
SCRUTINY PANEL A
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INQUIRY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 October 2010

Present: Kolker (Vice-Chair), Morrell, Turner, Willacy, Thomas and Osmond

Apologies: Councillor Parvin Damani and Councillor Jane Odgers

15. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

Apologies were received from Councillor Damani and Councillor Odgers and the Panel noted that in accordance with the provisions of Procedure Rules 4.3 and 4.4, Councillor Thomas replaced Councillor Damani and Councillor Osmond replaced Councillor Odgers, for the purposes of this meeting.

16. **DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS**

Councillors Morrell, Turner and Willacy declared non-prejudicial interests in relation to the scrutiny inquiry in view of their relationships with members of their family who were in receipt of or provided special educational needs.

COUNCILLOR KOLKER IN THE CHAIR

17. **INTRODUCTION TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INQUIRY**

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Policy and Performance, providing papers outlining the current definitions and strategies in place for special educational needs (SEN), attached.

The Panel received a presentation from officers from Southampton City Council and Solent Healthcare highlighting key issues around the support, provision and commissioning for children with special educational needs as well as the local context of current performance with trends, national context and problem areas in relation to particular special needs or areas.

The Panel noted that:-

- the SEN Inquiry had been well-timed as the Southampton Strategy for Special Educational Needs was due for renewal and the Government's SEN and Disability Green Paper on the revised guidelines and focus for SEN would be made public in November;
- one in five pupils – 1.7 million school-age children in England had been identified as having special educational needs and this was categorised by the 2001 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice into 3 categories. **School Action**, requiring additional support from within the school, **School Action Plus** requiring

- support from outside specialists and **Statement of Special Educational Needs** requiring intensive support;
- there were two models of SEN which required different approaches:
 - * medical model – the result of a medical condition which was fixed, unlikely to change and required early diagnosis to minimise the impairment through medical interventions and therapy; and
 - * social model – where children and young people were disabled/disadvantaged by socially created barriers in attitude, organisation and environment and which required the removal of barriers to learning;
 - the social model highlights the need to build good models of language, the potential issues with labelling and the differences between impairment and disability;
 - the allocation of resources for SEN in the medical profession and in education were different;
 - Southampton had a good range of quality provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities at mainstream schools with support and resourced provision and Special Schools, the latter which only catered for children and young people with statements;
 - Springwell School's specialist services can also be utilised by other schools;
 - Ofsted reports on the Southampton schools providing SEN provision were on the whole very good;
 - the Ofsted Special Educational Needs and Disability Review had highlighted a number of issues which needed to be addressed;
 - wherever possible children were educated in mainstream schools rather than Special Schools, but it depended on the specific circumstances and requirements of the child and a thorough assessment was undertaken prior to moving a child to a Special School;
 - all children were entitled to education and if a child had been excluded an appropriate assessment of their educational needs is undertaken so that the correct provision is made for them to return to school;
 - difficulties at school were often inextricably linked to the pupil's home environment
 - Solent Healthcare and their commissioners, Southampton NHS, provided very early information on children with possible medical special educational needs issues, whilst behavioural and learning difficulties often came to light when children started school;
 - children were more likely to have their special educational needs identified at primary school when they were required to sit still and listen;
 - there is evidence emerging that the Surestart project is improving levels of incoming pupils;
 - some SEN issues could be solved by teachers manipulating the learning situation/environment, but there were also SEN issues as a result of the home environment which could adversely impact on schooling and there was a range of services and professional expertise, including family support workers who worked together to assist in this regard;
 - schools that had a number of pupils with English as a second language would provide bilingual support;
 - all schools required to have a Special Educational Needs Coordinator who was also senior teacher.and
 - multi-disciplinary locality teams played a large part in tackling the issues within an area but as they have not been in operation for long their impact and

understanding of the opportunities to work together are only now beginning to emerge;

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the following requests and comments from officers be noted :-
- that as the authority was at the pivotal point with SEN and an imminent new code of practice, it was important that there was dialogue with members on how SEN issues could be taken forward in the new environment;
 - that the present excellent database needed to be built on;
 - that there was a need to work preventatively and not reactively;
 - that although the range of provision at Special Schools was good they were very full;
 - there was a good spectrum of provision for SEN in Southampton and one of the principles was to keep children in Southampton for SEN provision; and
 - Southampton also provided SEN provision for a number of other authorities for which they recouped the money.
- (ii) that the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement and the comments and presentation received from officers from Southampton City Council and the Solent Healthcare, along with the ideas and suggestions contributed by Members of the Panel , be placed in the register of evidence of the Inquiry into Educational Attainment for Children with Special Needs.