



Minutes

EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 1 JULY 2014, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.02 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.52 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Margaret Aston, John Chilver, Phil Gomm, Paul Irwin, Valerie Letheren (Chairman), Wendy Mallen, Robin Stuchbury, David Watson and Katrina Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

David Babb and Monique Nowers

GUESTS PRESENT

Mike Appleyard, Bill Bendyshe-Brown, David Martin, Rafiq Raja and Chauhdry Shafique MBE

OFFICERS PRESENT

Michael Carr, Raza Khan, Ed Mallam, Chris Munday, Joy Shakespeare and Gordon Vincent

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dev Dhillon and Mark Shaw. Members were also advised that Rebecca Burchell, the Secondary School Parent Governor representative on the Committee had resigned. The Chairman expressed her gratitude to Rebecca Burchell for her contribution to the work of the Committee over the past two years.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2014 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment under item 10 The Munro Programme –

‘David Johnston reported that Cambridgeshire were the only other local authority’ was amended to read ‘David Johnston reported that Cambridgeshire was an example of another local authority.’

The Chairman reported that the Ofsted inspection of Children’s Services began a week or so after the last Committee meeting. Mrs Sue Imbriano, Strategic Director – Children and Young People advised members that the Ofsted report would not be published until August. The County Council would receive a report in Mid-July, so at this stage she could make no further comments.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported that she has recently attended the Public Scrutiny Conference in London and the Bucks Budget Scrutiny work led by Andrew Brown had been nominated for an award. Buckinghamshire was commended for the transparency and strength of its Scrutiny Committees. The Chairman also commented that she had enjoyed the in-house Select Committee training session and it was interesting to draw the parallels between our Select Committees and those of Parliament.

The Chairman and also several other members had enjoyed visits to the PACE centre, which supports children with cerebral palsy and other sensory motor disabilities.

The Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board had held some briefing sessions for members and staff on the lessons learned from recent Serious Case Reviews.

The Chairman had also visited Thomas Hickman School to learn more about their Pupil Premium work and attended the United Nations Day with school pupils.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

The Chairman invited other members to update the Committee on their recent visits. All members who had visited the PACE centre had found it very inspiring and interesting. A member also commented that the Serious Case Review briefings had been thought provoking. Members were also impressed with the debating skills and the suggested solutions of the school children involved in the United Nations Day.

7 QUESTIONS TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The Chairman welcomed Mr Mike Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Mr Bill Bendyshe-Brown, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Mr Chris Munday, Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention to the meeting. The Chairman invited member’s questions for the Cabinet Member:

Are you confident that you can deal with the pressure over changes to home to school transport and are you happy that children are free to choose schools according to their needs, rather than their parent’s ability to pay for their transport?

Parents will obviously always do the best for their children. The Council are working under financial constraints and home to school transport is an area for savings, rather than cutting areas which might affect educational performance. I am also now looking at Special Educational Needs (SEN). We cannot do everything that we used to be able to do. I have received a clear steer from parents to retain home to school transport and the discretionary transport arrangements. I am trying hard to retain the service and limit cost increases.

There are growing pressures on school places due to housing developments in the county. Does the fact that Aylesbury Vale District Council has not accepted the Aylesbury Vale Plan make school place planning even more difficult?

The lack of an agreed plan for Aylesbury Vale does represent a challenge for Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) going forward, but to date BCC has met its statutory responsibilities. Planning is important and for larger developments Section 106 monies could be accessed. BCC does have a robust system for analysing housing development.

A member commented that there were issues with school buildings being able to accommodate an increase in pupil numbers. In response, Chris Munday noted that Cressex School had been built over-sized in anticipation of the future increase and BCC had identified a need to expand some other Secondary schools.

Following the Committee's Readiness for Work Inquiry, could members have a further update on Apprenticeships within the Council and generally across Bucks?

