

Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 16 January 2013 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor David Hubber (Chair)
Councillor The Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Rowenna Davis
Councillor Rosie Shimell
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Colin Elliott
Lynn Charlton
Councillor Poddy Clark

**OFFICER
AND COMMUNITY
SUPPORT:** Merrill Haeusler, Deputy Director of Children's Services –
Education
Kerry Crichlow, Deputy Director of Strategy and
Commissioning
Sam Fowler, Schools for the Future Project Director
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager
Sue Sanders, Schools OUT
Elena Noel, Empowering People for Excellence

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sunil Chopra and Paul Kyriacou. Leticia Ojeda, parent governor representatives, also sent apologies.

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

2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. REVIEW ON BULLYING - SCHOOL AND COUNCIL POLICY IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND REDUCING ABUSIVE AND POOR PEER RELATIONS.

- 5.1 The chair invited Sue Sanders from Schools OUT to present. She explained that she had lived in Southwark for 27 years and has been part of Southwark's anti homophobic alliance forum for several years.
- 5.2 Sue Sanders showed a presentation (attached to the minutes), which explained the work of Schools OUT. She outlined their strategy; a key component of this is to increase the visibility of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender(LGBT) community. She explained that there is now a public duty to promote the inclusion of the LGBT community and Schools Out have been setting out what schools can do to meet this duty. Sue signposted members to resources that are available on the following websites: www.schools-out.org.uk and www.the-classroom.org.uk. She explained that schools often desperately want training on tackling bullying.
- 5.3 Sue said that complaints are a gift to schools. She reported that often schools assume that all parents are heterosexual and she encouraged schools to ask parents about their sexual orientation and the prevalence of LGBT bullying on forms and in surveys – and to explain why and how the information collected will be used. She explained that support for young LGBT people is vital and social networks can help this. She emphasised that fostering good relationships is very important , and commented that while there is a legislative framework to support the inclusion of LGBT people the culture is lagging; this can be seen in the hate crime statistics. She noted that the visibility of different ethnicities is high, disability is still low, but LGBT people are hardly seen at all.
- 5.4 Sue reported that the assumption is very much of hetro-normality, whereby people are assumed to be white, heterosexual, able bodied, Christian & male. She explained that when teaching she explains the medical model of disability (that disabled people need to be cured) and the alternative social model (whereby society makes reasonable adaptations to include people with different impairments). She said this model was embraced by teaching leaders. She also explained that the Stephan Lawrence report, which identified 'Institutional Racism', was very important and that this is a concept that can be used for other groups who are disadvantaged and discriminated against. Sue reported that the binary notion of gender is still prevalent.
- 5.5 Sue said that the solutions are: Language, Law, Role Models and Culture. The classroom website has 32 lesson plans that can be used across different subjects. She reported OFSTED are very much pushing this work and a school would not obtain tops marks without demonstrating good practice.

- 5.6 She drew the committee's attention to a triangular diagram on the presentation which demonstrated the different levels of discrimination, from name calling, through avoidance and acting on prejudice, up to genocide. She reported that lots of schools have this on their walls and children really like this.
- 5.7 LGBT history month takes place in February, with a launch in Tate Modern. Sue reported that this initiative received support from the council. The Diversity calendar is an important resource for schools.
- 5.8 Sue ended her presentation by pointing to the resources available to Southwark schools, such as the Schools OUT website and local expert Shaun Dellenty, who is a Southwark school deputy head and founder of 'Inclusion For All'. She reported that Southwark historian Stephen Bourne has also written a booklet on LGBT history, which needs some extra money to be completed. The chair thanked Sue for her presentation and invited questions.
- 5.9 A member asked about the prevalence of LGBT bullying in Southwark and Sue responded that had not been able to get a survey done by Southwark to ascertain this. She reported that other boroughs have support groups for young people, but Southwark does not.
- 5.10 Sue was asked about the high level of homophobic abuse, 74%, that teachers have reported and asked how this usually manifests. Sue explained that this is mainly verbal abuse, and if this is not tackled it will lead to higher levels of exclusion, or possibly violence. A member asked Sue if a young person in a debate said that they were opposed to gay marriage, would that be perceived as homophobic. She responded that no; she would class that as a belief, however, if there was a comment that drew parallels between same sex marriage and sexual relations between humans and animals, then this would be abuse.
- 5.11 A member asked her about the issue of the choice of changing room used by transgender young people and Sue said that the best solution is to allow people to change where they want to change.
- 5.12 Sue was asked about the best networks that exist for young people and she mentioned Greenwich Metro and a network in Manchester that organises trips, arts activities and which creates a supportive space where young people are able to come out in a safely. She pointed out that if Southwark were to start such a network it would be used by young people from other boroughs, just as Southwark young people go to different parts of London, often because they feel safer outside of their immediate locality. A member asked if children can access information about these networks online at schools and Sue reported that often this was difficult as the software stopped access to the websites that used terms such as 'lesbian'.
- 5.13 A member asked about her work in Southwark and she said while she has contributed locally to a booklet and producing a conference, she hardly ever goes to Southwark schools. She reported that she works nationally and feels a little like a prophet who is not welcome in her own country! She added that local teacher and founder of 'Inclusion For All', Shaun Dellenty, may be working more locally.

