

# **REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

School Improvement is central to the Council's corporate vision of improved lives, improved health, economic regeneration, skills development and innovation. The report provides:-

- a strategic overview of the 2019/20 school improvement draft programme.
- a focus on securing excellent pupil attendance.
- a focus on the early years of pupils induction to education.

### **OPTIONS**

- Members will wish to consider and agree a scrutiny programme of school improvement for 2019/20.
- The priorities from pupil attendance should be determined
- The priorities for early years developments should be determined.

In the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of Tuesday 16 July 2019, Members received and considered a **Performance in Bury Schools report**, which contained:-

- an overview of current school performance
- a summary of school improvement strategies
- an overview of the legal and statutory context

This report develops the analysis by providing for Member consideration:-

- a detailed draft work programme, which will enable Members to scrutinise the key features of the education service.
- An appraisal of two essential elements of successful school improvement – attendance and early years.

### **RECOMMENDED OPTIONS**

1. Members are asked to agree a Scrutiny Work programme of School Improvement for 2019/20.
2. Members are asked to consider receiving a report on pupil attendance.
3. Members are asked to receive early years priorities.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

1. The proposal to develop strategic scrutiny of school improvement across all phases should enable Members to assess the initial investment we make in the early years, and the cumulative value which each subsequent stage adds to pupil learning.
2. Powerful scrutiny of each key area in the school improvement repertoire will enable Members to focus on areas of good practice and areas of performance concern. This will enable both shared good practice, and it will target the work of the service on areas of under-performance.
3. The implications of focusing on Early Years are self-evident; how children begin their learning in Bury is key to their later success.
4. Scrutiny of pupil attendance is critical to ensure that pupils are regularly and reliably at the place where structured learning is provided.

### **1:0 SUMMARY**

This report asks Members of Overview and Scrutiny to consider a work programme for school improvement to inform each of its meetings from September 2019 until March 2020.

The report proposes an initial scrutiny of Early Years provision and pupil attendance.

### **2:0 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION**

Members will wish to determine whether the report is appropriate and sufficient to support their ambitions in scrutinising school improvement arrangements in Bury.

### **3:0 BACKGROUND**

Although responsibilities, governance and accountability in securing education for young people in England is now a dispersed responsibility, the Local Authority continues to be responsible for key aspects of learning.

These include pupil admissions, attendance, exclusions, pupil place planning, SEND, aspects of post 16 provision and a general duty to champion the Rights of the Child and safeguarding.

In total, there are more than 200 duties vested in the Local Authority in relation to pupil learning and well-being.

Beyond what is legally required, Bury Council has a moral duty towards its residents to secure their education, training, well-being and economic success.

For these reasons, it has been of concern, both politically and professionally, that school improvement standards are not uniformly good. Recent performance in key phases of learning has been uneven. Bury has previously held a prominent position both Regionally and Nationally for the attainment of its young people.

After a period of administrative turbulence, there is now a determined approach to securing sustained and resistant school improvement. Each element of the school improvement strategy is being tested and strengthened.

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme is intended to enable Members of that Committee to focus sharply our school improvement across each of their meetings in the current year.

## **4:0 EARLY YEARS**

### **Executive Summary**

'School Readiness' is a term used to describe how ready children are socially, physically and intellectually to start formal schooling. Whilst an end in itself, school readiness should also be seen as a 'way marker' for future life chances. It is an indicator for having a good start in life i.e. growing up in a nurturing safe environment that enables children to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.

School readiness is measured through assessment at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and known as the EYFS profile. This assessment is based on practitioners' observations of a child's daily activities taking account of the perspectives of the child, parent and other adults. It is undertaken in the last term of a child's Reception year.

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development if they achieve at least the expected level in the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social & emotional development; physical development; and communication & language) and the early learning goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

The work around school readiness is a priority at both a national and regional level and makes a strong economic case for investing in school readiness, as early years interventions have been shown to have a higher rate of return per investment than later interventions. Greater Manchester

Combined Authorities are leading on a huge transformational programme of work with GM Health and Social Care Partnership, and an investment of £2.1m across GM Local Authorities has been agreed to drive forward this agenda.

The programme will aim to ensure that all children in GM have the best start in life and the right support to be ready to learn. A review of progress to date has taken place and refreshed delivery plans produced; these reflect current priorities identified through recent evaluation at a locality and GM level.

In Bury, this work is governed by the Starting Well Partnership Board.

Bury's Life Chances Commission also reference elements of this work, following the report written in March 2017 where a poor start was written about in the context of school readiness, and the importance of other indicators.

Additionally, Bury Local Authority are challenged on progress in this area through an Annual Conversation with Ofsted.

