



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair
Councillor Bonham – Vice Chair

Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Westley

Councillor Singh Sangha

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Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Also Present:

Benjamin – Youth Representative
Councillor Pantling – Assistant City Mayor for Education

188. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

Cllr Moore declared that a relative was a member of a protected group and previously worked for Leicester City Council and still accessing Council services. She felt she shouldn't take part in the discussion of the budget of the Revenue Account and left the room for this item.

190. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 28th October 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

191. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

192. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

193. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

194. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27 AND DRAFT THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27, and a report on the City Mayor's proposed Draft Three-Year Capital Programme 2026/27. Both items were taken together.

The Head of Finance (Education and Social Care) gave an overview of the reports, key points to note were as follows:

- The Draft General Fund Revenue Budget sets out the budget for 2026/2027 and the medium term financial strategy for the next two years. It was based on the government's Fair Funding consultation which ran over the summer, results were awaited but a budget gap was still forecasted. Hence the five strand strategy from last year would continue as follows:
 - To deliver budget savings
 - Constrain growth in areas such as Social Care and homelessness
 - A reduction in the Capital Programme
 - Releasing one off monies
 - A programme of property sales
- The budget built in growth to meet ongoing costs in social care, homelessness and housing benefits. The scope for additional investment was limited but some provision was made, particularly in areas previously funded from grants no longer received.
- Items relating to children's services included significant investment in future years as the growth forecasts are refreshed annually.
- There would be increased in house provision with an improved quality of accommodation and we expect that this will lead to lower rates of placement breakdowns.
- Attention was drawn to paragraph 6.1.3 of the Draft General Fund Revenue Budget which noted the position on the Dedicated Schools Grant, known as the DSG. The cumulative deficit was forecast to be £44.8m by the end of the financial year. The High Needs deficit for children with SEND was due to insufficient funding. The Government had indicated that future deficits may be centrally funded from April 2028, but there was no clarity currently on how existing deficits would be

addressed. Any remaining deficit may fall to the Council to fund from its resources.

- The Draft three year capital programme 2026/27 was worth £129m, fully funded from council resources, government grants and borrowing.
- A three year budget was better for planning, especially for capital projects running across several financial years.
- Specifically for children's services, £12.9m was provided to continue the School's Capital Maintenance Programme.
- Two new children's homes were planned for 2027, jointly funded by the DfE (not included in the Capital report but referenced in the Revenue report)
- Both of the papers would be updated and presented to Council in February and would include updated figures following the finance settlement.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Commission. The following key points were discussed:

- Any underspends were transferred to general reserves.
- In response to a question from members on the draft Capital Programme (Appendix 5), it was explained that the £1m allocation in 2026/27 related to school buildings and was based on condition and maintenance needs. The DfE's funding formula meant this was considered an increase despite appearing lower than projections in later years. The methodology used by the DfE was not known to the council but would take age and condition of the buildings into account.
- In terms of key risks to the budget and related mitigations it was noted that risk assessments were completed. A highlighted risk involved the complexities of placements and the subsequent impact on budget. Potential growth was built into the budget.
- The DSG deficit was another known area of risk.
- In response to Member questions, it was noted that although increases in numbers of looked after children could be relatively small, associated costs could be high. Budget projections were as robust as possible, informed by previous years' data, local market conditions alongside ongoing preventative work. The Family Help model would help to reduce the numbers of children in care. A corporate contingency is also available if risks materialise.
- Regarding the High Needs Block Deficit, significant work had taken place to reduce EHCP numbers over the previous 18 months. This was helping to manage costs, but the deficit would remain.
- Funding was flexible for Early Help and targeted across the city to meet local need and reduce demand for child protection plans. Early pilot findings were expected shortly and were positive so far.

Agreed:

- 1) That the reports be noted.

Cllr Dr Moore left the meeting for these items due to a Declaration of Interest.

195. LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP YEARLY REPORT 2024 - 2025

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report to the Commission on the activity Safe Guarding Partners have undertaken in a 12 month period.

- The LSCP Independent Scrutineer presented the report. The following was noted:
- The report had been delayed from its usual summer publication date and provided a retrospective overview of the partnership's activity.
- The report responded to statutory requirements and set out key achievements and challenges. It was highlighted that the reporting year had seen significant national change, with the context and drivers for those changes detailed throughout the report.
- Priority areas had been triangulated using feedback from children, families and practitioners, with practitioner voice playing a key role in shaping the work. The priorities for the coming year were set out at the end of the report.

