

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 MARCH 2018 AT 6.00 PM AT THE WILLENHALL E-ACT ACADEMY

Committee Members present	Councillor C. Towe (Chair) Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair) Councillor D. Barker Councillor A. Ditta Councillor J. Fitzpatrick Councillor M. Follows Councillor E. Hazell Councillor T. Wilson
Portfolio Holders present	Councillor A. Nawaz - Children's Services and Education
Non-elected voting Members present	Mrs T. Tunnell (Parent Governor)
Non-elected non-voting Members present	Mr R. Bragger (Primary Teacher Representative) Ms W. Duffus (Secondary Teacher Representative)
Officers present	Ms S. Rowe, Executive Director (Children's Services) Ms D. Carter, Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) Ms C. Beirne, Head of Service - Education Standards and Improvement Ms K. Mann, Service Manager - Admissions and Pupil Place Planning Dr P. Fantom, Democratic Services Officer
In Attendance: Representatives from E-ACT Academy	Mr D. Moran - Chief Executive Ms J. Millward – Deputy Chief Executive Ms L. Gregory - Regional Operations Director

23/18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors D. James and A. Nazir.

24/18 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

25/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Councillor E. Hazell declared a non-pecuniary interest in her capacity as a member of the Willenhall E-ACT Ambassadorial Advisory Group (AAG).

**26/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
(AS AMENDED)**

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

27/18 MINUTES

With reference to the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2018, a Member reiterated his comments regarding children located away from their home community and the concerns that might arise from breaking up the resources and support that those children had received, which would then be dispersed across the community.

Further to Minute No. 18/18, it was reported that the social work health check anonymous feedback information would be available for circulation to the Committee in May 2018.

Further to Minute No. 21/18, it was noted that the visit to Mary Elliot School had been re-arranged, that it had taken place on 23 March 2018 and that feedback from the Members attending had been very positive.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2018, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

28/18 WILLENHALL E-ACT ACADEMY

The Chair welcomed and thanked the representatives from E-ACT for offering the venue for the meeting and for their attendance. However, he noted the absence of the Head teacher, who had been unable to attend due to childcare commitments.

The Committee received an update report and impact statements from E-ACT [annexed] on the issues currently affecting Willenhall E-ACT Academy.

The Chief Executive of E-ACT, Mr D. Moran, introduced this report by stating that in his view Willenhall Academy was unrecognisable when it was compared with last year, when it had been in special measures, but that there was still progress to be made. In referring to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), as set out in the impact statements, he referred to their significant current positive trajectory and that he expected progress to continue over the next six months. He advised Members that £120k of capital investment was to be undertaken over the next six months and that there would be continued investment from the E-ACT Trust of £1/4m in order to provide more additionality, with Willenhall E-ACT being a key priority.

Reference was also made by Mr Moran to the operation of E-ACT's Raising Achievement Board (RAB) held every three weeks, which was overseen by E-ACT's Deputy Chief Executive, Ms J. Millward, and the regular meetings that are being held with Sir David Carter, the National Schools Commissioner. He highlighted the Ofsted monitoring visits, as summarised in the report, and outlined the next steps to be taken in terms of the Academy.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding attendance/safeguarding and the return to school interviews, it was noted by Mr Moran that an improvement in whole school attendance was indicated by the KPI data, which had increased from a base line of 87 per cent for the 2017 summer term to the current level of 91/92 per cent. Ms Millward added that the Academy was doing all that it could to encourage pupil attendance, including borrowing a minibus from another E-ACT Academy in to collect children and bring them into school. Furthermore, discussions with the pupils were held on their return to school and the feedback received indicated that there had been improvements in the lessons and the meeting of pupils' needs.

The Chair enquired about responses to the 'Pupil Voice' – teaching and learning shows, where 98.5 per cent of all questions answered had elicited positive responses. The Committee was advised by Ms Millward that responses had been received across the board for all the year groups at the Academy, and that the children were very good at articulating issues and engaging. It was also noted that three new pastoral staff had been appointed, which was assisting in the fulfilment of the needs of the children by encouraging engagement and building positive relationships. E-ACT's Regional Operations Director, Ms L. Gregory, also referred to the investment being carried out in respect of mental health training, the maintenance of which was an important aspect of E-ACT's strategy.

