EDUCATION AND BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Education and Business Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 13 February 2020 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:

Councillor Peter Babudu (Chair)
Councillor William Houngbo (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Renata Hamvas
Councillor Eleanor Kerslake
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE
Councillor Eliza Mann
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer
Martin Brecknell

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

OFFICER SUPPORT:

Nina Dohel, Education Director

Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice.

Julie Timbrell, scrutiny Project Manager

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT.

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

Cllr William Houngbo declared he is a parent governor of Tower Bridge primary school.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 October 2019 and 16 December were agreed as an accurate record.

5. EXCLUSION REVIEW: REGIONAL DIRECTOR LONDON, OFSTED

Martin Finch, Senior HMI, Ofsted, presented on the work of Ofsted , with reference to the scrutiny review on Exclusions and Alternative Provision (AP).

He commended the commission's approach of getting input from a variety of stakeholders and said that it is by working together that we can solve issues, such as Exclusions.

He referred to the Timpson report on Exclusions and the vulnerable groups this work identified:

- Educational needs
- Children in need
- Black Caribbean
- Mixed race
- Neglected children / troubled families
- Disadvantaged socio-economic background

The connections between Exclusion and serious youth violence are a concern. Exclusion is also related to lower academic attainment.

Martin Finch said that he attended the recent Southwark Conference on Inclusion, and spoke about the evidence of high Exclusion rates, but also that Special fixed term exclusions were very high in Southwark, and recommended that this is an area to focus on.

He spoke about the importance of schools, including PRUs, having an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, as well as ensuring that reading, writing and numeracy are well delivered - particularly reading, as not being able to read is very limiting.

Headteachers do have a right to exclude - and Ofsted to not want to undermine that, however there is a question around if schools are always following the guidance. Timpson identified this is an issue, and particularly around identifying underlying vulnerability. Timpson found too much variation and too many missed opportunities. Martine Finch stressed the importance of Fair Access panels.

He noted that Southwark has less than the average 3 and 4 year olds

attending nursery schools, which can impact on latter educational attainment.

Managed moves can be a good strategy for a child to have a new start; 56 % were successful. It can be instructive to look at what worked and didn't work and why.

The Inspector said that Ofsted are looking at potential off rolling by examining the census data from years 10 and 11.

The other area Ofsted is looking at is the rise in elective Home education and the reasons for this. Sometimes that can be a result of a break down in communication between home and school, coupled with schools suggesting home education - and in one case he came across writing a letter for illiterate parents, which is obviously unacceptable.

He finished by saying good quality Alternative Provision can work well for children. Here it is important to identify why a PRU is being chosen and to ask the children about their experience.

The chair invited questions and the following points were made by the Inspector in response to members' questions:

- Knife crime can be a vicious cycle as Excluded children can become more vulnerable to Gangs. When Ofsted speak to school leaders they want to see if teachers understand the local factors that impact on safeguarding. Then Ofsted speak to children, and see if perceptions line up.

- Examining ECHPs and ensuring that these are in place for special needs children, and include health and social care needs, can prevent exclusion. Plans ought to contain high aspirations and the child needs people who know their needs, and are working to address barriers.

- Ofsted have not done a breakdown of the special needs that are most likely to lead to Exclusion, such as complex needs or ADHD or dyslexia, however Timpson has done some work on this, as referred to earlier.

- There is a link between regular attendance and attainment. Ofsted will look at trends and ask about steps taken to improve attendance. Sometimes Ofsted will also speak to those children not attending and find out the reasons.

- The changing landscape and reduce leverage for councils could possibly be leading to more Exclusions. There is an increase in working together between councils, academies and Ofsted. Ofsted are presently shining a light on off-rolling, questioning schools doing targeted inspections.

- Exclusions are going up nationally

- The increase in home education may be linked to parents' dissatisfaction with schools. Home education can be very good, when it is a positive choice made by parents, however for many families it may be the last resort. There are few statutory resources available for home education, usually only some signposting. This can come as a surprise to parents.

