hart, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills
Mr A C Roberts, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
Nick Wilson, Interim Assistant Director - Education and Skills
David Townsend, Head of Quality and Improvement, Babcock Prime

Catherine Driscoll (Director of Children, Families and Communities), Sarah Wilkins (Interim Assistant Director for Early Help and Commissioning), Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Alyson Grice (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. Information on the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 attainment for individual schools (circulated at the Meeting)
- C. Presentation handout for the Update on Optimising the Use of Children's Centre Buildings (circulated at the Meeting)

(Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

308 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from Mr R W Banks and Ms T L Onslow.

Members were informed that Ms S A Webb was no longer a Member of the Panel. Her place would be taken by Mr T Baker-Price.

309 Declaration of Interest and of

None.

any Party Whip

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Public Participation

None.

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Educational Outcomes 2017 Including Ofsted Update

The Panel received an update report which included a summary of the educational outcomes for children and young people educated in Worcestershire schools for 2017. As well as an overview of county-wide performance, Members were provided with information on end of Key Stage 2 and end of Key Stage 4 attainment for individual schools. Members were asked to note that on the Key Stage 2 sheet, the columns showing figures for 2016 and 2017 had been transposed and in fact should be the other way around.

In the course of the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Concern was expressed about KS2 attainment and in particular the attainment of middle schools in the county. It was confirmed that performance at KS2 was in the bottom quartile. In response, a programme of focussed work had improved performance in some schools but it was acknowledged that performance in middle schools was not as good as performance in primary schools. Babcock Prime was now undertaking further intensive work with middle schools. Although there was no room for complacency, there were early signs of improvement. Work had included specialist maths training and a focus on transition and working together with first schools to ensure a one key stage approach.
- In response to a question about how many middle schools were academies, Members were reminded that when a school became an academy, the County Council retained the responsibility to take an overview of performance and include school data in the Local Authority's area performance. Where there was a cause for concern about an academy, escalation could be taken forward firstly via the school head and governors and then through the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner. Babcock Prime worked closely with academies and aimed to foster partnership working across school pyramids.
- It was confirmed that school improvement work was, on the whole, targeted rather than universal,

with support targeted in inverse proportion to a school's success. When unvalidated data was available in the summer, a triage system led to visits to schools where data showed cause for concern. It was a school-led system where each governing body would be conscious of these concerns. At KS2, half of all maintained schools in the County had required some intervention which was a higher proportion than might be expected. Support packages were tailored to the needs of individual schools.

- From the information available to the Panel there appeared to sometimes be a discrepancy between Ofsted judgements and actual performance outcomes. It was not clear how a school could be rated as good but at the same time less than 50% of children had reached the expected standard at KS2. It was suggested that parents were more likely to look at Ofsted reports rather than the detailed statistics on actual performance. Members were reminded that the inspection schedule was refreshed at regular intervals. Each school was on a cycle of inspections with times between inspections differing according to inspection results. Ofsted inspections focused on progress rather than attainment and, for some schools, there was a time difference between the most recent Ofsted inspection and available attainment data. Also an Ofsted inspection took into account the profile of children's attainment across all year groups. Final reports would be based on the professional judgement of the inspection team and their real life experience of the school rather than simply the data.
- It was confirmed that there was no reason why pupils with English as an additional language could not perform at or above expected levels. Ofsted would take account of this in its judgements to ensure that pupils with EAL were not disadvantaged. Good practice for pupils with EAL would benefit all pupils in a school. If a significant proportion of pupils with EAL were not doing as well as other pupils, this would be a matter for professional judgement from the inspection team as to how this would be reflected in the overall judgement.
- Officers working for Babcock Prime worked hard to ensure they knew all schools well and had good relationships with them, including academies. The aim would be to support schools before escalation was needed.

- In response to a question about data from 2015, Members were reminded that over that period schools were dealing with a number of changes to the curriculum.
- Members were told about 'school causing concern' meetings which brought together all relevant parties to create an holistic view of how the school was performing. The escalation policy aimed to ensure that the County Council was securing quality outcomes for all children in Worcestershire. If the school was a maintained school, a warning letter would be issued. If it was an academy, a letter would be sent to the Secretary of State via the Regional Schools Commissioner with a follow up to ensure the RSC was taking matters forward. It was confirmed that this was a relatively new policy and, to date, no warning letters had been issued. The policy aimed to be supportive but assertive.
- Members were reminded that nationally children who were eligible for free school meals performed less well than average and in Worcestershire children eligible for FSM performed less well than similar children elsewhere in the country. This was a difficult issue and officers at Babcock were only just getting underneath the reasons. There was a need to focus at school level and to target resources to get better results.
- In response to a question about whether pupil premium was being used appropriately, Members were informed that this was an ongoing area of work for Babcock Prime.
- It was confirmed that, depending on the type of school, the poor performance of one department could impact on the overall inspection result.
- If a particular school was on the radar of Babcock Prime it may be getting termly or half-termly visits and would be left in no doubt as to what was needed for improvement. This was a big investment of time but would hopefully avoid any need for escalation.
- It was confirmed that if a school had received a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement but was not performing well in end of key stage attainment, there was nothing to stop the school referring to the Ofsted judgement in its own publicity, as Ofsted judgements were public facing.
- In response to a question about disappointing results at KS5, Members were reminded that post-16 education was covered by a different funding regime. Work was now starting to analyse A level