- 5.14 The chair then invited Elena Noel from Empowering People for Excellence. She explained that her focus is on cohesion and community engagement and she has worked predominantly with young people and families where there is a risk of exclusion. She reported that she often works on identity and has been called in to schools to do training on racist bullying. She explained that her background is as a conflict practitioner, focussing particularly on hate crime.
- 5.15 Elena explained that Southwark schools often have a large number of black children, but often a predominantly white staff who often feel unable to tackle racist bullying. She reported that she most often works with older pupils. Elena reported that around 6 years ago cyber bullying emerged as a worrying trend and that recipients can be terrorised through threats, often sent anonymously.
- 5.16 She spoke about the high status that gang members often have in schools and referred to a boy on an attempted murder charge who was still in school and put on a pedestal by other children. On another occasion she was aware of a 16 year old who was supplying ecstasy and cocaine. She explained that these children are often referred to as 'generals' and are often not the disruptive children, but they can be deadly. She reported frequently teachers were not aware of the children with gang affiliations.
- 5.17 Elena reported that she has been asking schools if they have a gang prevention strategy. These used to be uncommon , but are now being developed by schools. She added that schools will report that children are being hassled for money. She added that gangs will often recruit younger children and some act within wider criminal networks. Gangs will often use vulnerable girls and exploit them, for example by encouraging the selling of sexual favours. She explained that sometimes schools will not be aware of the extent of the problem, or will not want to label the problem. She said one issue is that often the teachers are not local, and so do not have sufficient local understanding and in any way many will leave the area soon.
- 5.18 She explained that as part of her programme she will go and talk with young people about their behaviour. Often the girls engaged in sexual activity will be as young as eleven or twelve and peer pressure can be an issue. Drugs are also an issue with pupils acting as drug couriers. She said that schools should be questioning absences and seeking to understand the reasons. She advised that young people should be involved in developing the anti bullying / anti gang policy and that it is important that the policy is enacted. She added that work to prevent gangs needs complementary work on developing good safeguarding policy and practice. She noted that formally Goose Green had a poor quality response to bullying; however the situation has now improved.
- 5.19 Elena explained that when she works in schools she will often ask to meet the parents, who are often not aware of their children's involvement, the extent, or of the gravity of the situation .
- 5.20 The chair invited members the ask questions and the head teacher representative asked how widespread gang/ bullying activity is and what is her evidence base.

Elena said that children she have spoken with report that it is widespread and common. She said that of the around 200 students she had spoken too many of them indicated that they were not reporting incidents because of the fear of consequences and the level of control exhibited by disruptive elements. She explained that she got disclosures because of the way she worked with he young people; however, often there is not the space or time for young people to open up. Elena was asked if she had spoken with school heads and she responded that this is what she is doing now. A member commented that she recognised some of the children's behaviour in Elena's report, but not that of the teachers or head teachers.