Many agencies and organisations are involved with supporting children being school ready but, of course, this work starts predominantly with parents/carers and families. A very small team of Early Years Teachers in the early year's teams prioritise work with private, voluntary and independent early year's settings and support provision around the EYFS.

### **Functions of the Service Area**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results are published each year. This gives us a final percentage of those children who are 'school-ready' in Bury. There is also a great deal more data on specific elements of the EYFS so that we can look in detail at performance progress and gaps.

The table below shows Bury's EYFS performance for this and previous academic years:



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## **Priorities**

1. Our work in transforming early help services in Bury is aiming to bring together early years partners on a locality footprint and ensure that families are supported at the earliest point of concern, this focus on the child within the family is an holistic approach to work towards better outcomes, which of course includes children being better school-ready.

The ongoing implementation of the Locality based Early Help Teams (0-19 years) are the basis for this work.

2. We need to get better intelligence about those children who are struggling now, whether they be at home or in an early years setting and target support at those children in a meaningful and sustained way.

This approach has already been piloted in one early years setting and given very exciting outcomes in the area of speech, language and communication. We plan to review this work and roll out across other areas. This work is also further enhanced by additional support and focus at a GM level- with the Speech, Language and Communication pathway.

3. Our work is dependent on the reliability of good data systems and analysis which are not currently in place. We do not have a system that captures centrally concerns about individual children and are only informed about school readiness at the end of the EYFS and not beforehand.

Current developments include the establishment of a GM early years data dashboard. Additionally, Bury are the first Early Adopter in Greater Manchester for an Early Digitalisation Project. The system when in place will improve data sharing, digitalise current developmental tools used by health visitors, and allow access to appropriate information by early years providers

## **Process**

The above priorities are work streams within the school readiness work from the Starting Well Partnership Board. Bury also has strong representation at a GM level on the GM School Readiness Board and sub groups. This is both developmental and supportive. An 8 Stage Delivery framework describes the journey of assessments and professional judgements, followed by necessary interventions agreed at a GM level and incorporated by all GM local authorities. This framework gives us a base for which to develop our integrated work going forward, and to develop pathways that support early intervention.

## **5.0 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EDUCATION WELFARE**

### **Executive Summary**

To meet the statutory role of the Local Authority to ensure children and young people receive appropriate, full-time education whether at school or otherwise. To support parents and families in achieving the best educational outcomes for their children and ensure Bury supports inclusion of all children. This is achieved through:

- Supporting schools in managing attendance and behaviour
- Identifying children not in education, promoting inclusion and championing those who are disadvantaged to access education
- Supporting alternatives to exclusion and engaging in the wider inclusion work to promote other educational opportunities where needed

### **Functions of the Service Area**

Good school attendance is central to school improvement. For this reason

- 1) We develop and share high quality data
- 2) We make appropriate comparisons with other local authorities including those within the top quartile performance
- 3) We work with Governing Bodies and Head teachers to identify and share good practice
- 4) We challenge where appropriate
- 5) This includes the use of formal warnings, penalty notices and court work

We are currently developing a refreshed school attendance strategy to drive up pupil attendance across the service.

### **Priorities**

- 1) Develop, embed and deliver school attendance strategies to transform and reach top quartile of school attendance.
- 2) To achieve this by supporting Governing Bodies and Lead Head teachers in sharing good practice.
- 3) High quality data and analysis on our progress with regular reports to members.
- 4) To liaise with GM Partnership in order to benchmark our performance.

### **Process**

Over the terms this process will be aligned with GM Authorities.

The Assistant Director will work with Education Welfare Service, Head teachers and other partners to drive improvements.

Specifically,

We will identify best practice, share it and use it to improve our outcomes.

To achieve this we will create a post of Associate Head teacher to support this work.

Our aim is to secure top quartile pupil attendance performance.

### **Implications**

1. The proposal to develop strategic scrutiny of school improvement across all phases should enable Members to assess the initial investment we make in the early years, and the cumulative value which is added to school improvement.
2. Powerful scrutiny of each key area in the school improvement repertoire will enable Members to focus on areas of good practice and areas of performance concern. This will enable both shared good practice, and it will target the work of the service on areas of under-performance.
3. The implications of focusing on pupil attendance are self-evident; if children are in school and learning, both the pupil and the school are more likely to succeed.
4. Scrutiny of pupil attendance is critical to ensure that pupils are regularly and reliably at the place where structured learning is provided.

## **6:0 SCRUTINY OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WORK PROGRAMME**

This should support, challenge and reinforce our efforts to substantially recover educational standards in Bury.

## **7:0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Overview and Scrutiny Report – School Improvement: July 2019

Bury Council Meeting – July 2019

North West Association of Directors of Children’s Services (NWADCS)  
Local Authority Self-Assessment Report 2019

Greater Manchester: Support for School Improvement Peer Review 2019

Education Act 2016

Education Act 2011