

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Tuesday, 18th September, 2018

Present:- **Councillors** Alison Millar, Matt Cochrane, Sally Davis, Liz Hardman, Michelle O'Doherty, Peter Turner and Lizzie Gladwyn

Co-opted Members (Voting): David Williams

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting): Chris Batten and Kevin Burnett

Also in attendance: Mike Bowden (Corporate Director), Margaret Simmons-Bird (Director of Education Transformation), Richard Morgan (Education Business Manager) and Chris Wilford (Head of Education Inclusion Services)

29 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

30 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Andrew Tarrant, Co-opted Panel Member gave his apologies to the Panel.

32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

33 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

34 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

35 MINUTES - 10TH JULY 2018

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

36 UPDATE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACE SUFFICIENCY IN THE GREATER BATH CONSORTIUM PLANNING AREA

The Director of Education Transformation introduced this report to the Panel.

She explained that during 2018 as the school admissions process progressed it became clear that a number of additional secondary school places would be required for the GBC Planning Area for Year 7 admissions in September 2018. She said that the projected pupil numbers indicated there were sufficient places for all Bath residents, however as some of these places were able to be taken up by pupils from outside of the Bath area, there were insufficient places for Bath children.

She stated that the Council introduced a new admissions process for September 2018 Year 7 admissions onwards which allowed parents to name five school preferences on their application form, sufficient to name all schools in Bath. She explained that the majority of Bath parents chose not to indicate five preferences, which contributed to pupils from outside of Bath being able to obtain a place. She added that the legal framework for school admissions means that the Council cannot prevent this from happening.

The Panel were shown a video relating to School Admissions, the video can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9n2MTnQVcA&feature=youtu.be>

She informed the Panel that officers from the People and Communities Department consulted with the Bath Education Trust (BET) and met with the Headteachers or their representatives, from all of the Bath secondary schools within the GBC Planning Area to agree the provision of additional places for September 2018 admissions.

She said that schools were also invited to submit proposals to support the provision of future additional places in the medium to longer term from 2019 onwards to meet the future projected increase in demand based on the pattern of applications for places seen in 2018.

She explained that as a result of the discussions with schools, some additional places have been created for Year 7 admissions in 2018 and further additional places will be created for admissions in 2019 onwards. She said that a total of 118 additional places per year group are planned to be provided, for admissions in 2020 onwards.

The Chair asked if the parents of Year 6 pupils are sent a package of information relating to the admissions process.

The Education Business Manager replied that all of the relevant information is contained on the Council's website.

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/schools-colleges-and-learning/admissions-schools>

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the video shown would be sent to all Headteachers.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that Headteachers of all Primary and Secondary Schools will be sent the video and encouraged to share it with parents.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked if the Council were to undertake any other measures to ensure the message is circulated as widely as possible.

The Education Business Manager replied that the Council's Communications Team were also expected to do a release of information on this matter.

The Corporate Director added that Ward Councillors have a role to play in the process by advising parents appropriately if asked for advice.

Councillor Sally Davis suggested that a link to the video be sent from all schools via their weekly newsletter.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if a guarantee can be given to parents that they will secure a place at one of their first three preferences.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that a guarantee of this nature could not be given. She added that this year 81.3% of parents across Bath and North East Somerset obtained their first preference school, with 93% offered one of their first three preferences.

The Corporate Director added that each preference is considered equally against the school's admissions criteria regardless of whether it is listed as the first, second, third, fourth or fifth preference.

Kevin Burnett commented that parents need to know the full extent of the reasons behind the process by which they need to use all five preferences. He added that as Headteachers of both Primary and Secondary schools are likely to be contacted with queries they should be supplied with relevant additional information.

Councillor Matt Cochrane suggested that the same information be sent to Heads of Governors at all schools.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how the 118 additional places were to be sourced.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that the Planned Admission Number was due to increase at the following schools:

- Ralph Allen (+60 to 240)
- Oldfield (+44 to 224)
- St. Gregory's (+14 to 174)

She added that St. Mark's had also bid to take additional pupils and that further discussion was ongoing with them.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if officers had met with local independent schools and discussed their admission figures.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that she and Councillor Paul May had met with them. She said that they now know their PANs and the places they are offering.