Key Achievements:

- Formed a new Education Subgroup, which promotes and strengthens the role of local schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings in safeguarding arrangements
- Expanded the reach and membership of the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Voluntary and Community Sector Forum to strengthen engagement with this sector
- Quickly addressed and started to implement any learning required as a result of national reviews published by the Child Safeguarding
- Practice Review Panel
- Delivered high quality and well-attended large scale training events alongside our regular training programme

Key Challenges:

- Implementing the changes required as a result of Working Together 2023 and ensuring that the measures agreed were suitable and proportionate
- Progressing our Transitions Business Priority. The issues faced have been addressed and for 2025-26 there will be new vigour and focus to this work
- Having the capacity to fulfil our audit schedule, in light of competing priorities linked to the Joint Targeted Inspection programme. As a result of the issues faced, for 2025-26, the work of the Assurance and Audit Group will be split and taken up by two separate subgroups - the Performance Group and the Audit Group

In discussion with Members, the following was noted:

- Members welcomed the proposal to recruit a young person to the partnership and sought clarity on how individuals would be selected and supported to ensure they were able to participate meaningfully in the role.
- Officers explained that benchmarking and research had been undertaken with other areas where similar approaches were already established. Consideration had been given to balancing education commitments with participation, with the focus placed on the 16 to 18 age group. The role had been advertised widely to ensure fairness and accessibility, supported by a clear role description and skills profile. A shortlist had been agreed and interviews were due to take place, with the process being held online to improve accessibility. That while many young people already had relevant experience, the process had been designed to avoid excluding those who had not previously had similar opportunities.
- Members raised safeguarding concerns in relation to children's use of mobile phones, recognising this as a nationally prominent issue. Officers confirmed that this remained an ongoing area of focus for the partnership and formed part of its core business. The education group was identified as being well placed to help drive this agenda forward, supported by partnership policies and procedures.
- It was noted that there was extensive guidance and research on the risks associated with social media use, including situations that could not always be anticipated and might require support from family workers. In relation to looked after children, officers explained that mobile phone use was managed through risk assessment, with recognition that in some cases not having access could present a greater risk.
- Assurance was provided that safeguarding arrangements in this area would continue to be discussed and developed, including learning from international approaches.
- Members discussed the governance structure set out in the report, noting the number of groups within the partnership and seeking clarification on whether these were recent developments. It was explained that the structure reflected statutory partnership requirements, with additional groups introduced since 2023, including the education group, to respond to new expectations. Ongoing engagement was in place to ensure effective communication and alignment across the partnership.
- The Commission considered the financial position of the partnership, noting changes in income and increases in costs. It was noted that the partnership was made up of independent organisations, with rising salary costs contributing to financial pressures.
- A review of financial requirements was underway across children's and adults' boards to ensure delivery in a cost effective way. It was clarified that partners participated as part of their substantive roles, with no additional payment for involvement, although there were crossovers between groups. Membership included senior representatives across local authority, health and education, working collectively to support

child welfare.

- Members sought assurance regarding accountability and legal responsibility within the partnership, it was confirmed that all activity was governed by statutory Working Together arrangements, providing a framework for assurance and mutual challenge between agencies.
- Further discussion focused on the partnership's budget, including previous underspends and the small overspend in 2024/25 that had been supported by reserves. It was advised that planning for 2025/26 was underway, noting that recent increases such as national insurance had added pressure and that commissioning activity could vary across financial years. This had prompted a deeper review to identify efficiencies and ensure the most cost effective operating model.
- Members commented on the safeguarding case studies and resources included in the report, raising concerns about low engagement figures relative to the resources required to produce them. Difficulties in locating content on the website and broken links were highlighted, alongside questions about value for money and how promotion could be improved.
- Officers acknowledged the feedback and confirmed it would be taken forward as part of ongoing work, including exploring opportunities for greater collaboration to reduce duplication and increase reach. The importance of sharing good practice through professionals such as teachers was also emphasised.
- Members asked about the key safeguarding risks identified and the preventative measures planned for the coming year. Officers referred to the priorities set out in the report for the next 2 years, informed by national reviews and evidence, including risks associated with hidden harm and neglect occurring behind closed doors. A strong focus on belonging and lived experience was highlighted, with these priorities to be addressed through a structured programme of work.

