

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 DECEMBER 2014

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Report from: Councillor Kelly Tolhurst, Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement

Author: Pauline Maddison, Interim Assistant Director, School Effectiveness and Inclusion

Summary

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement. The areas within the portfolio are listed each time a Cabinet Member is invited to attend any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be held to account. The Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement works to support the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member).

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Educational Improvement, to support the Children's Services Portfolio Holder as statutory lead, specifically include:

- Review of the Council's approach and support for school effectiveness
- Support for School Governors
- Post Ofsted Advisory Group
- Any other additional key strands of work as agreed with the Children's Services Portfolio Holder to respond to emerging issues

2. Overview

2.1 Governor support

Overview

Medway's Governor Services team fulfils the duty to provide high quality information, advice and support to ensure that governors comply with government regulations and education law and are

effective in driving school improvement. It ensures governing bodies are aware of updated legislative guidance, brokers self and peer evaluation opportunities for governing bodies and offers a comprehensive central and school based training and development programme for governing bodies /clerks. Schools can commission reviews of the governing body and the deployment of National Leaders of Governance.

Actions and outcomes

- Medway Governor Services receives subscriptions from 86% of all schools.
- There is a comprehensive training programme which is well received by Governors and an annual conference. Schools can also request bespoke sessions.
- The Governor Information Bulletin is published 3 times per year and Governors continue to access The Key to provide online advice and guidance. The Key is funded by the Schools Forum for 2014-15
- 74%of governors new to role have attended induction training within their first 6 months.
- Governor recruitment continues as a priority with Governor services matching requests for specified skills whenever possible
- There are 3 National Leaders of Governance in Medway and 8 Local Leaders of Governance. We need more and continue to seek governors with this accredited expertise.
- National Leaders of Governance undertake reviews of governance as developed by the National College. These reviews can be a recommendation from an Ofsted report or at a Governing Body's own request.
- New Chairs of Governors are offered support through a mentoring programme.
- Robust action has been taken where necessary to strengthen governance: an Interim Executive Board has been established in one school causing concern and in another school 3 LA governors have joined the Governing Body.
- A new clerking service has been set up to provide a quality service for Governing Body. It is clear that outstanding authorities run their own clerking services. Schools have requested that Medway provide the same service.

Challenges

- Recruit governors. We are always needing governors who have expertise which will add value to governing bodies
- Continue to support the development of governors through high quality and bespoke training. Like all authorities, time commitments of governors, who are volunteers, is an issue.
- Share expertise and good practice across schools.
- Develop the clerking service. This is a difficult task and in unsociable hours. The role is crucial to the success of a governing

body. We have endeavoured to seek support from a range of sources to find potential candidates who know schools, but also know the need for acute integrity and legislative acumen.

2.2 Early Years in relation to School Effectiveness

Overview

The Local Authority has statutory responsibility to lead and coordinate services that result in good health and development of children in their first five years of life. We are measured on the “school readiness” of children at age five. This is delivered by securing nursery education for all children and through helping parents to give their children the best start in life via a network of Sure Start Children’s Centres, provided in partnership with the health services.

Actions and outcomes

Children starting school in Medway in September 2014 did so with the highest ever recorded levels of learning and development. The proportion of children attaining a “good level of development” as assessed by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile increased from 57% to 64%, and is 4 percentage points above the national average, placing Medway in the top quarter of all local authorities in England.

This success reflects the early help and targeted interventions provided by Medway’s 19 Sure Start Children’s Centres, alongside improved early years education in schools and nurseries. Ofsted inspections grades of the 100 private and independent pre-schools and nurseries continue to improve from a relatively low baseline and 76% are now judged as good or better.

98% of children in Medway access a free nursery place at the age of three. In September 2013 an entitlement to free nursery education was introduced for two-year-olds living in the poorest households, and extended in September 2014 to working families with an annual income no greater than £16,190. An extensive programme of capital works to increase the availability of places, to improve the play and learning environment, and to train and support the workforce has been delivered by the authority’s early years service over the past 18 months. More than 900 Medway children are now benefiting from free nursery places at the age of two, which will further help to improve their readiness for school.