Councillor Paul May added that the independent schools had been very open in their discussions and were willing to cooperate. He added that he felt that separate letters should be sent to parents in Bath and those in North East Somerset as Bath has specific issues.

He said that he would also write to the children that took part in the video to thank them on behalf of the Council.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Note the actions taken by officers to secure sufficiency of secondary school places in Bath.
- ii) Note the secondary school places and pupil projection figures for Years 7 to 11 for the GBC Planning Area from 2018 up to 2024.

37 BATH COMMUNITY ACADEMY SITE

The Education Business Manager introduced this report to the Panel. He informed the Panel that there are currently a number of short term, two year contracts with a nursery, GLL (Better) operating the sports centre and Bath Spa University that need to be honoured. He added that the income generated by these current leases can provide resources to ensure safe and secure management of the site giving time to develop a long term plan for the future use of the BCA site. He said that there is considerable interest in the future use and development of the site that could benefit the local community.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked that given the level of interest in this issue, how often the Panel will receive updates.

The Education Business Manager replied that the Panel could be updated on progress every two meetings.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty asked why a Site Audit would take 10 months.

The Education Business Manager replied that time was needed to assess the condition of all the buildings on site, assess the site for its future capabilities and whether any areas would require demolition.

Councillor Paul May stated that it was key to be transparent on this process.

The Chair agreed and said that the consultation process was therefore very important. She asked whether Ward Councillors would be involved.

The Corporate Director replied that they planned to engage widely on this matter and to be clear of the parameters of what can be done on the site. He said that Ward Councillors would be consulted as part of the process.

Councillor Paul May stated that there was no grand plan at this stage and in response to a question raised at the last Cabinet meeting there is no restricted covenant relating to the site to be used solely for educational purposes.

The Corporate Director added that there is a process to be followed for the site to be released for non-educational use.

The Chair asked when the consultation process is likely to commence.

The Education Business Manager replied that at this stage he would say July 2019.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if assurances can be given that whatever the future use of the site, the current facilities will continue to be available to the community in the longer term. She asked if conversations have taken place with GLL about extending their opening hours to daytime.

The Education Business Manager replied that discussions have taken place and at this stage they cannot commit to extending their opening hours.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Note the planned use of the site for the next 2 years
- ii) Note the proposed options and outline timeline to develop a master plan for the future use of the site.

38 CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WORK ACT 2017 UPDATE

The Corporate Director introduced this report to the Panel. He stated that the Act was wide ranging but that the main purpose of the legislation was to:

- Improve decision making and support for looked after and previously looked after children in England and Wales.
- Improve joint work at the local level to safeguard children and enable better learning at the local and national levels to improve practice in child protection.
- Promote the safeguarding of children by providing for relationships and sex education in schools.
- Enable the establishment of a new regulatory regime specifically for the social work profession in England.

Councillor Matt Cochrane asked what the proportion of care leavers was that retain engagement with the Council.

The Corporate Director replied that 94 care leavers were contacted and of that figure 26 have taken up engagement.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how the 'Local Offer' would be approved.

The Corporate Director replied that the Council will be asked to sign up to it.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if there are the resources to deliver a Personal Advisor for care leavers up to age of 25.

The Corporate Director replied that the Council is in receipt of £7,292 of new burdens funding for this work. He added that roles within the team have flexibility to provide assistance when necessary.

The Chair asked the difference between the roles of the Personal Assistant and the Personal Advisor mentioned in the report.

The Corporate Director replied that they are in fact the same person.

Chris Batten commented that the funding from Government was not sufficient.

Councillor Paul May agreed that it was not enough and said that he was due to meet with a Government representative to discuss the issue further. He added that keeping contact with these young people until 25 was so important and that he would be happy to report back on any progress made.

The Corporate Director added that new duties have been assigned to the Head of the Virtual School and new national guidance has been issued strengthening the requirements in respect of Looked After Children as well as previously Looked After Children and with additional emphasis on ensuring their mental health needs are met.

