

COUNCIL SEMINAR 15th October, 2014

Present:- Councillor Roche (in the Chair); Councillors Currie, Ellis, J. Hamilton, Havenhand, Kaye, Read, Reeder, Sharman and Swift.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Beaumont, Clark, Godfrey, Jepson and Pitchley.

SCHOOL STANDARDS AND EXAM RESULTS.

Councillor D. Roche, Adviser, Children and Education Services, opened the seminar and thanked all for attending. He introduced Karen Borthwick, Head of the School Effectiveness Service (Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services Directorate). Karen had prepared a presentation to appraise Elected Members on the current picture of school standards in Rotherham.

Attendees were asked to state whether ten statements provided were true or false. The statements were used as discussion points to separate commonly-held myths from the reality in Rotherham: - .

1. The Local Authority was responsible for all children across the Borough to be making progress in all schools. This role was facilitated by the School Effectiveness Service, who worked with maintained schools, academies and other partners, including dioceses, private schools, safeguarding, the admissions authority, parents' views/engagement and governors to work together for improved outcomes for children.

There was an Ofsted inspection framework (currently withdrawn) for local authorities' school improvement functions. Regional neighbours had been subject to school improvement inspections.

There was good engagement with all schools and academies in Rotherham. This was very positive and should be something that the Local Authority was very proud of.

2. Rotherham's Early Years Foundation Stage profile was above the national average in 2013 and 2014. This was a strong performance and Ofsted outcomes for early years settings were positive across all providers – schools, voluntary settings and private providers. The School Effectiveness Service constantly worked to build up good working relationships with all providers.

Q: Councillor Kaye asked what impact the Imagination Library had had on improved Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes? The scheme had been running for a significant period of time and children on the scheme had now started school.

- A: Improvements had been seen across the board in the Early Years and Foundation Stage and the relationship between one intervention (e.g. the Imagination Library) and overall outcomes was really hard to separate. It was clear that the Imagination Library would have had an impact / contribution to overall outcomes.
- Q: Councillor Hamilton asked what impact was expected following changes to the designation of some of the Borough's Children's Centres?
- A: No Children's Centres were closing but there would be changes to their designations and there was always a risk associated with change. If Elected Members wanted more information about this the Head of the Early Years and Foundation Stage could provide additional information.
- Q: Councillor Currie spoke about the emerging focus on Early Years over the past years. Was the Learning Community model helping primary schools to improve their outcomes?
- A: Yes. The re-focusing of Children's Centres to a learning and education drive had been important. Rotherham was moving to having a Foundation Years' Service as the importance of care, quality of learning and engagement with families was recognised as important for improved experiences for children, young people and their families and for improved outcomes.
- Q: Councillor Swift spoke about how the demographic changes to Rotherham's population had brought about changes, and improvements, to outcomes. Where new housing was built, this often had a positive impact on local attainment rates.
- A: Rotherham's mobile population brought positive and negative consequences for education outcomes across the Borough. Where the nature of catchment areas changed it could lead to a change in the skills and focus that professionals working in the area needed.
3. Rotherham's performance was above the national average in Key Stage 4 in 2014, which was significantly above neighbours. Children started school in Rotherham well below the national average but left school at 16 performing well above the national average. Rotherham's performance at Key Stage Four had decreased by 3.6%, but due to changes in reporting of KS4 results in 2014 performance could not be compared to previous years'.
4. Almost 80% of children attended a Rotherham school that was judged to be Good or better. The national average was 76% as at 1st April, 2014. The aim of the Local Authority was that all children would attend a Good or better school. Where schools were below the

standard of Good, the School Effectiveness Service was working with them and / or challenging them to improve.

5. In Rotherham 87% of children in secondary school were attending a school that had been rated as Good or better. Nationally the picture was 72%, as at 1st April, 2014. Rotherham was above the national average at secondary.
6. In Rotherham performance at English GCSE A*-C had been above the national average for the last three years. Progress had been 5.1% above the National average in 2013.
7. In Rotherham the average at Key Stage Two Mathematics was above the national averages. This included being above the national average at L4+ and L4B+ and was in-line with the national average at L5+ for the first time.
8. Rotherham's % young people who were 'NEET' (Not in employment, education or training) had declined 2.2% between 2006 and 2013 at a time of economic decline.
9. In Rotherham, of the 1,047 children who were eligible to achieve pupil premium funding, 385 did not achieve L4+ in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. The % of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding who achieved L4+ in reading, writing and maths had increased by 4% in 2014.
10. The number of schools in Rotherham who were below the Department for Education's Floor Standard had reduced to 3 in 2014. There had been 8 in 2013.

Karen referred to the document entitled 'Education Outcomes in Rotherham Schools and Settings'. This document had been produced by the School Effectiveness Service and was available for all stakeholders to give relevant information about Rotherham's outcomes. The document would be updated yearly and would describe the national stages and expectations from the Early Years Foundation Stage up to Key Stage 4.

Discussion continued and the following issues were raised: -

Q: - Councillor Currie asked about teacher assessment between the stages of Key Stages 1 and 2. He was pleased that it was now peer and professionally moderated. This should be a key question that Governors asked: - 'are the assessments a true picture of our children?'

A: - Good quality assessment was crucial and schools, the Local Authority and stakeholders needed to choose the right data and act on it correctly. It was key to look at whether the children were progressing and whether there were aspirations for progression.

Q: - Councillor Kaye referred to the various types of testing used across the Borough at primary school level. This made it difficult for secondary schools to work with their Year 7 pupils who all had different levels of progress. However, the majority of Sheffield's schools followed the same system, which was available to be bought into, allowing consistency over the whole area.

A: - National Government was making changes to the system. The worry that schools may start to conduct their own assessments was a projection – Year 6 SATs tests were consistent across the nation. Proposed changes were to assess without assigning levels. One of the strengths of working within learning communities meant that schools were co-operating for increased consistency. The Local Authority could not tell schools what to do, schools had the autonomy to arrange themselves.

The Rotherham School Effectiveness Service provided training on the Sheffield model and other models of assessment.

Current areas of focus and continuing discussion: -

Phonics – the sharing of good practice was taking place. Head teachers who would act as phonics champions had been identified and the very best schools were supporting less strong schools.

Q: - Councillor Ellis asked how the reason/s for the dip in performance were being identified and addressed? Was the dip across all schools or schools with certain demographics?

A: - The School Effectiveness Service was doing research work with schools with high levels of children who spoke English as an additional language.

KS2 – Although it was increasing across the board in all subjects there was still a need to close the gap to national average.

KS4 – outcomes were considered as at August, 2014, which represented un-validated data. New methods of comparing data had been introduced, including not considered the results of pupils who had been entered early for exams. Although the overall picture of attainment had reduced, it did not necessarily mean that there were children leaving school with less qualifications.

Q: - Councillor Roche asked about the performance of pupils who were eligible for Pupil Premium compared to their more advantaged peers.

A: - Verified data would be available in the new year.

Councillor Roche thanked Karen for her presentation and contribution to the discussion which was useful for all Elected Members in attendance.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the presentation slides and supporting documents be circulated to all Elected Members for their information with the health warning that the data in relation to 2014 outcomes had not yet undergone validation.