

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Conference for Priority Persistent Absence schools

The 2009 conference - 'Enhancing Attendance Practice within School Families' was a full day conference held on 21 October 2009. Persistent Absence (PA) schools along with their Primary school feeders were invited to attend. The PA Conference has been an annual half day event since 2006. The decision to make it a full day conference for families of schools was made following the evaluation of previous conferences. The Attendance Strategy Steering Group contributed to the agenda, in particular the multi agency offer of support to schools, recognising there is a need for a corporate and collaborative approach to PA by all agencies.

The aims of the event were:

- to keep colleagues informed of the developing government / national strategies relating to the PA agenda – Kate Bell, Regional Advisor National Strategy;
- to inform colleagues of the Nottinghamshire perspective of PA – Rob Skelton – Service Director, Inclusion Disability and Access;
- to share local good practice between Nottinghamshire schools;
- to share multi – agency offers of support to PA schools;
- to provide an opportunity for school colleagues to plan as a family of schools the next steps to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence in their own schools.

In September the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) invited the Local Authority attendance leader and the attendance leaders from PA schools to attend a 'Securing Good Attendance' conference in Peterborough on 1 October 2009. Attendance at these conferences was good.

The evaluation of the Nottinghamshire event was positive, the highlight being the presentations of good practice made by our leading practice schools. Other comments about what went well were, 'sharing good ideas for improved practice', 'good range of national/local initiatives and strategies/information shared', 'lots of information to take away', 'supportive atmosphere', 'useful tools/websites to use', 'family tables worked well', 'lots of discussions/networking', networking with colleagues is often the best thing for teachers, 'having the chance to think and plan new ways forward'.

These conferences are an excellent way to share information/strategies on the PA agenda, consistently with schools; however one of the main benefits seems to be the facility to network and plan.

The impact of these PA conferences, alongside all the other support the Education Welfare Service (EWS) offers to our PA schools, is apparent when we consider the PA data. This data shows a steady reduction in persistent absence in Nottinghamshire from 7.8% in 2006/7 to 6.00% in 2007/8 to 5.5% in 2008/9 (end of year – half term 5 figures).

Nottinghamshire School Governors' Conference

On Saturday, 14 November I joined Chris Levy, the Chairman of Nottinghamshire Association of Governors to open the 2009 governors' conference. The theme for the 2009 conference was 'curriculum pathways – preparing for the future'.

Over one hundred governors, exhibitors and workshop facilitators enjoyed a thought provoking day with input from Professor Mick Waters, who recently retired as the Director of Curriculum at Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Anthony May, Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services. The entertainment was provided by the Junior Cantamus choir, who received a standing ovation.

The conference working party will be meeting in the near future to discuss the conference evaluation sheets and start the planning for 2010.

Anti-bullying Showcase

On Thursday, 19 November as part of National Anti-bullying Week, the County Council hosted an anti-bullying showcase event at Mansfield Palace Theatre. The event celebrated the positive work by young people in Nottinghamshire to combat bullying. It was attended by children and young people, their teachers and families as well as representatives from organisations who support anti-bullying nationally and across the county.

There was an opportunity to present prizes to the eight winners of the poster competition that was held in the run-up to anti-bullying week. These young people had their winning entries turned into posters and sent to all schools and youth centres to encourage young people to report bullying.

The event was also used to launch the new Nottinghamshire Anti-bullying policy which was approved by the County Council recently. We also launched

a briefer young people's version of the policy which had been designed by young people themselves. Prior to the performances a Market Place for anti-bullying organisations was held in the Old Library Arts Centre next to the theatre.

The performances by children and young people demonstrated the wealth of excellent practice in schools across the county and across the whole age range. John Davies Primary School and Ryton Park Primary School produced DVDs to show how children support each other in their schools. Derrymount School presented a DVD featuring their rock band. Mapplewells Primary School children performed poems wearing the friendship T-shirts they had designed. Dayncourt School students performed a group poem and short play and the show was rounded off with a Pantomime on the theme of cyberbullying performed by 6th formers from Tuxford School.

Official opening of the new "Victor Miller" teaching block at Bowbridge Primary and Nursery School

The official opening of the new Victor Miller Building at Bowbridge Primary and Nursery School took place on Friday, 27 November 2009. The ceremony marked the opening of new teaching accommodation comprising 10 new classrooms. The accommodation has been designed for flexible future and current use, and to enable a variety of teaching styles and learning activities. The buildings previously used as teaching accommodation were first constructed during World War 2 as a training facility for the Royal Engineers. Captain Victor Miller, a Royal Engineer who was stationed there in 1943 also attended the opening ceremony, which was performed by Councillor Pettengell, Vice Chair of the County Council.

Local Targets for 2013

Central Government has a target setting process for schools and Local Authorities which has been in place for some years.

However the outcome targets generated are, in practice, unachievable - for this LA or others. For example, the Key Stage 2 results for 11 year olds in Nottinghamshire in 2009 are above the national average and ahead of our 10 statistical neighbours on all the given measures. Nottinghamshire is in the top quartile nationally for all 3 subjects, English, mathematics and science (where we are in the top 10 out of 149). In spite of this extraordinary outcome, we have still not achieved a single one of our KS2 central government targets. Such targets do not act as a motivator for schools or the Department. People do not routinely refer to them in their day to day work.

For these reasons, since 2005, we have been talking unofficially about our Key Stage 4 target as "becoming average by 2010". This is a memorable and worthwhile target. It sounds modest but is not because it meant putting on a couple of percentage points ahead of the national gain for each of the past 5 years. Across a cohort of 9,000 students in 45 schools annually this was a significant challenge. On the old 5+ A*-C measure we hit and slightly exceeded the target in 2009. On the new measure, to include English and mathematics, we are still a bit away and hope to hit it next year.

