

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
24th April, 2018

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Brookes, Cooksey, Cusworth, Fenwick-Green, Ireland, Jarvis, Khan, Marles, Marriott, Pitchley and Senior.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Elliot, Hague, Short, Julie Turner and Jones (GROW).

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

124. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cusworth declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 128 as she was a Governor at a Rotherham school.

125. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

126. COMMUNICATIONS

(1) As it was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, the Chair wished to place on record her thanks to Members of the Select Commission and every Officer who had attended and also to Caroline Webb (Senior Adviser) for her support during the year.

(2) The inaugural meeting of the Pause Board had taken place on 20th April to agree its Terms of Reference. The next meeting would be held in June.

(3) Councillor Cusworth reported that the Corporate Parenting Panel had not met since the last meeting of the Select Commission.

(4) Councillor Cusworth reported that the Performance Sub-Group had met to discuss the Early Help scorecards. The Sub-Group would meet quarterly to consider the data and briefings submitted to the Performance Board.

127. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH MARCH, 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 13th March, 2018, and matters arising from those minutes.

Further to Minute No. 119 (Adult Learning), it was noted that the report would be submitted to the June Select Commission meeting.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 13th March, 2018, be approved for signature by the Chairman.

128. 2017 EDUCATION PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Del Rew, Head of Education, presented an overview of the educational outcomes of children and young people in primary, secondary schools and academies in Rotherham for the academic year ending in the summer of 2017 in comparison to statistical neighbours, regional Yorkshire and Humber authorities and national averages for the same period of time. The report also made comparison with Sheffield's results and whilst not a statistical neighbour, provided a further sub-regional context.

The Department for Education (DfE) had made significant changes in the Key Stage 1 (KS1) Teacher Assessment (TA), Key Stage 2 (KS2) TA and Test Outcomes and Key Stage 4 (KS4) and Key Stage 5 (KS5) examinations in 2016 and further changes in KS4 and KS5 in 2017. It was not, therefore, possible to make comparison to historical data prior to 2016 at KS1 and KS2 and prior to 2017 for the majority of the thresholds at KS4 and KS5.

The report detailed:-

- A summary of outcomes
- School Ofsted Inspections
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
- Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4
- Key Stage 5
- Rotherham 2017/18 Overall Priorities

The following strengths were highlighted:-

- Early Years Foundation Stage – the good level of development had continued to rise above the national average. This was a well established trend and was first compared to statistical neighbours and joint second within the region
- Phonics – At the end of Year 1 (5/6 year olds) had shown an improvement but this was 2% below the national average. Last year 79% of Rotherham's children gained the Phonics Screening requirement compared with 81% nationally. . The authority was joint 5th against its statistical neighbours and 7th out of 15 regional local authorities

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

- KS1 was strong and for the first time Rotherham was above the national average
- KS2 was in line with the national average with particularly good progress in writing (girls) and mathematics (boys). The Higher Standard at the end of KS2 for more able children was below national average and needed to improve
- KS4 average attainment score was broadly in line with the national average.
- KS5 was above the national average

Areas of improvement included:-

- Performance of disadvantaged children from Foundation through to secondary stage
- Performance of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children had fallen below the national average
- Reading in KS1 and KS2, although above the national average in the combined score, it was below in reading
- The higher ability children at the end of KS2
- For secondary schools, the new measures introduced last year around grades for English and Mathematics

It was noted that the assessment for KS1, 2 and 4 had changed so it was difficult to compare like for like.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The description of a “disadvantaged child” in the report was as defined by the DfE and all the statistics collated were in accordance with that criteria. There was to be consultation by the DfE around this definition and collecting data about children who are not Looked After and may not fit the criteria
- Do we know what we are doing at early years compared with later key stages were greater improvements have to be made - The School Improvement Service had a Traded Services Offer to schools which was mainly geared towards primary aged children, with Special schools also accessing the offer. There are fewer secondary schools accessing the Local Authority School Improvement offer