He said that the Council has received £30,000 for this additional work which has enabled the role to become full time.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how will the local authority, police and CCG work together in the absence of the LSCB and can we have assurances that reviews of safeguarding will take place during the transition process.

The Corporate Director assured the Panel that the LSCB will not cease until new arrangements are in place. He added that he felt that having these three agencies retain oversight of this work was a positive message as they already worked together within the Board.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what are the resource implications for the police who are overstretched anyway and can we be assured that the police have the resources to engage in the new arrangements.

The Corporate Director acknowledged that the police are stretched in terms of their boundaries and that conversations were ongoing as to the detail of the footprint that they would have to cover.

Kevin Burnett asked what challenges / benefits were there to the potential new ways of working.

The Corporate Director replied that a real strength was the joint working arrangements already established through the LSCB, LSAB and their respective Sub-Groups. He added that there would be a challenge in terms of resources, but said that a pooled budget currently exists for both Boards.

Kevin Burnett asked if the Virtual Head had written new guidance relating to exclusions and whether this document had been presented to the School Standards Board.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that it has been written, all schools have received it and it was due to be discussed by the School Standards Board on 2nd October 2018.

Kevin Burnett asked if the Panel could see it.

The Director of Education Transformation replied that they could.

The Chair asked if the Panel could be given a role structure chart identifying which officers report to who and the various working groups / bodies that exist across the People and Communities Department.

The Corporate Director replied that they could attempt to do this on behalf of the Panel, but said that it could be quite a complex diagram.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the update.

39 SUPPORTING CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

The Corporate Director introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the Council resolved at its March 2018 meeting that it has a responsibility to support the children of alcoholics and to ensure that the needs of these children are met.

He stated that the initial review of policies, procedures and strategies indicates that we have a range of positive measures in place to ensure that the children of alcoholics have their needs identified, and that families can access appropriate support to address these needs.

He said that further work is required to complete the review and produce a set of recommendations to further improve the existing arrangements and that the Council has asked that we share the findings with the National Association for the Children of Alcoholics (NACOA) and invite them to comment on our support offer. He added that a further report will be brought to Panel when this has been completed.

Councillor Paul May added that he thought the Panel would benefit from receiving a presentation on the Complex Trio that had been previously given to the Health & Wellbeing Board by the Service Manager, Connecting Families.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the presentation could also be given to the Corporate Parenting Group.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the positive assurance provided from the initial analysis work described in this report and to receive a further report in due course when the assessment has been completed and shared with the National Association for the Children of Alcoholics (NACOA).

40 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The Head of Education Inclusion Services introduced this report to the Panel. He informed them that there has been a rise in the number of children and young people who are electively home educated (EHE) in Bath & North East Somerset. He added that this rise is reflected nationally and concern is growing that this rise is due to increasing numbers of vulnerable children and young people who are EHE and potentially out of sight of the education system and possible support services.

He said that all local authorities are reporting experiencing a rapid growth in the numbers of children who are EHE, especially children removed from registered schools in key stages 3 and 4. He said that a concern is the challenges for EHE parents of children coming out of Year 11 to arrange exams, with limited access to post 16 options, with no qualifications and high risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

He said that for many years within Bath and North East Somerset the numbers of EHE children remained fairly stable with the majority being a parental informed choice where children never entered the formal education system. He added that there has been a definite upward trend in numbers over the last few years of pupils coming out of the school system across the authority.

He informed the Panel that in response to the growing national concern, the DfE has carried out a formal consultation on EHE which B&NES took part in. He added that the consultation closed on 2nd July 2018 and that the date for the feedback outcome is yet unknown, but may have an impact on the DfE guidance that will be published. He said that if additional guidance or duties are introduced the Panel is advised that this is likely to have additional resourcing requirements.

He explained that in March 2018 the CMES presented a report to the LSCB highlighting their concerns. He said that the Board tasked the service with formulating a task finish group to look at the issue locally and to carry out an audit of the last 12 families who have notified the local authority that they will be electively home educating their child/ren and to report their findings back to the Board.

