

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2024**

**Present:** Councillor Mpofu-Coles (Chair);  
Councillors Gavin (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Cresswell, Davies, Gittings, Hoskin, Keane, McEwan, O'Connell, Robinson, Tarar and Woodward

**Apologies:** Councillors Edwards and McGoldrick

**31. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**32. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**

The minutes of the following meeting were received:

- Health and Wellbeing Board - 19 January 2024

**33. ANNUAL SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ATTAINMENT**

The Committee received a report to consider the Annual School Standards and Attainment report for the 2022-2023 academic year, and the priorities and activity to further improve attainment. A copy of Brighter Futures for Children's Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2022-2023 was attached to the report.

The report set out how Brighter Futures for Children, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, supported statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of the Council's strategic priorities and policies. The report used verified examination data and so related to the previous academic year (2022/23), not the current academic year.

The report explained that schools had been implementing research informed approaches to improve standards, with most schools being judged positively by Ofsted and in findings from school effectiveness assurance activities. However, schools were not yet closing gaps with national performance quickly enough. It was noted that actions taken in the autumn term since the July 2023 School Standards report presented to ACE Committee formed the basis of a proposed Education Strategy, for further consideration by ACE Committee at a future meeting.

The School Standards report informed the annual update of approach to working with schools in Reading, as set out in the Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness 2024/2025, appended to the report.

The report explained that 8 January marked the first anniversary of the death of Ruth Perry, a beloved colleague, peer and friend to so many in the education community. School leaders continued to be supported individually and in groups as the community

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continued to come to terms with the loss of Ruth, and the Education Partnership Board was maintaining collective prioritisation on school leader wellbeing. HM Coroner had conducted an inquest into the death of Ruth which concluded on 7 December 2023. The inquest recorded a narrative conclusion of suicide, contributed to by an Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2022. HM Coroner published a Prevention of future deaths report on 19 December 2023, requesting Department for Education, Ofsted and Reading Borough Council to respond to identified matters of concern.

It was noted that work had been undertaken with schools on the actions being taken in response to the Coroner's findings, which had aligned strongly with the work being undertaken with the Education Partnership Board, enhancing and developing current practice and enshrining this practice in the School Effectiveness Framework for Reading. The response of Reading Borough Council to the regulation 28 report and the School Effectiveness Framework for Reading were appended to the report.

The report explained that a more strategic and cohesive approach to collective action to improve outcomes for children had developed over the past year, building on the report presented to ACE Committee in July 2023. The Education Partnership Board had endorsed the following priorities:

- Developing school-to school support and challenge through the Education Partnership Board.
- Promotion of positive wellbeing for school leaders and school staff.
- Targeting of intervention and support to raise standards and progress of pupils at schools with the poorest results, informed by an increasingly sophisticated understanding of inequalities outcomes for disadvantaged groups.
- Building governor capacity, skills and oversight to enhance support and challenge.
- Implementing a Borough-wide teaching staff recruitment and retention strategy.

Actions to deliver the priority areas had been coordinated and progressed through the Education Partnership Board. Progress and next steps were summarised by the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Developing school-to school support and challenge through the Education Partnership Board;
- Priority 2: Promotion of positive wellbeing for school leaders and school staff;
- Priority 3: Targeting of intervention and support to raise standards and progress of pupils at schools with the poorest results, informed by an increasingly sophisticated understanding of inequalities outcomes for disadvantaged groups;
- Priority 4: Building governor capacity, skills and oversight to enhance support and challenge;
- Priority 5: Implementing a Boroughwide teaching staff recruitment and retention strategy.

Simon Uttley, Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, and Vice-Chair of the Reading Education Partnership Board; and Andrea O'Niel, Federation Head of Inclusion, Katesgrove Primary School, were present at the meeting for the item and addressed the Committee and answered questions on their experiences, work and roles as school leaders within the local school system.

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The report explained that the Council had high ambition to provide opportunity for all of children and young people to thrive in education and succeed. It was proposed that the current strategic approach to supporting improved educational outcomes and school effectiveness was further developed and captured in a Boroughwide Education Strategy, capturing the wider work with business, community and cultural organisations to improve educational outcomes for Reading children, this would be submitted for consideration at the next ACE Committee. This would include further learning from the independent learning review currently underway.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the position regarding school standards and attainment, as set out in the report, be noted;**
- (2) That the priorities and current and planned activity to further improved attainment, with a focus on reducing inequalities, be endorsed;**
- (3) That the Council's response to HM Coroner's regulation 28 report and actions being taken, be noted;**
- (4) That the Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness 2024-2025, including policy commitments in response to HM Coroner's Regulation 28 report, be endorsed;**
- (5) That a presentation of a Boroughwide Education Strategy 2024-2030 at a forthcoming ACE Committee, be supported.**

(Councillor Cresswell declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item relating to his work in the alternative provision education sector)

**34. READING SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The Committee received a report introducing the Reading Borough Council Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2022/23. The report would be appended to the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board's (SAB) Annual Report which was attached as appendix 2 to the report.

Susan Ross, Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality, Performance and Practice explained that Reading Borough Council was the host for the strategic partnership arrangement between Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. This formed the basis of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board operating across the three local authorities along with the other statutory partners in Health and the Police. The Board manager was supported by services in Reading including some administration, IT, payroll etc and line managed by the Assistant Director (Safeguarding, Quality and Practice). The

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Board was led by an Independent Chair who worked closely with the Board manager as an independent safeguarding expert.

The Council also had a Safeguarding Adults Team (SAT) who undertook the role of initial triage of concerns and referrals, decision making as to whether Care Act duties were required to be assessed, signposting to other services where required, and determining whether to initiate a section 42 (s42) enquiry to determine how to safeguard an individual at risk. Where an individual was already known the s42 would be referred on to the relevant team to carry out the section 42 but if the referral was not previously known, the team would carry out s42 enquiries.

A summary of the Council's Safeguarding Performance Data was set out in the report and included the following:

- 2374 Safeguarding Concerns had been received in 2022/23 which was a decrease since the previous year;
- Concerns which converted into a safeguarding enquiry were 18% compared with 13% in the previous year. It was noted that the national average was 33.9%;
- 41% of safeguarding concerns were from 'Health' staff which was a rise of 2.4% over the year;
- A majority of enquiries related to the 65+ age group which accounted for 57% of the enquiries, compared to 61% in the previous year;
- 85.5% of individuals involved in s42 enquiries for 2022/23 were of a 'White' ethnicity with the next biggest groups being 'Black or Black British' (6.7%) and 'Asian or Asian British' (6.1%);
- 37.4% of individuals had a Primary Support Reasons of 'Physical Support' although this had seen a decrease in its proportion of 8.9% over the year;
- The most common types of abuse were for 'Neglect and Acts of Omission' 41.2%, 'Financial or Material Abuse' 18.9% and 'Self Neglect' 18.9%;
- 68.5% of enquiries where alleged abused had taken place had been in the individuals 'Own Home';
- There had been three enquiries relating to modern day slavery. It was reported that in February 2023 'Operation Rivermead' had been launched in response to allegations of possible modern-day slavery. This had concluded in November 2023 and lessons learned would be the basis of continuing focus in 2023/24.
- The biggest source of risk was for individuals was from people within their own homes;

The report set out achievements including work being undertaken around hoarding and self-neglect cases, work with safeguarding and care providers around fire safety awareness and knowledge, training being provided on the Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS).

It was noted that financial abuse was a category of safeguarding and enquiries were investigated when reported.

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Timescales to deal with reporting of enquiries were available on the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board website. However, there had been difficulties in meeting these timescales due to staff shortages.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 22/23 be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 22/23 be published and appended to the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022/23.**

### **35. DENTISTRY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report from Hugh O'Keefe, Senior Programme Manager, Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental, Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, on NHS dental services in Reading.

