

CABINET MEETING: 15 DECEMBER 2014

CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ENTITLED "THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN CARDIFF"

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

AGENDA ITEM: 6

PORTFOLIO: EDUCATION & SKILLS (COUNCILLOR JULIA MAGILL)

Reason for this Report

1. To respond to a report published by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee in May 2013

Background

2. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Task and Finish Inquiry into educational attainment and poverty as part of its 2012-2013 work plan
3. The Committee agreed the following Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group:-

To explore how to close the attainment gap in Cardiff created by deprivation and poverty (where the attainment gap refers to the difference in educational attainment achieved by pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), compared with those who are not). The Task and Finish group would:

Gain an understanding of:

- How poverty can be defined and how many young people in Cardiff are affected
- Why poverty has an effect on the educational attainment of young people
- The scale of the educational attainment gap in Cardiff and how it is linked to poverty and deprivation
- Initiatives the Council has in place to address the barriers to attainment created by poverty.

- Consider evidence from teachers, school management, governors, student representatives and other key stakeholders.
- Examine good practice and successful initiatives in Cardiff and across comparable local authorities in the UK
- Use the evidence collected above to make informed recommendations to the Cabinet and other relevant stakeholders aimed at closing the attainment gap created by poverty in Cardiff.
- Report the findings of the Committee to the Cabinet and stakeholders

Issues

4. Data presented to the members of the Inquiry by a representative of Save the Children estimate that 18,289 young people in Cardiff live in relative income poverty; this is 26% of the 0-19 year old population of Cardiff.
5. The report recognises that the Authority, as a whole, acknowledges that there does not need to be a link between living in a deprived area and poor educational attainment, and that this link can be broken. It states that the Cabinet need to ensure that this mind-set is embedded in the culture of all schools, and in all Council services that engage with young people and families
6. The report states that pupils eligible for free school meals are outperformed by those not eligible at every key stage with the gap widening between Foundation Phase and KS4.
7. The report makes 18 recommendations and all have been accepted or partially accepted. Full details of the recommendations and response are in appendix A.

Reasons for Recommendations

8. To enable the Cabinet to respond to the report published by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Legal Implications

9. Any relevant legal implications will be identified and considered as part of the work to progress the responses to the recommendations that are accepted.

Financial Implications

10. Any relevant financial implications will be identified and considered as part of the work to progress the responses to the recommendations that are accepted.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to agree to the response to the recommendations as set out in Appendix A.

NICK BATCHELAR

Director

9 December 2014

The following appendix is attached:

Appendix A: Cabinet Response to the report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee entitled: "The Impact of Poverty on educational attainment in Cardiff" – Report of the Director of Education

Cabinet Response to the Report by Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee 'The Impact of Poverty on Educational Attainment in Cardiff' May 2013

Cabinet welcomes the findings of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. A response to each of the recommendations is set out below:

- R1. The Authority, as a whole, acknowledges that there doesn't need to be a link between living in a deprived area and poor educational attainment, and that this link can be broken. The Cabinet must ensure that this mind-set is embedded in the culture of all schools, and in all Council services that engage with young people and their families. *Supported by Key Findings 4 and 42***

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The Council has reaffirmed its commitment to raising educational attainment in Cardiff in the Corporate Plan, and is challenging the historic and unacceptable link between living in a deprived area and poor educational attainment through targeted improvement in individual schools and through the 21st Century schools plan. In 2014 there has been strong improvement in some schools serving areas of significant deprivation, such as Willows High School and Herbert Thompson Primary School.

The provisional data for 2014, published in October, shows that in Cardiff the FSM, non FSM gap closed between 2013 and 2014 at Key Stage 2 (Core Subject Indicator) from 19.4 to 17.6 percentage points and at Key Stage 4 (Level 2 inclusive) from 36.2 to 33.1. Comparative figures for Wales in 2014 are not yet published but both these 2014 measures for Cardiff were lower than the Wales 2013 figures.

