

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **28 November 2006**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Progress report on action following the Scrutiny Review of School Admissions**

Purpose of report: **To inform the Scrutiny Committee of progress on the action points and recommendations made within the report.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the progress of the action being taken following the Scrutiny Review in March 2006.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications in implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of School Admissions

2. Supporting Information

Introduction

2.1 The Committee will recall that a scrutiny review of school admissions took place in 2005/06 and a full report was made to the Committee in March 2006. The review was undertaken by Mr S Gregory, Cllr St Pierre and Cllr Mrs Tidy. The recommendations of the Review Board were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 23 March 2006.

2.2 The report gave timescales against each recommendation. The recommendations are shown in appendix 1 together with an indication as to the progress made against each recommendation. Appendix 2 summarises the outcome of the review of the Behavioural Support Service.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the actions taken and the progress made against each of the recommendations.

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Local members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report to Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services entitled 'Scrutiny review of the School Admissions and Home to school Transport' on 23 March 2006

Appendix 1 - Progress against recommendations of Scrutiny Report on School Admissions and Home to School Transport

	Recommendation	Timescale	Progress
R1	The Board to be reconvened to complete the Home to School Transport aspect of the review once a breakdown of the costs for each aspect of discretionary transport provided by ESCC is available from the Transport and Environment Department in April 2006	November 2006 (completion date)	The Board reported on 26 September 2006 to Scrutiny Committee its findings on home to school transport
R2	The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to be informed of future developments relating to the Education & Inspections Bill 2006 that are likely to effect the organisation of school admissions within East Sussex. The committee will then be in a position to decide if further work is needed.	Ongoing	The Bill will be enacted shortly
R3	The Board supported the current approach taken by ESCC with regard to school admissions. It felt though that there was a need for better communication between the Children's Services Authority and schools over the mechanics of setting the Published Admissions Number (PAN) and admissions above it and asked that the School Admissions Forum explore this further.	November 2006	Heads and Governors were sent a circular on 3 July 2006 explaining how admission numbers work. A copy was also included in the Autumn term briefing pack issued to chairs of governors and area forum representatives.
R4	The Board found the current appeals process to be effective in meeting current demands, but expressed concern about the resourcing capability to deal with any increased number of appeals in the future and asked that this be strengthened.	November 2006	This recommendation is being kept under review by both Directors of Children's Services and Law and Personnel.

R5	The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to be provided with the outcomes from current departmental reviews being carried out on the integration of hard to place children into mainstream schools to enable it to determine if future action is needed.	November 2006	Attached as appendix 2 is a note which summarises the outcome of the review of the Behavioural Support Service
R6	The Board supported the current format and style used for the admissions booklet but considered that the wording should be strengthened to ensure that parents were fully aware of their ability to state a preference for a school rather than make an actual choice.	2007/08 admissions booklet	The admissions booklet for 2007/08 has been produced and account has been taken of this recommendation – the wording in the booklet has been strengthened to emphasise 'preference' rather than 'choice'.

Review of Behaviour Support Service Dec 05 – June 06

The behaviour support service provides support to schools on managing challenging behaviour. It is targeted at individual or small groups of children and young people who are at risk of exclusion from school. Since 2001, the service has been delegated to New Horizons Centre in the east of the county and, since 2003, to Cuckmere House special school in the west of the county.

The service also includes the work of area reintegration officers who advise heads, governing bodies and parents over exclusion issues. In the event of an exclusion, the area reintegration officers work with the Access to Education Team and Admissions and Transport Team to facilitate the reintegration of the excluded pupil to another school or alternative provision eg a pupil referral unit, college placement or vocational package. Reintegration mentors provide key worker support to these children and young people while they are out of education and liaise closely with their families and other agencies to ensure they are well supported.

The conclusions of the review were:

- secondary schools want a more responsive and flexible service which is more aligned with the individual circumstances of each school;
- secondary schools would value more “hands on” modelling of strategies and coaching for staff but do not envisage a need for large scale training programmes provided by the Children’s Services Authority;
- secondary schools considered that changes to develop and access alternative provision, including PRUs, was a key issue for them. Other priorities were how to increase effective support for families, and how to improve access to mental health advice and support;
- of concern to a large number of schools was the effective re-integration of children and young people who had been excluded or were judged to be “hard to place”;
- schools could see the benefits in being able to access a multi-agency team for support, rather than a range of individual services;
- in general, primary schools were positive about the range of support available to them.

The proposals, which were agreed by the Lead Members for School Learning and Effectiveness and Children and Families on 5 September 2006, include :

- The primary behaviour support service provided by New Horizons and Cuckmere House should be retained but with a much greater focus on multi-agency working to support children and their parents/carers through liaison with the 0-11 years integrated area teams. Special arrangements should be developed to cover support to children undergoing transition from primary to secondary school.
- The secondary behaviour support service should be reconfigured and aligned closely with the 11+ integrated youth support teams, east and west. Management support and accountability would be through the Head of Attendance and Behaviour.
- The area re-integration officer, Tertext and Worklink posts should be reconfigured within a centralised Hard to Place Pupils Service.

- The area re-integration officer posts should be reduced from three to two and the two Tertex/Worklink posts to one. The released resources should fund additional teaching, learning and re-integration mentor posts.
- The responsibilities of the Area Re-integration and Tertex/Worklink posts should be revised to strengthen support for all hard to place pupils and secure links to alternative strategies to reduce exclusion, 14-19 curriculum developments, access to e-learning and other forms of alternative provision.
- There should be a further investment of resource to secure improved targeted support to schools on behaviour issues, including appropriate coaching and training opportunities for school staff. These should be provided by the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT).