

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD-HOC**  
**PANEL- SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS**

**3.00pm 5 NOVEMBER 2009**

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Fryer (Chair)

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Smart, Allen

**Other Members present:** Non-voting Co-optee: Travers

**PART ONE**

**6. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**6.1 Declarations of substitutes**

No substitutes are permitted on Ad-hoc Scrutiny panels.

**6.2 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

**6.3 Declaration of Party Whip**

There were none.

**6.4 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.

**7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

7.1 The Panel approved the minutes of the meeting on the 14 October, 2009.

**8. CHAIRS COMMUNICATIONS**

**9. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESSES**

9.1 Ms. D informed the Panel that she was a single parent, had 2 children with statements and wanted to talk about one of her children (who will be referred to as "A"), who is nearly 15 and her experiences of school exclusions. "A" had witnessed domestic violence as a child. The exclusions had been mainly for disruptive behaviour and these had continued on for weeks.

9.2 The Panel heard how the exclusions started at Bevendean Primary School on several occasions and on each occasion "A" was sent home. When her son was at school he would perform well; resulting in good grades.

The Panel heard how Bevendean School would find "A" too challenging and how the re-integration meetings would not be organised after each exclusion.

9.3 In Year 7 there were 2 exclusions at Falmer Secondary school, during this year "A" had a strict and firm teacher which resulted in "A" attending all his classes.

In Year 8 the teacher changed and the exclusions became weekly and monthly. Ms. D attended every meeting that the school had arranged and believed that her child should be in a mainstream school.

9.4 In answer to a question on whether the schools would communicate with the parent, the Panel were informed that the Head of Year had good communication with Ms. D and after the initial meetings; the school would speak to Ms. D on the phone about the incidents. In some cases there were 4 incidents in one day.

9.5 The Panel heard how "A" was kept out of OFSTED visits both at Bevendean Primary and Falmer Secondary Schools (and from his Pre-School), due to his behaviour.

9.6 "A" was excluded from Falmer Secondary permanently for violent behaviour. The school then organised a managed move for "A" to attend ACE on a full time basis. "A" didn't want to attend ACE.

9.7 "A" went to ACE on a part-time basis and had an Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) statement.

9.8 The Panel were informed that Ms. D felt that ACE was too sterile an environment and that her child's behaviour deteriorated after attending ACE.

Due to disruptive behaviour and a risk of safety to the other children "A" was excluded from ACE. "A" knows how his behaviour can get him excluded and persists with this until he is excluded, so that he doesn't have to go back there.

9.9 For 2 years "A" had no education. The Panel heard how it had been a very stressful time, as Ms. D worked full-time in Crawley. Ms. D received phone calls at work and would have to go back home.

9.10 The Panel heard how "A" had a session at West Street YOT.

- 9.11 A now attends a college course. Ms. D told the Panel it has been a frustrating three years.
- 9.12 Ms. D told the Panel that she felt her son was bright but hadn't received any formal education for years, doesn't have any respect or regard for anyone in an official position. "A" has not had any Psychiatric support and is unable to control his anger.
- 9.13 CAMHS diagnosed the child with oppositional disorder, and her child was tested for ADD, ADHD and her child has tried medication for these conditions. "A" has been with CAMHS for 12 ½ years and they are unable to support "A" any further.
- 9.14 Ms. D informed the Panel that she instigated the statutory request to get her child assessed for a Statement. The Panel heard how the process was fast and it took 12-16 weeks, which included the statutory assessments from CAMHS, assessments from the Educational Psychologist and observations from ACE.
- 9.15 In answer to a question on what would keep her child in school, Ms. D told the Panel that a school similar to ACE but was run more like Patcham House Special School, with a more "welcoming" environment would be more suitable for her child to meet his needs.
- 9.16 The Panel were informed that if "A" wasn't excluded at Primary school, that he may have still have been in school now, as "A" learnt what behaviour would get him excluded.
- Ms. D felt that exclusion doesn't work as a punishment for the child, but was a punishment for the parent, doesn't achieve anything and that using isolation techniques would have been more suitable.
- 9.17 "A" is on a DV8 (music & media) college course, which her child enjoys and the "Construct a Hut" course, that her child doesn't want to attend.
- 9.18 In answer to a question on whether "A" had been bullied at school, and whether this had led to the exclusions, the Panel heard how "A" had been excluded twice for bullying others and it was very unlikely that he would have been bullied by others.
- 9.19 **Professor Ian Cunningham** informed the Panel that he was from the Self Managed Learning College; works with young people with varying issues, who have been excluded. The College is an Accredited Alternative Education provider for East Sussex; it is part of an educational charity; has worked on an international level, and with other local authorities. The College works with groups of students to help them to take charge of their own lives.
- 9.20 The College is currently providing a Learning Centre in Brighton, working with 10 students, aged between 11 – 16 years. Most have been excluded, or have excluded themselves from school, and some have been educated at home.
- 9.21 The College has a person-centred approach. Staff and students create and enforce their own rules in a community. The College doesn't directly ask the students to change their

behaviour; the students are encouraged to make choices about their future through pragmatic discussions about where they could end up. The students look into professions that they may like to work in and visit their desired industry or sector to find out what qualifications are required to enter these professions. This type of learning gives the students something to aim for in the future. The College also supports students to obtain qualifications such as GCSEs via distance learning and it is an accredited centre for providing Arts Awards.

- 9.22 The students take time to understand the concept of this style of learning initially and are supported through the process; the College offers a wider range of learning that suits most needs.
- 9.23 The College received funding to run a project within a local school and has run programmes with head teachers for an innovative and 'person-centred' approach to learning.
- 9.24 Professor Cunningham told the Panel about his thoughts on exclusion; that 1:1 counselling was not always a good use of money and that it is often more effective to work with groups of 6 students as the peer group usually has the greatest influence on teenagers. The Panel heard how the curriculum of schools was not person centred enough, with inflexible times, communication can be limited due to the large numbers in classes and schools needed to reorganise their resources to get the most out of their students.
- 9.25 The Panel were informed that the College teaches the students about taking responsibility for their actions. If an incident occurs with one of the students, and keeps reoccurring, the group would address each instance and make a decision according to the agreed rules as to the outcome, of the student's actions. The students have a '3 strikes and you are out' rule and on an occasion it was agreed to exclude a student on a temporary basis, due to repeat incidences of violence.
- 9.26 The Panel were told that mainstream schools found it difficult to educate students that do not conform.
- 9.27 In answer to a question on how families are funded the Panel heard how parents were charged as the College was unable to raise all the money it needs from funding bodies.
- 9.28 The Panel asked about international comparisons and heard how in Finland children start school at the age of 7 and they only have a national test at the age of 18 years. In the UK children are identified at the age of 7 after sitting through the SATs exams. This latter practice can mean that children feel labelled from an early age and are therefore may be less inclined to accept schooling.

## **10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- 10.1 14 January, 2010 Committee Room 1, Hove Town Hall at 11am.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