He said that the findings of the audit demonstrated a high level of concern regarding the vulnerability of the families choosing to EHE their children. He explained that only in one case did it seem that a parent had made this decision in an informed way. He said that the other families, just under half of secondary school age, had removed their children from education due to a series of difficulties relating to their children's needs and their education, including exclusions, dissatisfaction with support or lack of support, difficulties with meeting special educational needs and disabilities, emotional and mental health, either relating to the child, or as indicated in professional notes, relating to parental mental health. He added that it was also clear that many parents did not understand the implications for themselves and their children in choosing to EHE.

He stated that the LSCB has supported a number of proposed recommendations in the report and added in their own additional ones, these include;

- That the local authority amends the Fair Access protocol to allow a period of 'cooling off' when the parent informs the school that they will EHE their

child/ren. This 'cooling off' period would ask schools not to de-register children at the point of parental notification, but to allow time for services to discuss options with the parent fully. This protocol is agreed annually and is binding across all schools, but can only be implemented with the agreement of all headteachers.

- That the Corporate Director of People's Services and the LSCB will write to all headteachers raising concern over the increasing numbers of children who are being EHE and that they support and adopt the proposed changes in the Fair Access protocol.
- That a further EHE report be presented to the LSCB in 6 months to update on progress of its recommendations and the implications of the DfE's consultation on EHE.

David Williams asked if any specific needs had been identified in the 12 cases that were audited.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that two children had identified SEND, two with ADHD, a number of them were known to CAMHS or who had parents with mental health concerns and one had a record within the Youth Justice system. He added that all children had been identified as having difficult behaviour.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty asked how can the records of children that have never entered education at a school be tracked.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that when the service is aware that parents have not accepted school places on behalf of their children we make contact with the family.

Councillor O'Doherty commented that it was important for the Council to ensure that EHE children are not at risk in terms of safeguarding, radicalisation and mental / physical health.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services said that he agreed with those concerns.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Council still has a CMES officer.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that it does.

Councillor Hardman asked if there were further resources, what else the service could do that would have a positive impact.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that additional resources would allow the service to work earlier / more strategically with schools and other services.

Councillor Hardman asked at what point does a child who refuses to go to school get removed from the roll.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that a child can only be removed in certain circumstances and this cannot be done through non-attendance.

Councillor Hardman asked to what extent are we anticipating that all Headteachers will agree to the revised Fair Access protocol.

The Head of Education Inclusion Services replied that it can sometimes be a difficult document to agree, but that he could not see why objections would be raised.

Councillor Hardman asked for the EHE report which is being presented to the LSCB (or its successor) in six months' time to be shared with the Panel.

The Director of Education Transformation informed the Panel that Ofsted have decided that if pupils in Year 10 / 11 leave to be EHE then these figures will count against the school they leave.

Councillor Sally Davis said that she was aware of the work within CMES and a positive outcome it has had on a child she knows.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Note the rise in elective home education in B&NES and notes the level of concern regarding the increase of its apparent use to remove vulnerable children from the education system
- ii) Note that EHE is now a national concern and that the Department for Education (DfE) has carried out a consultation on EHE that will have possible implications on the legislation and guidance that oversees this matter and that this could in turn have resource implications for B&NES services.
- iii) Note the report and the recommendations made by the LSCB which has been looking at this issue locally.

41 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Paul May, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People addressed the Panel, a summary is set out below.

Academies Policy

He explained that following the debate at the last Panel meeting that he has decided that there are no changes required to the current Policy for Academies and Free Schools and that the Local Authority maintains a neutral position.

SEND

He said that there is likely to be a SEND joint inspection soon which will result in a letter to the Council rather than an overall rating. He added that in other locations these reports have been quite firm so we are looking at all elements of our performance.

Autism Awareness

In response to the motion raised at Council by Councillor Tim Ball he said that there are three providers that regularly work with the Council on this matter. He acknowledged that issues do remain to be resolved, particularly around the high number of SEND exclusions, low performance figures of identified children and the number of EHCPs that are in place.