Members asked leadership and staffing, and what steps were being taken to recruit and retain staff. Mr Moran explained that in terms of developing teachers, support had been put in to the Academy and that E-ACT had been one of only two Trusts that had offered their staff members a pay package that included a two per cent cost of living component. He also stated that E-ACT had a bespoke professional development programme for its academies and invested £1/2m in order to deliver three days of CPD for its teachers. A staff survey enabled views to be fed back and incorporated into the action plan, and recent DfE visits had highlighted the positive attitude of the Academy's teachers.

In terms of leadership and staffing, a Member queried the comment in the report that urgent action was being taken with those staff where teaching or performance was of concern. Ms Millward outlined the techniques, such as coaching, team teaching, shadowing and joint planning, which ensured that there was improvement and all teaching staff members performed in accordance to their strengths. Knowledge and experience was also shared between the academies in the wider E-ACT Trust.

The Vice-Chair referred to paragraph 1.2 of E-ACT's report, which indicated that the Academy had received seven visits from the DfE since March 2017, and enquired whether the latest report could be shared with the Committee. Mr Moran stated that he was due to meet with Sir David Carter and would enquire if this was permissible.

The Vice-Chair also asked the E-ACT representatives whether there had been a reduction in the number of supply teachers employed by the Academy. Ms Millward confirmed that there had been a reduction and pointed out that this was mentioned in the reports from Ofsted. She added that for the forthcoming academic year, there was only one teaching vacancy to be filled in order for the Academy to have a full complement of staff for September 2018.

The Service Manager - Admissions and Pupil Place Planning, Ms K. Mann, referred to concerns occurring in 2017 regarding the Academy's Year 7 intake, when the Academy had been under-subscribed and a number of allocations had been made but a number of children had been placed on the Children Missing Education list due to their non-attendance. Mr Moran pointed out that the Public Admission Number (PAN) for 2018 was 210 and that places had already been accepted by 203 pupils who would be commencing at the Academy in September 2018, ensuring that the Academy was more popular than in previous years.

A Member noted that there had been an increase in the KPI for outstanding teaching, which had risen from 7 per cent to 13 per cent, and queried how this had been accomplished. She also enquired how many of the teaching staff were judged to be of good teaching standard, how teaching observations were undertaken and what could be done in order to support teachers to secure better outcomes for children. Ms Millward commented that progress was evident across the range of year groups and was increasingly positive. In response to a further question on lesson observations, she stated that rather than conventional observations, learning walks were undertaken by the Academy's senior and middle leadership teams. This allowed managers to watch the development taking place. However, there had been some initial confusion regarding these learning walks and the RABs, with all members of staff having been written to so as to clarify this.

A Member having raised a question concerning a staffing matter, it was agreed that this would be dealt with outside of the meeting.

Further to a question on whether staff turnover at Willenhall E-ACT had stabilised, Ms Millward confirmed that when the Academy was placed into Special Measures there had been a significant turnover of staff. However, E-ACT had supported the Head teacher and stability had subsequently been achieved in all departments. It was pointed out that there was now only one staff vacancy and that this would be filled in time for September.

The Chair reminded the Committee that at the 5 September 2017 meeting, Members had expressed concern regarding a lack of involvement of local people in the governance of the Academy. He enquired whether steps had been taken to address this by better communication with parents and via the appointment of local people on to the Academy's governing body. Mr Moran emphasised that E-ACT's governance structure was transparent, and also that feedback had been received from the AAG. He also pointed out that there had been an investment of approximately £30k in special projects connected to the four 'Cs' of communication, complaints, community engagement and celebration. Whilst emphasising that this had been highlighted as a strength by the Academy's external scrutiny arrangements, he acknowledged that more work was required with respect to community and parental engagement.

In terms of the encouragement of parental involvement in the Academy, Ms Gregory highlighted examples including the evenings and tours arranged for the parents of prospective Year 7 students, together with the increased numbers of activities for children in the local community, such as dance shows. Reference was also made to the work being carried out with feeder primary schools, such as Lodge Farm.

There were further questions from the Committee and a member of the public relating to staff morale, especially in key curriculum areas where there had been a significant turnover of staff. Ms Millward referred to the recent RAB, stating that she encountered many teachers doing a good job and pupils engaged with their learning.

Responding to a question from the Chair regarding the academic results achieved by the Academy, Mr Moran advised that since it was placed in Special Measures, the Academy had received five visits from Ofsted and a full inspection. His view was that the Academy should cease to be categorised as 'Inadequate' by no later than spring 2019. Mr Moran accepted that during the last four years, there had been some bad practice and poor leadership and that because of this some teaching staff had taken the opportunity to move on from the Academy.

In referring to her role with the AAG, Councillor E. Hazell advised the Committee that during the year there had been a positive change in attitude at the Academy. Previously, ambassadors were invited in to the school for two hours, but were now invited to stay for the day and therefore had a better idea of what was happening. Nevertheless, whilst improvements had been made, and she acknowledged there was still work to be done, she was encouraged by the positive feedback she had received from staff and pupils at Willenhall E-ACT.

In view of the significant number of children coming into the school with limited English skills, clarification was sought on the monitoring of EAL (English as an Additional Language). Mr Moran referred to the KPIs and the Academy's monitoring for the spring half term, with 73 pupils being recorded of whom 21 were now fluent. Mr Moran agreed that more information could be provided to the Committee. Members also informed that provision for year 12 was being reintroduced, with 48 prospective students due to commence in September.

There was discussion on the issues of reducing the number of exclusions and of safeguarding in the Academy. Mr Moran advised Members that he expected the number of exclusions to decrease and that, whilst Ofsted had raised concerns about safeguarding, this was now more effective, as demonstrated by the Impact Statements. Ms Millward added that internal safeguarding audits were conducted, and that no concerns had been raised by Ofsted during recent monitoring visits.

The Chair asked the E-ACT representatives about the connection to the Council. It was reported by Mr Moran that there was a good working relationship with the former Head of Service - Education Standards and Improvement, and he was keen to continue this. The arrangement of meetings with Council officers was discussed and a meeting with the Director of Children's Services would take place in the summer term. The arrangement of quarterly meetings involving the Portfolio Holder, Director of Children's Services, Mr Moran and the Head teacher of Willenhall E-ACT, to be reported back to the Committee in due course, was proposed by Councillor Nawaz.

The Head of Service - Education Standards and Improvement, Ms C. Beirne, raised a concern regarding the number of children in the local area receiving elective home education. Mr Moran stated that Ofsted had been happy that the requirements were being met by the Academy, but if information on individual cases could be provided then these could be discussed with the Head teacher. Ms Beirne added that if the Academy required additional support then partnership working could be provided.

In explaining to the Committee how it was intended that the performance of the Willenhall E-ACT Academy should continue to improve, Mr Moran referred to the position of some other academies. For example, following a number of years during which it had received a low rating, the West Walsall Academy had recently achieved an Ofsted rating of 'Good' and Mr Moran was confident that in time Willenhall E-ACT would also achieve similar ratings in due course.

The Chair asked the E-ACT representatives about the alternative provision being provided at the Innovation Centre at the West Walsall Academy. Mr Moran noted that it was the aim that all children should be provided with an appropriate curriculum offer and, where provision was not deemed to be good enough, another E-ACT provider would become involved to deliver the provision.

A Member advised the Committee that during the last year she had met some of the pupils in years 7, 8 and 9, who were attending the Innovation Centre, and that the feedback received from them was that they were now attending school because they felt that they were learning due to the smaller class sizes, and because of this their needs could be addressed.

Mr Moran informed Members that three E-ACT secondary academies in Birmingham pooled resources and that he wished to see a similar arrangement between the Willenhall E-ACT and the West Walsall Academies, so that there could be more joined up working and less reliance on alternative provision. By giving students confidence at KS 4, he felt this would have a beneficial impact on pupils' life chances and saw no reason why they should not proceed to A' Level or equivalent and then on to university. He also confirmed that Ms Millward was leading on developing the mental health curriculum for all pupils.

Further to a question from a Member concerning ensuring a seamless transition from primary to secondary school, and facilitating the effective transfer of pupil information, Mr Moran advised the Committee that because there were many primary feeder schools for E-ACT, the experience could be variable. Ms Gregory related that there were transition plans and that over the summer period a range of different activities were staged for the children, to assess their requirements in relation to literacy and numeracy, and that this assisted in information gathering.

The Chair concluded this item by thanking Mr Moran and his colleagues from E-ACT for their attendance, and for extending the offer to attend a future meeting of the Committee, possibly in six months, and which could be hosted at another venue, with the Innovation Centre being suggested for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report and the next steps to be carried out by E-ACT in respect of the Willenhall E-ACT Academy be noted;
2. That the E-ACT representatives be invited to provide a further update to the Committee in approximately six months.