AGREED

1. The Commission noted the Annual Report for 2024 to 25.
2. Officers were asked to take away members' feedback and suggestions, including promotion and accessibility of safeguarding resources, as part of ongoing partnership work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Officers to consider how safeguarding resources and videos could be more effectively promoted and accessed, including reviewing website functionality and links.
2. Officers to continue work on reviewing partnership costs and governance arrangements and ensure value for money is demonstrated.
3. Officers to keep safeguarding priorities, including mobile phone use and online safety, under review and report progress through the partnership's future work programme.

196. SEND TRANSPORT UPDATE

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report providing an update to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission regarding the Post 16 Transport service, including the latest policy implementation.

The Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People introduced the item and thanked the team for their exceptional work and significant engagement with the families.

The Director of SEND and Education reminded the commission that the update had come to scrutiny as requested after the recent policy changes. The following points were noted:

- A lot of hard work had gone into providing individualised responses to families.
- Over 200 cases had been reviewed with a wait time of under 5 days and typically within one day.
- Of the 215 Post 16 SEND school children supported, over 74% had received Council arranged transport, 25% had PTBS and enhanced PTBS.
- There had been 15 appeals, 4 of which went to stage 2. Only 2 appeals were rejected, due to insufficient evidence.
- The individualised approach was considered to be sustainable.
- Work would include making the package more efficient with a travel training element. Other Local Authorities with this experience were consulted.
- There had not been an increase in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) figures.
- There was an upcoming annual consultation with a view to keeping the current policy in place.
- Matters pertaining to the last change of policy had been well scrutinised with suggestions taken onboard.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- Members noted that they had not received any complaints or requests for assistance from dissatisfied families.
- The new policy meant that costs could be controlled whilst safeguarding and meeting the needs of the children.
- IT routing systems would play a key role during the growth in the SEND population.
- Post-16 school transport was not a statutory requirement, although needs still had to be addressed appropriately.
- Members discussed complaints relating to reliability. It was noted that there were inbuilt checks for taxi providers. A recent complaint had been dealt with swiftly and the family had been reassured.
- During the change of policy, the commission had made two

recommendations relating to the Exceptional Circumstances element of policy (7.1). Members requested that these two remain embedded:

- 1) *Where the circumstances mean that practically and or financially it is not possible for parents or carers to make arrangements for transport despite their best efforts.*
 - 2) *Where a parent or carer supporting the student with their journey is not reasonably practical whilst continuing in employment, or a reduction or flexibility in hours of employment would cause financial hardship as described.*
- The upcoming year's policy would be published on time to allow for planning.
 - In response to a question surrounding sustainability, it was noted that this would depend on the growth of the SEND population. Travel training and the computer programme will help. Also, early work with schools from year 9 onwards would be beneficial.

AGREED:

- 1) To note the update.
- 2) Members would email The Director of SEND and Education regarding the two points on exceptional circumstances.

197. HNB TASK GROUP REPORT

The Commission received a presentation led by the Chair providing an overview the findings of the High Needs Block Task Group and answered questions from members and answers.

It was noted that:

- The Task Group had benefited from strong engagement from officers, councillors and schools, with a significant amount of information shared to support the review.
- Members also met with young people, whose feedback provided valuable insight into their experiences.
- Members reflected that this Task Group had taken a different approach to previous reviews, with officers leading the drafting of the report, and welcomed the thoroughness of the final document.
- It was suggested that councillor led investigations, including site visits, observations and reflections, should be more clearly and visibly embedded within reports, to reflect the work undertaken by members.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of early intervention and investment at primary school level to support inclusion and manage demand on the High Needs Block.
- Members shared examples of effective practice observed in schools, including positive behaviour management approaches, staff training, rewards and recognition, and incentives designed to promote engagement and positive behaviour.

- The importance of relationships was emphasised, with examples of consistent daily interaction between teachers and pupils helping to build trust and improve behaviour outcomes.
- Members reflected positively on visits undertaken as part of the Task Group, noting strong inclusive practice and a clear focus on making children feel part of their school community.
- It was recognised that improvements in behaviour and outcomes required clear leadership, consistency and sustained effort over time.
- The importance of reinstating protocols for councillor visits to schools in different wards to ensure appropriate communication and transparency.
- Members sought clearer information within the recommendations on access to services, waiting times, delays and family engagement, including average waiting times where available
- Officers outlined ongoing work to support the sharing of good practice across schools, including regular secondary networks, engagement with academy trust leaders, and established professional networks to promote collaboration and learning.
- Members received an update on the recent Ofsted SEND inspection and noted the overall positive outcome, alongside areas identified for improvement.
- It was confirmed that a post inspection action plan would be published by 30 January and that work would continue to address all identified areas for improvement.
- Members noted that a national SEND White Paper was expected shortly and suggested that this be considered alongside the Task Group's findings at a future meeting, prior to submission to the Executive

AGREED:

1. The Commission noted the High Needs Block Task Group Report and the work undertaken.
2. Officers to respond to questions raised following the second Task Group meeting, including those referenced within the report.
3. The report to be updated with responses to questions raised be on the agenda at the next meeting, prior to submission to the Executive.
4. Councillors' Task Group notes to be published alongside the meeting minutes.

198. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2024 / 2025

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report providing an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help introduced the item noting that the Fostering Service was a regulated service with an obligation to produce the annual report. The report also went to the Corporate Parenting Panel. As well as recruitment, supporting foster carers and the young people

was key.

The Head of Service Corporate Parenting gave an overview of the report. Key points to note were as follows:

- Most of the Leicester City looked after children (LAC) resided with foster carers and remained within or within a 20-mile radius of the city. This allowed for continuity of family networks and for children to continue to go to local schools.
- There were a small number of private foster carers, 43 kinship carers and also respite carers providing short breaks.
- Key areas of focus included recruitment, carer support and safeguarding.
- Regarding recruitment, there was a national shortage of foster carers. Many long-term carers were now leaving due to retirement. Going forward, unique selling points would need to be considered. Foster carers of all backgrounds and ages were required with flexibility of hours being available.
- The Kinship Strategy enabled extended family arrangements and Corporate grandparenting.
- The Council website now had an inbuilt micro site for the fostering offer, promotional communications had gone out and fostering champions were in place
- Ofsted had noted that the foster carers spoke very positively about being carers under LCC.
- There was an increased complexity of needs coming into the service and tailored support was necessary alongside longevity of support for carers.
- The service had been impacted by the cost of living crisis and the need to remunerate carers appropriately.
- In terms of benchmarking, the ratio of numbers of breakdowns compared well to national figures and numbers remained stable for placements.
- There were increasing numbers of sibling groups, sometimes large in number.
- A small number of foster carers were referred to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer). For the vast majority no further action was taken. Three concerns were substantiated.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- The proportion of children with three or more placement moves was 5%, the national benchmark was 11%. Some children required residential provision and that schooling considerations were important.
- Extra support layers had been created to deal with complex needs. Enhanced Foster Carers with at least 3 yrs experience working with complex needs and in receipt of additional training were engaged. Additional support came through agencies such as CAMHS. SEND

needs might need more tuition.

- The CFST (Children and Family Support Team provided therapy to children displaying harmful sexual behaviour and other issues.
- Members were encouraged to attend the Celebrating Success events.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) For members of CYPE and also Adult Social Care Scrutiny to be invited to the Celebrating Success events, including a lunch on the 12th February 2026.

199. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE (APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2025) AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education gave a presentation to the Commission on the Children, Young People and Education Quarter 2 Performance from April to September 2025 and quality assurance.

The following was noted:

- Data was presented up to September 2025, with it noted that the performance dashboard was currently under revision and would improve as it became more established.
- Current areas of risk were outlined, including a rising number of children subject to child protection plans. It was emphasised that this reflected an increase in need rather than specific practice concerns, and benchmarking showed similar trends nationally.
- An Independent Assessment had been undertaken to provide assurance that the position was not the result of local practice issues.
- Workforce pressures were highlighted, including social worker vacancies and difficulty recruiting to 4 newly established posts.
- Work had been undertaken across Overview Select Committee and Adult Social Care to reinvest available funding in order to support a wider overall workforce.
- Positive performance was reported in several areas, including lower re-referral rates within 12 months compared to neighbouring authorities.
- The proportion of assessments completed within 45 working days was reported as 79 percent, with performance improving and recovery work ongoing.
- Care plan completion rates were above average.
- Education, Health and Care Plan completion performance was also noted.
- Unregulated placements were reported as low, with 6 children currently placed in children's homes without Ofsted registration, compared to a total of 520 children in care.
- The quality assurance framework and national performance data were outlined, with an emphasis on providing boards with clear information to

understand system position and trends.

