
Cllr Stephen Hillier
Chairman
Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee

7 December 2020

Dear Stephen

Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee – Impact of Covid 19 on schools and educational outcomes for children and young people

I refer to the recommendations made by the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 5 November 2020 in relation to the above item. Please see below my reply to your numbered recommendations: -

2. I have written to the Secretary of State for Education highlighting the points made by the Committee. I enclose a copy of that letter for which I await a response.
3. I have considered your request to carry out an online survey with parents and children on the impact of Covid-19. This would be an extremely resource intensive task as the number of parents totals over 300,000, and that figure would increase substantially if pupils were surveyed too. There is not capacity within the Education and Skills department to undertake a survey of such a large cohort and ensure that the data is assessed in a meaningful way. In addition, there are already mechanisms in place for parents and young people to raise concerns and provide feedback.
4. The three Headteachers' Executives provide the best forum for the Education and Skills service to engage with Heads representing the different sectors – Primary, Secondary and Special School. The Local Authority's approach to supporting and communicating with schools during the pandemic has been shaped in liaison with and taking on board feedback from the different Executives. I firmly believe this is the most effective method for working with and hearing from the senior leaders in our schools and would suggest that this continues rather than undertaking a separate survey.
5. As mentioned at the Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Education and Skills service are in discussions with the provider of the County Council's Employee Assistance Programme to develop a bespoke offer of support that Headteachers could access to benefit their emotional wellbeing. In the meantime, whilst this offer is being finalised, school leaders are encouraged to contact their school link advisor to discuss any concerns they may have. Once the offer of support is in place the details can be shared with the Business Planning Group (BPG).
6. I note the areas to be monitored by the BPG.

7. A report on the financial stresses on schools as a result of the pandemic can be provided to a future BPG meeting. Please let the Director of Education and Skills know the date of the meeting this is required for.
8. Following feedback received from schools and the West Sussex Governor Association the Education and Skills service have already made alterations to the communications circulated to schools and governors. In response to requests that the communications do not get sent on a Friday the service ensure these are sent out Monday to Thursday only, unless exceptional circumstances dictate. In addition, the format has been changed so it is clearer which part of the communication is for school staff to read and act on and which part is directed to governors.
9. I await receipt of any further feedback.
10. See response to 2 above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Cllr Nigel Jupp
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Enc – Letter to Secretary of State for Education