

# **Minutes of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in a Conference Room, Walsall Council House**

**Tuesday, 23 July 2024 at 6.00 PM**

## **Committee Members present:**

Councillor N. Latham (Chair)  
Councillor C. Towe (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor A. Hicken  
Councillor S. Hussain  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Councillor W. Rasab  
Councillor E. Russell  
Councillor G. Singh-Sohal

## **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor P. Kaur – Education and Skills

## **Officers Present:**

S. Kelly – Director (Access and Inclusion)  
R. Beards – Head of Service (Inclusion)  
N. Perks – Quality Assurance Team Manager  
R. Thomas – Head of Access  
M. Powis – Senior Democratic Services Officer

The Chair gave welcome and introductions.

## **74. Apologies**

Apologies were received Sharon Guy, Kathleen Hinton and Councillor Harrison.

## **75. Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

## **76. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

77. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

78. **Minutes**

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 26 March 2024 were submitted [annexed].

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2024 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved, and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.**

79. **Areas of focus – 2024/25**

The Director of Access and Inclusion, Sharon Kelly, along with fellow Access and Inclusion Officers presented an overview of the Children's Services directorate (see annexed).

In responses to questions from Members following the presentation included:

- The Borough's family of schools included 5 single academy trusts, 40 multi-academy trusts and 30 federation schools.
- The Borough was a net importer of pupils and a chosen place for parents and carers to send their children to school.
- As of the end of June 2024, 91% of schools in Walsall were good or outstanding, which was slightly below the national figure of 93%.
- The family school model has proven to be highly advantageous for Walsall, notably the Lighthouse Federation, which has garnered national acclaim.
- Financial pressures within the sector were continuing due to increasing demands and insufficient central funding.
- There was a view that further academisation of schools within the Borough would continue to strain public finances and resource ineffectively remaining vulnerable schools.
- The Council had improved EHCP completion and compliance timescales above national averages with 90% of cases completed within 20 weeks.
- Recruitment and retention of education psychologists continued to be an issue within the sector. Members were reassured that the Council had increased the number of psychologists.
- EHCP growth was a result of numerous factors such as the COVID pandemic, high deprivation areas, access to information and an under recognition of needs within an education setting.
- School Admissions was an area of interest for Members and as such, further discussion was required for the Committee to understand processes, procedures and legislation in this area.

- Monthly performance report breakdown of good/outstanding, primary/secondary, academy and maintain schools would be circulated regularly to Members.
- Due to a change in national government, there was likely to be legislative changes within the Education sector. Therefore, there was a consensus that the Committee would be flexible to changing the work programme subject to urgent items such as national policy changes.

The Director of Access and Inclusion outlined the proposed work programme for the municipal year, which had been agreed by the Chair. As such, the following items were considered and agreed for inclusion:

- Attendance Elective Home Education
- Children Missing in Education
- Exclusion and Suspensions
- SEND Developments including Designated Schools Grant
- Home to School Transport
- Inclusion Hub
- Budget Setting 2024/2025
- Specialist Provision Plan and Mainstream Pupil Place Planning and Capital Strategy
- School Admissions and Fair Access Protocol
- School Attainment Data
- Ofsted Data and Outcomes
- Family of School Development and Schools Causing Concern
- Skills Strategy and Development including Employment Pathways
- Post 16 including Not in Education, Employment or Training and Vulnerable Groups
- Alternative Provision – SEND
- School Readiness and Early Year Foundation Stage, Outcomes including Phonics
- Early Years SEN Development
- Childcare Sufficiency and Wraparound Programs
- Quarter 2 Financial monitoring

To assist with discussions, Members noted proposals for the following workshops during the municipal year:

- Workshop to be scheduled prior to 19 November 2024 to focus on School Admissions (process/procedures/myth busting).
- Workshop to be scheduled prior to 9th January 2025 meeting to focus on School Attainment Data, Ofsted data and outcomes.

## **Resolved**

**1. That, the following items be included in the work programme for the municipal year 2024 – 2025:**

- **Attendance Elective Home Education**

- **Children Missing in Education**
  - **Exclusion and Suspensions**
  - **SEND Developments including Designated Schools Grant**
  - **Home to School Transport**
  - **Inclusion Hub**
  - **Budget Setting 2024/2025**
  - **Specialist Provision Plan and Mainstream Pupil Place Planning and Capital Strategy**
  - **School Admissions and Fair Access Protocol**
  - **School Attainment Data**
  - **Ofsted Data and Outcomes**
  - **Family of School Development and Schools Causing Concern**
  - **Skills Strategy and Development including Employment Pathways**
  - **Post 16 including Not in Education, Employment or Training and Vulnerable Groups**
  - **Alternative Provision – SEND**
  - **School Readiness and Early Year Foundation Stage, Outcomes including Phonics**
  - **Early Years SEN Development**
  - **Childcare Sufficiency and Wraparound Programs**
  - **Quarter 2 Financial monitoring**
- 2. That, the Committee arrange two workshops during the municipal year to facilitate and aid discussion of School Admissions and School Attainment.**

80. **Areas of Focus**

**Resolved that:**

The Areas of Focus be noted.

81. **Recommendation Tracker**

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from previous meetings, including progress made and outstanding items.

[Annexed]

**Resolved:**

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

82. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be held on 3 September 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 19:40p.m.

Signed:

Date: