



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date and Time	THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2022 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	CONFERENCE ROOM 5, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), K Lucioni (Vice-Chairman), D Adams, C Critchison, S Ellis, S Hendry and T Outlaw
Officers Present	Marie Bartlett, Steve Crocker, Eric Halton, Sarah Philipsborn, Natalie Smith, Paul Thistlewood, Jonathon Willcocks and Rachel Williams

30. Minutes

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on the 9 December 2021 be confirmed.

31. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hendry declared that he was a School Governor at Holy Cross and Queensgate Primary Schools.

Councillor Quigley declared that he had previously been a member of the Home Education Network on the Isle of Wight.

32. Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum

No public questions were received.

33. Progress on Outcomes and Recommendations from previous meetings

The report was noted.

34. School Attainment

A report on the attainment of children and young people in Isle of Wight Schools in 2021, was presented on behalf of the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, by the County Education Managers for Primary and Early Years, and Secondary and Post 16.

Statutory assessments and examinations were contextualized given the onset of the pandemic and revisions made by the Department for Education (DfE) for 2021.

The pre-pandemic figures for 2019 showed a good level of attainment on the Island for the Early Years (72%) in line with national averages. Key Stages 2 and 4, however, although both saw significant improvements, remained below the national average in 2019, as was the same with A8 attainment.

It was highlighted that there had been very few Ofsted inspections since the pandemic, but this was now changing. The current figure for Island schools being judged good or better was 77%, with no schools being judged as inadequate.

During the pandemic, school attendance rates remained higher on the Island than the national average.

In terms of progression, it was demonstrated that the Isle of Wight had higher rates of progression into education, employment and training, than the national average.

There had been no formal assessment for Early Years, nor for Primary in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, however this was most likely to change with the re-introduction for statutory testing for Key Stages 2 in 2022, though these results would not be published. It was pointed out that learning and teaching had been happening, but it was important to adapt to what had been learnt, as some children had thrived in certain areas, whereas more vulnerable and disadvantaged children, often living in poverty with a lack of parental attention had been doubly-disadvantaged. Overall, attainment and progress were deemed to have most likely slowed.

In the case of Secondary education, it was affirmed that this mirrored the situation with Primary education, with experiences being individual to each child. Within the Secondary sector, teacher assessment of pupils during the pandemic was deemed a success despite initial concerns. It was stated that Key Stage 4 assessments would be published this year.

Regarding GCSEs, overall national results had gone up for the past 2 consecutive years, therefore the 2022 results were set to be manipulated downwards to reflect the same level of attainment as 2019. This was deemed of concern but unlikely to affect the next stage of education. Concessions had been made by Ofqual regarding GCSEs for this year, and as a result, exam topics or exam content were to be shared with schools.

Challenges were seen in the re-introduction of statutory examinations and assessment, dealing with the gaps and variables of individual pupils learning and school's experiences during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

35. **Elective Home Education**

A Report on Elective Home Education (EHE) was given by the Director of Children's Services.

It was stated that there had been a rise in home education over the past 2 years nationally and that this was also the case on the Isle of Wight. New legislation was expected soon which would oblige parents/carers to register children who were home educated with the local authority. This was perceived as a massive step forward in determining whether EHE children were receiving a suitable full-time education.

The onus was going to be put on local authorities to ascertain whether the provision of education provided at home for EHE children was suitable and this would therefore mean that local authorities would have to make arrangements to find out whether EHE children were receiving a suitable education.

As a result, the local authority would be entitled to deem home education unsuitable, and this could result in a school attendance order being issued.

Statistics were shared regarding Home Education for 2020/21 with 4.9% of children in Secondary and 2.3% of children in Primary being home educated. Year 11 was cited as having the highest number of children.

The reasons for home education were discussed, with the main reasons being covid concerns, cultural/philosophical/ religious factors and emotional/physical needs. Whilst the former 2 areas had significantly dropped in 2021 from 2020, this was not the case for emotional/physical needs which saw a sharp rise in 2021.

