

minutes



Meeting EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN ATTAINMENTS AND TARGETS
SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 20 November 2006 (commencing at 10.00 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Councillor Edward Llewellyn-Jones (Chair)

A Councillor Martin Suthers OBE (Chair)

Sybil Fielding
Keith Girling
Paul Henshaw
Pat Lally

Ellie Lodziak
Philip Owen
Brian Wombwell

CO-OPTED MEMBERS WITH VOTING RIGHTS

Mrs Paula Burbidge
Mr Ken Daly
Mr David Richards
A Mrs Lorraine Wooding

NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Joe Jefferies
Catherine McCready

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 30 OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the last meeting held on 30 October 2006, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mrs L Wooding.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Councillor Llewellyn-Jones introduced Ryan O'Loughlin from the Nottinghamshire Youth Parliament and Pom Boghal from the Youth Engagement Team. He intended to recommend to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Mr O'Loughlin be co-opted onto the Select Committee as a non-voting member. The Committee agreed that he could speak at this meeting.

REPORTS FROM SCHOOL VISITS

Manor School

Councillor Owen introduced the report from the group which had visited the Manor School, Mansfield Woodhouse. Key Stage 4 results were the low to mid 30% A* to C grades. The group had spoken to the head teacher and chair of governors rather than staff and pupils, which had somewhat limited the information obtained. Key findings were:

- Staff absences: the head teacher had concerns about the quality of supply staff. He had instigated a scheme whereby if a teacher was absent short term, the class would spend time in a computer room, supervised by a teaching assistant. The group had found such pupils unclear about what work they should be doing.
- Supply staff: it was difficult to find quality long term supply staff, particularly in maths and science.
- Recruitment: this was a particular difficulty in maths and science. The school had a partnership with Nottingham University to promote the recruitment of trainee teachers. The head teacher saw a need to market Nottinghamshire as an attractive place to live.
- Sharing good practice: the school had developed stronger links with schools outside the county through the specialist schools organisation than with county schools. The county council could give a stronger lead on sharing good practice.
- Links with industry: the school felt these were underdeveloped. More vocational education might engage disaffected pupils. Councillor Owen believed more could be done to forge links with local businesses.

In conclusion, he had found nothing during the visit to change the views expressed in the study group report.

Councillor Henshaw had found that head teacher and chair of governors had shown pride in the school, and that the use of the computer suite had been acceptable. Councillor Llewellyn-Jones said he had spoken to several pupils working with teaching assistants in the computer suite, and had been assured that the pupils understood what their task was. However such use of the suite did make it more difficult to fulfil its aim of supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. The school had asked for local authority help in making links with local small businesses, which did not see the benefits of partnerships with schools. Overall, the school had appeared clean and tidy, and the pupils orderly.

Mrs Burbidge commented that Mansfield Woodhouse was among the 10% most deprived communities in the country, and achieved well with the pupils it had. She believed that a focus on academic results would not reflect a school's broader achievements. Mr O'Loughlin observed that pupils were encouraged to look their best when inspectors and visitors were due. In response to a question from Mrs Burbidge, Anne Allsop, Head of Secondary School Improvement, said that the Manor School was working hard to improve KS3 performance, and that KS4 performance was more of an issue.

Kimberley School

Councillor Wombwell introduced the report on the Kimberley visit. The group's key findings had been:

- Poor condition of the school's older buildings hampered effective learning.
- Transfer from a small primary school to the large comprehensive school could be daunting.
- Low levels of ambition among some parents and pupils, with some local employers willing to employ school leavers without qualifications.
- Actions were being taken to improve attainment levels.
- Recruitment was a problem only to senior posts.
- There were insufficient funds to properly support pupils with special educational needs the classroom.

Mr Daly felt that the senior staff had been honest rather than negative in their observations. He pointed out that Kimberley School was in the county's raising achievement network. Councillor Lodziak commented that the school enjoyed a good reputation in the area, regardless of the condition of its buildings or its achievements. Ms Allsop gave the KS4 results as 57% A* to C grades. Mrs Burbidge and Mr O'Loughlin believed the quality of teaching was a key factor.

Redhill School

Mr Richards presented the findings of the group which had visited Redhill School. Key points were:

- Disruptive behaviour hindered learning. At Redhill, such behaviour was dealt with firmly.
- The school's ethos was challenging, and it presented a tidy and positive environment.
- Transition from primary school was handled well, with preparation beginning in Year 6.

- Parental involvement was good.
- KS3 performance was being addressed, with the school setting challenging targets.
- Links with other specialist schools were valuable.
- Recruitment was not a problem, but long term absences did present difficulties.

Other speakers endorsed the value of a firm approach to discipline. Councillor Llewellyn-Jones pointed out that there had to be a balance between discipline and other considerations, including what happened to pupils who had been excluded. Mr O'Loughlin referred to a need to explore the reasons for poor behaviour. Mr Richards indicated that Redhill School did take pupils excluded by other schools, and such a fresh start could prove successful. Ms Allsop stated that the school achieved 55% A* to C grades, which was 10% above the expected results from its intake.

Tuxford Comprehensive School

Councillor Girling reported on behalf of the group which had visited Tuxford Comprehensive School. Key points included:

- Strong leadership and discipline, and a positive relationship with the local authority.
- Structured approach to the transition from Year 6 to Year 7, including an inset week during the previous summer term for Year 7 pupils.
- A culture of it being “cool to learn”.
- Governors allocated portfolios, along the lines of the County Council’s Cabinet.
- Partnership work through a network of 12 other schools and with primary schools.
- Three levels of support to teachers, depending on need.
- A countywide team of specialist teachers to help cover long term staff absences would be useful.

Councillor Llewellyn-Jones had found the pupils to be self-assured and positive about the school, and the school’s communication with parents good. Councillor Girling observed that the school was willing to share good practice, and saw nothing to fear from competition or staff moving on to posts elsewhere. Mrs Burbidge suggested that the local authority take ownership of good practice, to avoid the risk of competition. Councillor Wombwell commented that although the buildings were similar to Kimberley’s, they were cleaner and brighter. Ms Allsop gave the KS4 results as 71% A* to C grades. She added that on a value added basis, Kimberley and Tuxford performed similarly. She pointed out that Tuxford, like other schools, had received funding from the local authority to develop good practice.

In concluding the discussion, Councillor Llewellyn-Jones stated that the next meeting of the Select Committee would need to reflect on how much league table positions mattered, whether other types of achievement could be evidenced, and the need to convince all young people of the value of achievement at school.

The meeting closed at 12.20 am.

CHAIR

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