

CITY OF DONCASTER COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2023

A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2023 at 4.30 PM

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Tim Needham, Vice-Chair in the Chair

Councillors Bob Anderson, Laura Bluff, Susan Durant, Charlie Hogarth and Tracey Moran

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Leanne Hornsby, Assistant Director, Children Young People and Families  
Martyn Owen, Head of Service SEND Transformation  
Jane Reed, Head of Service Education and Skills

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Hempshall and Steve Cox and Antoinette Drinkhill (Church of England Education Representative)

		<u>ACTION</u>
9.	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	There were no items where the public and press were to be excluded from the meeting.	Note
10.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.	Note
11.	<u>MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING HELD ON 31ST OCTOBER 2023</u>	
	<b>RESOLVED:-</b> that the minutes of the meeting dated 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2023, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the chair subject to the safeguarding and protection of children in schools paragraph being amended to read as follows:	Note

	<p>“Concerns were raised by a Youth Councillor with regard to accessing drinking water in schools and agreed this would be investigated. It was explained to the Panel that with regard to any reported issues or findings relating to schools, they would be investigated and addressed by the Local Authority.”</p>	
12.	<p><u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS</u></p>	
	<p>There were no public in attendance at the meeting and no public statements.</p>	
13.	<p><u>EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES FOR ALL KEY STAGES 2023</u></p>	
	<p><u>Achievement across all phases compared with 2019</u> – a Panel Member referred to paragraph 9 of the report where data showed achievement had either been sustained or surpassed and highlighted this was a testament to the hard work of the children and young people who achieved these results. Members continued by questioning if there were any notable surprises in setting/school results and if yes, why?</p> <p>In response it was explained that this cohort was the most impacted by Covid due to there being no mitigation with assessment. Some schools had sustained achievement and there had been a slight decline in others whilst some sustained the same level. The Panel was assured that the Local Authority was supporting schools where education had been lost in populations that were impacted by the pandemic. It was noted that some Doncaster schools had sustained and showed significant improvement with educational outcomes that were serving areas with high levels of deprivation and disadvantage, flipping trends.</p> <p><u>Progress 8 and being in line with the national average</u> – It was explained to the Panel that Progress 8 scores being in line with average outlined that pupils made typical levels of progress through secondary school given their outcomes at Key Stage 2. Members noted it related to starting points, if they were below average at KS2, typical progress meant that pupils remained below average at the end of KS4.</p> <p><u>Outcomes for pupils with EHCPs / SEND</u> – a Member questioned why pupils with SEN support were not in line with national average when those with EHCPs were. It was explained that this was an historical issue and the position was not as positive as had been wished, however, some progress had been made. The Panel was informed that this issue linked to the next report on the agenda, where historically the primary priority was to drive intervention to ensure support was available, however, intervention was required at a very early stage with schools identifying need at the earliest opportunity. To achieve early intervention, through the Strategy, a new infrastructure</p>	<p>A chart detailing regional results be provided to the Panel.</p>

was being developed to provide a strong mechanism within schools, with professional development being provided, a consistent approach being sort and ensuring resources were available for pupils.

Validated results from KS5 – It was noted that there had been a great uptake of more technical qualifications. The Panel acknowledged Doncaster’s validated results in the report but requested that once the figures from other Local Authorities were available that they be forwarded to Members.

Phonics results – the Panel was pleased to note that Doncaster was 1% above the national average and that the English Hub support had made an impact. In response to a query relating to all schools participating with the hub, it was explained that there were a variety of approaches being applied with schools as part of the Reading, Writing and Maths Strategy. It was noted that RWM Doncaster linked with two of the English Hubs with some schools receiving more intensive support whilst others had a more light touch. It was reported that the Local Authority was also working with the National Literacy Trust.

Key Stage 1 reading, writing and maths – in response a question relating to schools closing the gap between local and national results, it was explained that schools had employed a variety of measures to address this, with a recent Read Write strategy training event been well attended. Intensive and comprehensive South Yorkshire Talking Together training package in Early Years that was offered at a universal and targeted level. Read Write Maths Doncaster has also delivered word aware in a number of schools to develop children’s vocabulary helping them to access the curriculum more effectively and raising attainment.

It was noted that the Local Authority assessment and moderation offer for writing which had primarily focused on the statutory assessment years but would now be expanded to cover all year groups in primary. It was stressed that children need the right intervention at the right time.

The Panel noted the great examples in schools where improvement was already happening, with schools supporting each other and when something worked well it was shared no matter the designation.

Key Stage 2 Reading – In response to a question relating to work being undertaken to support schools in ensuring pupils became secure and developed mastery, it was explained that reading at the end of the KS2 was assessed by a comprehension paper. Every year the marks were allocated to a threshold so the children need to get a certain amount of questions right to meet the threshold. Some children miss this threshold and to support, ongoing work was being undertaken in schools to develop the reading curriculum across every year group. This included the love of reading, decoding, understanding and

Validated results from other local authorities be forwarded to the Panel when available.

