

People Scrutiny Committee – 28th January 2015
Public Questions

Questions from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Children & Learning

Question 1

“How can the school improvement group manager progress our most vulnerable children and young people in Southend Schools?”

Answer

The Group Manager for School Improvement is working to achieve better progress for our most vulnerable children and young people by taking the following actions:

- Having clear and unambiguous expectations of all Southend’s school leaders and governors to prioritise closing the achievement gap between all pupils and those that are disadvantaged
- Providing support and challenge to those schools where vulnerable children and young people are not making sufficient progress quickly enough
- Providing financial support for projects designed to help schools to improve the quality of teaching and assessment so that they can in turn enable their pupils to make progress
- With the support of the Head of Learning and the Director for People, holding school leaders and governors to account for under-performance and intervening where needed to strengthen leadership, governance and teaching.

All of these actions are included in Southend’s School Improvement Strategy ***Improving Learning Together***. This year, two of our primary schools were shortlisted for the prestigious national Pupil Premium Awards and a third received a personal letter from the Regional Director for Ofsted commending them on the work they have done to close the achievement gaps.

Ensuring that all children and young people achieve the very best results they can is my top educational priority and I will continue to maintain a close focus on this aspect of education until Southend’s results show an accelerated improvement for the most vulnerable.

Question 2

“What is the role of the child and family early intervention team officer? What will be the effective interventions to support and challenge families?”

Answer

- The Child and Family Early Intervention Officer’s role is to support children and families in the most appropriate way to improve aspects of their lives for the better. Sometimes this might be to do with establishing routines before and after school, sometimes it might relate to attendance and sometimes it might be connected to wider and more troubling issues relating to family life such as a change in domestic circumstances which has in turn created hardship or is making things difficult for the children and parents or carers to cope. The Team officers work in a partnership with other professionals including representatives from health, social care, education and the voluntary sector. Their main aim is to help the child and family cope with the difficulty and then work with them to change things and improve them. The interventions used will depend very much on individual circumstances and the initial assessment of needs enables the team officers to determine the best starting point.

- Through CFEIT schools can also request universal interventions such as group work sessions with children and/or parents depending upon the need of the school, pupils and families. Access to this support is organised via the school on receiving parental consent for CFEIT to work with the child in a group situation in school. Similar practice and access to family support also exists within the Southend Children Centres.
- There are also other occasions where a CFEIT Officer would become involved with a family such as investigations of Children Missing from Education, Elective Home Education and Child Employment investigations. These are direct referrals from internal and external services where concerns have been raised about the child regarding one of the above areas.
- Our early intervention has been nationally recognised as good practice because of the way in which early help such as that provided by the Child and Family Early Intervention Team enables children and families to manage situations that may otherwise escalate into greater difficulties.