

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 8th September 2020

Attendees

Sophie Conway (Councillor) (Chair)
Margaret Gordon (Councillor) (Vice Chair)
Ajay Chauhan (Councillor)
Humaira Garasia (Councillor)
James Peters (Councillor)
Clare Potter (Councillor)
Sharon Patrick (Councillor)
Katie Hansen (Councillor)
Sade Etti (Councillor)
Justine McDonald (Statutory Co-optee)
Luisa Dornelas (Statutory Co-optee)
Shabnum Hassan (Statutory Co-optee)
Ernell Watson (Co-opted member)
Michael Lobenstein (Co-opted member)
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)
Shuja Shaikh (Co-opted member)

In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play
- Anne Canning, Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health
- Sarah Wright, Director, Children and Families Service
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding & Learning
- Anton Francic, Senior Secondary Adviser
- Orlene Badu, System Leader, Young Black Men Project

Cllr Conway in the Chair

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Clare Joseph

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Hansen.

2. Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as scheduled.

3. Declarations of interest

3.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:

- Cllr Peters was a governor at a special school in Hackney;
- Cllr Chauhan was a member of NEU and a teacher at a school outside of Hackney;
- Justine McDonald was a Headteacher at a school in Hackney;

- Jo Macleod was a governor at a school in Hackney;
- Shabnum Hassan was a governor at a school in Hackney.

4. Examinations Update

4.1 Given the controversy over the process for awarding exam results in the summer of 2020 and the subsequent confusion and anxiety that this gave to young people, the Commission requested an update on A Level and GCSE exam results. In particular, the Commission sought assurance on the following:

- How local children in years 11 and 13 have been affected with particular reference to disadvantaged groups;
- The range of advice and support made available to help children navigate post 16 and post 18 options;
- Whether there was sufficient local capacity 16/18 options to meet local needs.

4.2 The Cabinet member for Education, Children and Children's Social Care introduced the response to this item. When it became apparent that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds would be disproportionately affected by the use of an algorithm to determine grades, the Mayor and Cabinet member petitioned the government to reconsider, and were pleased that the decision was taken to return to teacher assessed grades as had originally been planned. There was concern however, that this process had caused considerable anxiety and stress to local young people which could have been avoided.

4.3 The Cabinet member reassured the Commission that whilst school league tables would not be published this year, local schools had performed well and that the number of children staying on into local 6th forms had increased. In general, these results had allowed children to progress along pathways in further and higher education, vocational training or the world of work. The Cabinet member thanked local schools for their support in helping young people to achieve such good results and helping them navigate post 16 and post 18 options.

4.4 The Director of Education and Principal Secondary School adviser presented to the Commission (attached). The key points from this presentation were as follows:

- The number local passes at A level achieving a grade A*- C was 87%, 13 percentage points higher than last year (74%). The increase recorded in Hackney was higher than the national average;
- At GCSE level, 1 in 4 young people achieved a high pass (grade 7-9) compared to 1 in 5 last year;
- At GCSE, 54% achieved a strong pass in Basics, English and maths combined (grade 5+) compared with 48% last year (71% achieved a strong pass in English and 58% achieved a strong pass in maths).
- At GCSE, 73% achieved a standard pass in Basics, English and maths (grade 4+) compared to 69% last year. These results were higher than the national average;

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- Strong performances were recorded across local schools, including those where there is a high proportion of disadvantaged children (e.g. entitled to free school meals).
- As yet, it was not clear whether DfE would release any nationally aggregated data or analysis of the performance of different student cohorts (e.g. gender, ethnicity, FSM entitlement). An update was expected in October 2020.
- With the number of appeals likely to be low, there was a perception that the school assessed grades would seem to have generated fairer results for disadvantaged students than the use of the algorithm.

4.5 In relation to advice and support available to children at this time, all schools were noted to have strong systems to help advise and support children through their post 16 and post 18 options. Specialist advice was provided through Prospects for on-the-day results and advisers in-situ in schools and via a helpline. My Big Career had been commissioned to help students with university offers. Young Hackney, Hackney Education and Prospects held a careers festival on 21st August to help young people navigate future education and training options.