He added that he was committed to discussing any issues found with the Panel.

School Performance

He said that the gap for vulnerable children had unfortunately grown. He added though that in context both parties had shown improvements in their performance.

Youth Service

He said that the previously agreed reduction in the Youth Service budget is due to take place in October and the full business plan for a Staff Mutual is imminent. He added that discussions with the three sites continue with different options emerging and that as part of the process it is clear the Council supports strongly many commissioned third sector bodies and I am trying to build links with them.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how imminent the Staff Mutual plan was.

Councillor Paul May replied that mainly the discussions revolved around the three centres. He added that Riverside was progressing positively, there were some complications between the school and the church in Peasedown St John and that the cost of the Southside building was still being debated.

He added that he was awaiting the Business Plan.

The Corporate Director commented that a formal decision on the Staff Mutual is expected by the end of October 2018 for it to be able to go live in April 2019. He added that Youth Connect is to be restructured and that discussions are ongoing as to the transition arrangements that will be put in place.

The Chair thanked Councillor May for his update on behalf of the Panel.

42 CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The Corporate Director addressed the Panel, a copy of his briefing can be found on the Panel's Minute Book or as an online appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

GCSE and A Level Results

Early results as reported by schools indicate that pupils in Bath and North East Somerset have improved their GCSE results compared to last year. In a year when pupils, parents, teachers and school leaders have been concerned about the new,

more challenging GCSE courses it is a credit to all concerned that results have improved.

Initial data across the area shows that the average Attainment 8 score (a measure showing how well pupils have done in a range of 8 subjects) has risen so that it is now equivalent to a strong pass (Grade 5). The proportion of pupils achieving at least a strong pass in both English and maths has risen from 42% to 48% and the proportion achieving at least a standard pass (Grade 4) has risen from 63% to 69%.

Early indications of A level results across the area show a substantial increase in the average grade achieved by pupils and this is a real credit to the hard work that they and their teachers have put in. From the results of nearly all the schools and colleges in the area it would seem that the average grade achieved has moved from a C in 2017 to halfway between a C and a B grade in 2018.

Alternative Education Provision

The Council has commissioned 2 new providers of Alternative Provision who have commenced locally from September 2018. Learn@ (for secondary-age provision) and Broadlands (Primary) were both successful in securing the necessary DfE registration status in time for the start of term.

Adoption West

Adoption West, the new Regional Adoption Agency serving B&NES, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire will be in place from 1st October 2018, with staff transferring across from individual local authorities on 1st November. A joint scrutiny arrangement is proposed for this service, which will be run by a new company wholly-owned by the 6 Local Authorities.

Admissions

Applications for school places for September 2019 are now open and we are encouraging families to use all 5 preferences on the application form to ensure their child has the best chance of securing a suitable local school place. We are conscious that the admissions process is complex to understand and heavily prescribed by the national Code of Practice.

The national Schools Adjudicator has recently determined an objection to the admissions criteria of Beechen Cliff School. The Adjudicator has found 16 ways in which the criteria do not comply with the Admissions Code and has given the school 2 months to revise them accordingly.

The Adjudicator also commented on the number of children in South West Bath being allocated a school place on the far side of Bath. His findings indicated that this was in part because parents did not understand the implications of not making use of all five preferences. I would once again ask all Councillors to encourage local parents to make full use of their 5 preferences.

The Chair asked if the ruling regarding Beechen Cliff would have any effect on Hayesfield as they shared a sibling link in their criteria for the 2018 admission process.

The Corporate Director replied that the admissions criteria for Hayesfield has not been objected to and as such will remain the same for the 2019 admissions. He added that they have received advice from the Schools Adjudicator and have agreed to undertake a review by 2020.

The Chair asked from what date did the two months for Beechen Cliff begin to make their revisions.

The Corporate Director replied that they received notification of the decision on September 10th.

Councillor Matt Cochrane said that this therefore means that parents will be making applications not knowing the actual criteria for the school.

