



## **Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment**

At 5.00 pm on Wednesday 23rd March, 2022, held as a remote meeting, via Zoom

### **Present: -**

#### Members

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair)  
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury  
Councillor Philip Irwin  
Councillor Ian Jelley

Councillor Anne Lee  
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell  
Councillor Lee Wilkes

#### Officers

AnnMarie Dodds  
Jenny Daniels  
Jo Hutchinson  
Nichola Jones  
Ben Smith

Director of Children's Services  
Democracy Officer (minutes)  
Senior School Improvement Manager  
Children's Services  
Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

### **71 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Leanne Buckingham (Cllr Anne Lee substituting).

### **72 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **73 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair invited those members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

### **74 School Effectiveness and Improvement - Update**

The Panel considered a briefing note by the Senior School Improvement Manager outlining the core duties of the School Effectiveness Service and how they would support schools in the future.

In answer to queries on the report the following was confirmed:

- i) All schools whether they be special schools, academies or LA maintained schools fell under the same Ofsted inspection routine;

- ii) Details of class sizes would be obtained and passed to members following the meeting;
- iii) Special schools were either reaching or were at capacity.
- iv) The historical practice had been to ask for an educational healthcare plan if a parent wished to have a space in a special school. This had led to a disproportionate number of children in special schools which was not necessarily good for all the children. Work was therefore being undertaken with all those involved in a child's provision to work out what would best assist a child;
- v) Work was also being undertaken with the judiciary to ensure that for every child that had a tribunal the family understood their child could still receive special educational needs without gaining a place in a special school;
- vi) Figures relating to expected results children would gain in SATs testing in 2021/22 were not yet available;
- vii) Although officers did not work with exam boards the team included two curriculum specialists who would work with schools on pupils' level of attainment. There was an early years and primary specialist and a secondary specialist;
- viii) The Department for Education was aware that schools had had to revise their timetables and had had unexpected challenges in budgets due to the pandemic;
- ix) Governors were considered a vital part of the leadership team in schools. Regular forums were held and officers had been recently working with people who wished to become a governor. There was a bank of people who had already been through an interview process, in readiness to be matched with schools who asked for governors.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) The Education, Skills and Employment Advisory Panel notes the School Effectiveness and Improvement briefing paper; and
- b) A further update be provided in September 2022 on the Educational Psychology Service.

**75 Home Schooled Children**

At the Chairman's invitation the Head of SEND provided a verbal update on Home Schooled Children, highlighting the following:

- i) Parents had the right to choose to educate their child other than at school. Their reasons for educating their children at home were varied;
- ii) The local authority had no powers to monitor that education, only to ensure it was age appropriate. Parents did not have to inform the local authority when

- they took their child off role but the local authority had a duty to check the pupil was educated;
- iii) Currently there were 215 pupils in the primary phase and 473 pupils in the secondary phase that were educated out of school. 32 of these had an educational healthcare plan. 203 had begun since September and 85 had left such education;
  - iv) The local team supported parents and would check on a child's education every 11 months. There were currently 45 active reviews;
  - v) If it was believed that the statutory level of education was not being provided an attendance order would be issued, three of which had been served;
  - vi) Information was received from the police to ensure they were aware of all safeguarding issues;
  - vii) There were some vacancies within the team.

In answer to queries on the update the following was confirmed:

- viii) There had been a small increase in the number of pupils educated out of school since COVID but there was no indication that it had had an impact on the numbers;
- ix) Officers did not have a statutory duty to go in and view what education a home pupil was receiving. They wished to be assured they knew where every child was so they did speak with the police and health services to confirm this. Families did not have to engage with them but they did triangulate data from various services;
- x) There were many reasons why people chose to educate their children out of school, such as for practical or religious reasons, although there was no right to enquire in a way that would provide accurate data.
- xi) Officers did not consider that the Council was an outlier in the country in relation to the numbers of home-schooled children and it was considered that North Northamptonshire numbers were in a range that Ofsted would expect to see.
- xii) The team contacted parents to ensure they were fully aware of what home educating their child would look like;
- xiii) COVID may have had some impact on parents who had undertaken some home education during this time and now felt they could do more. It may have put some parents off however.

**RESOLVED that:**

The verbal update on Home Schooled Children be noted.

The Panel received a briefing paper on Maintained nursery schools which explained the Maintained Nursery Supplement (MNS) grant, its distribution and a fairer distribution of the grant that was proposed. A copy of the paper was attached to the agenda, marked as item 6.

It was noted that one of the nursery's in particular had received a larger grant than the other three which were suffering at the risk of closure without fairer funding in the future. Three options were proposed for how this grant would be shared more fairly in the future, with two options recommended by the Schools Forum.

In answer to queries on the briefing the following was confirmed:

- i) Pen Green Nursery was in receipt of a separate contract from Northamptonshire Children's Trust for the sum of £512,000 per annum. It also had unallocated reserves of approximately £300,000.
- ii) The local authority did not supplement the dedicated schools grant;
- iii) There was a need to be transparent and provide services to all children across the area;
- iv) The recommended Option 1 moved entirely to participation. The Local Authority only received the funding on the basis of participation so it was felt it should be given to the nurseries also on the basis of participation. In the past it had not been allocated in this way.
- v) Pen Green had received a large grant but it was not based on participation. The danger of the other nurseries closing meant the need to find a fairer funding formula.
- vi) However, it was acknowledged that suddenly moving to this Option would also be detrimental to Pen Green. The alternative recommended Option 2 therefore was to support Pen Green for a limited time to adjust to the new amount;
- vii) There had been a disaggregation in the run up to vesting day but the spend was not based on participation. Funding had been reviewed since the beginning of January 2022. The recommended options in the report were those that had been identified by the schools forum;
- viii) The Northamptonshire Children's Trust did not provide funding for other areas.

The Chair thanked members for their views expressed which overall was that Option 2 was the best course of action and would provide them to the Executive when it met the following week to decide on the options.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) That the Maintained Nursery Schools briefing paper be noted;
- b) That of the available options considered by the Schools Forum, Option 2 should be recommended as the view of the Panel, to the Executive.

Consideration was given to the Forward List of Items for the Panel.

**RESOLVED that: -**

The following be added to the forward list of items for presentation at future meetings by officers:

- a) An update on the Educational Psychologist Service;
- b) An item on school improvement including the results of schools' SATs results and any action taken as result of them.

**78 Close of Meeting**

There being no further business, the Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

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Chair

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Date

The meeting closed at 6.48 pm