4.6 The Commission was reassured that there was additional local capacity for post 16 options in that not every local 6th form or local college was full. There was further work to be done however, to ensure that there was greater breadth in the local offer to young people, particularly in terms of Level 2 qualifications, vocational qualifications and suitable courses for children with SEND.

Questions from the Commission

4.7 In terms of broadening the scope of the local 6th form offer, was this just in response to the exams process of the summer of 2020, or was this an ongoing area of work?

- The authority had been working to widen the offer at both local 6th forms and colleges for a number of years, but the events of this summer and the inequalities that resulted from Covid 19 had increased local resolve to make further progress on this issue.

4.8 Would it be possible to provide further detail about local capacity for post 16 and post 18 options, in particular, was there capacity in the right places and at the right levels? Are any local 6th forms struggling to meet local demand?

- It was acknowledged that capacity was also about responding to individual needs as well as places and courses. These issues were being discussed strategically at the Secondary Headteachers Forum and in the Post 16 Network meetings. The landscape of post 16 provision was evolving in response to the changing nature of qualifications in which more vocational courses were being given more prominence. Local 6th forms were also looking to extend their vocational offer which would appeal to a wider range of students.
- Whilst some 6th forms were oversubscribed, there was sufficient capacity in the sector overall in Hackney and in neighbouring boroughs. It was

noted that a number of children seeking further post 16 education do choose to travel to other schools and colleges.

- Borough wide support is provided through Prospects who follow up all post 16 students and provide advice and guidance where necessary.

4.9 What involvement did the LA have in lobbying for change at the national level?

- In relation to the national picture, it was only apparent that the government had considered 3 options for exam grading in 2020 once the results had actually been published. None of the options were completely satisfactory, but the government's preferred option (the use of the algorithm) was probably not as well tested as it should have been. There was much anger in the profession that for the most part, teacher assessments were overridden by an algorithm based on prior attainment level of the school. The Mayor and Cabinet member wrote to the government setting out these concerns and the impact that it would have on local young people. The subsequent reversal of policy helped address many of these issues, though young people were caused unnecessary anxiety in this process.
- Hackney Education Service had shared a paper with schools on unconscious bias ahead of the move to teacher assessment. This included the use of checklists to test for cultural responsiveness. The paper was well received in all settings. There had also been meetings with Secondary Heads and other post 16 providers to further help interpret the most recent government guidance and to develop consistency in how guidelines were applied across the sector.

4.10 Were students in Hackney in any way prejudiced by the final examination assessment? Did any students lose out on a university place and what support was offered to them? How are children who were not happy with their grades and want to retake exams being supported?

- It was clear that a number of students had been affected and had not been given places at their first choice university, as places had been allocated on the algorithm assessed results. Whilst some may now be at other universities, others may be taking an unplanned gap-year. Hackney Education Service was working with schools and colleges to make sure young people were getting appropriate advice and support.
- Guidelines for the appeal process had just been published and were still being clarified. The uptake of appeals was likely to be low given the number of young people being given their expected grades. If students were not happy with their grades they could appeal, but could only do this if they felt they were prejudiced in any way (and could not appeal against the school).

4.12 What plans are there to support children taking exams next year who have missed a substantial part of their learning this year as a result of school closures?

- Schools were just beginning to identify areas of lost learning and starting to plan how this could be re-captured in the months going forward. The

government announced the National Tutoring Programme (which uses individual tutoring) to support students to catch up. It is likely that blended learning will be ongoing, with teachers using a range of face-to-face and on-line teaching to support student learning.

- The feedback from the Lost Learning Project in Hackney was that the delivery and take up of on-line learning varied across schools with it being strong and established rapidly in some areas. The issues about different levels of access to ICT were noted. National and local interventions with schools were ongoing to further develop and improve on-line learning.

4.13 How many children were predicted to get a pass but did not get any grade?

- A number of cases were reported where a student's algorithm result was substantially below their teacher assessed grade. It was noted in terms of A levels, all local students passed (up from 98% in 2019).