The Corporate Director replied that there is little the Council can do. He added that the PAN for Hayesfield (238) is larger than that of Beechen Cliff (177).

Councillor Liz Hardman said that parents are going to be even more confused following this ruling. She stated that the criteria is unfair and discriminates against boys in Twerton. She asked if there were any lessons the Council can learn from this scenario.

The Corporate Director replied that the Council can look to be more alert to when schools make admissions criteria changes.

The Director of Education Transformation added that she believed that Beechen Cliff had already removed the link to siblings at Hayesfield for this year's admission process.

Councillor Paul May commented that he felt it was important that everyone sees the letter from the Schools Adjudicator. He said that the number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds attending specific schools was still a key issue.

He said that there were issues to address at Beechen Cliff as its Ofsted rating had gone from Outstanding to Inadequate and had not performed as well as it could. He stated that the Council will be keeping the progress of the school under review.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for his update on behalf of the Panel.

43 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. She asked for the Structure Chart mentioned earlier in the meeting to be added to the workplan.

Chris Batten asked for the Panel to receive a report on the support available to Young Carers.

Councillor Liz Hardman reminded the Panel they had earlier discussed receiving additional information relating to the Toxic Trio.

Councillor Paul May suggested that they keep in mind the need to have a report following on from whenever the SEND Joint Inspection is carried out.

Kevin Burnett said that a follow up report on Elective Home Education should be added to the workplan.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve these proposals.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Corporate Director's Briefing for Children's PDS, 18th September 2018

GCSE and A level Results

Early results as reported by schools indicate that pupils in Bath and North East Somerset have improved their GCSE results compared to last year. In a year when pupils, parents, teachers and school leaders have been concerned about the new, more challenging GCSE courses it is a credit to all concerned that results have improved.

Initial data across the area shows that the average Attainment 8 score (a measure showing how well pupils have done in a range of 8 subjects) has risen so that it is now equivalent to a strong pass (Grade 5). The proportion of pupils achieving at least a strong pass in both English and maths has risen from 42% to 48% and the proportion achieving at least a standard pass (Grade 4) has risen from 63% to 69%.

Early indications of A level results across the area show a substantial increase in the average grade achieved by pupils and this is a real credit to the hard work that they and their teachers have put in. We are seeing some strong improvements from local schools, both in the average grade achieved and in the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades.

From the results of nearly all the schools and colleges in the area it would seem that the average grade achieved has moved from a C in 2017 to halfway between a C and a B grade in 2018. The percentage of pupils achieving at least two A grades and a B grade in the subjects most favoured by universities has increased from 14.6% to 17.2%. This is a credit to pupils and teachers and should enable more students to get to the best universities.

This has been a period of substantial change for teachers and pupils, both at GCSE and A level. Bath and North East Somerset Council recognises the hard work that pupils have put in to achieve these results, and the dedication that their teachers have shown in preparing them so well. Behind these average figures there are many individual stories of success at all levels.

Alternative Education Provision

The Council has commissioned 2 new providers of Alternative Provision who have commenced locally from September 2018. Learn@ (for secondary-age provision) and Broadlands (Primary) were both successful in securing the necessary DfE registration status in time for the start of term.

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Admissions

Applications for school places for September 2019 are now open and we are encouraging families to use all 5 preferences on the application form to ensure their child has the best chance of securing a suitable local school place. We are conscious that the admissions process is complex to understand and heavily prescribed by the national Code of Practice. A video has been created, presented by two local year 6 pupils, to try to get some of the key messages across to families in a more engaging way.

The national Schools Adjudicator has recently determined an objection to the admissions criteria of Beechen Cliff School. The Adjudicator has found 16 ways in which the criteria do not comply with the Admissions Code and has given the school 2 months to revise them accordingly.

The Adjudicator also commented on the number of children in South West Bath being allocated a school place on the far side of Bath. His findings indicated that this was in part because parents did not understand the implications of not making use of all five preferences. I would once again ask all Councillors to encourage local parents to make full use of their 5 preferences.

Mike Bowden
Corporate Director