

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

15 May 2019

YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Attainment 2018

1. Every year we review the attainment results of North Yorkshire Pupils. This year in particular, members devoted considerable attention to the report, adopting strong and probing lines of questioning around the key aspects.
2. The 2018 Attainment results demonstrate that North Yorkshire children are on the whole achieving well in reading, writing and maths. We have much to be proud of. Results in Key Stage 4 in particular stand out as a success story.
3. Despite the identifiable improvement over the previous year, some areas – all of them familiar to the committee because of our previous work - are manifestly a challenge. Results in Key Stage 2, although improved, show levels of attainment in maths stubbornly resistant to the levels of improvement we all want to see. School standards in the coast remain an issue for the committee (and for me personally of course), although it is reassuring that the Coastal Opportunity Area should help to redress the imbalance.
4. Long standing performance challenges around children eligible for free school meals remain, with this cohort above national benchmarks for school absence and over-represented in terms of exclusions.
5. These are all areas which have consistently featured prominently in our work programme and, in the light of the report, will do so over the next year.
6. The strong improvement in attainment for children receiving SEN support at primary school is welcome. Performance for children with Education, Health and Care Plans is broadly in line with benchmarks at early years and primary, and above benchmarks at Key Stage 4. In the light of the known, significant budget pressures associated with these areas (both are significant contributors to the previously reported overspend), the committee had already decided to look at how the directorate is working to ensure these pupils, and other disadvantaged students, are receiving the appropriate support.

Supporting Underperforming Schools

7. We reviewed how we support underperforming primary, secondary, special schools and Pupil Referral Units.
8. The School Improvement Strategy 2019-21 recognises that it is the responsibility of school leaders to secure improvement in their schools. As part of the working partnership with schools, the local authority will act as champions of educational excellence for children and young people, working with early years settings, maintained schools, academies, free and independent schools to forge strong professional relationships through school networks and teaching school alliances.
9. We liked the way the quality assurance role was being exercised, effectively monitored and challenged across all schools regardless of whether they were LA maintained or academies. We found the four prioritisation categories adopted to judge and assess the risk in the quality of education being provided and where necessary respond to these risks, to be transparent, practical and effective. This clearly assists the directorate to reach an agreement about the intervention required, enabling the local authority to deliver its statutory functions, manage risks, target appropriate interventions and help those schools and institutions who are causing concern.
10. Without being in any sense complacent, we acknowledged that the numbers of schools deemed to be in a position where intervention is necessary (priorities 3 and 4) is relatively small. We were, however, still reassured that there is a well-established process for identifying schools causing concern and clear arrangements for focussed and timely interventions in those schools with a range of options being used and/or available .

School Governance

11. The committee has long recognised that the traditional role of school governors changes significantly when a school becomes an Academy. We received a comprehensive report on governance at all schools, focussing especially on the extent to which schools must be transparent in their decision making.
12. Inevitably, the changing roles and responsibilities of Parent Governors featured strongly in what was, in truth, very much an awareness raising item rather than directed scrutiny. But for members this report highlighted yet again an important discussion the committee has not yet had: the relationship between Multi Academy Trusts and the local communities served by schools under Trust management. Members were of a mind to take this further, but believe more thought is needed on how we should best approach such a complex topic.

Looking ahead

13. In the pipeline for consideration over the next two or three meetings are:

- Disabled Children Service - Current challenges, priorities activity, covering how we are meeting needs in more inclusive and enabling ways.
- Young People with additional needs Transitioning to Adulthood - How NYCC supports and offers guidance to a young person aged 14 to 25 with special educational needs or a disability. Including access to education, training and employment, and to live as independently as possible. This may be best tackled in a joint informal session with Care and Independence Scrutiny Committee.
- School deficits and overspend programme of action: progress.
- Annual Report/Update on Children Safeguarding Board.
- Supporting children in and out of education who have medical condition, especially a chronic (life threatening) illness.

14. I reported last time on the committee's review of the prevalence and experience of North Yorkshire children of compulsory school age whose parents opt, as is their right in law, to educate their child at home instead of sending them to school - referred to as Elective Home Education (EHE). In the light of guidance published last month which reflects legal advice received by the Government indicating that local authorities' powers in relation to home education often go further than was previously thought, I am minded to hold another more detailed session to examine the topic further.

JANET JEFFERSON

Chairman, Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Hall,
NORTHALLERTON
29 April 2019

Background Documents - Nil.