

EDUCATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 6.00 PM AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE, WALSALL

Committee Members present: Councillor Lee Jeavons (Chair)
Councillor Sarah Jane Cooper (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Gazanfer Ali
Councillor Daniel Barker
Councillor Rose Burley
Councillor Brian Douglas-Maul
Councillor Sat Johal
Councillor Pard Kaur
Councillor Farhana Mazhar
Councillor Saiqa Nasreen
Councillor Lorna Rattigan

Portfolio Holders present: Councillor Chris Towe - Education & Skills

Non-elected voting Members present: Mrs Philomena Mullins - Archbishop of Birmingham's Representative

Officers present: Ms Sally Rowe, Executive Director - Children's Services
Ms Trudy Pyatt, School Improvement Team Manager
Ms Tanya Collier, Senior Accountancy Officer
Dr Paul Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

In attendance: Mr Andy Mills, Head teacher - St John's Primary School
Mr Robert Trawford, Chair - Jane Lane School's Interim Executive Board

46/19 WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed new members of the Committee and asked all in attendance to introduce themselves.

47/19 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

48/19 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

49/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

**50/19 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
(AS AMENDED)**

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public.

51/19 MINUTES

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 was submitted [annexed].

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

52/19 UPDATE ON THE JANE LANE SCHOOL

With reference to Minute Nos 30/19 and 42/19, a further report on the Jane Lane School was submitted [annexed]. This outlined the progress that had been made since the report to the meeting of the Committee held on 26 March 2019 that set out the actions taken by the Council in response to Ofsted's inspection of the Jane Lane School.

The Chair welcomed Mr Robert Trawford, who also provided the Committee with an update on the position of the Jane Lane School in his capacity as the Chair of the Jane Lane School's Interim Executive Board (IEB). Mr Trawford explained that he was a retired former Head teacher and that he had spent all of his teaching career in schools in Walsall. He added that most of the other members of the IEB were also retired teachers.

Mr Trawford outlined that it had been found that safeguarding at the School had been inadequate, with no proper record keeping being done, but that this had now been rectified. Furthermore, curriculum planning had not been clear and that which had been done was deemed not to have been matched to the abilities of the pupils at the School. By contrast, there was now structural planning and delivery of lessons. There had been no systems for checking assessment and monitoring to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the progress being made by pupils, whereas this was now undertaken via the frequent observation of lessons and the provision of feedback to staff.

It was noted by Mr Trawford that the Jane Lane School was a school for children with moderate learning difficulties and that it was evident that previously pupils had been accepted onto the School's roll when this was not appropriate. It was also pointed out that when it was proposed to admit an additional pupil, the School was given a fortnight within which to respond to this, and that this was not being done by the School previously. Consequently, in order to cope with this situation, staffing at the School had been higher than would have been expected and many of the teachers had been employed on supply contracts, some of which had been extended over a number of years. Regarding the practices used in the School on a day-to-day basis, changes had been instituted to address, for example, when the behaviour of pupils was poor and an area called 'the zone' had been created to enable staff to work with children with behavioural difficulties.

Mr Trawford remarked that at a recent interim visit from the HMI, the comment had been made that the School's progress had been phenomenal given the time that the IEB had to make changes. He added that it was the expectation of the IEB that an outcome of the next inspection would be for the School to be given a good rating, and he paid tribute to the hard work, commitment and experience of the School's staff, including those who had been seconded to the Jane Lane School from other schools in Walsall.

The Executive Director - Children's Services, Ms Sally Rowe, noted that the School was found inadequate following an inspection by Ofsted. She articulated the frustration felt because this had been the consequence of the Local Authority expressing concerns and a previous Ofsted inspection had not revealed these issues. This had led to a very difficult twelve month period for all involved with the School. Ms Rowe informed the Committee that the plan was in place to improve and that the IEB, which was comprised of a group of very experienced former head teachers, had been very supportive of what was required.

In relation to the imposition of an Academy Order by the Secretary of State, it was noted by Ms Rowe that the Local Authority and the Jane Lane School did not have a choice in this and advised that the Authority was working with a potential Academy sponsor to ensure a smooth transition. However, a report would be made to the Committee prior to the School becoming an Academy. It was also noted that feedback received from a number of sources indicated that the School was happy and positive, and that the staff and the IEB were doing an excellent job in providing the children and young people with an education that met their needs. Further to Mr Trawford's observation that previously some of the pupils had been incorrectly placed at the School, Ms Rowe informed the Committee that children would not be moved when it was inappropriate to do so.

The School Improvement Team Manager, Ms Trudy Pyatt, made reference to the Written Statement of Action for the School, which Ofsted had found for purpose and was used as a template for the Ofsted visits. She added that the Local Authority Improvement Advisers were working with the team at the School to ensure that everything was on track.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Chris Towe, acknowledged the position that the School had been in and wished to put on the record his appreciation of the work that had been done by Mrs Kate Bargh, Executive Head teacher at Rushall Primary School, Mr Paul Drew, Head teacher at Beacon Primary School, Mrs Christine Fraser, Head teacher at the Castle Business and Enterprise College (and acting Head teacher at the Jane Lane School), and Robert Trawford for chairing the School's IEB.

Councillor Burley expressed the view that had action been taken earlier, the School would not have found itself in this position and stated that the former Chair of Governors had requested help from the Local Authority but this had not been forthcoming. She added that she was delighted at the progress being made but also informed the Committee that the School had previously enjoyed a good reputation and had not always had the stigma of being in special measures.

Ms Rowe informed the Committee that Ofsted's inspections of the School had resulted from communication between the Local Authority and the former Governing Body. The inspection conducted in September 2017 had not highlighted any concerns, which had made it difficult for the Authority to take further action at that point. However, following the introduction of the 'schools causing concern' protocol in 2018, the Jane Lane School had

been identified as being a red category school. The Authority followed the process with the School and required the production of an action plan which was deemed unacceptable. Therefore, a formal warning notice was issued to the School and the Chair of the Governing Body, and this triggered the Ofsted inspection in November 2018. She added that it was not the case that the Authority had not responded to the former Governors, and whilst it had been a difficult year for all concerned, there was a joint responsibility shared by the Authority, the School and its teaching staff, and the Governing Body.

Mr Trawford reiterated that coming from a low base, Jane Lane School was improving and that the evidence of this included the attitude of the pupils who were now happy and the high attendance at a recent parents' evening event. He noted that the IEB had also discussed the possibility of seeking to have the Academy Order rescinded.

On the latter point, Ms Rowe advised Members that nationally this had only ever occurred in 24 cases and that there would have to be sustained progress up to a full inspection before an application could be made to the Secretary of State to have the Order rescinded. This would require continued positive outcomes of monitoring inspections and stable staffing. There was also a timeline issue in relation to how quickly a potential Academy Sponsor came forward, which was a factor outside of the control of the Authority.

In response to a question from Councillor Burley regarding the decision to make the Academy Order, it was confirmed by Councillor Towe and Ms Rowe that this was national Government policy and that the Authority was required to comply with this by law. Furthermore, if the Authority did not do so then it would not be supporting the School and this could not be allowed to happen. Ms Pyatt informed the Committee that if a school is placed in the inadequate category, Ofsted and the DfE automatically require the issuing of the Order upon the School, and this is done in the name of the Secretary of State.

Councillor Rattigan having enquired whether there was continued training for the staff at the School, Mr Trawford confirmed that this was the case and gave examples being undertaken to grow expertise. He emphasised that there was training for the senior leaders to ensure that the School was run well.

Councillor Kaur asked what measures had been put in place at the School to maintain the momentum of the improvements that had been made. In response, Mr Trawford confirmed that the IEB would remain in place until the School assumed Academy Status. Having regard to the School's staffing, it would be necessary to make appointments to the leadership team as there had been secondment from other schools in Borough. Having regard to the transition period for this, and in response to a question from Councillor Cooper, Mr Trawford noted that the interim Head teacher had extensive experience in SEND education, that the School could not be better supported, and that it was her intention to stay with the School until Academy Status.

Councillor Johal having asked about the position of supply teachers at the School, it was reported by Mr Trawford that work on this was currently being undertaken to ensure that the School had teachers of the highest quality. He emphasised that the IEB's considerable experience in education and leadership, health and safety, and employment in schools would ensure the School's staffing would be appropriate and better organised.

Councillor Burley requested information on the Interim Executive Board's full composition. She also asked that further monitoring reports be made to the Committee, and for this to tie in with the forthcoming Ofsted monitoring report, it was suggested that an update report be provided to the Committee's meeting in either November 2019 or January 2020.

In terms of the 'schools causing concern' protocol, Ms Rowe reported that it was important for the Committee to be assured that there was now a different relationship with the schools in the Borough. Following the introduction of the protocol, which she outlined for Members, there had been some adjustments and refinements, and she noted that schools were shortly to receive an update on their position. This applied to all the schools in the Borough, including academies, and not just the ones maintained by the Local Authority. Councillor Towe added that the protocol had been accepted by schools and that the ratings given to schools had been subsequently confirmed via Ofsted inspections.

Mr Trawford added that the IEB had every confidence in the Local Authority and that it had taken the correct action in relation to the Jane Lane School. He believed that the first inspection conducted by Ofsted had reached an incorrect outcome and, therefore, the Authority had been placed in a difficult position.

The Chair thanked Mr Trawford for his attendance.

Resolved:

1. That the report and the actions taken by the Local Authority in managing the case of the Jane Lane School be noted;
2. That following the next Ofsted monitoring visit, an update report be provided to either the November 2019 or January 2020 meeting of the Committee.

53/19 TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SUPPLY

The Committee considered a report on teacher supply and recruitment [annexed].

The Chair welcomed Mr Andy Mills, the Head teacher of St John's CE Primary School, which is also a teaching school, and who has been extensively involved with the development programme for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in primary schools that has been formulated by the Walsall Strategic Education Inclusion Partnership (SEIP).

Mr Mills provided the Committee with some background to the programme, which focussed on the recruitment and retention of teachers. This aimed to recruit the best quality trainees who would receive bursaries to train in the teaching schools in Walsall and would be under contract for a three year period, which would include placement as NQTs in some of the more vulnerable schools in the Borough. Ongoing support and training would be provided for the trainees as they progressed to becoming Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs). There was a connection to the National Professional Qualification (NPQ) programme at the University of Wolverhampton, which would lead to access to managerial programmes. In 2018/19, the SEIP programme had recruited 22 trainees, which had increased to 34 trainees in 2019/20.

With reference to the Black Country pool of applicants, Mr Mills referred to a session he had delivered at the University of Wolverhampton when it had become evident that prospective trainees were being lost because Walsall had not been a part of the Black Country pool. Accordingly, it had been agreed to establish a Walsall pool for trainees and an outcome of this was that most of the local highly recommended applicants had been placed in schools in the Borough. Work was being carried out on the development of a website for prospective applicants, with these being drawn from other universities as well as the University of Wolverhampton.

Ms Pyatt acknowledged the hard work of the Head teachers involved with the SEIP programme, and who had worked with the Local Authority in providing support with the right packages, training and incentives for the trainees.

Councillor Towe underlined the importance of the programme and thanked Mr Mills for the work that he had done. He added that feedback was that previously the quality of some of the NQTs had not been what it should have been and that the progress made would be beneficial for Walsall in the future, and he supported this.

Councillor Burley suggested that in view of the uniqueness of each area of the Borough, it was important to encourage applicants throughout the Borough to apply to the programme.

Further to questions from Councillor Barker, it was noted that most of the vacancies for Walsall Schools were filled from this pool and, to ensure that it was not just more teachers recruited for Walsall's schools but better teachers, the bespoke package for NQTs was subject to monitoring.

Councillor Douglas-Maul stated that the improvement of standards of teaching was to be supported but he raised the question of teachers now having to undertake tasks beyond their traditional remit and the impact this could have on teaching standards. Mr Mills responded to this point by acknowledging that the range of duties undertaken by teachers had continued to expand because children were coming to school with more barriers to learning, and that it was important to prepare teachers for this. Councillor Burley stressed the importance of mentoring in schools and that it was important for trainees to be prepared when entering school.

