

AT A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at Ashburton Hall, Winchester on Friday, 30 September 2011.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Stephen Reid

Vice-Chairman:
p Councillor John West

Councillors:

p Charlotte Bailey	a Adrian Evans
p Ray Bolton	p Keith Evans
p Graham Burgess	a Andrew Gibson
p Rita Burgess	p David Keast
p Roz Chadd	p Roger Kimber
p Brian Collin	p Pam Mutton
p Brian Dash	p Jackie Porter
p Sam Darragh	p Jenny Radley
p David Drew	a Bruce Tennent

Co-opted Members:

a Sally Dace – Parent Governor (special)
p Mohammed Ansar – Parent Governor (primary)
a Rosemary Olivier – RC schools representative
p Tony Blackshaw – CoE schools representative
p Phil Watson – Parent Governor (secondary)

Also in attendance, Councillor Marilyn Tucker, Assistant Executive Member for Children and Families

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Adrian Evans, Andrew Gibson and Bruce Tennent. Co-opted members Rosemary Olivier and Sally Dace were also unable to attend and sent their apologies.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should

normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

82. MINUTES

Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2011 and were signed by the Chairman.

83. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Roz Chadd on her recent marriage.

84. HOW DO WE IDENTIFY IF A SCHOOL IS 'PUNCHING BENEATH ITS WEIGHT'?

The Deputy Director of Children's Services for Education and Inclusion (DDEI) accompanied by Brian Pope and David Hardcastle, Area Directors, provided the Committee with a most interesting and informative presentation on a topical issue of practical interest to Members and recently brought to the public's attention by the Prime Minister.

The DDEI presented an anonymised sample of secondary school results that included Raise Online (ROL) and Fischer Family Trust (FFT) comparative scoring. He explained that in addition to the actual GCSE scores, additional 'hard' and 'soft' evidence would be taken into account when comparing one school against another. The FFT scoring takes into account more socio-economic factors than the ROL approach.

Regardless of the system of scoring used for purposes of comparing school performance, it became clear that the way in which the department approaches monitoring is both sophisticated and complex.

Through its regular interaction with schools by education officers, inspectors and governor services, the department gains a lot of 'soft' evidence that is acted upon by its officers. All these additional sources of

information were then used together with harder sources to complete a picture of each school and would form the basis of how that school might best be supported to achieve the best possible outcomes for its pupils.

In addition, the DDEI then asked Members to consider the role of professional judgement and practice. He succinctly summarised the kind of good practice in school leadership that should ensure that schools do not punch beneath their weight.

A comprehensive range of factors was presented to the Committee that were used by educational services professional staff to support and challenge schools to rise above complacency and maximise their potential. However it was also clear whilst the department attempts to draw out as much information as it can from hard data, other critical influences on a school's performance included the drive, energy and clear sightedness of school leadership and the effectiveness of school governors. Whilst unable to control these variables, the department has continued to invest in training in both these areas.

Members welcomed the obvious commitment of the department and the clarity of thinking and thorough approach that underpinned the department's determination to foster a culture of continuous improvement in education in Hampshire's schools. Numerous questions were asked as the item progressed. For example, Members were interested to know how Ofsted inspections factored into this issue. The presenters acknowledged that if a school was awarded an 'unsatisfactory' rating, it would indicate that intervention would appear to have been required long before that situation had arisen. However Members recognised that even when the department knew a school was underperforming and support had been offered and provided, other factors could limit the capacity of the school to improve. Ofsted used the same data as the department, and the department took into account when providing their own services to schools that school performance would be assessed by Ofsted, and was thus focused in its approach.

Another Member followed up on this issue and was told that it was now easier to issue warning/improvement notice to schools. It was noted that when headteachers wanted to work with the County to improve educational outcomes for their school, that was what inevitably

followed. It was further noted that a number of Academies think the service valuable, and have indicated they want to buy it in from the department.

Local authority education departments were now in a difficult position because the provision of such services required significant resources, however because of the encouragement by Government for schools to become academies it was hard for authorities to predict the amount of demand that they would have to meet because of uncertain numbers of schools moving from local authority responsibility to function as independent entities. No local authority could afford to carry spare resources.