- There are poor fixed term practices, and the use of isolation rooms can be indicative of poor practice

The chair and commission thanked Martin Finch for attending.

6. EXCLUSION REVIEW: EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS

The chair thanked the Diocese leads for attending, and expressed his appreciation for their willingness to share their good practice, noting that both Dioceses had lower than average Exclusion rates.

Dr Simon Hughes, Director of Education, Catholic Diocese presented.

He emphasised that the Christian ethos of Compassion, Inclusion and Reconciliation guided the use of exclusions in Catholic Diocese schools.

Mental health is a major issue for many pupils, and there is a frustration in schools with the inability of teachers to access sufficient CAMHS support for young people in need. Untreated mental health issues often lead to poor behaviour.

Schools do need, on occasions, to undertake behaviour management; one approach used by a Diocese school is the use of a Saturday school exclusively for children experiencing difficulties. It is rare that families complain of the use of additional school, rather than exclusion.

Previously there were major concerns about drug, and now there are rising concerns with knife crime.

The Diocese takes a dim view of off-rolling.

Rachael Norman, Secondary Schools Adviser, Southwark Diocesan Board of Education gave a presentation with reference to the report circulated.

Rachael emphasised that a nurturing approach is taken rather than a punitive approach. There are learning mentors in place to support the children emotionally and with teaching.

The chair invited questions and the following points were made in response:

- Both Diocese leads confirmed that they do take children through

Managed Moves and these include pupils from faith schools and non faith schools. . Diocese prioritises children in care, and both reported success with children received through Managed Moves.

- It was helpful when Managed Moves were more centralised and coordinated, with a dedicated officer.

- Local Authorities are under pressure from systemic underfunding of health, social care, and education and this goes to the heart of many of the problems experienced by vulnerable children.

- Joined up working needs to be reinvigorated.

- Schools often talk about this an ideal PRU model, which would offer respite and wrap around care. There is appreciation this could be costly. There is a need for a form of provision for very vulnerable children and young people where SILS would be too challenging.

A member referred to the Ark Academy report circulated and requested further clarification on fixed term exclusions.

RESOLVED

Seek clarification from ARK Academy on if Globe Secondary's annual rate of 40 internal exclusions per 100 secondary students refers to the same pupils or repeat exclusions.

7. EXCLUSION REVIEW: 'KEEPING CHILDREN IN EDUCATION' CONFERENCE

Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help and Youth Justice, presented a film, "Excluded-voices of children and parents", and provided an update on the recent Southwark conference on 'Keeping Children in Education', held on the 16 January.

The following points were made in the subsequent discussion:

- There is a resource dilemma between crisis and prevention. There will be additional mental health funding going into schools and the provision of an open access mental health provision for children and young people.

- Not all schools turned up to the conference, and not all have same ethos towards Exclusions.

- There is tracking exercise looking at the Summerhouse primary cohort, in order to look at the long term outcomes of these children when they reach Secondary school.

8. PROCUREMENT REVIEW: SOUTHWARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Shade Abdul provided a summary of the Southwark Chamber of Commerce 'Entrepreneurial Peckham' event, held on 11 February, and more broadly on the work of the Chamber to engage small businesses led by people from ethnic minority backgrounds, along with Les Johnson, Chair of Southwark Chamber of Commerce

The Entrepreneurial Peckham event had highlighted the need for:

- Access to training for start ups
- Case studies of success
- Opportunities for partnership

A centralised location for business support would be useful, as well as the coordination of different resources.

9. PROCUREMENT REVIEW: SOUTHBANK BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT AND SOUTH LONDON PROCUREMENT NETWORK

Nic Durston, Southbank BID, and Petrona Wickham, South London Procurement Network, gave a presentation.