4.14 Although demographic analysis was not currently available for exam results, would this be available in the future? Could this data be determined at a local level via the data that schools provide to Hackney Education Service?

- Although no school league tables would be published for this year, it was still not clear what additional demographic data the DfE intended to release at this stage. It has been clear there will be no league tables.

4.15 Given the ongoing uncertainties around school exams and how young people had been impacted, the Chair suggested that it would be helpful to have a further update when the situation was clearer.

Agreed: A further update on school exams to be provided at a later date in the Commission's work programme.

4.16 The Chair thanked officers for attending and updating the Commission.

5. Covid 19 Service Updates

5.1 The Commission continues to receive updates from both Children and Families Services (CFS) and Hackney Learning Trust (Hackney Education Service) on how services were responding to Covid 19 and subsequent recovery plans. The Directors of the respective services highlighted key issues from their respective reports as set out below.

5.2 The Cabinet member for Education, Children and Children's Social Care introduced the response to this item and highlighted a number of issues:

- The council had been working extensively on supporting schools to reopen safely for children, including engagement with local parents;
- The health and wellbeing of children and young people continued to be priority, particularly the identification of children who may experience delayed trauma;
- An increase in social care referrals was expected as children returned to school and the service was in discussion with the Finance Department for additional capacity to support this;

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- Youth hubs were open and were engaging children in outside spaces and virtually to ensure that young people remained supported;
- Children's Centres have remained open throughout and adventure playgrounds have been reopened over the summer to help children reintegrate with their peers.

Children & Families Service (CFS)

5.3 The Director of the Children and Families Service highlighted a number of key issues from the report:

- Referral levels continue to be lower than expected, and were down by 38% overall on comparable figures from last year. Numbers were expected to increase as schools returned but no discernible difference had been recorded as yet.
- Notable increases in the system were recorded for the number of Children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) with a 10% increase being recorded (to 288 cases). This increase was the result of more children remaining on a CPP rather than new cases coming into the system, as there continued to be difficulty in undertaking appropriate interventions to help children and families improve and move off a CPP.
- Similarly, there were also increasing numbers of children in the court and pre-court systems also due to the problems of getting appropriate interventions to support children (or to make appropriate assessments).
- There were currently 456 looked after children in Hackney with the majority of new cases being unaccompanied asylum seeking children and adolescents whose relationships with their families had broken down.
- Domestic abuse referrals have fluctuated over recent weeks though levels appear to have plateaued.
- There was more face-to-face communication with children and young people, though this continues to be risk-assessed.
- Courts have reopened in July and as a consequence, more local cases in the Youth Offending Team were being dealt with in the court system which had helped to clear the backlog of cases.
- Summer activities offered through Young Hackney had gone well and more young people were accessing Youth Hubs. 680 children and young people had accessed Youth Hubs (3,146 total attendances).
- Digital devices arrived very late (late July) and CFS and Hackney Education Service had worked together to distribute these to priority groups of children.

Questions from the Commission

5.4 In terms of staffing at CFS, how have caseloads been affected from the impact of Covid 19? Are preparations being made for the expected increase in demand as children return to school?

- Some parts of the child care system were now very busy as referrals were increasing. Other parts had been less busy, such as the Access and Assessment services and these staff had been helping out in other areas of CFS. CFS was mapping out expected demands and how this may impact on overall patterns of staff activity. CFS had met with the Finance

Team to discuss additional resourcing for the service to meet expected increase in referrals.

5.5 The impact of the pandemic has been far reaching which may necessitate families who have not needed social care support in the past to seek help. What early help interventions were being put in place to help engage and support these families?

- CFS had been working with both Hackney Education Service and Young Hackney to provide early help to new families by signposting young people to front facing services. Such support would hopefully maintain children and families in the community and prevent more intensive interventions at a later date.

5.6 With increasing numbers of looked after children in its care, has the council been able to provide sufficient foster care placements?

- The numbers of looked after children were rising and there were pressures in finding suitable placements for them. There were particular difficulties in finding appropriate foster carers and as a result, more children were being placed in residential care. There were now over 40 children in residential care, the highest it has been in Hackney for over 10 years. It was noted that residential care was a significantly more expensive placement option for children than foster care.
- Capacity in the in-house foster carer team has been reduced since the start of the pandemic as many carers were elderly or from BAME communities and may have needed to shield themselves. It was hoped that as restrictions eased, capacity would increase within the in-house team of foster carers.
- Foster carer panels continued to operate as usual.

5.7 Given the increasing numbers of children in the care system and the likelihood of an increase in referrals for social care as schools return, what financial modelling has taken place to ensure that there are sufficient resources in place to meet these needs? What is the expected financial outturn for 2020/21?

- CFS were logging all additional expenditure due to Covid and were working with Finance colleagues to address this. The situation was complex and evolving which made it difficult to predict the financial impact of Covid on CFS as an end of year figure.
- A wider piece of work is being carried out across the Council on additional costs resulting from Covid 19 and what could be reclaimed from central government grants. The Council was keeping very close tabs on all Children and Families Service expenditure.

5.8 It was concerning to note the number of young people being held in remand situations. What was the council doing to help reduce this number?

- To clarify, there were more young people going on remand who had been waiting for their court cases to be heard. There were, however, many

young people still waiting for their cases to be heard, and the lack of outcome was very unsettling for both them and their families.

Hackney Education

5.9 The Director of Education highlighted a number of issues from the submitted report:

- Hackney Education Service worked together with Young Hackney to support over 700 children to attend schools over the summer, many of whom were vulnerable children or children in need;
- Hackney Education Service was starting to receive attendance data which suggested that some schools were reaching 95% levels of attendance, which reflected normally expected levels. Attendance was below this figure in some schools, though this could be due to staggered start of year groups;
- The SEND team were working on new bus routes to help more children with SEND to access their respective educational settings;
- Schools have been provided with guidance from both the LA and nationally on how to manage a Covid 19 outbreak. There have been a small number of positive cases identified across London which has required 'bubbles' of children and staff to be sent home. It is likely that this will also occur in Hackney school at some point, so guidance is available to make sure schools are prepared and know how to respond in this situation. If a child is diagnosed with Covid and is sent home, Hackney Education Service has issued guidance to schools establishing a minimum standard of what a child can expect when they are quarantined and need to be homeschooled. In the event of a positive test, it was unlikely that a whole school would close, which will reduce pressures on schools digital devices:
- There may be some vulnerable groups of children who may have difficulty in returning to school and schools may need to set up IT support for such children to enable them to continue to work remotely;
- Hackney Education Service continues to enhance local provision of digital devices and has set up a laptop donation scheme where old laptops can be reconditioned and given to schools. Wifi access continues to be problematic and as yet there is no borough wide solution. Hackney Education Service could report more fully in time on this issue;
- Children with an existing or emerging mental health condition were also a priority and the Wellbeing and Mental Health Service was operating in a large number of schools to help support these children;
- Many childcare settings have remained open during the pandemic, but independent providers and those settings which rely predominantly on fees income have faced considerable financial pressures. Whilst practical and financial support has been provided by the Early Years Network and Business Grants respectively, there is concern around the shape and size of the childcare landscape.

Questions from the Commission

5.10 Will schools relax behaviour policies to help children with SEND, mental health or other behaviour issues to adapt to being back in the school environment?

- Hackney Education Service has provided guidance to schools to ensure that they recognise the difficulties that children have faced over the past 6 months and that some children will need targeted support to help them adjust back into school life.
- The WAMHS Project and CAMHS workers were available to schools to help support children with specific mental and emotional well being needs.
- Schools have been provided with guidance to ensure that children are provided with reasonable adjustments to help them adapt to local school policies and practices.

5.11 Given the increased prevalence of Covid 19 in the north of the borough, will any additional support be provided to out of school settings such as Yeshiva to help them prevent infection?

- Letters have been sent to all schools in the wards most affected. It was noted that there had been a stronger response from schools where Hackney Education Service had a connection and across most early years settings.
- The Commission noted that the DPH does have the power to close schools if necessary, though this power would be used as a last resort. Although Yeshiva are out of school settings rather than schools, the Director of Public Health (DPH) and Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health had written to one such setting to highlight concerns.