- Next steps for quality improvement were set out, including a review of underlying methodology to ensure learning activity was focused and effective.
- A common methodology was being introduced to improve consistency, supported by a 6 month programme of work.
- Team managers would be supported through reflective workbooks and 3 mandatory sessions to embed learning into practice.
- Work on diversity and inclusion was outlined, including rolling out plans over the next 12 months, the establishment of a decision making forum, and the inclusion of staff with lived experience.
- A maturity matrix had been issued to the workforce, with responses being used to inform future development.
- Alignment with Local Government Association work and wider departmental activity was also noted.

In discussion with Members, the following was noted:

- Members welcomed the update and thanked officers for the work undertaken.
- Further discussion focused on the children's services performance and analysis framework, which had originally been developed following Ofsted work several years ago and was now maintained on a rolling monthly basis. Members welcomed the use of measures that provided early warning of emerging themes and enabled links to be made between different parts of the system, including demand, safeguarding and service change
- Members discussed demand trends, noting an increase from 309 to 485 within the analysis tool, with further increases anticipated once the latest data was available. It was recognised that the service was significantly busier than 6 months earlier, and members queried whether the increase in activity reflected appropriate levels of intervention and support for families. It was confirmed that artificial intelligence was not currently being used, and that future platforms would need to ensure sensitive data remained securely contained.
- Clarification was sought on referrals resulting in no further action. It was explained that definitions and measurement varied between authorities, and that the most recent figures were now balanced at around 3 percent, compared to a national average of 4 percent. It was noted that refresher work on thresholds and practice had supported this improvement, with an emphasis on advice and guidance where appropriate.
- Members highlighted positive Ofsted feedback in relation to contact with care leavers, noting performance above the national average.
- Members asked about emerging risks for Quarter 3. Officers confirmed that child protection numbers continued to rise, with an increase in looked after children during November and December. While numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children remained minimal, there had been an increase in babies entering care, with mitigation work undertaken but most cases resulting in care placements within a 4 week

period. Overall numbers had increased from 619 to 640 in one quarter, reflecting a larger rise than previous quarters, although consistent with the broader trend.

- Members emphasised the importance of timely availability of performance information, noting that data should be available within 6 weeks of the end of each quarter. It was confirmed that the next update would be presented at the March meeting in line with the work programme.

Agreed

1. The Commission noted the performance and quality update.
2. A further update be provided in line with the work programme.

200. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

201. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at ---.

Minute Item 197

Notes on task group visits by Cllr Bonham and Cllr Moore

Visit 1 – Samworth Academy – 29 April 2025 – Part of Tudor Grange Academy Trust

A faith school

We were greeted, offered refreshments and ushered into room with Principal, SENCO, Deputy Head (?) and Neil Tansley (chair of Advisory Board?? – not a trustee)

The Head gave a talk about the school, acknowledged its catchment area has significant social disadvantages. The school is now full and has a waiting list of children with diagnosed ASD (11%) and ADHD (47%). There has been an increase from 7 to 30 children with EHCPs in a year. 14 children on role are currently awaiting special provision, with an alternative provision proposed. A significant number of students are recently arrived immigrants (mainly Ukrainians and Africans (from Nigeria and Zimbabwe) and some Eastern Europeans. All are well integrated. There is also an increasing number of students with SEMH and neurodiversity.

Special provision arrangements and monitoring

- Mentoring team offers interventions e.g. for bereavement, has training from THRIVE. Monitoring is reviewed regularly.
- Children can approach staff if feeling anxious
- The school has zones of regulation, separating year groups for transitions, with staff stationed in corridors as a deterrent for running, jostling, bullying etc
- School nurse offers drop in sessions
- SPA discussion (management education?) every Thursday afternoon
- Targets from EHCPs are on school computer network so teachers could immediately access targets for individual children during lessons and RAG-rate progress towards achievement. This was started initially with Y7 students at the beginning of the year and is now being rolled out across all years. It has received good feedback from staff. It identifies those children where provision isn't bringing about progress, so they receive small group tuition in an outdoor environment (Forest School) working towards behavioural targets. Travel training is included as targets if indicated in annual reviews of EHCPs.
- The Trust holds disadvantage committee meetings, which break down data on progress.
- There are staff briefings which highlight the key SEND concerns and any home/school dimensions, which are then discussed by SENCO and college leaders
- Children have 20 minutes reading time daily. There is very low avoidance of this.
- Children in Y11 are supported into employment or college.

