

**SCRUTINY PANEL A**  
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INQUIRY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

**Present:**

Councillors Fitzgerald (Chair), Kolker (Vice-Chair), Damani, Morrell, Osmond, Turner and Willacy

**Also in attendance:**

Liz Filer – Headteacher, Bassett Green Primary School

Jackie Partridge – Headteacher, Springwell School

Lisa Osborn – Southampton ADHD Support Group

Alex Isles – Parent Partnership (Mencap)

Gwen Harrison – Parent Partnership (Mencap)

Lesley Hobbs – Strategic Lead for Special Educational Needs (SEN), SCC

Paul Nugent – Head of Standards

Julie Wharton – SEN Inspector

**18. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

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

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

Councillors Osmond, 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 Damani declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to the scrutiny inquiry in view of her working relationship with the witnesses.

**20. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 be approved and signed as a correct record. (Copy of the minutes circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

**21. 2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INQUIRY**

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Policy and Performance, introducing the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting which would be separated into two main sections detailing the school's perspective of special needs and the parent's and child's perspective of support for children with special education needs, attached.

The Panel received the following presentations:

- (i) **Liz Filer - Headteacher, Basset Green Primary School – managing SEN in a mainstream primary school**

The Panel noted that:-

- there were two distinct groups of pupils at the school ,45% who were eligible for free school meals and 45% who were from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- the school enjoyed a diversity of 26 languages with 41% of pupils having English as an additional language and it was important that when a child joined the school there was a settling in period in order to ascertain whether the child had difficulties because of the language barrier or special educational needs;
- 30% of the children had special educational needs (SEN) as well as 13 children having statements with 1:1 support;
- at least half of the children had chaotic home lives and each child was welcomed into school everyday which often included breakfast, in an attempt to provide security and enabling them to have time to share their feelings and thus meet their emotional needs;
- each child had an individual learning plan, an IEP (Individual Education Plan), an IBP (Individual Behaviour Plan) or a Statement of Special Educational Needs, so that individual learning needs could met and these plans were shared with the children and the teachers;
- the school had a Whole School Behaviour policy written with the children based on the belief that they were all responsible members of the school community rather than complying because the rules said so;
- the school worked very closely with outside agencies;
- a lot of psychological problems were as a result of the environment outside of the school, over which the school had no control; and
- the inclusive approach has seen a significant drop in the absence rates

(ii) **Jackie Partridge – Headteacher, Springwell School – best practice in special schools and via Outreach**

The Panel noted that:-

- there was a greater complexity of needs at Springwell than at a maintained school and all the pupils were statemented;
- the school had 64 children in 8 classes of 8 and each class had 1 teacher with 3 learning support assistants;
- the children had personalised learning programmes which covered all aspects of learning, social skills and developing confidence and self esteem;
- the curriculum was based on the national curriculum but rewritten to specific levels for each child with specialist teaching techniques;
- the school environment was totally communicative and children used a range of spoken language, Makaton (sign language) and PECS (picture exchange card system);
- children were supported and encouraged to work independently without adult intervention by means of independent work systems and tasks;
- the school had close partnership working with parents, professional partners and the community and 5 members of staff provided outreach services;
- the school had applied to be a National Leader in Education – a National Support School; and
- all the staff provided training and support at mainstream schools and this training was in the process of being extended;

(iii) **Lisa Osborn – Chair , Southampton ADHD Support Group – an overview of their activities**

The Panel noted that:-

- the service was run by a group of volunteers and was part of SVS;
- ADHD had recently been diagnosed as a genetic condition;
- the statistics on ADHD were grossly incorrect and many parents of children diagnosed with ADHD were unaware that they also had this condition which further complicated their situation; and
- parents quite often had to stop work or change their work pattern if their child had been excluded from school because of severe behavioural problems as it was very difficult to find childcare to cope with their child's behavioural problems;

(iv) **Alex Isles and Gwen Harrison – Southampton Parent Partnership Service (SPPS) - the parental perspective**

The Panel noted that:-

- SPPS was a voluntary organisation who delivered an independent service to families with children and young people with SEN and at present had a caseload of approximately 200 parents;
- The main services provided were:-
  - \* how special educational needs were identified and assessed by schools and the local authority;
  - \* who parents could talk to in a school or LA about their concerns;
  - \* the SEN Code of Practice, the statutory assessment process and statements;
  - \* parents/carers rights and responsibilities;
  - \* meetings and reviews about a child's needs;
  - \* how progress was monitored and reviewed; and
  - \* what parents could do if they were not happy with a decision made about their child's SEN.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the following requests and comments from officers be noted :-
- that more recognition be given to those schools who worked hard to enable children with SEN to be successful;
  - that all schools be encouraged to be more inclusive and if expertise in SEN was lacking, that training be provided;
  - that financial support be provided so that children with SEN did not suffer as a result of the economy;
  - that volunteers from the ADHD Support Group and SPPS were better linked with schools; and

- that services needed to be more joined up and if possible one point of contact be available for all services and support related to SEN/disability issues.
- (ii) that the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement and the comments and presentations received from the Headteachers of Bassett Green Primary School and Springwell School, Southampton ADHD Support Group and Southampton Parent Partnership, 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.