29/18 OFSTED INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS

The Committee received a report [annexed] on the progress being made to address each of the twelve recommendations made in the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

The Chair initiated discussion of the Red-Amber-Green (RAG) ratings for each of the twelve recommendations, as set out in the overall summary of the report. The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care), Ms D. Carter, informed Members that with reference to the table on pages 26 and 27, 'Last period' covered the interval before Christmas 2017 and 'This period' was for the interval January/February 2018, so that another update was now due.

In response to a query on those recommendations in the table shown as grey, it was reported that these were actions not scheduled to start in the period concerned, or where the impact was not yet felt. With reference to recommendations 5 and 6, it was reported that it had taken longer to engage with health partners, but that the changes to the leadership at the Care Commissioning Group (CCG) would facilitate new relationships being built. It was noted that the CCG was due to undergo an inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and because there would be parallel themes to those from the Ofsted inspection, this would provide a useful means of further engaging with the CCG.

The Chair enquired how outcomes could be demonstrably shown and was advised by Ms Carter that this would be done by measuring the thresholds in terms of improvements in the quality of referrals coming in. Also, by reviewing the quality of what was being done, it was possible to assess both volume and quality.

A concern was expressed by the Chair, especially in relation to recommendations 3, 7 and 9, that there could be an adverse impact on the workloads of team managers. Ms Carter confirmed to Members that because a number of staff members needed to develop their experience, this was being addressed via training and workshops for frontline staff and managers. However, in order to provide the opportunity for reflection, this had implications and caution was essential so that the amount of training being offered did not detract from the other responsibilities.

With reference to recommendations 7 and 9, and in response to a question from the Chair regarding the pressures experienced by Legal Services and the Safeguarding and Family Support (SFS) Team, Ms Carter updated Members on the work being carried out to reinforce the principles of court work via mandatory training for all

social work staff in Children's Social Care. However, the Committee was advised that currently there were capacity issues that necessitated Legal Services having to concentrate on court work and which prevented participation in the co-delivery of workshop sessions. Accordingly, it had been deemed necessary to buy in training expertise from an external source, namely from a solicitor from another local authority who would co-deliver with a Group Manager from Children's Services.

Addressing his remarks to the Portfolio Holder, the Chair emphasised his view that it was importance to ensure that such expertise was provided in-house rather than by buying it in from an external provider. Members also questioned whether the costs of outsourcing could be reviewed to determine whether the resources being spent on an external trainer could be reallocated to enable Legal Services.

In response, Ms Rowe advised that the post-Ofsted Action Plan had set out what was required in terms of training, but added that the provision of legal support was an element of a broader issue and that the Chief Executive was to undertake a 'stock-take' of resources. There were other ways in which the court work could be supported by developing dedicated court resources and ensuring that staff members were trained to undertake it. Furthermore, there would be a review over the next twelve months that would lead to a realignment of social work services, as the services performing child-in-need work and court work were stretched. Moreover, as social workers were currently carrying out work that covered the whole of the Borough, over the next six months there would be a review to achieve consistency with the locality model to work more effectively with schools and other agencies.

A question was raised by a Member regarding the cost of outsourcing the aforementioned training, and whether the costs should be borne by Legal Services. Ms Carter informed the Committee that the arrangement was for seven days of training to be carried out by a solicitor in May/June and that it would be co-delivered with a Group Manager from Children's Services. It was noted by Ms Carter that this was in line with training in other local authorities and that the costs were comparable.

A Member challenged the locality model and given that Walsall was a small area when compared with Staffordshire. They were concerned that continuity would be affected if families had to keep changing their social workers. Ms Carter emphasised that there was no intention for cases to be transferred between social workers and explained that under the locality model, social workers would cover a smaller area and there would be a better use of resources. Ms Rowe stated that social workers were being encouraged to work using restorative practice and was important that they did so. Therefore, it was essential that social workers had the framework to allow them to form with agencies such as schools the requisite professional relationships that are required for the work.

The Vice-Chair reminded the Committee that some areas of the Borough required more social workers than other areas and asked whether staff would be allocated on that basis. Ms Rowe stated that data was being used to identify the largest pressure points and to allocate resources accordingly. Nevertheless, it was noted that because situations could change, there has to be the flexibility to reallocate resources to take account of this.