results and officers were beginning a programme of visits to schools. The County had a number of relatively small 6th forms and this may be a factor, although no conclusions had yet been reached. A thorough analysis of the situation was needed. Reference was made to three schools in Wyre Forest who were looking to work collaboratively at 6th form level and it was suggested that other schools could be encouraged to collaborate in this way. In response to a question about whether more students took A levels at college than school, Members were informed that data on post-16 destinations would be provided following the meeting. The Panel was reminded that there was also competition across borders for post-16 students in some parts of the County.

- It was confirmed that Babcock Prime had a five year contract to provide services to the Council. In response to a question about how the performance of Babcock Prime was monitored, the Cabinet Member reminded the Panel that scrutiny was part of this process. Additionally, the CMR had a responsibility to hold the Assistant Director – Education and Skills to account who, in turn, held Babcock Prime to account through Key Performance Indicators. For example the Cabinet Member would go through issues of concern with the Assistant Director who would then go back to Babcock Prime to discuss them further.
- With reference to 6th form provision, the Cabinet Member suggested that there was some concern about the narrowing of the curriculum. Smaller numbers of students would result in less money and make 6th forms less sustainable. He suggested that collaboration should be encouraged to ensure schools could provide as wide an offer as possible.
- In response to a question about challenging targets for 6th forms, the Panel was reminded that these would be used in schools for self-evaluation and quality assurance.
- The Chairman of the Panel noted that outcomes for Looked After Children were improving and Members should be pleased with this. She wished to record her thanks to the Virtual Head and other staff of the Virtual School.
- Members were informed that, across the range of Babcock services, buy-in was at approximately 96%.
- It was suggested that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) would have huge implications

**312 Update On
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Buildings**

for schools.

- With reference to the Strategic School Improvement Fund, Members were informed that funding had been obtained from the DfE via the Teaching School Alliance for a programme of work targeted on disadvantaged children at Key Stage 2. Key themes were parental engagement, pupil efficacy and oracy with a focus on whole school factors such as teaching and learning.
- The Chairman of the Panel expressed concern that, as a Governor of three schools in Kidderminster, she had not been aware of the Key Priority Area Programme in Redditch and Kidderminster. This programme had now concluded and had provided support for governors and senior/middle leadership, focusing on collective and partnership working between schools.
- It was confirmed that local Members should be advised by Governor Services if a Local Authority vacancy occurred in a school in their division. It was suggested that this did not always happen.

In conclusion, the Panel:

- Expressed concern about the performance of middle schools in the County.
- Would like to receive further information in relation to KS5 in due course.
- Would like to invite a representative of the teaching schools to a future meeting.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Assistant Director for Early Help and Partnerships had been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on optimising the use of children's centres buildings.

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director for Early Help and Partnerships. In the ensuing discussion the following main points were made:

- Having experienced Children's Centres in other authorities, the Assistant Director was heartened to see the range of services provided in Worcestershire.
- A Member asked about the impact of the Alternative Delivery Model on Children's Centres. The Director of Children, Families and

Communities reminded the Panel that the business case for the ADM was not yet completed. However, as a general principle, the strong intention was not to transfer any property to the ADM. The work of the Children's Centres was not in the scope of the Directive from the DfE but was part of the Early Help Offer. Working on the leases of the buildings was complicated, challenging work. The Chairman of the Panel confirmed that the Panel would want to be involved when further decisions were being made in 2019. It would be important for the Council's Early Help Offer to be fair and equitable across the County.

- In response to a question about the number of families now using the Children's Centres when compared to a year ago, the Panel was told that these figures were not currently available. An assessment of the use of each building was being undertaken in 2018 to inform decisions in 2019. The Chairman of the Panel confirmed that she would like the Panel to receive figures comparing use of the Children's Centres now with use before the changes in 2016. The Director of Children, Families and Communities informed Members that she would come to a future Panel meeting with a further detailed report giving footfall at each centre, together with the number of people receiving early help services. She reminded Members that services were targeted, but there was an ongoing discussion about whether they were being targeted at the most vulnerable families.
- It was confirmed that current contracts would run until April 2019 and would be renewed after a full procurement process.
- It was suggested that a sound position statement in relation to centre usage would be available for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel by Summer 2018.

The meeting ended at 12.43 pm

Chairman