Mr Bill Bendyshe-Brown has led on developing apprenticeships which has been a priority for the skills agenda. Currently there were more companies requesting apprentices, than young people expressing interest in the roles. Concerns had been expressed that there was no quality assurance for companies willing to take on apprentices, so a 'Going for Gold' initiative had been introduced in order to address this. A member asked why there was a shortage of young people coming forward and Mr Bendyshe-Brown commented that often young people were not aware of the opportunities. However now that Ofsted were looking at skills in school inspections, he hoped that schools would promote opportunities like apprenticeships as an alternative to university. He had attended meetings of the Bucks Association of Secondary Heads (BASH) to promote the skills agenda and through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) skills group, employers were having more opportunity to influence the school curriculum.

The Chairman thanked Mr Appleyard, Mr Bendyshe-Brown and Chris Munday for their contributions.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO PLAN

Mr Mike Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Mr Chris Munday, Service Director – Learning, Skills and Prevention suggested that it might be sensible to consider Items 8 and 9 together.

The Chairman invited members' questions on the Children and Young People's Services Portfolio Plan 2014-15 and the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18.

What are the priorities for the Education and Skills area within the Portfolio this coming year?

A major priority is to engage with more children in Early Years therefore Children's Centres are a priority, as we are not reaching enough children aged two and three years currently. Through Children's Centres, we can support children's early development, even preparing parents pre-birth and then at the other end, it is important to prepare children for adult life. I want young people leaving school to be better equipped in presenting themselves for university places and the world of work. Alongside these two priorities, we also want to deliver high quality academic education.

A member took the opportunity to remind the Committee that all elected members have a responsibility to Looked After Children as Corporate Parents. Mrs Sue Imbriano, Strategic Director, Children and Young People reinforced this comment, explaining that whilst the Corporate Parenting Panel membership included elected members, who focus on looking at the quality of services provided for Looked After Children, it is the responsibility of all elected members and officers of the Council to be Corporate Parents. A training course was being offered on 9th October for all members to help them gain a greater understanding of their responsibilities in this area.

With additional large housing developments in the county, will the local authority be able to meet the additional demand for primary school places and will Children's Centres be able to expand? How can Children's Centres engage more with their communities?

Children's Centres are crucial to giving children the best start in life. We want to improve the current offer and hopefully improve outcomes. Children's Centres should be maintained to deliver a range of services and we need to ensure that there is good quality provision in deprived areas. A new Government initiative to introduce 15 hours of free child care for two year olds in disadvantaged areas has led to 803 two year old places being created in Bucks. We need to encourage good quality providers into our more deprived areas. There have been challenges with the level of early years funding from Government, but fortunately Schools Forum had agreed to move budgets in order to support early years work.

We need to consider where our growth areas are and generally this is in our more urban deprived areas. We must also look at how best our provision can fit the communities it is serving. There is a mixed picture in how well the Children's Centres are engaging with their communities. I visited Burnham Children's Centre and was very impressed by their close links to the GP surgery opposite, offering Baby Clinic and Speech and Language therapy at the Centre alongside other impressive services, but I felt this level of provision is not necessarily universal across the county. Buckinghamshire County Council are looking to establish Early Excellence Hubs which will bring together two year old provision, Children's Centres and Schools together in order to drive improvements in these areas. We must target those children and families who really need this support the most.

Originally guidance for Children's Centres specified that they needed to be within pram pushing distance of the communities they served but this has now been revised. Our view is that the building should not be the key issue as services could be delivered via existing community facilities like a village hall or school. Children's Centres need to be encouraged to use other community resources to drive improvement and Mike Appleyard is working hard to improve engagement with communities who do not currently take up the offer. A member commented that outreach work from the Children's Centre in his area was invaluable

How many people have taken up the two year old places?

85% of eligible families have taken up the offer to date but additional places still need to be developed.

I am pleased that Children's Centres are a priority and I was impressed with provision at my local Hazlemere Centre. Is there any difference in the provision where the Centre is operated by Barnardo's? I believe that staff were uncertain about the future of the centres.

We are undertaking a review of Children's Centres and we understand the issues which Barnardo's are facing – the outcome of this will be known shortly. We anticipate that we will go out to market for all Children's Centres, except for the ones identified to become Early Excellence Hubs and Barnardo's will have the opportunity to bid for them, alongside any other interested providers during the tender process. We want Children's Centres to be the best they possibly can be and are moving towards a new approach which will improve outcomes for

children. The Chairman commented that she was pleased that Children's Centres were being retained and developed in Bucks, as other local authorities have cut funding in this area.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Donald McPhail, Chairman of Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) to the meeting. A later item on the agenda would focus specifically on the work of the BSCB, but the Chairman asked Mr McPhail how the BSCB could work with BCC to help to deliver the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18.

Mr McPhail reported that the current Children and Young People's Plan had been provided to the Board for comment and there were some specific safeguarding priorities included for the Board. The Board has to be targeted in its oversight of effectiveness due to capacity issues, but there were standing items on the agenda of the Board which pick up issues of capacity within the partner agencies, so in this way the Board can play a part in monitoring the implementation of the Children and Young People's Plan. Mr McPhail acknowledged that the interconnections between different agencies with responsibilities for children could be further enhanced.

When will the detailed Action Plan for the Children and Young People's Plan be ready?

It is in the final stages of development and should be agreed and available very soon.

Are all partner's contributing effectively to achieving the Children and Young People's Plan priorities?

Yes – we have been particularly pleased with positive practical projects which have been initiated by the three local Children's Boards, which are district council based, with Chiltern and South Bucks together. One project tackling Fuel Poverty won a national award for partnership working and had resulted in one family saving over £1,000 through using energy monitors.

The Conference we attended on Friday focussed on preventing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was very good, but what work is going on to ensure that other children who could not attend will still receive these important messages?

There were 120 pupils attending on Friday out of around 25,000 in total in our secondary schools, so we do need to expand these experiences to reach a wider audience. In addition the PSHE curriculum needs to cover the subjects which are crucial for developing children into adults. There needs to be a more determined effort in schools to help children to make the transition into adulthood alongside the drive for academic achievements.

The Chairman advised that the Committee were planning to undertake Inquiries looking at Internet Safety and Hearing the Voice of the Child.

The Chairman thanked all the contributors for attending the meeting and commented that the Committee would like to support local partners in the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18 and would revisit the topic at a later date.

RESOLVED

That the information gathered today be noted as evidence.

9 THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

This item was covered under Item 8.

10 THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The Chairman welcomed Mr Donald McPhail, Independent Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) to the meeting. The Chairman asked Mr McPhail to provide the Committee with a brief explanation of the role of the Board. Mr McPhail explained that the BSCB's statutory role had two elements – the first was to co-ordinate arrangements

between agencies in the area to ensure that they are safeguarding children and promoting safeguarding and the second is to monitor the effectiveness of the agencies and these arrangements. It was noted that the work of the Board had been considered by Ofsted as part of the recent inspection of Children's Services.

The Chairman commented that when she had attended meetings of BSCB in the past, she felt that the membership of the Board was very large and she asked if it was necessary for all the agencies to be represented. Mr McPhail explained that the membership of the Board was prescribed by the statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. BSCB did not have many agencies over and above what was set out in the guidance, although the Chairs of the seven Sub-Committees of the Board also attend. In terms of Education representatives BSCB had only two representatives when the statutory guidance recommends four. BSCB were in the process of developing a secondary concept – BSCB hoped to set up a Reference Group which would run parallel to BSCB for those agencies who do not need to be on the main board, but who BSCB do need to communicate with.

The Chairman asked how BSCB would link in with the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub). In response Mr McPhail reported that BSCB had been receiving regular updates on the implementation of the MASH and monitoring the effectiveness of the MASH was one of the Board's top priorities. The Board had agreed 17 priorities but Mr McPhail listed the top ones as follows: - i) promoting a shared understanding of thresholds across all agencies ii) monitoring the effectiveness of Early Help/Early Intervention iii) monitoring the effectiveness of information sharing iv) monitoring the effectiveness of the MASH v) raising awareness of female genital mutilation vi) to extend section 11 auditing beyond statutory agencies and vii) monitor the quality of practice in relation to neglect across Early Years, Children in Need and Child Protection teams.

The Chairman invited members' questions.