- 5.21 A member referred to cyber bullying and a news-story about a video of young people having sex going viral. She asked how prevalent this was and Elena responded that cyber-bullying can be fast moving and unfamiliar to adults; young people often employ a variety of social media channels and use text slang.
- 5.22 A member referred to her day job teaching and said she recognised many of the scenarios and asked about engagement with parents. Elena commented that many of the parents left school early and are often uncomfortable visiting schools. She recommended encouraging parents to visit in the good times. Elena was asked what was the best way to engage with parents who are unwilling and she responded that parents are often frightened and agitated and a visit to their homes can help.
- 5.23 A member asked what recommendations she would have about tackling gangs and Elena commented that sometimes serious offending can be a better term. She said that one of her key recommendations would be to encourage professionals to come together to share information. She also advocated training with people who are credible and knowledgeable. She cautioned that some people offering training are still caught up in their social / criminal networks. Elena said that looking out for trading activity can be a sign. She also said it is important to look out for more vulnerable young people, and young women who may be affiliated, and do follow up work.
- 5.24 A member mentioned the parental engagement review that the committee undertook and the striking evidence that it is parents, and often fathers, whose positive role most influences their children's educational performance and behaviour. He asked Elena how many children at risk had a positive male role model and she responded that very few did. She explained that often fathers were not around and often mums did not have the time. She added that social issues were very prevalent and increasing with austerity. The member commented that he grew up in Peckham and there were gangs, but there were also fathers and parents that we were scared of.
- 5.25 Elena commented that often young people lack emotional intelligence and that giving time to young people can make a difference, She said that recognising the signs that something is going awry and giving young people home truths is effective. She explained that she worked with young people looking at role play and through this the young people discovered that they did not like being

disruptive. She added that young people often need a consistent relationship. A member commented that ownership lies with the parents and that government policy must support their role.

- 5.26 Elena commented that Southwark commissioned a report on raising ethnic minority achievement which was useful. She said that often parents do care, but they don't know how to deal with school and deal with problems and so parents may get angry. She recommended induction programmes on how schools can improve their relationships with parents. She also recommended the work of Crown Lane Primary School, in Lambeth, and their very good practice tackling bullying.
- 5.27 Sue Sanders commented that we need to find a way to encourage teachers to access training; she acknowledged that the council's powers in this regard are diminishing. A member commented that teachers are often busy and think they do not need it; however schools often do meet in clusters and this can be a good forum. A member asked the head teacher representative if they have received LGBT training in these clusters and she said that they had not yet but could consider it.

6. REVIEW ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ROLE IN EDUCATION

- 6.1 The chair introduced the item by referring to the two reports circulated: 'Should We Shed The Middle Tier', by LGiU (Local Government information Unit), and 'Unleashing Greatness' by the Academies Commission. He referred to the recommendations, principally for central government, set out on pages 11 and 12, and noted that they would give a clearer and stronger role for local government in relation to academies.
- 6.2 Concerns were raised that academies are getting around the transparent and fair selection process by holding social meetings with parents and using this to covertly influence the application process.
- 6.3 A member reported that she had recently attended a LiGU meeting about the report circulated. She reported that concerns were raised that academies were more likely to expel or exclude pupils. Another member referred to recent data from the Department of Education, reported in the media, that shows a significantly higher rate of exclusion by academies , compared to the maintained schools sector.
- 6.4 There was a discussion about the gap between the wishes and expectations on local authorities to hold academies to account and maintain a coherent educational framework, and their actual powers. Merril Haeusler, Director of Education Children's and Adults' Services, commented that while there have been changes to Local Authorities powers the council has never walked away from its responsibilities. She said that the council work with the vast majority of schools , and both officers and councillors are welcome in all academies. However she acknowledged that the authority have found it more difficult to develop a constructive professional relationship with Harris, but she reported that they are

working to turn this around.