HNB pays for mentoring, school nurse and TAs.

Data collection

We were given printed information on cost of provision per pupil, with average cost compared to average impact.

Attendance data is used as an additional index of impact

Exclusions

There have been four this year, three of whom have EHCPs, 2 in Y8, 2 in Y10, All are now attending the alternative provision at Carisbrooke. The exclusions were for violent behaviour, threatening to staff and other children. The risk to the child by exclusion is assessed. The number could be higher but the school has invested a big proportion of its budget in preventing social exclusion.

Observations

We were able to watch corridor behaviours during transition between lessons. We watched a group of 19 children in a physics lesson on energy as part of revision for end of year exams. The children were from low ability bands. The teacher used a whiteboard display with good graphics. Attention from most of the children was good but a small group of four talked and fidgeted. The teacher ignored this behaviour but at one point indicated that he wanted quiet.

We were given a tour of the deciduous woodland as part of the school site (Forest School). This had numerous wooden structures for shelter, climbing, etc.

We then met with five Y8 students without a member of staff present, two of whom had SEND (one physical disability, the other ASD). Four of the five spoke readily and with confidence. They rated the school highly, praised the mentoring being offered and the low incidence of bullying with staff intervening effectively to prevent. But as the conversation proceeded, they confided that there was disruptive talking in all classes which teachers didn't interrupt, and which they found disturbing and irritating, as it interfered with concentration and opportunities to get on with work.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- Good recording of performance data, particularly the cost of implementation
- The lack of antisocial behaviour in corridors during transitions
- The enthusiasm and energy of the new SENCO in introducing a system for awareness of targets in classes and tracking of progress.

Visit 2- Stokes Wood Primary School. 30 April 2025

When we arrived at the school, we were greeted by the SENCO who gave us some information about provision: the school has a nursery which offers weekly sessions of support. It has many children from abroad who have no English when they arrive.

Special provision arrangements and monitoring

A designated special provision works every afternoon with children with EHCPs towards their targets. At present, it accommodates Key Stage 1 children in a class with a capacity for 11 (The Rainbow Room), all of whom have EHCPs or are waiting for the process to be completed; and are non-verbal. They are following a sensory-based curriculum. Seven are in Reception, of whom two access inclusion in the Reception class. lunchtimes and afternoon; three are in Y1. One child with multiple SEND attends for mornings only and is supported in a separate room with two adults, such is the level of his challenging behaviour. There is no extra funding for this particular child. The school expects to admit a further 17 children from their catchment area into the Rainbow Room. One child on role is attending full-time at a pupil referral unit. One is in alternative provision.

The space formally used for the school library is being adapted to create small rooms to offer 1:1 teaching support.

The school receives support from the SEND team via a link teacher as well as the Learning, Communication and Interaction team, the Mental Health Support team, the School Nurse and a long-term family support worker. Educational Psychologists visit in connection with individual children and will attend annual reviews of EHCPs if involved. The SENCO has frequent meetings and telephone contact with parents.

Observations

We were able to watch a movement activity in the hall with half a dozen SEND children, all with ASD, each with a TA (TA), being helped to carry out movements on a mat as a sensory activity. We were told that another group was having supported reading at this time.

We were then taken to observe a class of 21 children, with three adults (class teacher, 2 TAs). The lesson was about protected characteristics and was well-planned with frequent changes of activities: listening to the teacher talking from a white board and flip chart, some written recording, conversations with a partner, standing in two lines one facing the other, taking turns to talk and listen. The TAs were seated near target children and talked to them to support them. The class teacher also approached and talked to the SEND children, and chose one to answer a question put to the class. There was a calm working atmosphere with

good positive management e.g. the teacher counted down from 3 to 1 to gain the classes attention after a talking activity. However, three of the SEND children showed disengagement, self-stimulating, fidgeting, yawning. The SENCO agreed that it was a big challenge to offer inclusion within the constraints of the National Curriculum in a mainstream class. This raised the question as to whether this was inclusion in name only. However, we then went into another class, where two boys with ASD were being accommodated by each having their own desk, rather than sitting on tables with other children. This offered them stability without the distraction of other children moving and invading their personal space, an arrangement which had caused anxiety and meltdowns after school at home.

