

London Borough of Islington  
**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 20 July 2020**

Minutes of the meeting of the virtual Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held via Zoom on Monday, 20 July 2020 at 7.30 pm.

|                      |                          |  |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Present:</b>      | <b>Councillors:</b>      | Cutler (Chair), Woolf (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Graham, Jeapes, Ngongo, Ozedmir and Williamson  |
| <b>Also Present:</b> | <b>Co-opted Members:</b> | Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese<br>Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)<br>Claire Ballak, Parent Governor Representative (Primary) |

**Councillor Vivien Cutler in the Chair**

**178 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. 1)**

None.

**179 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. 2)**

None.

**180 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. 3)**

None.

**181 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. 4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**182 CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. 5)**

The Chair reported that the Equalities in Educational Outcomes scrutiny report would be submitted to the Executive in September.

**183 ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 6)**

None.

**184 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. 7)**

None.

185

**PERMANENT AND FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOL - 12 MONTH UPDATE (ITEM NO. B1)**

Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services presented the report which provided a 12 month update following the recommendations made by the committee's scrutiny review report into Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions from School.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- Fixed period exclusion from Islington secondary schools had reduced by 40% and from primary schools by 25% over a 12 month period. Permanent exclusion from secondary school had reduced by 10% and had remained at the same level (i.e. 4 permanent exclusions) for primary schools.
- There had been good progress made against all the recommendations in the scrutiny report and work was continuing to make further improvements.
- A member of the public queried how much the decrease in exclusions was due to a cultural change in particular schools and how sustainable further reductions would be in the future. The officer stated that work had taken place with schools where there was over representation and as a result, exclusions had reduced dramatically. Work was now taking place with another school which had about a third of the permanent exclusions this year. There was an ambition not to have any exclusions by doing early intervention work, trying to predict problems, using data and working with the mental health workers in schools. Some events leading to an exclusion were extreme or unpredictable, however, often low level disruption preceded the issue that led to the exclusion. There was cooperation and goodwill from schools in working with Children's Services to prevent exclusions.
- A member asked whether there were specific measures in place to deal with 40% weapons related exclusions in secondary schools. The officer stated that there was a crime strategy and weapons prevention work was undertaken. Young people were exposed to the consequences of the use of weapons. The Ben Kinsella programme took place in schools and the Integrated Gangs Team and targeted youth workers worked with young people. Schools took the issue of weapons seriously.
- A member of the public asked whether the schools the council had worked with to reduce exclusions could be named and was advised that they could not be due to the small numbers involved. However she stated that targeted work had taken place and an improvement plan was in place. Work included offering advice at the point of inclusion, working quickly to get pupils back into school and working with parents. This work had continued virtually during lockdown. Currently there were no exclusions due to lockdown.
- The Chair stated that some governors were unaware of the committee's report. The officer advised that there was a focus on the action that the council wanted governors to take. Attendance at meetings had increased significantly since meetings had been held virtually. Unfortunately the scheduled exclusions course was unable to take place as there had only been two people register their interest. There was a

recruitment drive taking place for governors and council staff would be encouraged to apply. There was an aim to have a more representative group of governors. A governor steering group was also being established and this was more representative.

Candy Holder was thanked for her report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

186

**SCHOOL RESULTS 2019 (ITEM NO. B2)**

Mark Taylor, Director – Learning and Schools, Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement (Primary), Penny Kenway, Head of Early Years and Childcare and Jeff Cole, Head of School Improvement (Secondary) presented the report which gave an overview of educational attainment in Islington.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- The results were positive with Islington outcomes consistently above the national average. There were aspirations for Islington outcomes to be above the Inner London average.
- The data was a year old and COVID-19 meant this year's outcomes would not be measured.
- It was hoped that attainment levels would be maintained despite the COVID-19 pandemic. There would be personalised teaching, planning and the use of assessment.
- A member asked whether Kurdish and Turkish children in the Early Years' stage had been given support during the pandemic and an officer replied that there was concern that the most disadvantaged children's attainment would be most affected by the pandemic. Work was taking place to get children back to their early years setting which had been open since the beginning of June. There was a service level agreement with a group who would provide support to Kurdish children and the Bright Start publication was translated twice a week.
- A member queried how the committee would be able to scrutinise when there would be no reliable data produced for this year. The committee was advised that there were explicit priorities and creativity and innovation were key. Although there would be no core data, there would be some data for specific schools and groups. Islington had good schools and with good planning and teaching, learning could be individualised. Once schools were back open, teachers could identify gaps and plan lessons accordingly. There would be a recovery curriculum which would be in place for 12-18 months.
- The Ofqual assessment process for this year was based on the schools performance over the last 3 years so where improvements had been made recently, these would not be reflected.
- Work was taking place to ensure Year 11s had an offer for September.
- The Chair suggested that the terms 'dual heritage/mixed heritage' could be used locally instead of the Department for Education term 'mixed white black Caribbean'. Officers would look into this.

Officers were thanked for their report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**187 COVID-19 UPDATE (ITEM NO. B3)**

The update was included in the discussion on other agenda items.

**188 SELECTION OF SCRUTINY TOPIC AND INTERIM WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B4)**

The strategy underpinning the transition from COVID 19 was suggested as the next scrutiny review topic.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- The scrutiny review could include the impacts of COVID; measures that had been implemented as a result; remote learning; safeguarding; education and inequalities; youth safety and justice.
- There could be two parts to the scrutiny review: 1) the impacts so far and the lessons learned and 2) the longer term impacts.
- In response to a member's question, an officer advised that it was important for children to have laptops and Wi-Fi in case of a local lockdown. This was a priority and bidding was taking place to try and secure more laptops.

Officers were thanked for their attendance and work throughout the year.

**RESOLVED:**

1) That the strategy underpinning the transition from COVID 19 be the next scrutiny review topic and that a Scrutiny Initiation Document be submitted to the next meeting.

2) That the interim work programme be noted.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.45 pm

Chair