Councillor Towe reminded Members that as Portfolio Holder he had written to parents regarding the need for their children to be school-ready and that he was ready to support head teachers in relation to this and to encourage parents to take responsibility for this.

In reply to a question from Councillor Kaur regarding NQT retention rates, Mr Mills confirmed, the rate for those qualified teachers leaving the profession was a problem and that it was high nationally. He asserted that when the conditions, mentoring and training were right, there would be fewer teachers wishing to leave the profession.

Ms Pyatt made reference to the previous item on the Jane Lane School and the 'schools causing concern' protocol since, for schools to be at their best, their teachers required good support. There were many pressures on communities that had an impact on education and these needed to be addressed in order to create the right environment for teaching and learning.

Mrs Mullins emphasised the importance of Walsall's children being taught by Walsall teachers as this would improve self-esteem. Teachers and school leaders had been faced with challenge for over two decades but this had not led to increases in training and resources. However, ensuring that parental responsibilities were upheld had not been addressed and there was a significant percentage of homes in Walsall where parents lacked ambition for their children, parenting was neglected and schools had to manage the ensuing social problems. Greater confidence and challenge was required, therefore, to address these matters for the benefit of the children and young people affected.

Councillor Burley suggested that future meetings of the Committee should receive feedback from the programme on a quarterly or six-monthly basis.

The Chair thanked Mr Mills for his attendance and concluded the discussion of this item by welcoming the programme and referring to the need to provide training and support to the staff in schools from top to bottom, and so that trainees could progress their careers. Barriers to learning had to be addressed, and this would be achieved by bringing appropriate skills into schools.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

**54/19 CORPORATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 4 PRE-AUDIT
OUTTURN POSITION FOR 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report that gave the corporate financial position and was informed of the Children's Services pre-audit revenue and capital outturn position for 2018/19 [annexed].

The Senior Accountancy Officer, Ms Tanya Collier, reported that the pre-audit revenue outturn position for services relating to this portfolio was a forecast overspend of £2.192m. Following mitigating action, the use of reserves and the implementation of an action plan by the Directorate, this overspend reduced to £0.571m. She noted that the overspend was attributable to increased demand for SEN educational psychologists, the extension of agency and temporary posts in the SEN assessment team due to increased demand and the demand for home to school transport due an increase in the number of children being transported and of their transport needs.

In terms of the pre-audit capital outturn for 2018/19, Ms Collier reported that the total budget for education services capital programme was £31.384m, with a pre-audit outturn of £7.630m as at the end of the 2018/19 financial year. Carry forwards totalling £23.754m had been approved leaving an overall net position.

In response to a question from Councillor Douglas-Maul on home to school transport, the Executive Director - Children's Services, Ms Sally Rowe, confirmed that this service was for children with special educational needs and disabilities. She added that whilst this was a real budget pressure for the Council and would continue to be so, it was an area of overspend for every local authority and that this overspend for Walsall was relatively small in magnitude when compared with other authorities in the West Midlands and nationally.

Resolved:

1. That the pre-audit revenue outturn financial position for the 2018/19 year end for services under the remit of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
2. That the pre-audit capital outturn financial position for the 2018/19 year end for services under the remit of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
3. That the actions taken to address the areas of overspend be noted.

55/19 WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Members considered the proposed Work Programme for the Committee [annexed].

The Chair reminded the Committee that at its last meeting it was agreed that a working group should be established to consider access and inclusion and that four Members had indicated their willingness to serve on this group. In view of the Committee's increased membership, he invited expressions of interest from any other Members who might now be interested in participating in the work of the group.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed Work Programme for 2019/20 be approved;
2. That any Members wishing to serve on the working group to contact the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer, Dr Paul Fantom.

56/19 FORWARD PLANS

Members considered the Work Programme and the Forward Plans of the Council and the Black Country Executive Joint Committee [annexed].

Resolved:

That the revised Work Programme and the Forward Plans be noted.

57/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was 8 October 2019.

The meeting terminated at 7.32 pm.

Chair.....Date.....