We were given a tour of the school's Forest School which is well equipped with equipment for outdoor play and learning.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to set up what is in effect a small special school in the Rainbow Room for children with severe SEND from ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach is assessing and providing for individual needs
- Clever use of strategies and support staff to attempt inclusion for children with communication difficulties with the teacher actively involved in their teaching.

Visit 3- Crown Hills Community College 30 April 2025

At the start of the visit we joined a meeting with the SENCO and Deputy Principal who gave us information about the school. Its overall aim is to keep students in lessons. Information on each child is given to teachers as to how to adjust the school's behaviour management policy for individual needs, together with a photograph of the child and the features of each specific learning difficulty. There is also online information for teachers for each child who has an EHCP, which lists the desired outcomes.

The school has many children who have English as a second language, with Asian languages predominant as the home language. There are some children at KS4 who are unaccompanied, including asylum seekers from Afghanistan. A teacher offers ESOL lessons.

Children are withdrawn from mainstream lessons daily for small group teaching on literacy, using a variety of approaches including Read Write, a phonics programme with three levels, plus activities to improve comprehension (but not at present paired reading which aims to improve whole word recognition). These groups accord with three levels of ability, rather than year groups. All are making good progress. If not, they would be referred on for specialist advice. The groups visit the school library for one lesson per week. Targets are set for each child, with badges for achievement. We were given paperwork on this curriculum.

High needs block funding helps with employment of TAs, and providing equipment for SEND: Chrome boards (tablets?) and specially-adapted laptops for the four children with visual impairment.

Older children are taken to offer support to the community, such as food banks, visits to elderly persons' homes and litter picking.

There is a mentor on the staff for 13 children with SEMH and mixed ethnicity. A teacher We heard about two children with ASD, a girl who was high functioning but masking in school then showing extreme exhaustion at home; and a boy who was attacking his mother at home and showing extremely challenging behaviour in school. The staff received support from the LCI team and the child was given a card with a five point scale for spotting and de-escalating his level of anger. This had been successful in helping him to self-regulate.

There is as much communication with parents as possible, with coffee mornings, talks on social development, reading, strategies to use with children with ASD, and opportunities to talk. They are involved in reviews.

Observations

We were taken to a PSE lesson for Personal and Social Education. The topic being covered was Islam. The children were seated in rows and each had an A3 sheet, scaffolded to record information. All attended to the teacher, including one student who has ASD. There was no potentially disruptive behaviour,

We then went to a Y9 nurture group of around a dozen children, supported two LSAs. All the children had just eaten a breakfast which they had cooked and were clearing up as we entered the room. There was a range of equipment to support activities. They were all completely engaged, in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

The lead LSA, a long standing member of staff, who had set up the group, provided information on how it functioned. The group offers training in independence skills: gardening, cooking, clearing up; as well as thinking and conversational skills. We were told that the group currently includes two students who have EHCPs. Other children also had special needs (most with moderate learning difficulties, others with visual impairment, hearing impairment and ASD).

We were then taken to see the Forest School, again a valuable resource for some recuperative activity, away from the pressures of the classroom for vulnerable children.

We met with the Head of Pastoral Care, who described his development of the school's behavioural policy, drawing on his own experience in two city community colleges as Head of Science, as well as his study of research into positive behaviour management, which had led to the formation of his vision in addressing the criticisms of the Ofsted inspection in 2016 which judged that children's needs were not being met. He wanted to do what was right for children.

Finally, we met with two students with ASD who spoke very positively about their experiences and the support they were receiving, with no criticisms to be made.

School's behavioural policy

When beginning work in the school, the Head of Pastoral Care had realised that interventions on a rising scale of sanctions, leading to detentions and suspensions, was not effective in curbing undesirable behaviours. He also recognised that special needs were individual to each child, and that challenging behaviours were often the result of missed and/or unrecognised needs.

