

## **Education Scrutiny Commission**

**Monday 29 June 2015**

### **Minutes**

#### **PRESENT**

Cllr Ed Davie (Co-chair), Cllr Max Deckers-Dowber (Co-Chair) Cllr Daniel Adilypour, Cllr Tim Briggs, Cllr Vaila McClure

#### **ALSO PRESENT**

Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer and Mrs Penny Smith-Orr (OSC co-optees), Cllr Imogen Walker (Deputy Leader, Policy), Cllr Jane Pickard (Cabinet Member for Children and Families)

### **1. Welcomes and Introductions**

Cllr Ed Davie, Co-chair Education Scrutiny Commission, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the Education Scrutiny Commission had been established to consider key planning and performance issues affecting children's education in Lambeth. He welcomed additionally to the commission's discussions the participation and input of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committee education co-optees, Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer and Penny Smith-Orr.

### **2. Pupil Place Planning and Capital Projects**

The item was in response to a request from the Archbishop Sumner 2 Form Entry Campaign for Scrutiny to look at how the education department project demand for primary school places in the north of the borough. The chair brought to the commission's attention the letter from the Chair of ABS2FormEntry campaign (Appendix 1). A letter from the Chair of the Oval Learning Cluster had subsequently been received and circulated (Appendix 3). The commission was addressed as follows:

Frank Roberts, Chair of Governors Archbishop Sumner Church of England Primary School, advised that the school was attended by 292 pupils. There are a high number of children with SEN and also a high number of disadvantaged children and across a range of abilities. The school is keen to ensure that those parents who want to send their children to the school are able to do so. Data has been assessed and the expansion of Archbishop Sumner will not impact on other schools.

Adam Matthews, Chair ASB2FormEntry Parent and Community Campaign said that parents and the community had been led to believe that the school would be expanded and this matter had been the subject of discussion since 2010. The Lambeth data which projects demand for places has been incorrect in a number of instances. There is a need to expand Archbishop Sumner to meet the demand for places and to take into account the issue of parental choice. Scrutiny had been asked to look at this issue as it was important to ensure the correct decisions are made by Cabinet.

Kate Hoey MP noted that other schools had raised concerns but commented that the expansion of Archbishop Sumner is not at the expense of other schools and that parental choice is needed. She questioned what is behind the council's refusal to expand the school and that three years in a row the projections have been wrong and there is a need to forward plan. Archbishop Sumner has credible support from the community and there is a need for parents to have choice about where they send their child to school.

Cllr Imogen Walker, Deputy Leader (Policy), advised that there is pressure for school places in the south of the borough. Expansion has to be taken in the context of limited resources and these are used where most needed. The council has to be able to justify its use of resources. Rigorous forward planning is undertaken using a variety of sources to project future demand for school places and the council faces new challenges each year.

Kathy Twist, Director Education, Learning and Skills advised that the council has a duty to provide a school place for all children in the borough. In projecting demand for school places and the schools expansion programme the council has to look at the whole borough. It projects demand based around five town centre areas and aims to have a good school near to where all children live. The council has to bid for Basic Needs Funding based on evidence that places are needed in a particular area. Need currently exists in the south of the borough and projections show that this will continue to be the case over the next three years. This is based on evidence from GP registrations, Child Yield and ONS/GLA statistics.

It is recognised that Archbishop Sumner is an outstanding school. It has taken an additional 30 children since national offer day. It has taken children from schools where they had already been accepted for a place so some schools in North Lambeth now have spare places. Parental choice is valued but there is a need to maintain strong schools and meet the needs of all parents and children. It is not known when Archbishop Sumner will be able to expand permanently as a two-form entry and the council can only argue for funding for a school to expand when there is demonstrable need.

Mike Pocock Delivery Director, Business, Growth and Regeneration advised that the council seeks to project population numbers so that all children can have a local school place and it is reasonably accurate in doing so. There had been a previous imbalance with a surplus in the north of the borough and shortage in the south. The methodology for projections was set out in the agenda report including differences between projected numbers in the population and applications. Table 7 sets out the projected surplus/deficit of places. The information is formally reviewed annually and regularly updated. The data is presented to the DoE who would not provide funds if there were any doubts about it being a robust and rational analysis.