Do we use the Local Government Association's Toolkit in schools to help raise awareness of child sexual exploitation? Young People in these situations naturally seem to feel that they are at fault and we need to get a clear message out to children and young people that this is not the case.

The key message in Safeguarding services is that abuse of a child is never a child's fault. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is far more complex. If a young person has been groomed into situations they are unaware of, they can then feel more responsible for getting into that situation. We now have a far better understanding of CSE.

We know you have been involved in the Jimmy Saville investigations due to his links with Bucks, what is the up to date situation? Also the press coverage of the Saville case has shown that children just were not believed when they tried to alert adults as to what was going on. How can we reassure young people today that this situation will not arise and that they will be believed if they come forward for help?

There was a big change in the recognition of child sexual abuse in the 1980s. The key thing was that children had tried to tell and alert people to what was going on but were not believed. But we have a very different scenario now. From the 1980s onwards all professionals had training on how to recognise and deal with sexual abuse, so agencies now respond far more effectively. Now CSE is a further development of this trend and people are more likely to be believed. Previously these issues were just too big for people to contemplate.

Sue Imbriano, Strategic Director, Children and Young People agreed with Mr McPhail but also commented that we should not believe that this has been totally fixed, as there are still some people even now who may not believe children or who may feel that they are at fault. Young people have to go through very difficult processes just to bring perpetrators to court. The sad reality is that people do this and our job is to try and protect children and make it more difficult for the perpetrators.

With regards to the Jimmy Saville investigations, BSCB has had a significant role in some parts of the investigation and played no part at all in other areas. Thames Valley Police initially investigated and this work was passed over to NHS England, who are due to publish their findings in September – BSCB was not involved in the detail of this. BSCB recognised that people needed to have confidence in the hospitals of Bucks, so they carried out a joint independent Safeguarding audit with the Bucks Safeguarding Adults Board. This looked at the robustness of policy, practice, recruitment including recruitment of volunteers, audit, management of concerns and the reporting of allegations in all hospitals in Bucks. This was completed on March 2014 and an executive summary was published. The full report was sent to NHS England and was published this week. The report included approximately 27 recommendations with the key recommendation focussing on strengthening training. The key finding was that the audit did not find any issues of children or vulnerable adults who had not been safeguarded.

How can the Board help schools to keep young people safe? I am aware of a young person who has seen the ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ production and had discussions and PSHE whilst in school, who is being groomed by another young person who is known to the police, yet they have still not realised this.

CSE has come upon us – our Business Manager has brought in key people from other authorities in the North of England to share their learning with the Board. BSCB has also set up a CSE Working group to ensure we capture the strategic issues of identifying and managing CSE. The Board has provided information to schools to help them with this issue and commissioned the ‘Chelsea’s Choice’ production which is aimed at secondary school pupils. The Board also ensures that issues emerging from the CSE Working Group are shared with the Internet Safety Sub-Committee as a lot of grooming occurs online. This coming Tuesday we are presenting the work we have done in this area to professionals in Bucks and also to the media. CSE is such a complex issue it is important to respond in a variety of ways. Raising awareness and monitoring awareness of CSE is another of the Board’s priorities.

How can BSCB monitor or assess effectiveness? What data do you receive from partner agencies?

This work is mainly undertaken by the Serious Cases Sub-Committee and the Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Committee which undertakes targeted auditing to answer key questions on specific issues. We also need to receive key audits from agencies scrutinising their own provisions. We receive data from Thames Valley Police, Health and Social Care and we need to further refine what data we request and to ensure that we received analysed data rather than raw data, due to the limited time and resources of the Board, to enable us to challenge more effectively.

How can you validate an internal audit?

We can do our own audits but BSCB has limited capacity. Capacity is an ongoing challenge in respect of BSCB having limited financial resources and also capacity within agencies themselves to contribute to the work of the Board.

When do you do a Serious Case Review?

The Board has to conduct a Serious Case Review (SCR) if a child has died and the death is linked to abuse or neglect. Also if a child has been significantly harmed and there is a suggestion that agencies did not work together. I will always commission an SCR if the statutory guidance requires it and the new guidance has increased the number of ‘musts’ for SCRs.

How can we monitor internet bullying or grooming more effectively?

This is very hard for the Board to monitor. The Internet Safety Sub-Committee engage with young people and take guidance from them regarding the technology and how it is used by

young people to help the Board promote safety in schools and with parents. The sub-group has been very active in reaching out to parents.

I am very concerned that the press coverage of the Jimmy Saville case may confuse the public with regards to the current situation. Although the victims of Jimmy Saville have suffered tremendously, I want children and young people today to know that they will be believed and supported if they look for help. How can we achieve this?

The Board is definitely grounded in the here and now. The historical situation would not divert the Board but neither is there any arrogance because this is a constantly changing area. We currently have an SCR which is looking at CSE and there will be more to learn locally as a result of this.

One of the priorities is to measure the effectiveness of Early Intervention. Does the Board know yet if the investment in Early Intervention is working and if not, when will we know?

From our point of view it is not just the local authority which is providing early help. We need to ensure that partners are also delivering services in this area and this in time may reduce demand on local authority services. But we do not know yet and we need to identify indicators of success in order to assess the overall effectiveness.

Sue Imbriano commented that the local authority invest in programmes which have been proven to work elsewhere but often the return on early help would not be seen within one Council term. Also it may not bring cashable savings but instead will lead to cost avoidance in future. Sue Imbriano expressed the view that BCC was still not investing enough in early help.

CSE was also a priority for the Council, with members voting in support of more money in this area. This has enabled the appointment of additional case workers in the R U Safe? project run for BCC by Barnardo's working with potential victims and a School Education Worker for Schools and Youth Centres. In April BCC ran two anti-bullying conferences, one for professionals and one for young people and there was a significant focus on cyberbullying. It was important to reassure young people that we all make mistakes and even if you do, it does not mean that all is lost, there is a way back. We cannot underestimate the lifelong impact of CSE on victims.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Imbriano for rounding up and Mr McPhail for his hard work as Chairman of BSCB and his interesting contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the evidence provided be noted.

11 FAMILIES FIRST

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Sue Imbriano, Strategic Director, Children and Young People, Mrs Joy Shakespeare, Head of Family Resilience and Mr Gordon Vincent, Consultant to the meeting. A copy of York Consulting's Interim Report on Buckinghamshire: Families First: The Journey March 2014 and a copy of the Payment by Results figures were tabled at the meeting. Mr Vincent gave an overview of the progress of Families First in Buckinghamshire. Bucks had initially undertaken a pilot project with 11 families in Chesham to test the new practice model. This helped to inform the whole project and Families First was rolled out to the whole of the county from June 2013.

There were four key considerations when working with the identified troubled families. The family might encompass different households and would be multi-generational – often some of the problems within families had been faced by the parents and today their children were demonstrating similar behaviours. Troubled families had multiple issues which could only be resolved by effective multiagency work. There had to be an agreement of what success would

look like for each family and there was a real drive to make this change sustainable, which meant a change in attitudes.

Families First appears to be delivering results. One professional takes the lead with a family winning their trust and agreeing with them a plan to move forward. This worker needs to be able to identify all the issues within the family, prioritise where to start, gain their trust and manage other professionals effectively.

Professor Montgomery from Oxford University is proposing to undertake a three year study with a limited number of families to look at how interventions are delivered and managed, the impact and relative costs of the interventions, consider what other factors might influence outcomes for the families and to agree how success can be measured effectively. There will be learning from the agency representatives, the parents or carer's stories and also from the children's stories.

The Chairman invited members' questions.

You mention that previously there was an issue with too many professionals trying to engage with these families. How do you decide who should be the lead professional?

We do this in agreement with each family and the agencies involved. Often there is one agency who has a particularly good relationship with the family and so far there have been no issues in deciding who is the right person to take the lead.

What is the definition of a 'family'?

The Government's definition is a household where at least one person is under 18 years of age. Sometimes the families we deal with stretch across two households.

Families First seems like a great example of preventative work. How do families access Families First?

Initially we identified a number of families and others are referred to us from other agencies. Obviously there are lots of families out there who can manage with lower levels of support or who can help themselves with the right signposting.

Do you have sufficient resources to sustain the project in the longer term? The suggested return of saving £4.30 for every £1 spent is encouraging.

We have adopted this practice model as we feel it is sustainable for the longer term, rather than setting up a dedicated team. The savings or cost avoidance are felt in all agencies - sometimes the savings will be felt more keenly by other agencies rather than BCC.

We now have a national cost savings tool which we can use to give a true picture of the savings.

How do you define successfully turning a family around and how can you secure sustainability if a professional leaves?

Success relates to long term changes for example school attendance maintained for one year or not claiming benefits for six months. We also have a protocol in place to ensure transition to a different lead agency over time.

You really cannot measure the success of the programme until these children go on to have their own families. Will we be able to track the families over the longer term?

There are some short term wins as well as the longer term ones. Many of these families have been made helpless by the system. A crucial part of this is how agencies are working closely together and building trust.

How will the research project work?

The details are being finalised at the moment. The terms of reference are about to be agreed and BCC will receive annual interim reports.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Imbriano, Mrs Shakespeare and Mr Vincent for their contributions to the meeting.

12 EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The Chairman welcomed Mr Mike Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Mr Chris Munday, Service Director, Learning, Skills and Prevention, Mr Raza Khan, Chief Executive, Bucks Learning Trust and Mrs Amanda Hopkins, Director of Education, Bucks Learning Trust to the meeting. The annual report on Educational Standards was included in the agenda papers and the Chairman asked the contributors for the key headlines.

Mr Appleyard explained that the report contained the traditional measures of academic achievement in Bucks schools, but he believed that it was important to measure and celebrate success in other areas of the curriculum and school life too. He wanted to see excellence across the whole of the education system. Mr Munday reiterated that the statutory responsibility for standards in all schools which are state funded rests with Buckinghamshire County Council and as with the previous year's Educational Standards report, there were both positive and negative trends.

Mrs Amanda Hopkins, Director of Education, Bucks Learning Trust (BLT) advised that BLT were using these results to drive their work programme. One area for consideration was how best to approach Phonics, as there appeared to be a discrepancy in the Phonics results. BLT were carrying out an audit to see how Phonics are delivered across the county with a view to sharing expertise from schools with strong Phonics performance. There were a number of different Phonics programmes and the BLT would look at what specific cohorts of children need.

For Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, BLT had appointed high quality English and Maths Leads for both Primary and Secondary to improve results. BLT were also aiming to tackle underperforming groups and had outlined to the Committee previously their narrowing the gap initiatives.

A member asked for information on Grammar school admissions, particularly what percentage of children securing a Grammar school place had been privately educated and what percentage were from out of county primary schools. Mr Munday explained that this was a report on Standards and he would supply the Committee with data on the latest round of admissions at another meeting. Grammar schools were not the only way of driving up attainment – we want improving standards in all our schools. The member commented that he could see from the report that there had been improvements in the Primary sector and it would be interesting to see if children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) who had early intervention to support them at Primary level, were then gaining Grammar school places.

Mr Appleyard reported that any child who qualifies for a Grammar school place in Bucks will get one, this guarantee does not apply to children who live outside of the county. Upper Schools were improving their performance and it was important to recognise this. Mr Raza Khan, Chief Executive, Bucks Learning Trust added that they could have a great impact in Key Stage 3 and 4 and significant progress was already being seen in upper schools which should then be translated into exam results. Next year every Upper School will be able to participate in an Inspection style review initiative, which will result in a tailored action plan for improvement and BLT hoped that Upper Schools would come to be seen as a genuine alternative to the Grammar Schools in Bucks. Another member agreed that it was great for Upper Schools to be aspiring to higher standards but the Committee was simply requesting data on Grammar admissions, to see if the new 11+ exam had made any difference to

outcomes and also because in the past there had perhaps been a perception that Bucks catered too much for high achievers from neighbouring counties .

