

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday 27th September 2017 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor S. Rees- Owen – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

J. Brencher	L Hooper	W. Lewis
A. Calvert	S. Powell	
S. Evans- Fear	S. Rees	

Non – Committee Member in Attendance

County Borough Councillor G. Thomas – Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

Co-opted Members

Mr.J.Fish – Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs S Jones – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative
Mr S Jones – Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr M Cleverley - Representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel
Mr D Price – Representing UNISON

Officers in Attendance

Ms E. Thomas Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Mr P Nicholls – Head of Legal – Litigation, Planning & Environment, Community and Children's Services
Ms G. Davies – Service Director for Access, Engagement and Inclusion
Ms J Allen, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing
Ms C Jones – Head of Access and Inclusion Service

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillors J Davies, H Fychan, R. Smith and Co-opted Members Mrs S Jones and Mr S. Jones.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED - In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no personal declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED - To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 26th July 2017

21. ANNUAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PERFORMANCE IN RCT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-16

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented Members with the annual school attendance performance report in RCT for the academic year 2015-16, together with local provisional data for academic year 2016/17 and a comparison of performance over the last three years (six years for attainment comparison).

Members were presented with the overall primary school attendance rates, including the pupils of primary school age in special education provision, in RCT over the last three years and how the Authority has compared to the all Wales average. Members were also provided with details of the attendance gap year on year by identifying the percentage difference between the attendance rates of FSM/non FSM pupils in RCT.

Members were informed that the overall primary school attendance for 2015/16 had increased by 0.1% compared to 2013/14. The gap between the attendance of FSM pupils and Non FSM Pupils has increased by 0.2%, 0.1% more than the Welsh Average.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing went on to explain that the overall secondary school attendance rates, including the pupils of secondary school age education provision has increased in 2015/16 by 0.8% compared to 2013/14 and the gap between the attendance of FSM Pupils and Non- FSM pupils has reduced by 0.6% which is 0.2% more than the Welsh average which indicates that the interventions

put in place to tackle absenteeism are appropriately targeted and successful in making improvements despite the complex barriers to attend faced by some pupils.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing also reported that secondary school attendance stands at 93.9% which is just below the All Wales average and coincidentally the local authority's target of 94.2%.

Members were pleased to see that the performance in secondary schools had improved greatly and that the improvement rate in RCT is in line with Central South Consortium average of 0.7%.

In respect of the Pupil Referral Unit attendance it was reported to Members that there had been an increase of 2.1%, Members found this was pleasing to see in light of the fact that this group of pupils often face complex, multiple barriers to school attendance.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing also provided a summary of attendance rates of vulnerable groups within RCT, along with an update of the work carried out by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

Members were updated that Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to implement the fixed Penalty Notice (FPNs) scheme for non attendance in line with the Local Authority's Code of Conduct. A total of 1026 FPN's have been issued during the period of 1st September 2015 and August 2016 with the vast majority having being issued for school holidays in term time.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing took Members through the report in depth and explained that even though school attendance rates are significantly better than in previous years the Council continues to support Head teachers in striving to achieve improvements in attendance rates year on year.

Members thanked the officers for the report and put their questions forward. A Member asked in respect of the attendance rate SEN pupils was there any reason why there is lower than average attendance rate within the category. In response to the question officers explained that this would vary depending on cohorts, family dynamics, it works on school by school basis and is not a one size fit all approach.

Members raised concerns in respect of the Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) in relation to how they were being managed and monitored. Members felt that the Committee could look into to FPNs in the future. After further consideration of the report Members RESOLVED to:

- Receive a further report setting out the full data in January 2018
- To carry out a piece of work in respect of the Fixed Penalty Notices

22. FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2 & 3 AND PROVISIONAL KEY STAGE 4 OUTCOMES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-16

The Temporary Director of Education and Lifelong Learning provided Members with the initial feedback on Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and 3 and the provisional Key Stage 4 outcomes for the academic year 2015 -16

Members considered the report in great deal and acknowledge that the general trend over the past few years has been positive, especially when consideration is given to the large number of pupils receiving free school meals within RCT.

In respect of Key Stage 2 outcomes the Temporary Director of Education informed Members that the primary schools have made good progress in 2017 across the majority of subject areas, with Rhondda Cynon Taf pupils performing just above the Welsh average for the first time. It was explained that the positive performance reflects well on primary schools for future success at Key Stage 3 & 4.

Members considered the data for Key Stage 3 which has indicated that secondary schools have made good progress in 2017 across all five Key Indicators, with the rate of improvement in RCT greater than the Welsh Average for the five indicators.

The Temporary Director of Education and Lifelong Learning explained to Members that the Key Stage 4 data provided is provisional and that final data will be provided after December.

Members consider the report in depth put their views forward to the officers.

After further consideration Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information provided within the report
- Review the level of support needed for schools for schools during the academic year 2016-17 at a future meeting.
- Receive more information on standards groups and resulting support which will be presented to the Committee once finalised in January.
- Receive detailed school by school information in relation to Key Stage 4 data once verified by Welsh Government.

23. OUTCOMES OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CLA) IN RCT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/16

The Service Director for Access, Engagement and Inclusion presented the report to Member of the Committee.

Members were informed that the CLA team within Access and Inclusion Service works in collaboration with schools, foster carers, Children's Services and other

external agencies to promote educational outcomes life chances and social inclusion of the children who are looked after.

Members acknowledged that Rhondda, Cynon, Taf has a significant looked after population. Members were informed that the outcome data for this group of highly vulnerable learners suggest there is evidence of progress in many areas but there is still scope for improvement particularly in relation to Key Stage 4.

The Service Director for Access, Engagement and Inclusion informed Members that data for children who are looked after will continue to be robustly scrutinised and evaluated in order to inform key areas for further strategic development and improvement.

After in depth discussion Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained within the report.
- Receive a further data report on 2016/17 outcomes in June 2018
- Update Members with success stories at future Meetings

24. **WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

The Chair updated Members on the progress that is being made by the Working Group in respect of provision of Sanitary product within schools in RCT.

S Rees – Owen (Chairman)

Meeting closed at 7:00pm