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

- To encourage schools to work together, the Service attended meetings of the secondary Head Teachers looking at the data; the Head Teachers were keen to work together. There was some very strong collaborative working practices from groups of schools in the secondary sector
- A few years ago secondary schools had been at the national average or above and it had been the primary schools that had been below. However, there had been a breakthrough and for the first time primaries were in line or above and secondaries, against the new measures, were below
- A report was to be submitted to Cabinet proposing the establishment of an Education Improvement Board
- Training had been delivered to some of Rotherham's school leaders. It had been a one day course held earlier in the school year, attended by 35 people, who had received accreditation and resources to enable them to carry out Pupil Premium Reviews in other schools. In the new Traded Services School offer from September 2018, if schools bought back into the Service, they could have a Pupil Premium Review which included 2 appropriately trained accredited reviewers going into their school and carrying out a forensic analysis of how the Pupil Premium money was spent, what they were doing with it, and the evidence of the impact it had. They would receive a written report and a follow-up visit 6 months later with the "so what". The school would take it to its Governing Body and compile an action plan, supported by the reviewers, which was checked through and monitored. 3 schools had already taken up the offer.
- The performance of disadvantaged children had been a focus at Head Teacher meetings using data of where schools have either improved the performance of their disadvantaged children or had a strong record of their disadvantaged children doing very well. It had been looked at in terms of context and those who had been successful requested to hold a mini workshop to show what they did, the impact etc. There was also the opportunity within the Traded Services Offer to see it in action with a couple of schools opening up their doors and inviting other schools to observe what they were doing, see the extra interventions and how the disadvantaged children were targeted with questioning in lessons. It would be a big priority next year and looking at work with school leaders on a strategy for closing the gap
- The vast majority of Rotherham's secondary schools were academies and did not buy the School Improvement Offer. A reason for the proposed establishment of an Education Improvement Board and the work with the Regional Schools Commissioner was to influence those who were not maintained by the Local Authority to address some the issues being found around performance. The Local Authority had an influencing role and obviously wanted to make sure that it had a

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

Traded Services Offer that was attractive that schools wanted to spend their budget on. School Improvement was something that was bought rather than enforced

- The 2018/19 Traded Services Offer had been sent to all schools. The new Offer had been highlighted to secondary schools with the hope that it would be of more interest to them and something they would want to be engaged with such as the Outstanding Teaching Programme and Outstanding Teaching Assistant
- The Authority had a statutory duty with regard to any school that was not performing well. If it was a Local Authority maintained school it would be brought into the Schools Causing Concern process. The Local Authority had a responsibility for the education for all children in all Rotherham settings. The vehicle would be via the Regional Schools Commissioner. Termly meetings took place with the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office where discussions would take place on schools, whether they be academies or Local Authority maintained schools, that were potentially underperforming and what was happening with them. Similarly the same happened with the senior HMI Ofsted lead for the region
- The Traded Services Offer was for all schools. A number of academies bought fully back into the Traded Services Offer and some Local Authority maintained schools that only bought certain parts
- Although the percentage of Gypsy/Roma/Traveller pupils achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) had increased by 13%, it remained below the national average. This cohort was a vulnerable group of pupils nationally and in terms of their education performance. In Rotherham they were centred around a small number of primary and secondary schools in the Town Centre. There were a range of reasons why they were not achieving some of which centred upon their language being less developed and expectations for formal education in this country. A representative from Rotherham's Virtual School had contacted Doncaster who had set up a virtual school for Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children and had had some success
- School attendance was an issue for the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children. Work was taking place in the schools in terms of working with parents and instilling the importance of good attendance
- Research showed that a focus on Early Years was the best opportunity to address issues that would impact upon social mobility in later years. An intention of free nursery education was in part to help parents to establish good trends at an early stage and prepare children for school.