- R2. The Cabinet must ensure that all schools, working closely with the Council and partner organisations, develop a holistic Family Engagement Strategy. This strategy should enable all parents to be fully engaged and involved in their child's education, break down any barriers that exist between home**

and school, and ensure that both parents and young people are getting the support they require. Supported by Key Findings 8 and 10

Response: This recommendation is accepted

Families First is the key programme for designing better integrated support for families living in poverty in Cardiff. The Families First programme aims to be family focused taking a whole family approach to improving outcomes and is bespoke in terms of tailoring support to individual family circumstances. It is an integrated strategy with effective co-ordination of planning and service provision across organisations, ensuring that needs assessment and delivery are jointly managed. The programme is pro-active seeking early identification and appropriate intervention for families. The programme identifies needs of communities and develops appropriate service delivery to fit those needs with particular regard for the opportunities to link with the Flying Start, Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) and Communities First programmes.

R3. The Cabinet must ensure that, in spending their Pupil Deprivation Grant allocation, schools use guidance materials, such as the Sutton Trust Toolkit, to make informed decisions on the most effective use of the money they have available. Schools are accountable for the use of this money, and must be required to demonstrate the impact the spending has had, and clearly identify the future long term impact it will have for pupils who live in deprivation. Supported by Key Findings 18, 19 and 20

Response: This recommendation is accepted

Schools have been provided with a range of guidance materials such as that provided by the Welsh Government and the Estyn self-evaluation tool. They have also been given electronic links to material such as the Sutton Trust materials. The Consortium have provided schools in the early summer term with a revised format for their PDG spending plan that they could use as their improvement plan. The Consortium has reminded schools about the requirement to publish their spending plans on line and are continuing to do that. Challenge advisers have discussed each school's improvement priorities. PDG will have featured within that discussion and challenge advisers approve and/or give a professional view in discussion with schools of the appropriateness of their plans. Good practice in the effective use of this grant in

Cardiff schools has been cited in the Estyn thematic survey (Pupil Deprivation May 2014).

**R4. The Cabinet identify and share examples of good practice for transition of pupils from primary to secondary school across all schools in Cardiff.
*Supported by Key Finding 23***

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The LA and the Consortium identify examples of good practice in transition planning and are working towards sharing examples of best practice. For example, the Fitzalan cluster have well developed transition planning for all pupils with a particular emphasis on those pupils who will be particularly vulnerable in the secondary context. Transition planning for some of our most vulnerable pupils with Special Educational Needs is well developed with Secondary Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) being involved in primary school pupil reviews.

**R5. The Cabinet ensure that the quality of teaching in Cardiff schools is of the highest standard so that all children are supported to achieve educationally by: a. putting in place the necessary support mechanisms to enable head teachers to challenge their staff to improve, and b. supporting the expansion of Teach First into South Wales.
*Supported by Key Findings 28, 29 and 24***

Response: This recommendation is accepted

There is an established performance management system established for teaching staff in all schools. The focus is on standards and in particular on the outcomes achieved by pupils and the quality of teaching in classrooms.

There are 19 Teach First graduates placed in 5 Cardiff high schools, Fitzalan, Cathays, Michaelston, Willows and Cantonian.

R6. The Cabinet establish a process for sharing good practice across all schools to facilitate a culture of sharing teaching practices and initiatives that have successfully impacted upon educational attainment, and

create a peer support network for teachers, support staff and governors in Cardiff.

Supported by Key Finding 25

Response: This recommendation is accepted

There have been significant steps taken throughout the past academic year to develop a Central South Wales Challenge improvement strategy in the region, building on the practice from the Challenge areas in England. This strategy is designed to build effective practice in schools and to ensure that this good practice 'travels' around the system. School Improvement Groups (SIGs) are established across the consortium. They are facilitating school to school improvement and each SIG has an action plan clearly focussed on improving standards. There have been high levels of engagement recorded so far.