The Chairman welcomed Mr Raja, Chairman of the Muslim Parent's Association in High Wycombe to the meeting. Mr Raja opened with greetings of Ramadan to the Committee and thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to comment on the Education Standards report. He commented that he was not anti-Grammar schools having attended the Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe but it should be recognised that some sections of the community were not achieving so well, including Black and Minority Ethnic groups such as Pakistani children and White working class boys. He suggested that the Committee should build on the findings of the Strand report and analyse the reasons behind the lack of achievement of Pakistani children. He also expressed the view that the Committee should commission an independent review into whether the selective system disadvantaged children from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and children in receipt of free school meals (FSM).

Mr Raja advised that he had read the Committee's Narrowing the Gap report but would like to see the results of the recommendations made to the Cabinet Member. He agreed with the Cabinet Member that early intervention through children's centres and schools was very important and it was also important to motivate parents. However he noted that some Muslim families can be very hard to reach, even for the Muslim Parents Association. In addition schools should be encouraged to have high expectations – staff are motivated and need the resources help our children achieve. The Chairman thanked Mr Raja for his contribution and explained that the Cabinet Member would be providing more feedback in response to the Committee's Narrowing the Gap recommendations later in the year.

A member asked what steps were being taken to ease the transition for children from Primary to Secondary school, as there can be a wide variation in what children have been taught when they arrive at their Grammar or Upper School. Mrs Amanda Hopkins of BLT agreed that this was an important consideration as often children fall back from their Key Stage 2 standards during Year 7. During Year 6, there will now be a transition interview to help the Secondary schools gain key information on the individuals who are moving up. BLT are also suggesting that pupils should take their Year 6 books with them to their new school, as these will clearly demonstrate their levels of achievement. Quite often the levels achieved in modern languages are quite varied when children arrive at Secondary school and the BLT were using modern foreign languages specialists from the Secondary sector to assess Primary language courses. In addition, BLT were suggesting that there should be a Transition half term so that children would have the opportunity to spend more than just one day visiting their new school and Secondary school teachers will also visit them at their current school. Children are moving from a very safe Primary situation where they often know everyone in the school, to a much bigger environment so the transition arrangements are very important.

Mr Mike Appleyard advised that he would return to the Committee to discuss the Narrowing the Gap recommendations and the additional data that members had requested would be made available. Mr Raja was requested to send in his specific questions on Narrowing the Gap to Mr Appleyard for a response. He was pleased that the BLT were focussing on driving up standards in schools and measuring performance more robustly.

A member commented that she was pleased to see the response to the Phonics standards this year, which was a positive attitude and a clear direction as to how standards could be improved. She did however raise concerns about comparing our standards to statistical neighbours, suggesting that Bucks should look at the highest achieving local authorities instead. Mr Munday advised that it was important to compare Bucks with statistical neighbours as they share similar characteristics and are similar areas. But Bucks had made a significant effort to drive up standards and was in no way using statistical neighbours as a 'sop' i.e. as long as we could achieve better than these authorities then we would be satisfied.

The Chairman thanked all the contributors to the discussion.

RESOLVED

That the evidence provided be noted.

**13 EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE
ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2014-15**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Simon Billenness, Senior Practitioner - Participation to the meeting. Mr Billenness would be contributing to both the proposed Select Committee Inquiries. As a Senior Practitioner - Participation, he is involved in running various projects to encourage engagement with children and young people including the Youth Parliament, Young Inspectors and We Do Care! the Children in Care Council in Bucks. In addition, he chairs the BSCB Internet Safety Sub-Committee which has undertaken work looking at how children and young people conduct themselves online and how they can do this safely.

Members considered the draft terms of reference for both Inquiries and were asked which inquiry they would like to take part in. Val Letheren, Paul Irwin, Robin Stuchbury, Margaret Aston and David Watson volunteered for Children's Voices and Val Letheren, Paul Irwin, Robin Stuchbury, Phil Gomm, Katrina Wood and Monique Nowers volunteered for Internet Safety.

RESOLVED

That the draft terms of reference and membership for the Internet Safety Inquiry and Children's Voices Inquiry be agreed.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the next meeting of the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee on Tuesday 7th October 2014 at 10am, in Mezzanine Room 2

CHAIRMAN