Cllr Davie highlighted the letter from the Oval Learning Cluster which says that '*no case has been made for expansion of any school in North Lambeth on the basis of pupil number*'. He further commented on that the decision to expand the bulge class had been a unilateral decision by Archbishop Sumner School rather than being the decision

of the council. He cited the Oval Learning Cluster letter further in saying that this had created space in some schools and there is insufficient demand to fill these places.

Mr Matthews disputed that the bulge class impacted on other schools – he commented that Henry Fawcett School for example had had vacancies for the previous five years. He also queried the Lambeth projections and cited the previous inaccuracy of projections for the north of the borough and that the number of offers made this year already indicated they were incorrect. He had made requests for the background data but this had not been supplied. He commented that there is a need to plan better for 2016/17 onwards. He also queried the consistency of approach for development and that some schools are expanding despite their neighbouring schools not being full.

Cllr Davie invited the comment of the Ms Penny Smith-Orr, co-optee member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on behalf of Southwark Diocese. Ms Smith-Orr advised that she had taken advice from the Board of Education which acknowledged that parents would like their child to go to a church school but if they were non-participating members of the local community it was not of necessary that children attend a church school.

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills commented that the Diocese had been advised that the expansion of Archbishop Sumner this year had been by a back door route and the issue was about expanding properly. When additional places were needed funds could be applied for to support expansion. The Diocese Board of Education supported the expansion of the school but at the right time and in working with the council.

Mr Matthews considered it unfair to suggest that the expansion was back door, and that the Diocese does not do pupil planning but works with Lambeth Council and is reliant on its information. He raised on-going concerns about the accuracy of data and the request for further information which had not been provided.

Cllr Tim Biggs commented that Vauxhall is an area that is expanding and the council needs to be sure that its projections are correct. If people want specific schools to expand the council should meet that aspiration and also needs to deal with the impact that might have on other schools.

In concluding the discussion, the chair summed up that there is a need to look at the wider impact on other schools arising from expansion, and in this case the unilateral bulge class at Archbishop Sumner had impacted on other schools. Some damage had been done by the school not working collectively with its neighbouring schools and this needs to be overcome. There is a need for the council to be sure that it is rigorous in its pupil planning and data projections and suggested that an external body such as the LGA be commissioned to look at the rigour of the council's data and pupil planning projections.

### **3. Raising Achievement in Schools 2014-15**

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills introduced the report which sets out performance at Key Stage 1 and 2 and at GCSE and analysed by a range of indices including gender, ethnicity, English fluency and mobility. The report additionally considers attainment by eligibility for free school meals which has been used in a number of studies as an indicator of deprivation. The following matters were highlighted:

- Results for KS1 in the borough are about the national average, whilst at KS2 these are above average. Good progress is being made in a number of areas in particular English as an additional language.
- Results at GCSE have been improving steadily and are now above the national average.
- Results at Post 16 are below average. However this is a different cohort of pupils to those at GCSE reflecting changes in education arrangements e.g. pupils may be coming into Lambeth schools and colleges and Lambeth pupils may be going out of borough.
- Girls outperform boys at all stages, although there are variations in margins of achievement.
- Pupils who have English as a second language will outperform all peer groups when they become fluent in English.
- There is a gap in attainment between those who receive a free school meal and those who pay, but this is smaller than national indices.
- Black Caribbean, Portuguese pupils and white British pupils eligible for free school meals are underachieving in relation to their peers.

In response to questions on what can make a difference in balancing achievement the Feyisa Demie, Head of Research, and the Director ELS advised as follows

- Lambeth has undertaken a number of studies and strategies to consider disadvantage and what works in narrowing the attainment gap (listed on page 56 of the agenda).
- A research project focussed on Portuguese pupils and had looked at issues in four schools. Schools have now employed Portuguese teaching assistants (TA) and one teacher is a deputy head. Similar strategies apply to the Somali population, the focus of an earlier study, and schools with significant numbers of pupils were urged to employ Somali speaking TAs. It was important for pupils to maintain fluency in both languages and bi-lingual fluency, and writing specifically is a key issue.
- The government is encouraging the collection of data for broad specific groups rather than language groups. Achievement for Portuguese speakers in Lambeth is measured as a language rather than an ethnic group as this group is officially recognised in Lambeth but it is not the same for other languages such as Spanish. The government is reluctant to accept other groups as smaller subsets can overburden schools in data collection and language in itself does not tell the whole story. Accordingly it can be difficult to break down patterns of achievement for other cohorts e.g. pupils of Latin American heritage/Spanish speakers.
- Family/Parenting courses and educating parents in a family context are proven to work. Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an early intervention programme sponsored by Save the Children. In particular it supports low income parents and children and helps them engage with schools and achieve their potential.

- It was confirmed that provision and aspiration supports the borough's brightest children as well as those who might struggle to learn or study.
- The Education Strategy (circulated) sets out key objectives including
  - all education facilities (early years through to colleges) should be rated good or better;
  - aspiration is for all learners to reach at least national standards and the gaps in achievements between groups be reduced.
- A key lever which supports a school's progression and thereby pupil attainment is having outstanding teachers and a strong support staff including TAs. Such schools support all children to attain their potential and facilitate disadvantaged children to progress quicker.
- Over the next academic year schools will be implementing changes to the national curriculum. Alongside this the DfE has removed the assessment system of National Curriculum Levels as a measurement of where pupils should be and schools will need to develop new systems of how they measure and assess pupils learning. Lambeth is piloting options in school clusters and will moderate the system based upon learning. Whilst the government has given limited advice on new measurements, OFSTED's expectation is that systems should be robust.
- The next three years will be particularly challenging as to date budgets have been protected. To continue to achieve improved outcomes in future will require new ways of working with, and between, schools.

In concluding the discussion the committee was advised that sources of external funding are being sought to support research on a number of issues. Cllr Davie suggested Guys and St Thomas charity as a source if a health element could be introduced into research projects. It was identified that further research on the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils be flagged and work on parenting programmes/Parenting Groups should particularly be targeted towards those families whose children come from an underachieving group.

#### **4. School Inspection Outcomes**

The report set out the results of 20 schools inspected by OFSTED during 2013-14. 70% achieved a judgement of good or outstanding and 30% were judged to be requiring improvement. Members questioned how improvements were being addressed in relation to poorly performing schools and also highlighted comparable boroughs such as Islington which had no schools in this category. It was also noted that one school St Saviours was judged to require special measures.

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills and Richard Blackmore (School Improvement Team) advised that this has been an unusual year for Lambeth - generally about 10% of inspected schools are judged to require improvement. (The agenda report dealt only with schools inspected in 2013-14. In fact in Lambeth about 90% of schools are judged to be good or better and 30% outstanding). For those schools judged to require improvement, about three or four months after judgement a check is made whether improvements are taking place – in every case the judgement has been that

effective steps are being taken to deliver improvements. Local intelligence is used to support the improvement journey as well as performance data and information from what is viewed in the classroom.

In response to member questions officers advised as follows:

- A number of strategies are in place to retain outstanding Heads and teachers and ensure schools maintain standards and support other schools. Head Teachers are used in the role of advisor and where weakness is identified support is brokered through a federation arrangement or through work in a cluster. No small single education organisations stands alone, for example a small infant school would be joined with a primary and also with a children centre. Head Teachers are also used for bespoke projects and sharing good practice. A current example is 'Life without Levels' to ensure that there is still support and shared intelligence in the move away from the national curriculum levels.
- All schools are monitored and the school improvement monitoring group will be able to facilitate tailored support as needed. Leadership and Governor Support are key issues.

In conclusion the Chair noted the standards and improvements being achieved in education and the contrast with Children Services and considered there may be lessons to be learned and shared in relation to staff retention and governance

## **5. Lambeth Virtual School (Looked After Children)**

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills and Denise Downie-Campbell, Head Lambeth Virtual School, introduced the report which had been provided in response to a request from the commission on the education and attainment of Looked after Children. The commission was advised that the Virtual School oversees the education of Lambeth's Looked after Children. It is not a physical school but supports the educational needs of LAC and seeks to improve their attainment. At any one time it will have 300-400 children. The following matters were highlighted:

- Its role includes placement in schools of LAC and requires that schools be judged at least Good. LAC have priority for admission;
- Reducing exclusions - LAC will not be excluded unless there are exceptional circumstances;
- LAC have disrupted lives and the Virtual School will seek to address the disadvantage of this group of young people who have lower educational achievement than their peers;
- It support and monitors the education of LAC between the ages of 0 and 25 years;
- Lambeth has had a Virtual School for five years, but it is now a statutory requirement (since 2014);
- A child will have a Learning Plan with the Virtual School along with a designated teacher whose job it is to support the LAC and ensure the plan is delivered;
- Improving the outcomes for LAC is a priority in the Education and Learning Strategy and the aim is to narrow the gap with peers;

- The Virtual School had previously sat within social services but was now transferred to Education so its focus is on education and has a Governing Body whose focus is on education outcomes.

In response to member questions officers advised as follows:

- Of the children it supports 1/3 are at school in Lambeth, 1/3 in surrounding boroughs and 1/3 elsewhere. Of the latter group a number are in Kent but there are also placements further away such as Liverpool;
- The Virtual School is responsible for and monitors the Pupil Premium (about £1900 per pupil per year). LAC are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities; the Virtual School takes a holistic view of the child/young person and the Pupil Premium can be used to support after school activities/learning a musical instrument etc.;
- The Virtual School works with the Children in Care Council and it is hoped that social workers discuss this opportunity with the children they support. The frequency in change of social workers is an issue and there can be gaps between change over;
- Young people leaving school are encouraged to go on to university but there is also support for people into apprentices.

The report additionally set out a number of issues related to the Virtual School raised in the OFSTED Children Services report. It was specifically noted by the committee that the OFSTED report comments that the local authority does not have accurate information on the numbers of care leavers who are NEET and members questioned on how the Virtual School works with other parts of the council to seek apprentices, work experience etc. The committee encouraged the Head to use all available levers to secure opportunities for Lambeth's most vulnerable young people including considering possible links into Lambeth's procurement and contracting arrangements for apprenticeships.

## **6. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review - Update**

The Director of Education, Learning and Skills introduced the report which had been submitted to Cabinet in March 2015. This provided an update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) review and implementation, and issues arising from the Children and Families Act which came into force in September 2014. The following matters were highlighted:

- £7.5m had been agreed by Cabinet in 2012 to provide more placements in Lambeth;
- A number of new places were being developed at local schools and a 78 place school was being built for completion in autumn 2016;
- The aim of the review was to enable more children to be educated locally and participate in local activities and to reduce the time and cost of travelling;
- The Children and Families Act brought in new arrangements – Statements had been replaced by Education Health and Care Plans and children with statements were being transferred to EHCP;

- The council has to make a 'Local Offer' on what is available and information can be found on the council's website.

Cllr Jane Pickard, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, advised the committee that she had taken on this new role in April. She welcomed the new strategy and work being done and commented as follows:

- In the past there has been poor communication with parents on SEND – this had much improved over the last year under Cllr Meldrum;
- Funding needs to go up – there are an increasing number of children with needs, including those who don't meet the threshold. Funding is made within the Dedicated Schools Grant as the High Needs Grant but this is a notional funding which does not increase with demand or pupil growth.

Commission members commented on the following issues:

- In relation to access to child and adolescent mental health services, only about 17% of children with mental health conditions are treated. This means several thousand children do not receive required support at an early stage and grow up to become adults with mental health problems. The committee considered that preventative treatment and earlier interventions are needed. The CM supported the preventative agenda and advised that a review of mental health is underway locally.
- Children with SEND have been schooled and supported in mainstream schools - it was questioned whether the new school will change this arrangement. The Director ELS advised that there would always be some children who need more specialist support and there has always been special provision but a number of children are having to go out of borough. This will provide the opportunity for local schooling for those with the most severe and other associated learning needs.
- It was confirmed that feedback is sought from the SENCO Network and is a mechanism for sharing good practice. There is a requirement in the Act to have a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator).
- Regarding personal budgets, officers advised that whilst work is undertaken with families to give options and choices most families do not want a personal budget, a view shared by the Parents Forum in view of other demands on time.

The chair thanked all participants in the meeting for their contributions. The meeting finished at 9.30 p.m.

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