

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD-HOC
PANEL- SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

10.00am 14 OCTOBER 2009

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Fryer (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Allen and Smart

Other Members present: Non-voting Co-optee: Rachel Travers (Community Voluntary Sector Forum)

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1.1 Declarations of substitutes

No substitutes are permitted on Ad-hoc Scrutiny panels.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

1.3 Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

1.4 Exclusion of the Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED-That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESSES

- 3.1 Councillor Juliet McCaffrey, is the Chair of the Student Management Committee at Varndean School and sits on the Permanence and Adoption Panel presented her concerns to the Panel.

3.2 Cllr. McCaffrey told the Panel she wanted to raise concerns with the Panel, from experience that she had gained from being a Parent Governor at Dorothy Stringer Primary School and at Vardean School in the past.

3.3 The Panel heard how the same 12 children were repeatedly excluded from one of the schools which raised the following concerns:

- What support is offered to the children that were excluded?
- Who were these children being excluded? (These children had Special Educational Needs (SEN) and were also SEN+. The Parent Governors were aware that very few Looked After Children (LAC) were excluded).
- There was a smaller group of children that were gifted and talented and it was uncertain as to why they were being excluded?
- How many of these children were Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) and in the criminal justice system, after 16 years?

3.4 The Panel were told how these children had education at the school after 3pm and it was uncertain what happened to them, between 8.30am – 3pm, and whether the parents were at home with them.

3.5 The Panel were advised how on one occasion there was no other option but to exclude a girl as her behaviour had reached such a level. Psychological, mental health support had been requested by the mother from Children's Services however there was a long waiting time for this.

Cllr. McCaffery felt there were limited resources, on a local basis of qualified mental health support. Qualified staff could range from someone that had completed a counselling course to staff with degrees/ or a masters.

3.6 Cllr. McCaffrey told the Panel about an autistic child who had their admission rejected on the grounds that the school didn't have the appropriate services to support the pupil.

This pupil was then admitted to another secondary school, who provided 30 hours of individual support to the pupil, within school teaching time. An incident occurred in the playground which resulted in the pupil being excluded.

The family moved to Leicestershire and it was felt that the pupil received much better support as the school had a more thorough understanding of autism.

3.7 The Panel heard how *outcomes* were a further concern and whether this was monitored after the pupils had been excluded and what happened when they left school?

3.8 Cllr. McCaffrey advised the Panel that she also had concerns regarding unofficial exclusions.

3.9 In answer to a question on why a school was thinking of having their own psychologist rather than utilising Sussex Partnership services, the Panel were informed that the active governing bodies were putting pressure on the teachers to improve the behaviour of pupils. It was felt that the waiting times of Children and Adolescent Mental Health

Services (CAMHS) was delaying improving some behavioural practices, therefore the school felt it would buy in its own psychologist.

- 3.10 In response to a question on whether all the concerns were in relation to experience gained as a Parent Governor, The Panel were informed that Cllr. McCaffery also sits on the Permanance Panel and there were situations that may cause further problems for children. These being that when children were settled in school, but their home life was unsettled and they are moved to live with foster parents, this means that the school would be changed too. It is uncertain whether the "new" school would have the same level of support.
- 3.11 The Chair thanked Cllr. McCaffrey for bringing these concerns to the Panel.

4. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 4.1 Date of the next meeting is the 5 November, 2009. It was agreed that the times needed to change to 2-5pm, which would include any private meetings to take place during these hours and the last half hour would be a private Debrief meeting.
- 4.2 It was agreed to set up a meeting in January 2010, to start at 10am to 1pm and confirmation would be sent on e-mail and be published on the council website. Private meetings would need to take place between these hours.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 The Panel noted that the press release had been published in the Argus on the 10 & 11 October weekend.
- 5.2 The Panel were informed that the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People had been invited to speak to the Panel, as this was normal protocol for all Scrutiny Panels.
- 5.3 All Councillors had been e-mailed about the Panel and to contact Scrutiny if they wanted to present any information. Other groups that had been contacted were the Youth Council, Youth Offending Team, Amaze, CVSF, MOSAIC (black and mixed parentage family group).
- 5.4 The Panel requested Behaviour Policies from Varndean, Dorothy Stringer and Blatchington Mill Secondary Schools, plus Whitehawk and Moulsecomb Primary Schools.

The meeting concluded at 11.00am

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of