Challenges

The new Ofsted framework means that schools will receive a separate graded judgement for their early years provision within their inspection report. There is an increased focus on school readiness and pupil progress in the early years, and the quality of teaching and learning within school nursery and reception classes. Generally, the early years foundation stage is a strength of Medway’s primary schools. A key challenge is to ensure that the improved start to children’s learning in

the very earliest years provides a strong foundation for when they start school, as assessed by Ofsted. A further challenge is to continue to secure sufficient good quality free nursery places for the large number of two year-olds who live in the Chatham

2.3 Primary and secondary education

Overview

The Council continues to work to support effective practice in pre-school, primary and secondary schools. Our statutory responsibility is for all pupils' achievement, regardless of whether they attend an academy or a local authority school. We also have a statutory responsibility with regard to assessment in schools and for Children Looked After. The small minority who are educated otherwise are monitored at least annually.

Actions and outcomes

- The School Challenge and Improvement (SCI) team continues to offer a central training programme and advice and consultancy to schools. Schools are held to account through Raising Achievement in Medway Partnership meetings between school leaders and LA officers.
- LA schools have a "partnership rating" (A – E) which provides time from the SCI team to drive school improvement. Actions are negotiated and form part of the school's improvement plan
- .Achievement in maths continues to be a priority: Durham shared mathematics project continues with the second cohort of schools now engaged. This involves peer mentoring. Action research projects are also planned to address girls' engagement.
- Literacy is supported by a specialist consultant offering training and advice and guidance.
- Assessment is a core activity, helping schools to accurately assess and celebrate pupil progress. A comprehensive training programme is planned and underway. The moderation of pupils' work on behalf of the Standards Testing Agency is scheduled for summer 2015.
- Developing leadership has been a focus of the SCI team's work. New Headteachers benefit from an induction programme and mentoring support. The Compass Programme provides opportunities for experienced headteachers to share practice and visit good and outstanding schools in other LAs. This is important as Medway does not have sufficient good and outstanding schools and so the link with other LAs is helpful not only in showing good and outstanding practice but showing how the LA is clear that we aim for the best for our children and young people.
- The National Leaders of Education (NLE) and Local Leaders of Education (LLE) deployments are used to support leadership and improve pupil outcomes in schools.
- Work continues with the two local teaching schools to develop the support and training offer and to broker and access Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE) to improve teaching. This has improved strategically as we have arranged regular meetings to ensure that we

are maximising the support arrangements and single offer framework for our schools.

- The Corporate Parenting Group, chaired by the Lead Member, continues to champion outcomes for children who are looked after (CLA). Medway's virtual school Headteacher monitors pupil progress and allocated the pupil premium grant for CLA.e
- There has been significant improvement in achievement in the year 1 and year 2 phonics checks: Year 1 increased by 9 percent to 71%. Medway is the 5th most improved LA on this measure nationally.
- There has been improvement in all measures at key stage 1., with mathematics matching the national average for level 2B or better
- For key stage 2 Level 4 or better, in reading, writing and mathematics there was an increase of 3 percent to 74% (national 78%). Our improvement rate has matched the national rate but Key stage 2 continues to be a priority as we endeavour to reach the national average.
- The progress between key stage 1 and 2 for writing increased to 92% (national average 93%). Progress was 85% for mathematics (national average 89%) and progress in reading 88% (national average 91%).
- The percentage of students gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C including English and mathematics is above national (Medway 53.7%, national 52.6%). At this stage, we have no more information as the releases of statistical information is, both local and national for GCSE, is in January 2015 at the earliest. Schools which are expected to be below the floor target have been challenged through the DFE on their performance.

Challenges

- Improving the recruitment and retention of good teachers in Medway schools.
- Increasing the percentage of good or better schools for overall effectiveness
- Raising standards of pupil achievement to meet or exceed national outcomes
- Using mechanisms to ensure that DFE are aware of concerns re standards in academies

2.4 Attendance

The Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) sits under the umbrella of Early Help working closely with the Family Support Service, MafF, Social Care, Police and other supporting agencies to safeguard and improve the outcomes of children and young people.

AASSA are also responsible for Children Missing Education (CME), Missing Children (MISPERS) child employment, children in performance and chaperone licensing.

AASSA are a statutory service working to support schools and academies throughout Medway to improve and monitor school

attendance. It is a successful part traded service with all academies except one small primary academy purchasing the service. The support of the service to school effectiveness is fundamental. If children do not attend school, they are unlikely to learn.

Actions and outcomes

- Schools are allocated hours at the start of each academic year based on a formula where authorised absence, unauthorised absence, persistent absence, percentage of free school meals and school roll numbers are taken into account to ensure consistency of hours allocated.
- AASSA statutory responsibilities involve prosecuting parents for the poor school attendance and unauthorised absence of their children and the issuing of penalty notices for unauthorised absences including holiday taken during term time. During 2013/2014, 217 parents were prosecuted for the poor school attendance for their children of which 65 cases were repeat offenders. 694 penalty notices were issued for unauthorised absence or for unauthorised holidays taken during term time.
- AASSA regularly visit schools and academies advising on school attendance and during the academic year 2013/2014 received over 1200 referrals from them. Home visits are made, clinics and meetings held with parents and pupils to improve school attendance and identify any problems impacting on attendance.
- Schools and academies report attendance via the census 3 times a year to the Performance and Intelligence Team. Persistent absence is reported at the end of terms 1 to 5 and figures are produced which support AASSA to identify further individual cases of pupil persistent absence or schools and academies that may require further support.
- Statistics are not produce for the academic year 2013/2014 until March 2015, however figures produced by Medway for all schools and academies 2013/2014 indicate persistent absence at 3.4% and this compares well to the 2012/2013 England figure at 4.6%. (primary, secondary and special schools).

Challenges

- With more of Medway schools becoming academies, it is a challenge and important that the service continues to build excellent relationships with all schools, work professionally with our schools to encourage them to purchase hours from the service. This ensures safeguarding responsibilities are met and all agencies can work jointly to ensure that all children reach their full potential and access education. .

2.5 Exclusions

The Inclusions team deals with both permanent and fixed term exclusions in schools ensuring legal procedures are followed. Support is offered to school to ensure children are kept on role where possible. The team also supports families who choose to withdraw their children from school and educate them at home (Education Otherwise).

Actions and outcomes

- To advise schools about their policies and legal duties ensuring exclusion procedures are applied fairly and reasonably.
- Continue to liaise with parents and carers ensuring they are aware of their rights and responsibilities within the exclusion process
- Continue to support schools to manage transfers between school as an exclusion prevention mechanism and provide training to schools to ensure they are aware of the legal responsibilities relating to exclusion.
- Provide home visits to home educators to provide advice and guidance.
- At the end of the academic year 2012/13, 0.06% (4,630) of the national population of pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools had received permanent exclusions. In the same academic year, 0.09% (40) of Medway pupils in these schools received permanent exclusions. 0.13% (58) of Medway pupils had been issued with a permanent exclusion. (The number of permanent exclusions can change due to the fact that there are appeals awaiting outcome)
- At the end of the academic year 2012/13, 3.52% (267,520) of the national population of pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools had received fixed period exclusions. In the same academic year, 5.71% (2,420) of Medway pupils in these schools received fixed period exclusions.
- 5.74% (2485) of Medway pupils had been issued with fixed period exclusions.

Challenges

- The difficulty schools face in balancing the overall needs of the school community and the needs of individual pupils who may be exhibiting extreme social, mental health and behavioural issues.
- Rising numbers of exclusions where the LA has limited capacity to intervene puts pressure on local alternative provision capacity. This in turn places increasing financial pressure on the LA and an increase in workload because of the need to quality assure progress and safeguarding at providers commissioned by Medway. .

Lead officer contact:

Pauline Maddison, Interim Assistant Director School Effectiveness and Inclusion

Email: pauline.maddison@medway.gov.uk Telephone: (01634) 332201

Background Papers:

None