South London Procurement Network, in conjunction with Southbank Business Improvement District, is a business support initiative formed and funded by Canary Wharf Group and Qatari Diar to support the Southbank Place development in Waterloo. It is funded by Section 106 to provide investment in local business capacity and to ensure local people benefit from the Southbank Place development. The initiative links bigger developments with local SMEs. The network is made up from businesses from across 11 south London boroughs, including SMMEs from a variety of sectors, both construction and non construction.

22% of businesses are from Southwark. SLPN has enable £288.6m in contract wins, £103.6m of which is has gone to SMMEs, of which £72.1m are to Southwark SMMEs.

The SLPN aims to tackle the challenges faced by SMME's, which are:

- Lack of knowledge/ Complicated legislation
- Lack of access
- Lack of trust/ organisation risk averse
- Lack of support
- Resources
- Funding

The support provided includes one to one business development, as well as networking events.

The chair invited questions from the Commission and in response the following points were made:

- SLPN set internal targets

- Small businesses are identified through various means as there can be a lot of churn and much work from home. Directories are used, although these go out of date frequently. Another avenue is social housing providers. Some of the challenges are more established BME business with an old model based on word of mouth, which is difficult to sustain profitably with challenges such as business rates rising – SLPN reach out to help with new models, which often involve social engagement.

- SLPN utilise social procurement rules which stipulate a percentage of local people must be employed, and recommended the council hold SLPNs feet to the fire on this through the procurement process.

- SLPN is funded by the developer, which is a good model that works well.

The chair and commission thanked Nic Durston and Petrona Wickham for their presentation.

10. PROCUREMENT REVIEW: PROCURE

The report was noted.

11. EXCLUSION REVIEW : SURVEY

The survey is ongoing with young people and families.

12. EXCLUSION REVIEW: TIMPSON REVIEW REPORT

The report was noted.

13. EXCLUSION REVIEW: SOUTHWARK PRU VISIT

A report on a visit made to SILS Key Stage 4 by Cllr William Houngbo and Cllr Eliza Mann was tabled and discussed. Members highlighted the emotional and behavioural problems of the young people there, and that more resources could enrich the curriculum. The setting is not always able to provide PE and Drama, which the young people would like to be able to do.

The chair, Cllr Peter Babudu, reported on his visit to SILS stage 3, noting that the provision is resource intensive, with a lot of staff, nevertheless the desired academic outcomes are largely not being achieved.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

Commission members discussed themes and recommendations for the Exclusion and Alternative Provision scrutiny review report, with reference to a tabled paper, and made the following comments:

- Transitions from Primary to Secondary are very important to get right as research shows that risk of social exclusion increases at this point. In particular it is important to ensure that ECHP and other funding continues after transition, and that a child's vulnerabilities continue to be addressed, with issues and support handed over from Primary to Secondary school.

- SILS indicated that originating schools are not always releasing the funding attached to the child e.g. Pupil Premium and other specific grants associated with individual children. The originating schools, councils and SILS ought to work together to ensure statutory funding and other funding follows the child.

- The SILS building is not adequate; section 106 funding ought to be explored to provide a new facility. With better provision and funding the SILs curriculum ought to be able to expand, so it can be more enriching and meet the young people's passions, for example drama and sport.

- SEN are a risk group, particularly where children do not have pushy parents, and pupils are not getting adequate support. Undiagnosed trauma, emotional and learning difficulties can lead to difficulties later. More testing for dyslexia's is needed to pick up on problems. Second language speakers, refugees who have experienced trauma are all at risk. Better diagnosis and treatment can all prevent Exclusion.

- The importance of values and Exclusion as last resort ought to be picked up on, and this could be linked to the Charter recommended by the Advocacy Academy.

- The Nurture model and a nurturing environment are demonstratively effective at preventing Exclusion. Early stage nurturing work ought to be improved to aid prevention.

Members indicated that they would like to look at the impact of Brexit on SMEs.

Officers and the cabinet lead for Growth, Development and Planning, Councillor Johnson Situ, will be invited to a following meeting to discuss opportunities for large development and regeneration projects to aid and engage SMEs in procurement opportunities, and utilise section 106 funding.