	<p>discussion about text.</p> <p><u>Outcomes for Looked After Children</u> – Members stressed the good news with regard to the significant improvement for children at early years, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. It was noted that strategies in place appeared to be working but it was stressed that cohort numbers could change significantly and sometimes the children at this stage in their lives could be playing catch up, but it was very positive that education outcomes were improving.</p> <p><u>Results when using mock examination programmes</u> – It was noted that most secondary schools had robust mock examination processes in place but the internal data was not available and therefore difficult to evaluate the impact of school results. The Local Authority had the assurance that teacher assessments had been correct during Covid, when assessing outcomes for 2023.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> That the Panel reviewed and noted the educational outcomes and data contained within the report.</p>	<p>When reports were number heavy graphs and charts be provided to accompany the data</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL</u></p>	
	<p><u>Monitoring and supporting the proposed pathway changes</u> – to support the elements detailed within the proposed model, assessments needed to be undertaken therefore work was being carried out within educational settings. This ensured children’s needs were being met, by working in tandem with schools to make sure clear pathways were in place, and if required accessing and pooling intelligence and resources. It was stressed that partners were committed, united with a strong wish to make the collaboration work. It was noted that the project funding was being provided by the Department for Education.</p> <p>With regard to costs associated with out of authority placements, it was acknowledged that provision and costs would be more controllable where provision was available in local authority settings and was an area being addressed within the school sector, to provide and offer high quality placements for children. Unit costs for placements in comparison to out of authority placements were significantly lower.</p> <p>It was stressed that if needs were met at the right time it would provide a significant measure and hopefully avoid future out of authority placements. The panel noted that out of authority placements were a challenge for everyone and the positive news that the different</p>	

approaches would benefit both children but also costs associated with current and future provision, was accepted.

Social, Emotional Mental health hub places – it was explained that one hub had opened and a further 3 were due to open in spring. The Panel accepted that with any project there could be delays and noted, that due to recent weather, additional flood risk surveys had to be undertaken.

The Local Authority was working with families and schools to ensure the right provision was in place, making an impact and enriching opportunities for young people.

With regard to concern that capacity could outreach demand, it was noted that need was being managed and the pressure for placements would remain.

In response to a query relating to whether the hubs were available for children being home educated, it was explained that the child needed to be detailed on a school roll or it would be classed as an unregistered provision. Advice and guidance would be provided by the Attendance Team if this was the case.

Stakeholders and partners delivering the SEND Strategy – It was explained that the following groups developed and deliver on the Strategy:

Local Area SEND Board (including representatives from each key stakeholder group including children, young people, parents, health leads, schools and trusts from all sectors);  
SEND Engine Room (council, parents and health);  
Parents 'Making the Difference' sessions (6 weekly);  
Children and Young People's SEND Board;  
Head Teacher's SEND Strategy Group;  
Head Teachers Briefings;  
SENCO Steering Group;  
Schools Forum;  
Head Teachers SEND Funding group; and  
SENCO Needs Descriptors Group;

The local authority also consulted widely on the development of the strategy, working with the Department for Education and have shared key documents with OFSTED. A parental survey was currently being undertaken prior to an update of the strategy.

High Needs Block Overspend – in response to concern expressed it was explained that some high cost placements were absolutely necessary, but developing facilities within Doncaster would ensure children were closer to home. It was stressed that the key work described in the report would make a difference in the long term, eg.

	<p>fair funding, early investment, a stronger range of preventative measures, improved sufficiency and stronger capability / accountability.</p> <p>The Local Authority had a clear deficit reduction plan and was working with the DfE to ensure it was fair and realistic. It was noted that there was a £3.5 billion shortfall nationally with many local authorities were struggling to reduce the deficit.</p> <p><u>Stonehill’s new Post 16 provision</u> – the Panel acknowledged that this was an amazing programme. It was noted that the work with Stonehill was very exciting and that conversations were regularly held to hear about experiences and what could be improved. The Local Authority was working with Stonehill on a number of projects and reviewing future provision. The specific number of employment training places was unknown at this point but there were a significant number of employers working with the school and keen to engage.</p> <p>There was currently significant work ongoing and in it’s early stages, it was therefore proposed that an update on the issue be provided at a future meeting in 2025.</p> <p><u>Education Act</u> – In response to concern expressed it was explained that the Local Authority had been adhering to the Education Act with regard to promoting high standards and fair access to education. What the report highlighted was the Local Authority going beyond what was the statutory duty and to do more for Doncaster’s young people. It was explained that the Doncaster had made a conscious effort to ensure specialist placements for young people were available and improvements delivered, whilst the Panel noted growth in demand had increased fourfold since 2020. It was stressed that historically better decisions could have been made which would have prepared Doncaster for challenges that had followed the 2014 Code of Practice, the impacts of Covid and school academisation.</p> <p><b><u>RESOLVED:</u></b> That</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the changes implemented to date and impact be noted; and</li> <li>2) the future overall approach detailed within the report, including the impact on future savings and cost avoidance, be noted.</li> </ol>	<p>Work undertaken with Stonehill be considered by the Panel in March 2025</p>
15.	<p><b><u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN AND COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u></b></p>	
	<p>The Senior Governance Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan and Council’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the Panel’s information.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair proposed that the Panel request an update from an</p>	<p>Note</p>

earlier Panel recommendation relating to training being made compulsory in the future for drivers on school transport routes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

**RESOLVED:-** That a request be made for an update to be provided to the Panel, on an earlier Panel recommendation relating to training being made compulsory in the future for drivers on school transport routes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).