His first change, imposition of an immediate and predictable sanction of detention for disruptive or disrespectful behaviour in class, to give students clear and firm boundaries, was not popular with staff so that he met with stiff resistance and some staff left the school. It did, however, improve behaviour. Alongside this, he looked at pastoral roles and realised that mentors were missing needs. He introduced a system by which each Head of Year and Assistant Head plus one

non-teacher had more time to liaise with families and offer children a safe space, with time to think and rest breaks as necessary. He also introduced once-a-week staff meetings to discuss key children who were especially vulnerable, to avoid exclusion. Staff were given training in positive behaviour management. In addition, he introduced zones of regulation to keep year groups apart throughout the school day, so younger children were protected from jostling or bullying during transitions. He encouraged staff to focus on acceptable behaviour, however slight, and to publicly notice and praise them. A post box was provided for pupils to report any friends who were in pain, or to self-report. As a long-term reward, a Christmas Success Fete (a film and pizza) was held for those students who had shown particular commitment with golden tickets for children who were struggling socially. Additional funding was used to employ a temporary TA to prevent one child (see above) being excluded: he came into school for 2 hours daily and was supported in a separate building in the grounds, then gradually reintegrated into mainstream class, accompanied by his TA. The school was successful in its bid for one year funding for this.

The overall scheme had now been operating for five years and had produced a significant change, both in children's behaviour and in staff morale with everyone much happier, and with the result that the school had an outstanding rating from Ofsted in January 2025. There had been no exclusions in the current year and no students had been referred to pupil referral units.

Funding which came with EHCPs, together with High Needs block money, was used to employ a mentor and to train an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) who could drop into lessons as a safe adult for children to approach, also to get children into school. Children who were eligible for exam concessions, but reluctant to accept them were now receiving interventions to familiarise them with what was involved and overcome embarrassment. It had also funded work with school leavers; a pupil with visual impairment had received training to catch the bus to college and had now been offered a place at De Montfort University to study computer graphics. Within the REACH programme, the school is being partnered with city organisations, to offer work experience to KS4 students.

In general, High Needs Block funding paid for TAs and was considered to be an investment in interventions, nurturing and support for children with ASD.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to offer cleverly-tailored interventions for children with SEND, particularly those with high ability and ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach, assessing and providing for individual needs

- A highly successful and effective programme for managing challenging behaviour which had brought about a positive change in the school culture and in teacher attitudes and skills
- The passion and commitment of key members of staff to the project of meeting children's needs

Crown Hills School Visit

11-16 age range

1500 on roll

200 SEND

19 EHCPs

Inclusive ethos – try to keep SEND in Mainstream

Use BERA = Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments to keep SEND in mainstream.

10 TAs in lessons, 2 in Nurture

1 SEMH funded by HNB – included ELSA Training and 121 mentoring

Outline of strategies linked in with teaching.

Shortened version of EHCP & profiles available to all teaching staff.

Number of asylum seeking children arriving unaccompanied – significantly affecting KS4.

70% of children speak English as a second language.

13 Intervention students.

HNB funding pays for TAs

LCI coffee mornings with all parents invited – Learning Communication & Interaction

ESOL support available for parents who don't speak English

Be Ready To Take On The World scheme prepares SEND children for life – social skills, food banks, skills for independent living.

2019 OFSTED = Good, now at Outstanding in all areas. Attributed due to pastoral support put in place which had lead to significant staff restructure.

HNB funding impacted on low exclusion rate due to support available.

HNB paid for:

TAs, Interventions, SEMH Mentor, specific ASD support, Counsellor based in school – alleviated stress on school overall.

HNB Task Group for CYPE Scrutiny

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy notes on visit 29/04/25

- School places are full.
- Immigration has impacted, with 80 different languages being spoken within the school. Many of the teachers are multilingual.
- Internal Alternative Provision (IAP) proposal in place for a unit to support increasing numbers of students with complex Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges. 14 students are currently awaiting specialist provision and the unit would allow them to remain at the school.
- 69% percent of pupils are on the SEN register.
- HNB funds mentoring, Forest School, School Nurse, interventions & 5 Thrive practitioners.
- Significant work had gone into improving Annual Reviews for EHCPs.
- EHCP targets are logged for all to see and work on, with a RAG system in place.
- 4 permanent exclusions had taken place in the last year, 3 of which were children identified with SEND but not having an EHCP.
- Bid put in to create IAP (Internal Alternative Provision) unit. 14 students awaiting specialist provision – unit could allow them to stay within the school.
- Mentoring team onsite with specialist Bereavement service.
- Thrive support to assist with emotional regulation
- Forest School
- School nurse – drop in sessions for sleep and anxiety
- HNB funds: mentoring, Forest School, Nurse, interventions
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