With reference to recommendation 4, to increase the number of care leavers who are in education, employment and training, a Member asked what could be done to achieve this. Ms Carter responded by pointing out that work had been undertaken and progress was being made towards meeting the target. Ms Rowe advised that of the 65 care leavers, 60.5 per cent were in employment and 38.6 per cent were not in employment, education or training (NEET). A significant number of these young people had child care responsibilities, but it was noted that five were working as apprentices for the Council and five were in pre-apprenticeship programmes and would progress to apprenticeships in due course. The Vice-Chair noted that there had been an increase in the number of care leavers who had progressed to study at a university, with fourteen young people now undertaking such studies.

With reference to recommendation 6, to ensure that pathway plans set realistic targets for care leavers to support their progress into a fulfilling life, the Vice-Chair asked about the areas of concern in the report. Specifically, this had highlighted that adjustment to the performance report had been requested to enable managers to monitor completion of pathway plans and pathway plan reviews, and this was not yet in place. Ms Carter advised the Committee that she would provide them with an update on this matter.

With reference to recommendation 5, to enable care leavers to have access to good physical and emotional health services and ensure that they are able to understand their health histories, a Member asked what steps were being taken to mitigate delays. The importance of engagement with the CCG was noted by Ms Carter, who also referred to the imminent production of the CQC's inspection report, adding that a new Director of Nursing, Sarah Shingler, had been appointed by the CCG and it was anticipated that this would add impetus. In relation to encouraging and holding the CCG to account, especially through partnership working with operational staff and strategic leads, it was indicated that this was a component of the health work stream of the Corporate Parenting Board. This point was reinforced by the Portfolio Holder who, whilst remarking that the CCG would have its own set of priorities, noted that the Council would always look at partnership working.

With reference to recommendation 3, to improve the response to all children at risk of child sexual exploitation, making sure all assessments, safety plans and interventions are of a consistently good quality, a Member asked about the passing on of information concerning CSE from children and young people to appropriate professionals. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council was taking all steps to increase the awareness of and train adults in regard to such situations.

The Chair enquired when it was anticipated that Ofsted would be returning to review the progress being made. With inspection now being viewed as a process rather than an event, Ms Rowe advised that it was anticipated that a further two week inspection could occur during the next two years. It was also noted that it was likely that this would be a two day focused inspection or joint target area inspection. It was suggested by the Portfolio Holder that an explanatory note be circulated to the Committee in order to update Members on the anticipated future inspection regime.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report and the progress to date against the post-Ofsted Action Plan be noted;
2. That an explanatory note on future Ofsted inspections be circulated to the Committee in due course.

30/18 CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED WORKING GROUP

The Committee received the report of the Children's Services Ofsted Working Group [annexed], which had considered the 2017 Ofsted inspection report together with the Council's post-Ofsted Action Plan, to propose a number of recommendations.

The report was introduced by the Chair of the Working Group, Councillor T. Wilson, who thanked all the Members of the Working Group, the officers who had supported the work of the Group, and those officers of the Council and partner organisations who provided evidence and participated in the Working Group's meetings.

There was discussion by the Committee of the preferred options to progress the report, i.e. whether it should be considered by the Cabinet or by full Council. There was a consensus of opinion that the report should be referred to the Cabinet for its consideration of the Working Group's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That should Members wish to make further comments on the report, then these should be forwarded to the Democratic Services Officer. Dr P. Fantom;
2. That should further comments be received, these would be considered at a meeting of the Working Group to be convened as soon as practical thereafter;
3. That following the consideration and incorporation of further comments, if any, the report be presented to the Cabinet for its consideration of the findings and recommendations contained therein;
4. That any feedback from the Cabinet be provided to the Chair in due course.

31/18 FORWARD PLANS

The Committee received the Forward Plans of the Council and of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee. It was noted that the Council's forward plan contained the following decisions to be considered by the Portfolio Holder: Regional Family Drug and Alcohol Court; and primary and secondary schools expansion programme.

Resolved:

That the Forward Plans be noted.

32/18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be approved by the Council in May 2018.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the Members of the Committee and the Council's officers for their work and support during the 2017/18 municipal year.

The meeting terminated at 7.54 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....