- 6.5 The Director of Education Children's and Adults' Services said that 12 months ago local authorities were told that the council had no role in holding to account, and ensuring there are good standards, in academies and Free Schools, but before Christmas the Secretary of State announced that local authorities do have an overall responsibility for the provision of public education. She commented that the Secretary of state cannot run thousands of schools in London from a central educational department.
- 6.6 She went on to report that Southwark schools are in the top quartile and all schools are signed up for a relationship with the council, which is based on: support, challenge, intervention. She said that she is very proud of Southwark schools and that the admissions process is going from strength to strength. On the issue of exclusions she said that the council need to give schools some credit because leaders have worked tirelessly to improve their practice; 9/10 pupils now leave a school under managed transfers, which are much more likely to be successful. She reported that the council is also working closely with the voluntary sector to provide alternative provision for children where mainstream provision has not worked.
- 6.7 The Director of Education Children's and Adults' Services commented that she agreed that there is a need for a middle tier , and commented that the approach the council is presentably taking is based on partnership. She also drew the committee's attention to the number of emerging Free Schools and the need for close observation. The Director referred to the LiGU recommendation that the local authorities be given overall control when boroughs have a majority of academies and reported that schools in Southwark give a proportion of their income to fund School Improvement Officers.
- 6.8 A member queried the channels available to local authorities if there are problems; given the council has little or no power. The Director of Education Children's and Adults' Services responded that usually issues are raised with the Secretary of State, however, if it is a safeguarding matter the council has statutory powers to act. A member asked if going to the Secretary of Sate is effective and the Director commented that Department of Education officials are not on the ground, so their response is not always effective, whereas the council's local position mean it is often in a better position to act.
- 6.9 A member commented that if a child is excluded the council has obligations. The Director agreed and said she has just returned from a meeting with a head about a managed move.
- 6.10 A member asked children's services officers about recent figures that indicated that Southwark has a high rate of children waiting for adoption. Kerry Crichlow, Director of Strategy & Commissioning, explained that the Department for Education has agreed with the council that the figures referred to are not accurate; better data will be provided by the end of March. However, she said, the council is not complacent and reported that there is an Adoption Task Force. The member asked how big the scale of the discrepancy is and the Director of Strategy & Commissioning explained that it is around a half or two thirds. She reported that they are still

agreeing the criteria so it is not straight forward.

- 6.11 The chair recommended that the committee report our anxiety about the lack of local powers of oversight of academies and free schools by local authorities to cabinet. A member queried whether the committee should be lobbying locally or to central government. The chair said the committee can recommend that the cabinet support the LiGU proposal to lobby government for a great role for local authorities and another member commented that this position had cross party support at LiGU.

RESOLVED

The committee will recommend that the Cabinet support the LiGU to lobby the government for councils to be given back powers to monitor the performance of academies.

7. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL AND SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS

- 7.1 The chair welcomed Sam Fowler, Project Director, and Kerry Crichlow, Director of Strategy & Commissioning.
- 7.2 The Project Director reported that Compass are struggling to find a site; they are being supported by Education Funding Agency.
- 7.3 He reported that the council continues to express concerns about the use of temporary sites because of the longer term affect that changes of location will have on children and parents. Southwark Free school will open in temporary premises; the Ledbury site is not particularly fit for purpose.
- 7.4 The Judith Kerr Primary School, a German / English bilingual school, is looking for a site and considering the East Dulwich Hospital site.
- 7.5 The Education Funding Agency is trying to establish a group of sites and then match proposers to sites.
- 7.6 Harris has approached the council about starting a primary school and is also looking at the East Dulwich Hospital site and its own estate.
- 7.7 A member asked if the council considered there was a need for a new school in the Rotherhithe area and the Project Director said the council continue to say that there is a need for additional places that can be met by a new school and expansion of existing provision; the council is pursuing both options in case one does not come to fruition.
- 7.8 Primary schools in East Dulwich were discussed and a member reported that ward councillors were being proactive with Harris and seeking support from parents. The Project Director said that a meeting is planned with Harris. He commented the demand for places can certainly not be met only by expanding current provision and that there will need to be investment in Southwark's maintained primary

schools, supplemented by free schools.

8. WORKPLAN

- 8.1 Julie Timbrell, scrutiny project manager, updated the committee on the work plan. She explained that the Environment Department would prefer to send the report on the Olympic and Paralympic legacy in April, as the first meeting of the full Legacy Board is on 28 March. She reported that CVS were contacted and invited to come to this meeting but they did not respond. She said that this may be because they are currently in negotiations with the council about continuing their initiative, which works with parents in challenging situations.

RESOLVED

Children's Services will be contacted to find out more information about their arrangements with CVS, with a view to inviting CVS to the next meeting.

The Olympic and Paralympic legacy report will go to April's meeting, as the legacy board is meeting on 28 March.

Speakerbox will be coming to the March meeting to give evidence on the Bullying review.