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

- It was known that in terms of social mobility children that came from low income households did not perform as well and often found it much more difficult to achieve and attain in the longer term. Good quality Early Years provision was fundamental to supporting children to develop the right skills to learn and enjoy learning. It was important that the focus was around speech, language and communication. Proposals were being considered for a Speech Therapist to be included within the Virtual School for children in care along with the teaching staff
- Schools that were below the floor standard were Brookfield Academy, Dinnington Primary Academy and St. Joseph's Dinnington Academy. There were no secondary schools below the floor standard
- The Rotherham coasting schools were Dinnington Primary Academy, Brookfield Academy, Maltby Lily Hall Academy and Ferham Primary School and Dinnington High School (Academy)
- There was a set cost for the Traded Service Offer. The 3 Early Years settings received a reduced set cost which is fully subscribed.. For primary schools there was a full subscribed offer of £25 per pupil, as calculated on the October Census and the number on roll, which enabled them to access absolutely everything. The larger schools with the corresponding larger budgets paid more. Other schools bought certain things at a certain price on a "pay as you go" but it had been found that that method was more expensive. All the special schools and nurseries fully subscribed, the majority of primaries with secondary schools buying back certain items
- Are there other ways of measuring Children's performance beyond the academic core curriculum for example sports, health, fitness and wellbeing. In terms of other areas of the curriculum, work was taking place with primary schools in particular around the importance of accessing areas beyond the core curriculum. There was a national concern from Ofsted around the narrowing of the curriculum with the focus on English and Mathematics but so that children did not miss out on opportunities to shine and thrive in other areas. The new lead of Ofsted had made a speech on such and guidance, together with examples of where things were going well in terms of the broad balance curriculum offer, was to be issued
- There was no strategy in connection with Brexit and school turbulence as yet although the Local Government Association would work with local authorities as to how they were preparing for it
- Within the Early Years setting it was imperative to be supportive of both boys and girls to develop the skills they needed. Boys often required help to develop expressive communication and to be able to develop their language skills

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

- The bid for additional funding to the Education Endowment Foundation to extend the Improving Outcomes for Boys in the EYFS project had not been successful. A lot of work had been undertaken in the last 2 years to engage boys into language. There had been 12 schools engaged in Cohort 1 of the project with another 12 in Cohort 2. There was also a new project with the National Literacy Trust to support parents and carers to prepare their children for school and which activities could develop children's vocabulary and language (targeted at parents of boys in particular)
- Forge Teaching School was the newest teaching school in Rotherham, led by the Head Teacher at Wath C. of E. School, and consisted of a group of schools who were keen to work with other schools in Rotherham, to be a part of the improvement agenda and to work across faiths. The Service was working with them and had been a partner in their bid for a project which was based on Bedrock Learning.

Bedrock Learning was around language acquisition and vocabulary, all based on research, and had identified that, particularly for disadvantaged children, the lack of academic aspirational academic language limited their educational performance. Bedrock Learning was a structured approach to teaching key vocabulary designed to help them in terms of their comprehension of the things they heard but also what they read. Reading comprehension with the way the curriculum was set up in the country at the moment and it was important that children develop this skill from an early age for later academic success.

Currently Bedrock Learning consisted of 30+ schools in Rotherham mainly primary but some secondary, and was about structured systematic teaching of academic vocabulary. Bedrock Learning visited every term to check progress. Children used digital technology so they could either do it at home or in school lessons and consisted of basic tests with words missing and learning what the words meant

It was targeted at Years 4-9 because that was what the company had developed, however, they were currently working on developing something for Years 1, 2 and 3 but it had not been published as yet. Some of the Rotherham schools had chosen to use it with Year 3 because they wanted it as a whole Key Stage. All the children had completed a baseline reading test to give a starting point as Bedrock Learning was keen to prove how it increased children's vocabulary with a similar test at the end. The company visited every term to answer any questions.

As well as Bedrock there were other personal development opportunities and ways of teaching vocabulary which would be open to all Rotherham schools

This was not part of the Traded Services Offer. It was a successful bid to the DfE Strategic School Improvement Fund for which there was an eligibility criteria. The DfE had a list of schools in terms of their performance and data that they wanted to improve. At least 70% of the schools had to be from that list with the remaining 30% of schools who were interested and committed to taking part

- No work had been carried out as yet on the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit as to whether it would increase the numbers of disadvantaged children or not. Feedback from some areas was that numbers had decreased due to the eligibility for Free School Meals but it may have an impact on Pupil Premium numbers
- There had been some really positive feedback to the Service's proposals around Re-enabling School Improvement. A number of the academies had engaged in the consultation and there had been lots of feedback about wanting to work collaboratively through the School Improvement Partnership Arrangement

The Chair thanked Del for his presentation

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a further report be submitted once the work around the possible impact of Universal Credit had been completed.

129. OFSTED SINGLE INSPECTION FRAMEWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

Sue Wilson, Head of Performance Planning, presented a report on the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework recommendations.

The Ofsted report with the findings from the November 2017 Single Inspection Framework (re-inspection) had been published on 29th January, 2018, and found that overall services for children and young people in Rotherham were Good. The report detailed 8 recommendations across the Framework where the Service still needed to make additional improvements; these would be monitored as part of the routine Service Planning and reported to the Children and Young People's Service monthly Performance Board.

