

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

18 OCTOBER 2007

Councillors * Egan (Chair), *Edge, Cooke, *Oakes, Reid * Vanier and Ms Kally

* Members present

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Reid and Ms Kally

2. URGENT BUSINESS

There was none

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March were confirmed

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor Egan – Employed in education involved in Graduate training, a Governor at St Thomas More School (not involved in Exclusions) and as a retired member of the NUT

Councillor Vanier – Employed in Education, a Governor at Northumberland Park (not involved in exclusions) and as a member of the NASUWT

Councillor Oakes – As a Governor at Bounds Green School

5. PRE- EMPTIVE WORK UNDERTAKEN IN SCHOOLS TO PREVENT SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

A

Councillor Egan explained that this part of the review was looking at work being carried out to prevent school exclusions, looking at what was currently happening in schools and seeking models of good practice that could be shared by other schools. The Panel had visited both Gladesmore School and Bow School in Tower Hamlets; the notes of these visits were tabled at the meeting.

As requested previously the appropriate Trade Unions had been invited to present evidence to the Panel. Although UNISON had declined to take up the offer Julie Davies from the NUT and Tony Brockman, Secretary of the Teachers Panel presented a paper on behalf of the NUT. A request was put to the meeting that the matter be treated sensitively.

The key points raised were:-

- All teacher organisations shared the view that inclusion of pupils in school was important and an aim that should be supported.
- Inclusion of the entire school population was insufficiently resourced. There were not adequate resources in schools to address the needs of violent or disruptive pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties.
- Failure of schools to report assaults should be treated as a serious disciplinary matter
- Concerns about alleged failure of the Local Authority to meet its duty under health and safety legislation to systemically monitor assaults on staff and to seek to reduce them.
- The development of Learning Support Centres in Secondary Schools was limited. There needed to be a full range of provision for SEBD pupils, which should include special school, off site provision managed by schools, as well as on site provision. A full range of provision was necessary to give a flexible approach to all pupils.
- A robust monitoring system for pupil behaviour and a clear behaviour policy was needed across all schools. A simple model of good practice should be produced and disseminated to all schools. The Union had produced some guidance on this.
- Governing Bodies and Independent Appeal Panels continued to overturn decisions to exclude on grounds which were not in accordance with DCFS guidance. The Authority should ensure that Panels received training prior to appointment and had the necessary skills.

The Panel was informed that Schools appeared to be worried that if they reported assaults on staff it would become a publicity issue and affect the popularity of the school. The NUT representative felt that many Headteachers were not notifying the Authority of assaults on staff.

In response to a question as what the Council should be doing the Unions felt that the idea of Learning Support Centres within schools was a good one, but there were issues around the supervision of pupils when they entered school premises, at the start of the day, and at break and lunchtimes. There would be occasions when some pupils would not be able to cope with being on site and needed off site specialist provision. Also there was concern that there was a limited number of experts that were able to manage extremely challenging behaviour and that if all schools had on site provision there would not be sufficient number of trained staff to manage all pupils in the on site units. More training and extra staff resources would be required.

In response to a question it was noted that details of preventative work had been the subject of an earlier report. This included work with primary schools on literacy skills, outreach work, sharing of good practice and partnership working. It was accepted that early preventative work was essential. The

Unions agreed that there was a lot of early preventative work undertaken in Haringey Schools which was consistent with Teachers policy.

The Union representatives were thanked for their evidence.

B

UPDATE ON FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS

The Panel received an update on fixed term exclusions for 2006/7. Although there was an increase in the number of fixed term exclusions compared with previous years, it was largely due to an increase in pupils being excluded once only. It appeared that short term fixed term exclusions were being used as a strategy to improve behaviour and attendance.

It was noted that there was no collation between exclusions and attainment. For example Northumberland Park had seen an increase in fixed term exclusions and had also seen a large increase in students obtaining 5 GCSE's, whereas Highgate Wood had seen a reduction in fixed term exclusions and also had achieved an increase in pupils obtaining 5 GCSE's

The Behaviour Improvement Programme was the targeted element of the national DfES programme for improving behaviour and attendance in schools, providing extra funding and intensive support to key areas. From its launch in 2002 to the end of 2006, four secondary and eight primary schools benefited from BIP in Haringey. The emphasis was on delivering the outcomes of improved behaviour, reduced exclusions, reduced truancy, and increased attendance, providing key worker support for all children at risk. Also Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs) are multi-agency teams working with children and young people aged 5-18 to intervene early to address and prevent emotional and behavioural problems. This included developing closer links with the Health Service to support young people's mental health needs.

Haringey was also supporting all interested primary schools in implementing the SEAL programme in their schools both as a whole school programme and as a more focused support programme for vulnerable youngsters and parents.

The Panel were reminded that Haringey also had a Pupil and Family Mediation Service, the purpose of which was to:

- provide support to pupils and their families who are identified as being at risk of exclusion or who are excluded, through advice, mediation and conflict resolution;
- liaise with community organisations to develop effective support for pupils and parents/carers;
- take action or contribute to other services taking action to reduce the number of excluded pupils, and support re-integration.

The Panel noted an additional report setting out responses to questions previously raised by Panel members.

PAT EGAN
Chair