

minutes



Meeting SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND SUPPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 2nd June 2008 (commencing at 2.00pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Edward Llewellyn-Jones (Chair)

Brian Wombwell (Vice Chair)

John Carter

S Fielding

A Haynes

P Lally

P Owen

M Suthers

L Sykes

STATUTORY CO-OPTED MEMBERS

- A Mr E Hayes (Diocese of Nottingham)
- Mr D Richards (Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham)
- A Mrs I Wooding (Parent Governor)
- Vacancy (Parent Governor)

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 April 2008, having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

PRESENTATION BY KATE BELL, REGIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE ADVISOR, DCSF

Councillor Llewellyn-Jones referred to the revised version of reports which had been circulated to Members at the meeting.

Kate Bell, Regional Behaviour and Attendance Advisor Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) gave a presentation to the Select Committee on the National Strategies for Behaviour and Attendance. The presentation included:

- an overview of the National Strategy for Behaviour and Attendance and SEAL20 08/09 plan.
- Local context in Nottinghamshire.
- An awareness of the Regional Advisor role.
- New legislation and developments.

Ms Bell said that the National Strategy was the guiding arm for Regional Advisors and that they worked closely with schools and the improvement services and was required to report back with 6 weekly reviews to the DCSF. The national overview was focused on improving overall absence in primary, secondary and special schools, academies and pupil referral units (PRUs). All schools except the PRUs were required to work towards an annual overall absence target.

Targets for 2011 included a reduction in persistent absence in secondary pupils to 5%. In order to achieve this it would be necessary to ensure that all schools engaged in responsibility for attendance. Nationally the Government's target had been reduced from 7.41% to 6.42% over the last 10 years. Although the change was small it was explained that these small changes had made a big impact.

Primary schools persistent absence in Nottinghamshire stood at 1.67% compared with the national average of 2.2%. The combined (primary and secondary) absence level in Nottinghamshire at autumn term 2007 was 6.36%. The national target was set at 6.42% by 2008 with a target of 5% for secondary pupils by 2011.

There was discussion about authorised absence in schools and holidays taken during term-time. Persistent absence was about looking at those who did not engage in education and the reasons behind a child not being in school. A persistent absence student was identified by a 20% or more absence level. Figures in Nottinghamshire for 2006/07 had identified 3,853 pupils as having persistent absence, 1,605 from the 13 PA (persistent absence) schools and a further 2,248 in non PA schools. Compared with its statistical neighbours Nottinghamshire came out slightly higher.

Ms Bell talked about the support to PA (persistent absence) schools and some of the systems in place to collate data from the schools. Recent data had shown a significant reduction in persistent absence in all 13 of the County's PA schools with a 40% drop in the number of persistent absence students.

The Committee heard about SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) a programme in primary schools which was also being rolled out into secondary schools with the support of Behaviour and Attendance consultants. The programme attempts to get everyone in the community to raise self-awareness and was supported by the School Improvement Team. Work was continuing well.

Ms Bell also talked about the behaviour priorities in schools and the partnership work taking place locally to meet the needs on behaviour and attendance. The School Partnership for Behaviour and Attendance was about a shared vision which committed staff and the governors to work together to improve behaviour,

tackle persistent absence and improve outcomes for students with challenging behaviour and attendance.

Ms Bell explained the different levels/ratings applied to behaviour in schools and when the Department would become involved. Positive behaviour was encouraged in schools to reduce the need for exclusion and to minimise low level disruption to learning and teaching alongside maintaining a low number of schools judged as having inadequate behaviour and shifting schools from satisfactory to good or outstanding behaviour rating.

The Select Committee also heard about Back-On-Track which was a strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people. Ms Bell reported that 75% of students in alternative provision had special educational needs of which 62% did not have statements. 69% of the students were boys.

Information was circulated on schools receiving additional support to address behaviour issues and raise learner achievement. Ms Bell said that for many schools, behaviour issues were discussed and supported through termly springboard meetings when members of the county support teams discuss the issues with Special Needs Co-ordinators and senior leaders to develop appropriate strategies.

There was discussion about court appearances for non attendance and the need for magistrates training to pick this up.

Councillor Llewellyn-Jones thanked everyone for their input to the meeting.

The Select Committee noted the report.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Councillor Llewellyn-Jones referred to the report which provided additional information previously requested by the Select Committee.

The Select Committee noted the report.

PRESENTATION BY DAWN MORGAN DEPUTY HEAD FROM THE QUEEN ELIZABETH'S ENDOWED SCHOOL AND KAY ARCHER DEPUTY HEAD FROM THE VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Ms Morgan gave a presentation to the Select Committee on the work involved in improving behaviour and attendance at the Queen Elizabeth Endowed School. She began by giving an overview of the work which took place in school. She pointed out the key partners involved in this very important work, also included students and their parents/carers. Work was driven by the school's Senior Leadership Team. Ms Morgan said that staffing structures had had to be changed to address the ongoing issue given the very challenging circumstances faced by the school. Attendance and behaviour was a high priority within the school and featured on every agenda. In terms of attendance strategies the school had introduced a creative curriculum, had a pro-active role in informing

parents about SATs as well as sending clear messages regarding holidays in term time.

The Select Committee also heard about the strategies in place to improve behaviour in the school. The work of the Learning Intervention Centre supported by Learning Mentors and Behaviour Support Assistants was equipped to identify and resource individual needs which were often varied and challenging.

Ms Morgan also explained how students could access the curriculum through its use of the green, red and amber rooms. The red room was the school's internal exclusion room. It was important to continually monitor, modify and review each student.

Ms Archer, Deputy Head from the Valley Comprehensive School explained that they also focused on those that did attend school to say thank you. Over the last 12 months attendance had improved by 2%. The students felt supported and safe in their environment. She praised the support of the Education Welfare Service and the School's Pastoral Support Management Team. Whilst attendance was good Ms Archer said that behaviour was proving more difficult.

There was discussion about the challenges faced by schools to engage families. It was recognised that the staff and the diverse nature of the curriculum had made a difference. Ms Morgan explained that they utilised every minute of the Education Welfare Officer and that it was important to engage in-house services as well as work with families. It was noted that one of the strongest links between primary and secondary school had been the SEAL programme. There was a lot to learn from the primary schools.

Ms Bell said that the challenge now was how to disseminate information to the non targeted schools with PA students.

Councillor Llewelyn-Jones thanked Ms Morgan and Ms Archer for sharing their first hand experience with the Select Committee.

The Select Committee noted the good practise and sharing of information in these schools and recognised that their ownership of attendance was something that should be followed by all schools.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee noted the work programme.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.

CHAIR