The report explained that on 1 July 2022 the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board had taken on delegated responsibility for Dentistry, alongside Pharmacy and Optometry. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) had an explicit purpose to improve health outcomes for their whole population and the delegation would allow the ICB to integrate services to enable decisions to be taken as close as possible to their residents. The ICB were working to ensure that residents could experience joined up care, with an increased focus on prevention, addressing inequalities and to achieve better access to dental care and advice.

The following points were noted:

- Access to services were improving with a 21.4% increase from February 2022;
- Since the previous update no dental practices in the Reading area had left the NHS service;
- An increase in contract delivery was forecast for 23/24;
- The pilot Flexible Commissioning scheme had taken place from 1 June 2023 to 31 March 2024, 33 practices in BOB had taken part to support patients to access dental care. The ICB had agreed that the service should continue for a further year from 1 April 2024;
- It was noted there had been a low take up of the Flexible Commission scheme in Berkshire West;
- The ICB had been working as part of an NHS South-East programme to replace Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) that were lost due to contract hand backs and reductions, the aim was to start implementation from April 2024;
- Further changes to the NHS Dental contract had been announced by government in February 2024. This had included payment of a new patient premium, supporting dentists to treat one million new patients, increasing the minimum UDA price to £28 and a 'Golden Hello' payment for dentists in areas of need;

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- Other ambitions in the new NHS contract included water fluoridation; increase focus on prevention, dental support for life programmes, and focus on family hubs.

It was noted that dental take up was not at pre-pandemic levels and the low flexible commissioning take up in Berkshire West could be due to practices going back to previous levels in terms of delivering their targets.

The Committee discussed the report and presentation and thanked Hugh for the information. It was requested that a further update be provided to the Committee in six months times.

**Resolved - That a further presentation/report be submitted to the Committee in six months.**

### **36. SEND SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report providing an update on school place planning for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The report explained that the School Place Planning Strategy 2022-2027 set out how Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council delivered sufficient school places in the context of the Council's statutory duties, ensuring that school place delivery supported the achievement of the best outcomes for Reading children.

The Strategy confirmed that there were more than sufficient primary school places, and with the delivery of the new secondary academy, River Academy from September 2024, sufficient secondary places, for the duration of the Strategy. The Strategy had been updated with the latest capacity and census data and was appended to the report.

In contrast to the sufficiency challenge of previous years, and reflecting the national context of school place demand, the focus was shifting from the need for plans to deliver an increasing number of mainstream school places across phases, to:

- securing a sustainable school system of sufficient mainstream school places through effective school organisation and;
- meeting the rising challenge of sufficiency of specialist provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision and the pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.

It was noted that Reading was experiencing significant demand and financial pressures regarding school places for children with SEND. Significant progress had been made over the past year in securing more local school places for children with SEND in Additionally Resourced Provision in local mainstream schools. Development of further new provision for children with SEND was necessary, to both deliver sufficiency and to help reduce the financial pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant. Based on current plans, it was predicted that Reading would be short 234 places for children with SEND who require a non-mainstream setting from September 2024.

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The report set out proposals to deliver these places by utilising spare capacity in primary schools in Reading, exploring changing the designation of primary school provision to special provision, and set out time frames for next steps.

The report also proposed that an ACE Task and Finish Group be established to receive updates on options being considered for the development of a new special school, prior to further update reports to ACE Committee.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the continued roll-out of the Additionally Resources Provision programme across Reading be noted;**
- (2) That an ACE Task and Finish Group be established to receive updates on the options for the development of new special school provision;**
- (3) That the formation and agreed membership of the Task and Finish Group be delegated to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Lead Councillor for Public Health and Education and the Leader of the Council.**

(The meeting closed at 9.10 pm)