An action plan had to be submitted to Ofsted by 10th May, 2018 (70 working days from the publication date of the report) in relation to the recommendations as part of their Single Inspection Framework.

A named Lead Officer had been allocated to each of the 8 Ofsted recommendations to ensure that the Service was accountable for the actions that needed to be in place to fully undertake the recommendations. The Officers would be held to account as part of the quarterly Service Plan Performance Clinics and monthly Performance Board meetings.

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - 24/04/18

The Audit Committee continued to review an overview of progress from recommendations from external inspections and as such progress against them would be included in the regular report on a 6 monthly basis.

Inspection readiness continued to be a priority in Children's Services as the Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services had now been published and included an annual self-assessment (which would need to cover progress against the 8 recommendations) and an annual conversation which was a visit from an Ofsted HMI to discuss the progress being made and any risks and issues. These together determined when the next inspection would take place.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- There were an additional 8 specific actions regarding the Looked After Children Service with the aim of moving it from Requires Improvement to Good and beyond
- There was a process of Quality Assurance Framework across the Service which included Social Care, Early Help and just about to embed some Education Services. There were approximately 30-40 audits undertaken on a monthly basis by Team Managers. The Team selected cases for which Early Help and Social Care Managers undertook a detailed audit which included providing an Ofsted style rating e.g. inadequate etc. A report was then compiled and submitted to the monthly Performance Board. In addition there were monthly Ofsted style visits – practice learning days – where a team of staff from the Director down to Business Support went out and conducted an Ofsted style visit, observed practice, looked at performance, held a focus group for staff. The Director would return and provide feedback
- The performance measures were reviewed on an annual basis, however, if something cropped up during the year it would be added. A refresh of the measures and targets that were to be included in the Council Plan had just taken place to ensure the Framework and Plan coincided. There may be specific pieces of service/of work that may need a score card developed as a result
- For Looked After Children, particularly those for whom permanence was achieved outside of their family, life story work was fundamental to enable them to be able to progress. It was also something that was looked for in the audits
- When conducting the mini Ofsted visits a similar approach would be adopted to that of the Ofsted Framework. The definition of Outstanding was that children were making sustainable progress i.e. do we exceed what the minimum requirements are and evidence that children were making sustained progress. The key word was “sustained” to be Outstanding

- The auditors were asked to speak to the child and the family as part of the audit as well as the people who worked with them. It was a fairly new practice (October 2017) so there was a small body evidence of what child/children thought about the work that was being carried out
- There had not been a case found “Critical” or “Inadequate” for 14 months although there was still work that was believed not to meet standards. There was a tracker for those cases and they were monitored on a fortnightly basis in performance meetings to make sure that changes were being made to get cases up to at least “Requires Improvement”. Due to the number of “Inadequate” cases being low, the same would now apply to those cases that “Requires Improvement” and would be entered onto the tracker, managers would have oversight and be clear to staff what needed to be done to get it to “Good”
- There were 2 areas that were particularly challenging. Firstly Exclusions and the obligation to try and reduce the vulnerability that being excluded from school had for children and secondly the Rotherham Family Approach which was the implementation of Signs of Safety and restorative practice. To fully embed and implement Signs of Safety, it was reliant upon Liquid Logic to be able to reflect that in the forms. Work was taking place with colleagues in IT around the next phase of its implementation.

Sue was thanked for her presentation.

The Chair also wished to place on record her thanks to Mel Meggs who had been the Link Officer from the Directorate to the Select Commission. Mel was to be the Acting Strategic Director of Children and Young People’s Services due to Ian Thomas’ leaving the Authority until a new postholder was appointed.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That a copy of the 8 specific additional actions for the Looked After Children Service be circulated to the Select Commission for information.

(3) That a presentation on Signs of Safety be included in the 2018/19 work plan.

(4) That the Select Commission’s thanked be placed on record to Ian Thomas, Strategic Director of Children and Young People’s Services, and best wishes for the future.

130. VICE-CHAIR

The Chair thanked Councillor Cusworth for her Vice-Chairmanship during the 2017/18 Municipal Year and all her support and encouragement.

131. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Tuesday, 5th June, 2018, commencing at 5.30 p.m.