

Report to:	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Steve Sienkiewicz, Scrutiny Manager
Date of Meeting	26th February 2015

EDUCATION SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 The Committee to consider the report of the Education Scrutiny Review Panel.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee notes the ongoing work of the Education Scrutiny Review Panel and makes comments or recommendations as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure the scrutiny process continues to be fully accountable and an important part of the democratic process.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 Tackling child poverty, raising aspirations and improving educational achievement.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 At its meeting on 25 October 2012, the Scrutiny Committee appointed a Panel to undertake scrutiny of education matters including consideration of school performance information and Ofsted Inspection Reports.

- 5.2 The Panel is supported by Delyth Curtis, Director of People, Carl Baker, Deputy Director of People (Children's Services), Charlotte Clarke, Head of Education Standards and Effectiveness and Chris Kelly, Senior Democratic Services Adviser (Scrutiny).
- 5.3 The membership of the Panel comprises of Councillors Stansfield (Lead Member), D Coleman, Green, Hutton and O'Hara.
- 5.4 The Panel has agreed a timetable of meetings based around school term times, with a total of six meetings scheduled for the academic year. Since the last report to the Scrutiny Committee the Panel has held two meetings and this report summarises the work undertaken by the Panel in those meetings.
- 5.5 The Panel meets within schools across Blackpool and prior to each meeting receives a tour of the school utilised as a venue. This gives Members a chance to speak directly to Headteachers and/or school children about their school.

6.0 Meeting held 6 November 2014

- 6.1 The Panel considered information regarding schools causing concern and information relating to the Register of Support. Members also received information relating to HMI monitoring inspections to Hawes Side Primary Academy, St Nicholas CE Primary School and Montgomery Academy. The Panel challenged what actions were being undertaken to improve standards in those schools causing concern.
- 6.2 School performance information from Boundary Primary School, St John CE Primary School, Westcliff Academy (including Blackpool Gateway) and South Shore Academy was presented to the Panel and Members raised a number of questions on the performance of those schools.
- 6.3 Data was presented to the Panel detailing the current numbers of looked after children in each school in Blackpool, in comparison to the numbers in each school for the previous academic year. The Panel was advised that looked after children should be placed into a school that was rated as being good or outstanding and Members raised a number of questions relating to the placements of looked after children.
- 6.4 The Panel received an up to date data matrix that provided Members with the data used by the Department for Education and Ofsted to measure the authority. Data was highlighted by exception with Members questioning key characteristics.
- 6.5 The Panel also considered the progress that had been made on the actions identified in the Blackpool School Improvement Plan. Members asked key questions regarding the plan and were provided with details of the actions undertaken and the progress

by themes. Those themes were:

- Performance Management (Managing the Performance of Schools)
- Quality Assurance
- Improving Front Line Services
- Partnerships
- Scrutiny
- Communications

7.0 Meeting held 22 January 2015

- 7.1 The January meeting of the Panel followed an Ofsted inspection of School Improvement Services, the report from which was due to be published during week commencing 16th February 2015.
- 7.2 Members received detailed performance and school improvement information on Baines Endowed CofE Primary School and Highfield Humanities College, two schools that were causing concern.
- 7.3 The Panel discussed in depth the reasons for the decline in standards at the schools, which had included a high turnover of staff, inconsistent standards of teaching and a need to raise pupil expectations.
- 7.4 Members challenged officers on what had been done to address the insufficient standards and were advised of the measures that were being taken and provided with details of the support that had been brokered, in order to raise standards in the schools.
- 7.5 Members also considered the format for future meetings of the Panel and agreed that continuing to receive in depth reports on the individual schools causing concern would enable the Panel to better hold officers to account over what was being done to improve under-performing schools and on achieving value for money for the Council.

8.0 Witnesses/representatives

- 8.1 Councillor Stansfield, Scrutiny Lead/Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Culture and Heritage.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

None

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None

10.1 Human Resources considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Financial considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Risk management considerations:

13.1 None

14.0 Ethical considerations:

14.1 None

15.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

15.1 None

16.0 Background papers:

16.1 Notes of the Panel meetings held on 6 November 2014 and 22 January 2015