

SCRUTINY PANEL A
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INQUIRY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th JANUARY 2011

Present:

Councillors Fitzgerald (Chair), Mrs Damani, Morrell, Osmond, Turner and Willacy

Also in attendance:

Julie Wharton – SEN Inspector

Julia Katherine – Principal Educational Psychologist

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

Paul Nugent – Head of Standards

Jamie Schofield – Service Manager, Solent Healthcare

Donna Chapman – PCT Lead Commissioner – Children, Young People & Maternity Services, SCC/Southampton City PCT

23. APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Councillor Kolker and 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.

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

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2010 be approved and signed as a correct record. (Copy of the minutes circulated with the agenda and appended to the signed minutes).

26. 3rd 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 3rd meeting which comprised two presentations and verbal feedback from members who visited Bassett Green Primary School, Hardmoor Early Years Centre, Highfield CE Primary School, Mason Moor Primary School and Springwell School to see the schools in action, with a particular focus on their resourced provision for special educational needs, attached.

The Panel received the following presentations:

(i) **Julie Wharton, Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inspector and Julia Katherine, Principal Educational Psychologist - The emerging national picture for special educational needs.**

The Panel noted that:-

- Academies would need to follow the legislation and guidance that applied to maintained schools in relation to admissions and responding to the needs of pupils with SEN and with effect from January 2011 and Special Schools could become Academies;
- standards funds targeted at pupils with SEN through 'Every Child Counts' would cease and be replaced by a single grant paid directly to schools as the 'Pupil Premium' which was likely to be based on free school meals;
- the SEN Green Paper is due to be published in February/March 2011 and would be likely to result in substantial changes to the statementing process;
- children with SEN may be able to obtain their own pupil premium-style personal budgets and these grants would follow the child wherever they were being educated.
- funding may be allocated according to the severity of the child's needs;
- School Action and School Action Plus might be disbanded and "pupil profiles" identifying the severity of needs would be the model adopted. There were 12 bands of needs;
- there would be a new role for educational psychologists who may be independent from the Local Authority; and
- mediation may be introduced for parents/carers who were unhappy with their child's support as it was felt that the tribunal process was too bureaucratic.

(ii) **Donna Chapman, PCT Lead Commissioner – Children, Young People & Maternity Services, SCC/Southampton City PCT – The future model of delivery and developments from the health perspective and how the Health White Paper will impact on service delivery for children with SEN**

The Panel noted that:-

- new commissioning and provider arrangements would be put in place which would enable medical and educational models to be better integrated, with specific reference to children with SEN;
- the Local Authority's role in relation to children with SEN would decrease and there would be more emphasis on parent's relationships with schools;
- there would be new roles and powers for Local Authorities and greater "patient power";
- although the pace of change could not be controlled there was a strong desire from all agencies and schools to adopt and lead the process with good examples of successful multi-agency already working across the City;
- there would be a strong focus on early years and foundation stage to provide children with the best start in life by early intervention and specific attention would be paid to vulnerable groups as well as early identification and support for carers; and

- local service reviews were in progress on Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS), speech and language therapy and services for children and young people with disabilities, underpinned by a joint commissioning team for children and young people across the PCT and the Local Authority;

(iii) **Members Verbal Feedback on visits to schools**

The following comments were noted:-

Bassett Green Primary School

- the catchment area was socially deprived with a low level of education, a high ethnic minority;
- the school had a large number and excellent record of supporting children with SEN. This was compounded by an indifference from some schools to take on pupils with SEN themselves;
- the children had great regard for the teachers and support staff and saw the school as an oasis of calm;
- the Headteacher felt that the school deserved more recognition/ acknowledgement both nationally through address value and locally in the community and city of the good progress made under very difficult circumstances, ;
- problems for the school were pupil attendance, a lack of co-operation from parents and a low level of language ability when children started school.
- It was felt that Sure Start should be better supported to ensure early intervention;

Hardmoor Early Years Centre

- there was a high percentage of children with English as a second language and it was felt there was a need for a language unit ;
- it would be helpful if children with SEN could stay on an extra year in nursery and pre-schools to accommodate delays in development ; and
- there were transport problems for children within a 2 mile radius who could not get to school easily especially if they had a sibling with a disability, as well as the problem that children with SEN were not being picked up early enough through 3 year health checks;
- early intervention was seen to be extremely beneficial to the child, especially in areas such as autism.

Highfield CE Primary School

- the school's split site created problems;
- the children were very committed to their activities and school and the learning framework was not just about accumulating facts but stimulating the children's interest level;
- there was a large number of capable children and few children with SEN and the learning technique of setting lessons for the more capable children and drawing in the children with SEN worked well due to the low level of special needs in each classroom;
- the school received funding from the Diocese and was in the process of increasing pupil places from 30 to 45; and

- the head teacher at this school recognised dyslexia as a special educational need
- the school has adopted a framework for learning which supported the development of learning as a goal rather than only focussing on attainment standards – this supports their good results in added value terms.

Mason Moor Primary School

- the catchment area was very socially deprived and was reflected in the high percentage of the many and varied special educational needs (SEN) in the school;
- the Deputy Headteacher was responsible for the children with SEN and was extremely committed;
- the school valued the extra educational psychologists support offered and would welcome an increase in intervention if it were available and
- there was a good atmosphere in the classrooms.

Springwell School

- the Headteacher and staff were a big asset to the school;
- the children had personalised learning programmes, broken down into small steps;
- the outside school activities and outreach for parents was excellent
- the head teacher had recently been awarded National Leader Status and was hoping to be able to develop outreach work and increase teacher training for SEN as a result; and
- it was difficult to obtain a place at the school and although the school had space to expand to 90 places, the Headteacher preferred to use any extra funding for outreach work and support to other schools.

General Comments

- the commitment of the Headteachers and teaching staff was apparent at all the schools visited;
- the recent changes to Southampton City Council staff's terms and conditions would create major problems for all the schools in relation to staffing and special educational needs;
- it was felt there were many lessons, tools and techniques for supporting children with special educational needs that could be taken into mainstream education and
- as there was an under-usage of Specialist Schools it might be possible for the Local Authority to become a conduit for specialist support and outreach work to mainstream schools.

RESOLVED

(i) that the following requests and comments be noted :-

- the high quality of leadership and teaching that existed at a number of Southampton schools should be maximised and utilised more widely; and
- the Chair would be writing to the Headteachers of all the schools visited, thanking them for their openness and hospitality.

- (ii) that the report of the Head of Policy and Improvement, the comments and presentations received from officers, Members' feedback on school visits, 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.