

CHILDREN'S SERVICE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

Present – Councillors Adia (Chairman), Ashcroft, Ayub, McKeon, Murray, Mrs Swarbrick, Sherrington (as deputy for Councillor Mrs Thomas) and Wild.

Councillors M. Connell, Francis, Mistry, Mrs Rothwell and White attended with respect to Minute 23 as members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee.

Also in Attendance

Mrs M. Asquith	- Director of Children's Services
Mr. J. Livesey	- Assistant Director
Mr. D. Grogan	- Assistant Director
Mr. T. Birch	- Assistant Director
Mr. D. Kilgallon	- Lead Officer BSF (Educational Transformation)
Mr. C. Chisholm	- SEN Strategy and Development Manager
Mr A. Jennings	- Democratic Services manager

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Mrs Brierley, Rushton and Mrs Thomas.

Councillor Adia in the Chair.

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 17th August, 2010 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

23. STARTING POINT/PUPIL REFFERAL UNITS

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in the matter as Chair of the Management Committee for Starting Point Pupil Referral Unit.

The Director of Children's Services provided an update on Starting Point that informed members that a multi-disciplinary project team from Children's Services had now been established and that, in line with the PDG's discussions at its last meeting, Starting Point had now been deregistered.

The project team had twin roles in:-

- Developing the new vision for Starting Point; and
- Implementing immediate changes to improve practices/pupil experiences.

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With respect to the PRUs review this was now with the APEX Group to develop a robust system and that a first draft of Back on Track would be completed shortly.

Key protocols would be examined and behaviour and attendance partnership ideas were being considered.

Furthermore, a discussion document on the future role/nature of PRUs had been developed to support protocol/needs.

The views of key stakeholders would be sought prior to any future steps

Members were apprised of the next steps with Head Teachers whereby a presentation would be made by the Apex Group to the Bolton Association of Head Teachers on 20th September, 2010.

A full day would also be allocated at the October conference to consider behaviour/attendance issues and it was hoped that a draft document would be produced by the end of the conference in preparation for an implementation in 2011.

In response to a member's question regarding Starting Point the Director indicated that an approach would be made to the new Secretary of State for Education to illicit a response to the Council's original statement regarding the definition of Starting Point. She informed members that representatives from Ofsted had visited Bolton recently and were very helpful in moving Starting Point forward.

The Director reiterated the policy that, under the new regime, vulnerable children would be given enough time to adjust with up to six weeks at the Centre, with an extended time if particular problems were encountered.

Members were reminded of the following work streams agreed by members and that further details on each would be submitted to the PDG:-

1. re-set the objectives of Starting Point which would include:
 - induction, settlement and integration of newly arrived children and families;
 - transition to mainstream school; and

- signposting, advice and guidance for children, families and schools.
- 2. agree the assessment process for children to provide consistent information to schools.
- 3. agree the teaching and learning activities to be carried out at Starting Point with a focus on 'accessing learning', particularly for older pupils.
- 4. agree transition timescales for entry to mainstream school with a range of 1-2 weeks (usual) and a maximum of 6 weeks (exceptional where complex needs were identified) in order to comply with legislation.
- 5. agree transition, transfer arrangements and post transfer, support activities to be delivered from Starting Point.

The PDG noted the report.

24. SENIAS

The Director of Children's Services undertook a presentation with respect to SENIAS and its future operation.

The presentation examined the reasons for the proposals regarding its future operation as follows:-

- The need to achieve better outcomes for SEN/LDD pupils as part of the 'narrowing the gap' agenda;
- The desire to utilise the expertise of Bolton's outstanding special schools; and
- The national SEN strategy espoused within Removing Barriers to Achievement wished for special schools to take a greater proactive role in delivering outreach to mainstream schools and helping to develop an early intervention and preventative approach.

The aims and objectives were set out as follows:-

- To increase the responsibility of schools to the wider community by greater partnership working and to facilitate this by moving resources closer to schools;
- To encourage schools through self evaluation and external verification to achieve quality standards in inclusive practice; and

- To raise standards for all pupils and in particular to narrow the gap in attainment/achievement for vulnerable groups such as those with disabilities or SEN/LDD.

The presentation explained how the above would be achieved as follows:-

- The transfer of SENIAS staff (10 teachers, 6 support staff and 1 administrative staff), who were currently managed centrally by the Local Authority, across to the Governing Body of Ladywood School. Their management and employment would become the responsibility of the Governors of Ladywood School;
- The Authority was commissioning the Governing Body of Ladywood School to deliver support, training and guidance to mainstream schools and would provide a budget to the school for these functions to be carried out; and
- The Local Authority would establish a Service Level Agreement with Ladywood School (the provider) and Ladywood School would establish a Service Level Agreement with mainstream schools.

The presentation set out the proposed structure and explained that there were no reductions in posts overall.

The report would form the basis of formal consultation with key stakeholders during the autumn term 2010 with a report back to the Executive Member in November 2010 on the outcome of the consultation.

The aim was to implement the proposal from January 2011

The PDG noted the report and thanked Mr. Chisholm for his work for the Authority and wished him a full and happy retirement.

25. EXAM/TEST RESULTS

The Director of Children's Services undertook a presentation which provided members with the provisional exam results for 2010 for primary key stage 2 and GCSE's.

The presentation concluded that with respect to GCSE's there was an overall positive picture with good improvement demonstrated and that there were no schools below the floor target.

With respect to primary key stage 2 they were in line with the national average and that in the case of level 5 English and maths they were above the national average.

A small number of schools were below the floor target and work would be undertaken with the schools

The PDG noted the report.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.00 pm)