We have decided to set similarly ambitious but realistic targets to be achieved by the end of the current administration. The 2013 targets we have agreed are as follows:

- Key Stage 2: Be in the top 20 LAs
- Key Stage 4: Be in the top half nationally
- Key stage 5: Match the national average point score

These targets set for the end of primary, statutory secondary and further education are joined by one essential other which is about overcoming the effects of poverty:

- Free School Meals – Closing the Gap: Be in the top half nationally.

I believe colleagues will find these targets useful – by being memorable and providing suitable challenge. We will make a massive improvement in our young people's life chances if we get them. I would be grateful if we would share these targets with all our staff and colleagues as widely as possible and strive to achieve them.

Deputy Portfolio Holder events

Official Sod Cutting Event for MyPlace

The Official Sod Cutting event on 16 November for the £6.5 million MyPlace-Westfield Folkhouse Young People's Centre in Mansfield was attended by Councillor Lynn Sykes.

The event was attended by young people representing the differing groups who will be making use of the new centre when it opens. Councillor Reg Adair, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property, cut the first 'sod' to mark the start of the building phase of the scheme.

In September 2008 the County Council, along with a range of partners (and following consultation with local young people), submitted a bid to the DSCF MyPlace fund for a further £5million capital funding to support a larger redevelopment project. The County Council's original £1.5million capital allocation was included in the bid as match funding. The County Council was notified of the success of its bid in February of this year. G F Thomlinson Building Ltd is the main Contractor for the project and has been procured through the County Council's framework arrangements.

The Westfield Folkhouse Young People's Centre is the first of all The MyPlace "standard track" start projects building, and is therefore likely to be the first one in the country when it is completed during the winter of 2010/11. Once completed, the new centre will include:

- a state of the art disabled youth club, and a large, well equipped open access youth club spread over 2 floors;

- specialist advice and information provision;
- youth employment training provision;
- outdoor facilities including a sensory garden, allotment, fitness area and sports pitch;
- a sensitively refurbished original building that will house youth service staff and a voluntary sector young people's homeless support project.

In delivery terms, the new centre will offer seven days per week opening, both daytime and evening, and the provision of a wide range of multi-agency young people's support services, in addition to the dual youth clubs. The new facilities, supported by effective publicity, marketing and programming, will attract large numbers of local young people.

Presentation of certificates for practitioners reaching Early Years Professional Status

On 16 November 2009, Councillor Allen Clarke joined over 40 childcare practitioners at a celebratory event held at the National Watersport's Centre to mark practitioners reaching Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

EYPS is the Children's Workforce Development Council's graduate standard for practitioners looking after children aged under five. Nottinghamshire county has more Early Years Professionals (EYPs) than any other county in the country and is striving towards the Government's target of having an EYP in every childcare setting by 2015.

The Early Years National Programme Manager for the Children's Workforce Development Council also attended the event and presented practitioners with a certificate and badge to mark their success.

Nottinghamshire County Council Social Care and Health Achievement Awards

On Thursday, 19 November 2009 Councillor Allen Clarke, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services and Helen Ryan, Service Director, Social Care and Health, Children and Young People's Services attended the annual Nottinghamshire County Council's Social Care and Health Achievement Awards at Mansfield Civic Centre.

The event organised by the Learning and Development Unit was attended by 250 of the 547 Children and Young People staff who attained awards.

Prior to the presentation, a performance was given by Willow Wood Drama group on the importance of service user participation.

Councillor Clarke addressed the staff and emphasised the importance of their role in providing services to the most vulnerable children in our communities. He congratulated all staff on their awards. Children's Social Care teams from across the county were represented as were Children's Homecare and all of the residential units.

Staff received awards in:

- NVQ - Health and Social Care levels 2, 3 & 4
- NVQ - Leadership and Management in Care Services
- NVQ - Management levels 3 & 4
- NVQ - Administration and Customer Service levels 2 & 3
- NVQ Assessor (A1) and Internal Verifier (V1)
- Social Work degree and Newly Qualified Social Workers
- Learning Disability Qualification (LDQ)
- Certificate in Training Practice (CTP)
- Coaching qualifications
- Post Qualifying awards (PQ1, PQCCA, PQSW, PQ2-5, PQ6)
- Approved Mental Health Professional training
- Best Interest Achievers

As reminders of their achievements staff were presented with a gift of a pen set bearing the title Social Care Achiever, NVQ lapel pins and were able to reflect on their achievements over tea and cakes after the event.

Inclusion Support Service: Pupil Participation event

On Friday, 20 November Deputy Portfolio Holders for Children and Young People's Services Councillor Lynn Sykes and Councillor Allen Clarke were invited, at the request of the secondary aged pupils with special educational needs working with the ISS Pupil Voice Steering Group, to their latest event at Bestwood Lodge Hotel and Conference Centre. The students have already met members of the Youth Parliament and the Speaking Up Youth Parliament and wished to meet with elected representatives with an interest in their support and education.

The event was planned to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Declaration of the Rights of the Child as a means of introducing supported children from junior schools to the Pupil Voice group for the first time. An art workshop was held to enable the children and young people to make cards to send to their Members of Parliament about the UNHCR Anniversary, and this was followed by a drumming workshop which encouraged children to work together despite their different needs. These children will now work together in school 'Family' groups to give their perspective on special needs support.

COUNCILLOR PHILIP OWEN

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

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