

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD-HOC
PANEL- SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS**

11.00am 14 JANUARY 2010

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Fryer (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Councillor Smart

Other Members present: Rachel Travers (representative from the Community Voluntary Sector Forum)

Apologies: Councillor Allen

PART ONE

12. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

12.1 Declarations of substitutes

No substitutes are permitted on Ad-hoc Scrutiny panels.

12.2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair declared that she was a Private Music Teacher.

12.3 Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

12.4 Exclusion of the Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED-That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

13.1 The Panel approved the minutes of the meeting on the 5 November, 2009.

14. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS

15. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESS

15.1 Jacqueline Coe - Head of Special Educational Needs presented her evidence and answered questions.

15.2 The Panel heard how B&H spent a significant amount of money on special education needs compared to other authorities that they were benchmarked with.

An extensive analysis of data took place when the SEN strategy was established in 2006, and a number of achievements were highlighted that have been made since then, resulting in securing better Value for Money within special schools and achieving overall budget savings, which have largely been reinvested into mainstream schools.

The next phase of the Strategy is currently under discussion, led by the SEN Strategy group (multiagency group) and it will be formally relaunched this year.

15.3 The Panel were made aware that there had historically been a perception that 'special is best', but this wasn't always the right choice, or the only, option to meet the child's needs. Teachers in mainstream schools are now significantly better at identifying children who have SEN and are able to put an individual learning programme together for these children, supported by a whole range of support services. The Panel were informed of parental entitlement to request a mainstream school placement for their child, and that the CYPT would do everything they could to make this possible, as is required under the Code of Practice (COP).

15.4 In answer to a question as to whether there was a policy to actively reduce the number of pupils for whom statements are issued the Panel heard how the relatively small reduction in the number of statements probably reflected more the policy of identifying SEN and supporting children through early intervention and providing resources to schools to enable them to meet the needs at school action and school action plus, thus avoiding statements as the only way to access additional resources.

The Panel were informed how the statutory assessment of children can take up to 26 weeks (under the COP) and achieving these timescales was a performance indicator for LAs; it can cost approximately £3,000-4,000 per child to carry out an assessment, (which would include officer and decision making times).

15.5 The Panel heard how resources for pupils that had been statemented with Behavioural Emotional Social Difficulties (BESD) were not separately identified in statements, but were allocated to schools via the SEN formula, as this is a high incidence need. This is common in many LAs.

15.6 The Panel heard how the formula for delegating SEN funding was constructed and that schools were being encouraged to use both their delegated and targeted funding as creatively as possible, in order to achieve maximum impact.

- 15.7 The Panel were informed that there were discussions taking place with schools, and within the CYPT about how any available resource might be allocated, in order to achieve better holistic outcomes for children. It is important to consider the role of speech therapists, social workers, mental health services on supporting children in school, and minimising the chances of exclusion of any sort.
- 15.8 The Panel were told how schools were encouraged to differentiate the curriculum and develop more personalised learning programmes and packages of support, in order to meet needs more effectively.
- 15.9 The Panel were advised of the work the CYPT were doing in relation to home to school transport, both to reduce the need for children to travel across the city, when their needs could be better met within their local community. Also how children were being encouraged to learn how to travel independently, to help their self confidence and social skills.
- 15.10 The Panel were told that delegated funding that schools receive for pupils with SEN (called "formula" money) was not ring-fenced, and could not be so, under the financial arrangements; however schools have a responsibility to support these pupils and it was important that the CYPT considered how best to review how this formula money was being spent by schools.

The Panel were informed that the money could be used creatively to buy in staffing or additional services

- 15.11 The Panel were informed that it was good practice for pupils with SEN to have Individual Education Plans (IEP) that were revised regularly, irrespective of whether they have a statement or not.
- 15.12 The Panel were told that provision for BESD, including ACE, was being re-commissioned, and a group, including headteachers, was taking this forward.

The Panel were informed that the Building Schools for the Future programme would be useful in ensuring that secondary school buildings and curriculum were more effective in being able to meet the needs of students with BESD, by providing additional facilities where a wider range of provision and different teaching strategies could be used.

16. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 16.1 Private meeting 27 January, 2010 at King's House, Room B26A.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 17.1 There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 1.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of