

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

20 January 2025 at 6.00 PM

Committee Members present:

Councillor N. Latham (Chair)
Councillor C. Towe (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor S. Hussain
Councillor E. Russell

W. Duffus (Secondary Teacher Representative)
S. Guy (Primary Teacher Representative)

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
T. Collier – Strategic Finance Business Partner (Virtual)
N. Gough – Democratic Services Officer

The Chair gave welcome and introductions.

109. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Harrison, Hicken and Rattigan.

110. Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

111. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

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

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

113. Minutes

A copy of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 22 October 2024 were submitted [annexed].

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2024 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved, and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

114. Ofsted Data and Outcomes

The Quality Assurance Team Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). Members were informed that the report set out how schools were currently inspected by Ofsted and described changes to the inspectorate's framework. The report provided the latest Ofsted outcomes data for Walsall.

The Committee was informed that from September 2024 the DfE announced that the single headline grades of 'overall effectiveness' for schools would no longer be used. This would be replaced with gradings across 6 subcategories, which would be followed by the introduction of school report cards from September 2025.

It was noted that School Ofsted outcomes in Walsall were improving - currently 91% of Walsall schools were rated as good or outstanding which placed Walsall above the national average by 0.5 percentage points.

There then ensued a period of questioning, The Quality Assurance Team Manager provided information on how the Local Authority would be involved in schools that needed improvement.

A discussion was held on the perception that Walsall schools did not perform well, members suggested that this should be rectified as based on the data presented, schools in Walsall were performing well and this needed effectively communicating to the public. Officers agreed to consider how communication could be improved. The Director stated that school outcomes should improve year on year as actions fed through and stressed that it may take some time for this to become clear. A discussion on the importance of the school environment in pupil performance was held.

Resolved

- 1. The Committee noted the changes in how schools Ofsted outcomes were now reported together with Walsall's current Ofsted position.**
- 2. The Committee recognised the progress that schools in Walsall had made and improving Ofsted judgements over recent years.**

3. Officers consider how communication in relation to school performance could be improved.

115. Schools Priority Education Investment Areas and Attainment Data

The Quality Assurance Team Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report detailed school results for 2024 and provided context in relation to the national, West Midlands and statistical neighbours. It was noted that progress had been made from 2023 and in reducing the gap to national. In particular, the trend in closing the overall gap to national within Early Years. This reflected the improving quality of schools in Walsall.

The report informed members that Priority Education Investment areas were areas that had been selected based on low key stage 2 and 4 attainment areas and high rates of disadvantage. The Local Needs Funding for Walsall Priority Education Investment area programme funding was £2.7 million. During a period of questioning, Officers confirmed that once available feedback on the impact of the Walsall Priority Education Investment area programme would be circulated outside of the meeting. Further challenge was provided in relation to the reasons for lower attainment (than national levels) at grade 5 in Maths and English.

Officers confirmed that where a schools attainment data was not improving that it would receive extra support. This was often provided by the Local Authority through signposting to high performing schools. Members were advised that schools received headline data for all schools in Walsall with contextual data to allow identification of similar demographics and areas of strength.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Schools Priority Education Investment Areas and Attainment Data report be noted.**
- 2. That feedback and evaluation of the Walsall Priority Education Investment area programme be circulated outside of the meeting.**
- 3. That a further report be provided once validated data is received.**

116. Family of Schools Development and Schools Causing Concern (SCC)

The Quality Assurance Team Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report set out an overview of the statutory duties that the local authority must undertake as part of the DfE 'Support and Intervention in schools' statutory guidance, together with the authorities own local Schools Causing Concern protocols and the development of the Family of School's strategy. It was stressed that federations of schools were encouraged as it drove improvement.

In response to queries from the Committee, Officers confirmed that there were no schools in Walsall with a warning notice. The governance of schools was

considered, and the Quality Assurance Team Manager explained that the School Governance Team provided advice, support and training to schools.

Resolved:

That the Committee noted the Family of Schools Development and Schools Causing Concern report.

117. Areas of Focus

A discussion was held in relation to the areas of focus and the items that needed to be scheduled. It was agreed that this would be discussed with the Chair outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

That the areas of focus was noted.

118. 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.

119. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting would be 13 February 2025.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.

Signed:

Date: