

People Overview and Scrutiny

6th October 2021.

Present: Councillor Liddle, in the Chair, Akhtar, Humphrys, Kahn, Z. Smith, Irfan, Hussain, M., and Whittle.

Also Present: Joanne Siddle, Deputy Director, Education

Alison Ashworth-Taylor.

Paul Conlon, Democratic Services

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED- that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

3. Declarations of interest.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

4. SACRE

The Committee looked at the work of SACRE and its annual report. SACRE is the Standing advisory Committee on Religious Education and it is a statutory body which looks at-

- **Curriculum Design and Development-** Requiring the review of an agreed syllabus for religious education adopted by the Local Authority
- **Supporting Schools-** Providing advice on methods of teaching, choice of materials and provision of teacher training
- **Making Determinations-**Receiving and responding to requests for determinations on Collective Worship
- **Problem Solving-**Considering complaints about the provision and delivery of Religious Education and Collective Worship referred by the Local Authority
- **Monitoring-** Monitoring standards of Religious Education and Collective Worship

- **Advice-** Advising the Local Authority on matters connected with Religious Education and Collective Worship

SACRE had gone through a period of significant change in terms of leadership and membership over the last academic year. A firm commitment had been made by leadership within the education department to re-establish and invigorate a high quality SACRE, to ensure that the Local Authority was able to meet its statutory duties. This commitment was borne out of the desire to provide high quality support advice and guidance for RE and collective worship and to breathe new life into the curriculum for our young people. Ultimately the aim was to ensure that the learning offer from Blackburn with Darwen was vibrant, relevant, and inspiring for the young people.

The Blackburn with Darwen agreed syllabus for religious education 2017-2022 was adopted from RE Today. It is the syllabus to be used by all community schools and has been adopted by all non-faith based academies and free schools. SACRE had begun the review cycle and will set a full review timetable in its September meeting, 2021.

Questionnaires have been distributed to school and responses collated. The response rate was 98% from schools and there was a clear mandate for change. It was SACRE's intention in 2021-2022 to:

- Promote the achievement of the RE quality mark in our schools.
- Audit our school websites and share good practice regarding RE in schools.
- Commit to invite ITT representation to SACRE to engage in both partnership and dialogue. This will be pertinent as the agreed syllabus is redesigned and launched and will be a vehicle for delivery. Engagement will be with Teaching School Hubs, TEAMS School Direct and STAR RE PGCE together with our Universities, Edge Hill, and Cumbria.

The Committee were informed that the current collective worship policy and materials had been launched 2009 and it was intend to update the secondary collective worship guidance in 2021 and the primary in 2022.

The Committee looked at the positive changes that had been delivered in the recent years and the work that had been undertaken by the council and partners. The Committee asked about the provision for atheists and were informed of the way that these beliefs were accommodated in schools.

RESOLVED- The Committee noted the annual report and welcomed the progress of SACRE and hard work that had been undertaken.

5. Safeguarding Review

The Committee were updated on the progress of the review of safeguarding and the arrangements that were in place to carry this out. The Committee looked at what background to the process of the review and the involvement with partners and other Local Authorities in Lancashire. Members drew attention to the training that school governors received and how this could be simplified to ensure that it focused on the governor's role rather than the whole referral process.

RESOLVED- That the Committee continue to receive regular reports on progress and have opportunity to review the work undertaken by the partnership.

6. Peer Challenge – Neglect.

The Committee were updated on the peer challenge that had taken place to look at the Effective understanding, recognition and response to neglect. The review had been carried out between 21st and 25th June and had looked at leadership, management and culture of the authority and how the visions and strategy were incorporated. The Committee looked at the reporting arrangements for the monthly neglect champions sub group and how this reviewed progress.

The Committee were informed of the strengths highlighted in the review-

- Despite a “prolonged and extreme impact of the pandemic the council and partners have demonstrated a determined approach of ‘business as usual’ as far as possible in these extraordinary times.”
- “Leadership is impressive in Blackburn with Darwen – keep doing what you are doing”
- “consistent and very powerful messages about the strength of leadership and governance”
- “Strong and well embedded relationships across partner agencies is driving strategic ambition for children”
- “Strong bond of honesty in relationships with schools’
- BWD has “an integrated, creative & tenacious approach to building relationships and working with young people underpinned by the Adolescent Strategy”
- “The vision provides a golden thread that runs from frontline practice through to corporate governance arrangements and is underpinned by a systemic model of social work. Political leaders are highly informed.”
- Reduced caseloads are now enabling more direct work with children and families which is supported by effective supervision arrangements and strong management oversight.

The Committee looked at the key recommendations and how these would be implemented and progress measured. These included-

Strengthening systems to promote the timely progress of cases in PLO including:

- reviewing the number of trackers and role of Legal Gateway Meeting in oversight of all cases

Repeat & short-term child protection plans where neglect is a feature require further enquiry

- to enable a better understanding of the impact of the Neglect Strategy in decision-making.

Further develop a holistic approach to the child’s lived experience of neglect including evaluating evidence and capacity for sustained change beyond consideration of physical conditions

- Routinely feature and analyse the impact of poverty and the pandemic in children’s and young people’s care assessments and plans.

Members noted the findings of the review and the strengths that had been highlighted. The committee indicated that they would look at how the recommendations would be implemented and addressed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED- That the Committee note that the review did not highlight any areas that the council were not already working at improving and would continue to look at progress.

7. **Safe return to schools.**

The Committee looked at the progress in ensuring the safe return to schools and the issues that had been addressed to achieve this. The Committee were informed that as of 1st October 514 pupils had tested positive and 85 adults. The arrangements for tracking of cases was outlined and attendance monitoring that was carried out. The Committee were informed that the borough had attained the highest rates of attendance with over 90% in schools. Vaccination in schools was to commence from next week, 11th October which would be with the agreement of parents.

RESOLVED- That the Committee note that it was a positive start to the year and work was being undertaken to restructure curriculums to ensure that knowledge gaps could be filled where necessary and supported future learning. The Committee thanked those involved in the hard work that had ensured the safe return to schools.

Chair at the meeting where the minutes were signed.....

Date.....