It was explored to see if there was a correlation between children who had poor attendance and those who went on to be home educated. The pressure of getting children to school was discussed and how they could be best supported by the schools

It was deemed of deep concern if children with special needs were withdrawn from school to be home educated. The massive jump from primary to secondary was also highlighted as a factor why parents chose to home educate.

When looking at the Island's local authority engagement with families who home educate their children, it was stated that the Isle of Wight fared better than many other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Isle of Wight Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 notes the points that are relevant to EHE.

THAT expected changes to legislation regarding EHE be anticipated, and that work would be needed to adapt to these changes.

THAT the report on Elective Home Education be noted.

36. **School Exclusions**

A report on school exclusions was given by the Inclusion Support Service Manager.

It was stated that the reasons for exclusions from school were complex, and that the Isle of Wight had a higher school exclusion rate (5.1%) compared to the national rate of (3.8%). It was acknowledged that the rate of suspension was higher in the secondary sector. Statistics were given for the academic year 2019/2020 as there was no data for 2021.

Senior Leadership teams across the Island were working on this issue and dedicated teams were in place to support such children. Best practise was being shared with difficult cases and robust work had been done with Head Teachers. There had, however, been a paradigm shift in this area with a revolution having taken place in teacher training and learning styles, which was turning the situation around.

Statistics 2017-2019 were shared regarding the reasons for suspensions, which included verbal abuse against an adult, persistent disruptive behaviour and physical assault against a pupil, being the most common reasons.

The committee affirmed that such high rates of exclusion were not acceptable and rigorous conversations with the senior management teams were taking place to avoid suspending children, but it would take time to change behaviours and mindsets.

Strategies to increase inclusion were discussed with emphasis on early intervention and prevention. Multi-agency working was being undertaken with support for schools and out-reach support for pupils, along with specialist training.

It was highlighted that there was now an improved method of data collection which defined different categories of vulnerable children, with children in need and looked after children showing the greatest numbers of suspensions.

RESOLVED:

THAT it be noted that work was ongoing to reduce the use of exclusions.

THAT any findings from the current government consultation would need to be considered.

THAT the actions that have been taken by the department be noted.

THAT an item be placed in the workplan to review the position in a year's time.

THAT this matter be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of the Schools and Education Attainment Support Panel

37. Committee's Work Plan

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills stated that an Annual Survey by the Youth Trust was due to be published shortly and it was suggested that this could be included on the June agenda as it would be useful to feed into the Green Paper.

It was suggested not to delay the item of School Governors on the work plan as this was to tie in with the future recruitment drive for School Governors, but the Youth Offending item could be discussed in September 2022.

RESOLVED:

THAT the workplan be amended accordingly.

38. Members' Question Time

Councillor Critchison stated that Early Year's education was critical and asked what the committee could do to support families and children. In reply it was stated that there was a range of support for families and family hubs and Barnados were already established on the Island offering support. It was, however, acknowledged that there appeared to be a lack of such support in Ventnor and South Wight.

Councillor Ellis referred to the matter of deferring the decision on Chillerton and Rookley Primary School and asked when an update was likely. The Cabinet Member indicated that further information was still being assessed before a final decision could be taken.

Councillor Outlaw pointed out that there was a 22% shortfall in filling school places as only 11 schools this year on the Island would have full in-take which would have a knock-on effect on educational and financial stability. Difficult decisions were needed to be made which would not only consider Chillerton and Rookley Primary, but other schools in different wards.

The Cabinet Member and Director of Children's Services indicated that even if EHE children came back into the school system, this would not have any major impact on admission numbers. Place planning was discussed, and it was concluded that not all place planning was the same and that the Island had a mix. A Government White Paper was due out in the next 3 months on school reorganisation which would have an impact.

CHAIRMAN