R7. The Cabinet continue to explore the concept of Federated Schools, which are seen to facilitate the sharing of expertise, resources and practices.

Supported by Key Finding 26

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The Federation of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2014 which came into force on 22 May 2014 continue to allow governing bodies to be able to federate their schools if they wish. In addition the regulations provide LAs with the power to federate schools. These new regulations also contain a process for LAs to federate small schools, which have been defined in an Order made by the Welsh Ministers as a school which has fewer than 91 pupils. The concept of Federated schools continues to be explored as part of the ongoing 21st Century Schools refresh.

R8. The Cabinet support the Welsh Government drive for effective school governors, and put in place appropriate training and support to equip governors in Cardiff with the necessary skills and confidence to drive improvements and hold school leadership to account.

Supported by Key Finding 27

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The importance of good governance of schools is noted and is a priority in the Council's Estyn Action Plan. The process for appointing governors to LA vacancies is currently under review to strengthen the range of individuals who take up these roles.

R9. The Cabinet develop a city-wide campaign to ensure that all families who are eligible to receive free school meals are made aware of this entitlement and are supported to complete the necessary forms.

Supported by Key Finding 13, 14 and 30

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The uptake of Free School Meals has significantly improved following a City Wide take up campaign and a change to the administration. Customers can now apply for Free School Meals at the same time as claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, using the same application form. The service has been extended to the Hubs and Area Offices throughout the City so claims and enquiries can be dealt with in the locality. Data matching also enables officers to contact customers who are entitled to, but not in receipt of Free School Meals to ensure that there is proactive contact with those in greatest need.

R10. The Cabinet take every measure to remove the stigma or negativity attached to claiming free school meals, and continue to give full support and commitment to the introduction of biometric cashless catering in Cardiff secondary schools.

Supported by Key Findings 33 and 14

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The Education Department working with the Corporate ICT and Procurement have commissioned a project which should see a biometric cashless payment system installed in every Cardiff Secondary School by the end of the 2015 calendar year. The first system was installed in Willows High School early in the autumn term of 2014 and the next batch of schools to benefit from installation will be Fitzalan, Cathays and Plasmawr. This removes the 'visibility' of those on free school meals.

R11. The Cabinet explore strategies to raise awareness and promotion of the Free Breakfast Initiative, with a view to increase the uptake across the city and support families in most need. *Supported by Key Finding 32*

Response: This recommendation is accepted

Raising awareness and the promotion of the Free Breakfast Initiative remains a clear focus. There are currently 86 Primary and Special Schools operating the Free Breakfast Initiative, with a further school due to start later this term. This equates to 86% take up. The average take up within schools operating the Free Breakfast Initiative is 25%. Of the 15 remaining schools, 7 operate a paid breakfast club.

R12. The Cabinet support a clear Council-wide commitment to the principles of Restorative Approaches within schools and other partner organisations across the city. This will include a clear vision, strategy for implementation and commitment to provide appropriate support resources. Supported by Key Finding 33 and 34

Response: This recommendation is accepted

Since May 2013 there has been a focus on embedding restorative approaches in the new Cardiff Families First programme from the outset. Training is ongoing and projects such as Restorative Approaches Family Group Meetings and Team Around the Family are examples of good practice in embedding restorative approaches in their work with children, young people and families. Training has also taken place to support the creation of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels. 119 people have been trained on 3 to 5 day Restorative Approaches courses since April 2013. 68 were from Families First and 46 from Neighbourhood Resolution Panels as well as 1 from the Youth Offending Service and 4 PCSO's to support that initiative. Over a hundred further staff from schools and Social Services have received inset and awareness input on restorative approaches during this period.

Schools such as Herbert Thompson Primary School and Fitzalan High School continue to utilise restorative approaches and report improved behaviour, relationships, attendance and exclusion data that they link to restorative work with pupils and their families. Both schools presented at the recent Restorative Approaches in South Wales Conference as models of good practice in earliest intervention and prevention in education.

Depth has been added to the Restorative Approaches offer through Family Learning Signature, a family engagement, assessment and distance travelled tool that is restorative and empowering in that it engages families to identify their own needs and contribute solutions. 71 Agents have been trained who are able to facilitate a Family Learning Signature. 44 are from schools, 16 from Families First and 11 from Communities First. Good practice is emerging at Fitzalan School and Baden Powell School in the use of Family Learning Signature to identify family needs and create and identify interventions to address them.

**R13. The Cabinet support Library Services to undertake promotion and outreach to schools so that young people have access to literature from a young age, with particular focus on deprived parts of the city.
Supported by Key Finding 35**

Response: This recommendation is accepted

A financial bid is currently being considered by CyMAL to support the purchase of a suitable vehicle to undertake a pilot scheme with primary schools in the East of the City. Outcomes and measures of success will focus on new users/book issues and relevant demographics supported by the Summer Reading Challenge. Work will be undertaken to ascertain whether the schools' library service could be supported by the deprivation grant.

**R14. The Cabinet ensure that the expansion of Flying Start into communities most in need is not held back by inadequate facilities, and that the programme is delivered in the highest quality environments, recognising the importance of early intervention for young people living in poverty.
*Supported by Key Findings 36 and 37***

Response: This recommendation is accepted

22 schemes are in progress or have been completed from 2012 until the present time. All schemes have been designed with a view to developing high quality environments and to comply with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales standards and building regulations.

**R15. The Cabinet support the work of volunteer organisations, such as Student Volunteers Cardiff, and raise awareness across all schools in Cardiff of the additional support they can offer.
*Supported by Key Finding 39 and 40***

Response: This recommendation is accepted

The work of volunteers is co-ordinated centrally and at the present time there are 202 business volunteers and 90 third sector volunteers supporting pupils vulnerable to underachievement in Cardiff schools. Central staff link volunteers with schools, train them and provide on-going support.

R16. The Cabinet explore the possibility of co-locating health services and social services within a school setting, enabling a holistic approach to helping families in deprived communities, and raising the profile of these services.

Supported by Key Finding 41

Response: This recommendation is accepted

One of the key aims of the forthcoming refresh of the local authority's "21st. Century Schools Programme" is to ensure that in the future "Community Focused Schools" are developed. It is commonly acknowledged that our schools are best placed within the community to deliver a broad range of wider community benefits. As part of this it would be possible in the future to consider the co-locating of health and social services within a school setting.

R17. The Cabinet, through its responsibilities of monitoring and challenge, support school leaders to develop appropriate management and financial expertise to adapt to the increasing demands placed on schools.

Supported by Key Finding 26

Response: This recommendation is accepted

Individual Schools buy into an SLA with Finance who provide support in building up a budget as well as monitoring and providing advice on the financial impact of any potential decision a school may have. For 2013/14 and 2014/15 there has increasingly been a prescriptive nature to the grants provided for by Welsh government not least in the case of Pupil Deprivation Grant. Schools have received advice from finance in respect to eligibility of expenditure and in compiling the returns for the annual audit of that Grant. In addition, this Grant has significantly increased from 2013/14 to 2015/16 from £450 per pupil to £1050 per pupil. Whilst, this has been positive it should be noted that the increase in 2014/15 where it more than doubled was heralded as a one off increase with a return in 2015/16 to 2013/14 levels. Therefore, schools were unable to use the funding in a planned and sustainable way with the 2015/16 increase only being confirmed in October 2014.

R18. The cabinet accepts these recommendations and its response, identifies an action plan, including timescales, for the implementation of the accepted recommendations.

Response: This recommendation is accepted

All recommendations are at least partially accepted and are contained within the Education Business Plan which documents the actions to be taken, including timescales, along with quantitative targets for the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals. All Estyn improvement actions are included within the Education Business Plan.