

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Friday 11th October 2019

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support
Martin Wilby, Acting Deputy Assistant Director, LA Statutory Duties Learning and Skills

Observers: Councillor Viv Kendrick
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Bernard McGuin
Councillor Alison Munro
Mel Meggs, Director for Children's Services
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)

Apologies: Toni Bromley (Co-Optee)
Linda Summers (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received from Toni Bromley and Linda Summers (Co-optees)

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th August and 23rd September 2019 be agreed.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

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5 Deputations/Petitions

No petitions or deputations were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions from the public were received.

7 Almondbury Community School

The Panel considered a report giving an update on Almondbury Community School following the Council's decision to change the age range of the school from 1st September 2020.

Jo-Anne Sanders advised the Panel that the youngsters who were on roll at Almondbury Community School and lived in the area were at the heart of the proposals. Jo-Anne Sanders highlighted key points which were as follows:-

- The Learning Service was working in partnership with Almondbury Community School, King Jame's School, Netherhall High School and Newsome High School to develop an offer for existing secondary age pupils at Almondbury Community School which would include carefully planned transitional arrangements;
- A letter was issued to Year 6 pupils by primary schools in the areas surrounding Almondbury on the 30th September confirming catchment areas, the letter was attached to the report as Appendix A;
- Officers were working hard to progress the transitional arrangements for children on roll at Almondbury Community school in years 7 to 10 and this was expected to be shared with parents shortly; children in the current year 11 would complete their education and then leave school;
- Kirklees applied to the Office of the School Adjudicator for a variation to the secondary school Priority Admission Areas (PAAs) of Newsome and Netherhall High Schools for 20/21; a complementary application had also been made by King Jame's Academy to the Education and Skill Funding Agency (ESFA);
- An application was made by Kirklees to reduce the Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) in the primary phase of Almondbury Community School to 30 places for 2020/21 and a positive decision has been received from the Schools Adjudicator on the 30th September, which brought clarity to parents and carers who were applying for a Reception place to start in September 2020;
- Following an inspection by Ofsted in December 2018, Almondbury Community School was issued with an Academy Order in May this year and the Office of the School Adjudicator had advised that work would commence in due course on the academy conversion.

Jo-Anne Sanders advised the Panel that the main priority for Kirklees was to bring clarity to parents.

In response to a question from Cllr Munro regarding whether places would be guaranteed at King Jame's School, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that there was no guarantee for a school place at any school, but that children living in the King Jame's priority admission area would get priority over other children living outside the catchment area for King Jame's.

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In response to a question from Cllr Munro regarding the admission arrangements for children in year 5, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that children in the current year 5 would apply for a secondary school place next year. Jo-Anne Sanders further explained that there would be an opportunity in the autumn to consult with schools on their admission criteria and that the Learning Service would work with the schools in question on this.

In response to a question from Cllr McGuin regarding whether the published admission number for King Jame's would increase, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that the Learning Service was currently in consultation with the schools referenced in this report and that it would bring clarity regarding the number of places in year groups in due course, but that the focus was on making the transitional arrangements as smooth as possible for children and families.

In response to a question from Cllr Munro regarding children from Almondbury Community School being forced to travel to schools outside their catchment areas and siblings going to different schools, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that officers were working at pace to bring clarity to children on the school roll in cases where there would be an impact on travel and the Learning Service would liaise with those families in question.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding whether the priority admission areas were permanent, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that they were not permanent but that consultation could be undertaken in the autumn on the future admission arrangements for the schools where necessary with a view to making more permanent arrangements.

In response to a question from Cllr McGuin regarding whether a cost analysis had been undertaken on the cost of changes in school arrangements, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that the Learning Service was mindful of the fact that the Council had to make sure that the Almondbury Community School primary phase was fit for purpose and suitable and needed to make sure that the school funding arrangements followed the youngsters. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that a multi-agency team would look at all necessary issues including funding and that the Schools Forum would scrutinise this.

In response to a question from Cllr Munro regarding places available at Netherhall and Newsome High Schools, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that parents had been informed of a dedicated email address in Pupil Admissions who were communicating with parents on a one to one basis in response to their queries. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that the Learning Service was very close to being able to communicate with parents and carers to bring further clarity on this matter.

In response to a question from Cllr Munro regarding whether open evenings would be held for families to look at the various options for secondary school places for children on roll at Almondbury Community School, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that open evenings would be arranged and that officers were working as fast as they could to bring clarity and acknowledged this was a stressful time for families.

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In response to a question from Cllr McGuin regarding whether people were trying to get their children into another secondary school in-year, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that Pupil Admissions had seen some parents choose to take up the opportunity and that they had statutory rights to do so, but that places would be limited due to availability. The Panel was informed that Pupil Admissions would be happy to talk to any parents who wanted to take up this right. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that every child would be tracked in terms of ensuring that transitional arrangements were put in place.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding the success rating of the Impact Education Multi-Agency Academy Trust who would be the sponsor for Almondbury Community School, Jo-Anne Sanders advised that this had been communicated to parents and carers by the School early in October 2019. The Panel was informed that the Impact Education Multi-Agency Academy Trust had also been appointed as the sponsor for Newsome High School, which had also been served with an academy order. The Panel agreed to consider a report at a future meeting on the success rating of the Academy Trust.

The Panel agreed to attend meetings with parents regarding the transitional arrangements for children on roll at Almondbury Community School for the school year 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

1. The Panel noted the progress report on Almondbury Community School and thanked Jo-Anne Sanders and Martin Wilby for their contributions.
2. The Panel agreed to consider an update report to the November meeting outlining next steps and progress and which would include an outline of the transitional arrangements for children years 7 to 10.
3. That the Panel consider a future report on the success rating of the Academy Trust that was sponsoring Newsome High School and that the report should include an update on the Management arrangements for the school, following its Ofsted rating of special measures.
4. The Panel agreed to attend and observe meetings with parents held to discuss the transitional arrangements for children from Almondbury Community School for the school year 2020/21.

8 Children's Scrutiny Panel Work Programme and agenda plan for 2019/20

The Panel considered the work programme and agenda plan for the 2019/20 and will considered issues for inclusion.

RESOLVED -

1. That the 2019/20 Agenda Plan for the Children's Scrutiny Panel be noted and updated as agreed.
2. That the Governance Officer be authorised to liaise with officers on agreed actions.