
Meeting	Children, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	5 September 2023
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Nelson (Vice-Chair), Clarke, Crawshaw, Cuthbertson, Pearson, Waller, Wilson and Mason (Substitute for Councillor Knight)
Apologies	Councillors Knight, Wells

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda.

Councillor Waller noted that he was a Governor of York High School and Westfield Primary School and Councillor Cuthbertson noted that he was a Governor of Headlands Primary School; these had been included on their registers of interests.

Councillor Crawshaw noted that he had children in both years 6 and 9. In relation to both items on the agenda, he declared a personal non-registerable, sensitive interest. He had taken advice and was satisfied that he had no conflict of interest.

Councillor Webb noted that he was a teacher at Holgate School and an employee of Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust.

2. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 7 March 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams spoke on Agenda Item 5 (Report of the School Inclusion Advisor – Inclusion Services). She stated that children were expected to attend school without adequate precautions being in place, which could lead to an increase in COVID-19 cases. She noted that a focus on school attendance would primarily affect poorer families, and disabled children.

4. SEND Update: Delivery of the SEND Operational Plan, 2023-2025

[Councillor Mason arrived at 5.48pm.]

The Assistant Director of Education presented the SEND Update report, which updated members on the progress since the SEND inspection re-visit in November 2022.

Since the November 2022 inspection Ofsted had removed the written statement of action that was implemented in the 2019 inspection.

A new inspection framework was in place and the next inspection should examine how the authority works with partners, and children's and young people's parents/carers, and will be driven by the child's voice. Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) must reflect the choices of the child/young person, and they should understand why they have an EHCP and what the aims of the EHCP are.

Communication and the voice of the child/young person were key priorities. Engagement events would be started from January 2024 that would be fed into the next SEND strategy.

Monthly meetings with the Parent Carer Forum were held to understand how the Council can better support parents and carers, this was a key part of the SEND operational plan.

In response to issues raised during public participation, the Assistant Director of Education stated that schools had not returned to pre-COVID-19 normality, but schools were as safe as possible for children. Schools were having to be reactive, rather than strategic, in their responses to challenges.

Employers had committed to the council's request to develop a network of inclusive employers; this demonstrated the council's commitment to the futures of SEND children.

The Head of the Integrated SEND Service explained that the number of mediations and tribunals seen by City of York Council were similar

to national figures, and working with parents and carers effectively prior to a tribunal being needed has successfully led to the reduction in mediations and tribunals.

It was agreed that at a future committee meeting the Assistant Director of Education would provide an update on the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (4.1 in Annexe A) and transition plans (4.5 in Annexe A).

Resolved: Members noted contents of the report and consider plans for ongoing scrutiny of the issues.

Reason: To ensure that the committee maintained an overview of SEND provision in the local area.

5. Report of the School Inclusion Advisor - Inclusion Services

The School Inclusion Advisor presented the Behaviour and Attendance report and indicated that York had previously been below national averages and had seen an increase in expulsions this year which is in line with a national increase. It was said that there is a commitment city-wide to reduce the number of expulsions being seen. It was noted that primary school absence levels had improved from last year, and it was hoped that secondary school absence levels would soon follow this trend. Severe absences had improved from last year but SEND pupils and those on FSMs (free school meals) were disproportionately affected by these absences than other pupils.

In response to questions from members, officers noted that:

- All schools have got a pastoral team who can assist with SEND children.
- Communication with families can support SEND children who are medically unable to return to school to re-engage with mainstream education, and communicating with families to get a better understanding of early triggers in SEND pupils has helped keep children in school.
- There has been an increase of around 50-60% of those who are electively home-schooled, but York were below national statistics. Schools are encouraged to support electively home-schooled pupils back into mainstream education and have annual contact with these families to ensure the child is getting the best possible support.

Resolved: That members noted the contents of the report and considered plans for ongoing scrutiny of the issues raised within the analysis of the data.

Reason: To ensure that the committee fully discharged its responsibilities in relation to behaviour and attendance in schools.

6. Work Plan

Members considered the work plan for the municipal year 2023-2024.

Members agreed that:

- Councillors Cuthbertson, Crawshaw, and Wilson would be appointed to a Task & Finish group examining changes in the type of EHCPs that children and young people are qualifying for.
- Councillor Nelson would be appointed to the Food Insecurity Task & Finish Group. The Chair would write to the Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee to request a Liberal Democrat member to contribute to the group.
- The Chair would write to the Chair of the Corporate Services, Climate Change, and Scrutiny Management Committee to confirm the membership of the Task & Finish Groups and to request an additional member from another scrutiny committee for the Food Insecurity Group.

Cllr Nicholls , Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.24 pm].