Members questioned what the authority could do to help if the governors of a school needed particular help. Apart from the supporting work of Governor Services, it was sometimes possible to strengthen the situation by putting in a skilled LA governor. However it was clear that some governing bodies provided headteachers with constructive challenge, whilst others did not play an effective role in setting high enough expectations for the school and its leadership; this could seriously disadvantage a school. A number of Members recognised this issue and said that they took very seriously their role in approving governors for schools in their area. One member of the Committee recalled a governing body that had realised they needed help and asked for it. The department had been keen to provide the help needed.

One Member asked if whether it was good enough if 45% of children in a school left with 5 GCSEs (A* - C) even if that school was considered to be doing well. There was considered to be no simple answer to the question as the previous discussion had indicated, since many factors had to be considered; for some schools such a result might be a real accomplishment, for others not so.

Further debate centred around the importance of good headship of schools which served to highlight this as probably the most consistent feature of outstanding schools. A Member asked whether it might not be possible to, as a matter of principle, require headteachers to do an exchange with another school for perhaps a term or longer with the idea of sharing and exchanging good practice and challenging staleness or complacency. In response Members were told this had

happened from time to time with beneficial results.

The 'total Children's Services approach' had made effective use of local children's partnerships. As a consequence the Education division within Children's Services was just one of a number of partners that provided resources and support for children, their families and schools. All of these played a role in achieving improving educational outcomes. Thus many resources were used to complement and strengthen the work of Education.

The Chairman commented that it seemed clear that the greatest asset a child takes into the classroom is parental interest.

RESOLVED

Members were assured by the responses of officers of the comprehensive and professional approach taken by the department in securing the best educational outcomes for students of Hampshire schools. Members strongly supported prompt action rather than waiting for Ofsted inspections to identify where schools might be coasting.

85. **PARENTING – ITS IMPACT ON LIFE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND INTERVENTIONS WHEN OUTCOMES ARE NOT GOOD**

The Deputy Director of Children's Services for Children and Families (DDCF) and Volker Buck, Strategic Lead Family and Parent Support, summarised the wide range of services provided by the department to support parenting and families. They discussed the criteria that have been proven to be critical in achieving successful outcomes in working with parents and for their children. It was noted that working with children or parents in isolation was not effective and that a variety of approaches were necessary. Interventions were therefore made available in different ways and in different contexts.

Careful prioritisation and clear focus was required, particularly since it seemed to be increasingly challenging to identify funding streams and the criteria that needed to be satisfied in order to obtain external, including Government funding for intervention. The criteria themselves would sometimes influence local authority priorities.

A Member commented that parenting skills were more learned than instinctive, suggesting that most parents were likely to repeat the experience that they themselves had had. However, it also suggested parents could benefit from being taught a variety of parenting skills to achieve more successful outcomes.

Asked if truancing was linked with parenting, the officer responded that whilst that may be a reasonable deduction there were no statistics that indicated how strong the link might be. It was also pointed out that truancing should normally be picked up by schools which had a responsibility for this.

Another Member commented that different cultures typically had different customs and norms associated with parenting and that it was not simple to know where the parenting responsibility lie or perhaps where it was perceived to lie.

RESOLVED

Members were assured by the information provided and responses to their questions. The Committee indicated that it would be interested to hear from the department again when full performance data became available to evaluate the impact of these services for children and families.

86. OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Chairman offered the Committee's congratulations to the Deputy Director for Children and Families on the excellent outcomes of the Ofsted inspection. The Deputy Director thanked Members, he also pointed out that Ofsted had noted the political commitment of the County Council to safeguarding and looked after children: this was appreciated and recognised by the department. This would have favourably influenced the inspection.

The DDCF briefly summarised the report for Members and invited questions.

One Member noted a reference in the report to ensuring consistency in the provision of an audit trail to document what actions may have been taken following views

expressed by children about their experience and care, however this was being addressed.

RESOLVED

Members were happy with the excellent Ofsted report and would follow up in future if areas of particular concern came to their notice.

87. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive presented the Work Programme (item 8 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED

The Work Programme was approved.

Chairman, 18 January 2012