5.12 Given the prospect of a second wave of infection, what action is the council taking to help improve resilience of local education and children and young people services?

- Hackney Education Service was maintaining communication with all schools to help promote key public health messages and to ensure that school staff remain vigilant and aware of infection control measures.

5.13 What role can libraries and other community spaces in combating the digital divide, for example by providing wifi access and places for children to study.

- Many children would use libraries not only to gain access to free wifi, but also to have a quiet space to study. It would be beneficial if libraries could reopen, though it was recognised that this may be more problematic for particular libraries given the need to maintain social distancing requirements.

5.14 Whilst school closures may not have been beneficial for most children, a small number have seen some benefits in their mental health as they have not been exposed to the social and other pressures from their peers. Is there anything that the Education Service can learn from this small cohort of young people about some of the possible negative effects of schooling?

- A number of benefits of school closures have been reported among children and parents. Children have experienced less pressures in relation to exams and some parents have reported that their children have benefited from a less intense curriculum and timetable during lockdown. Whilst it is critical that children are back in school, there are clearly wider lessons to be learnt from the school closures.

5.15 Does the power of the DPH to close schools extend to unregistered settings given that these are not schools?

- The powers do extend to unregistered settings, but these are very rarely used. These settings have been notified that this power exists should it be needed.

5.16 The Cabinet member for Families, Early Years and Play noted the work that was taking place to support children with SEND and the Disabled Children Service in particular. It was acknowledged that many families living with children with SEND would have struggled over recent months, but the Short Break Team had connected with all service users to help identify additional needs from the pandemic and had relaxed conditions for payments to help improve the home environment.

5.17 The Cabinet member had also visited adventure playgrounds including those supported by the Disabled Children Service. It was reported that children with SEND had greatly benefited from this facility being reopened.

5.18 The Chair noted that the situation with schools remained fluid and that a more definitive picture would emerge as the term progressed and the Commission would retain oversight over this in the coming months. The Chair reinforced the need for financial monitoring data for both Hackney Education Service and CFS for the next meeting as per the work programme.

5.19 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

6. Racial inequalities and unconscious bias

6.1 The death of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests have highlighted racial inequalities that exist across public services. The Commission invited the Directors of the Children and Families Service (CFS) and Hackney Learning Trust (Hackney Education Service) to set out the work to help identify and address racial inequalities and unconscious bias in the policies and practices of their respective departments.

6.2 The purpose of this item was three fold:

- To ensure that the Commission had oversight of work to combat racial inequalities across children and young people's services;
- To provide challenge to local strategies, plans or work that seek address racial inequalities; and

- To assess whether further more detailed scrutiny is necessary for any identified service areas.

6.3 The Cabinet member for Education, Children and Children's Social Care introduced responses from both CFS and Hackney Education Service. The Cabinet member made the following points:

- Hackney has supported the Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men strategy for a number of years and this work has helped to bring change to local services.
- In response to the death of George Floyd, Hackney has embarked on further work across the Council in both CFS and Hackney Education Service.
- Subsequent to a meeting with Headteachers, a Black-only space has been set up for local teachers for them to explore racial inequality issues in education.

6.4 The Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health provided an overview of the strategic work taking place across CYP services to address racial inequalities.

- It was acknowledged that progress to tackle inequalities had been slow and that greater urgency was required;
- There were three themes in the work to address racial inequalities across services:
 - That there was a focus on practice to make sure that this has necessary impact to address inequalities (e.g service delivery);
 - To improve the inclusivity of the workforce at pace;
 - To improve education and awareness of racial inequalities and the urgency required to identify meaningful and impactful solutions.

6.5 The Director of CFS presented to the Commission (attached). Key points from this presentation are summarised below.

- An action plan was already in place in CFS in relation to the Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men strategy, though this has been developed further into an Anti-Racist Action Plan. This was developed by the leadership team within CFS alongside the CFS Black Leadership Group. The action plan has been developed to focus on those areas which would have the greatest impact, these included:
 - Inclusive recruitment and aspirational support to staff;
 - Anti-racist leadership and practice with the Children and Families Service;
 - Promoting anti-racist practice to influence broader care support systems.
- There was an acknowledgement that diversity in the workforce varied and that the senior leadership team was one area where improved diversity was required. A number of developments had taken place to improve diversity across CFS which included anonymous recruitment paperwork and improved diversity on interview panels. Additional data monitoring now takes place to track disproportionality in the workforce.

- Planned work to improve recruitment included the establishment of a CFS Black Leadership Group and a review of training to ensure that black staff have equal access to development opportunities, particularly those leading to leadership roles.
- A Black Practitioners Group was also planned.
- Anti-racism in practice training was being provided to the whole service in the autumn and anti-racist practice standards and development tools would be developed by spring 2021;
- A key objective within the Anti-Racist Action Plan being developed by CFS was the need to influence the broader care system that affects the lives of children and families e.g. through the multi-agency bodies of which it is a part, the services it commissions from other agencies and its engagement with young people.

Questions from the Commission

6.6 The presentation noted that CFS was working with the courts to ensure proportionality in decision making. In practice, what steps had been taken?

- Issues of racial disproportionality toward Black young people within the youth courts is a national issue. CFS had started conversations with the local youth court and is part of a user group for that court to provide feedback on its operation. It is hoped that CFS are able to engage the court in developing trauma-informed practice training sessions. CFS were hoping to be able to introduce statements into the court about young people's experience of racism, discrimination and disadvantage to help inform decision making by the courts. It was understood that the courts were open to, and wanted to engage with, work to reduce racial disproportionality.

6.7 What baseline data was being used to assess the performance and impact of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice? When could this be made available for the Commission?

- In terms of workforce data, CFS has actively collected and collated data on social workers but has now extended this to the wider workforce.
- CFS also analysed data on young people entering and going through the social care system in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Poverty indicators had also been recently included. Whilst the data was very rich, analysis was complex. CFS was aware that children from Black and other minority ethnic backgrounds were over-represented within the local social care system. Conversely, some sections of the white community were underrepresented. This is similar to national trends. CFS continues to analyse data to help develop a baseline through which to measure success.

6.8 In relation to the CFS Black Leadership Group that had recently been established, what percentage of the senior leadership group in CFS are from Black or other minority ethnic groups?

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- Whilst officers were not able to give precise data at the meeting, it was acknowledged that the majority of staff in senior leadership roles in CFS were White. Further data would be provided to the Commission.

6.9 In summary, the Commission agreed that whilst there had been progress to address racial inequalities across services, it had been acknowledged that progress had been slow and that this would benefit from additional, regular scrutiny.

Agreed:

- (1) That CFS would provide intervention rate data for children's social care by ethnicity to help understand any disparities in interventions and to establish baseline data.
- (2) That CFS would provide data to the Commission on the ethnic background of staff in senior roles.
- (3) That progress against the Anti-Racist Action Plan is reported in the Children's Social Care Bi-Annual Report.
- (4) That a further follow up report on the progress to tackle racial inequalities is provided to the Commission within 6 months.

Hackney Education Service

6.10 The Director of Education and officers presented to the Commission the work of Hackney Education Service to address racial inequalities and improve equality in local educational settings (presentation attached).

6.11 Since the death of George Floyd, Hackney Education Service has taken a number of actions including contacting and providing reassurance to all schools and pupils.

- Hackney Education Service also held two meetings with staff to help identify priority actions that should be taken to address inequalities.
- A curriculum group had also been established which included representatives from local schools and would focus its work on how racial inequalities in the curriculum should be addressed.
- Hackney Schools Group Board has worked with 6 schools to engage and involve parents in talking about race which has been very positive (results to be published late September).

6.12 Work to promote the Black Curriculum and promote diversity and inclusion within teaching had commenced and a dedicated officer lead had been appointed. The purpose of the Black Curriculum Group was to encompass not only how Black history was being taught, but also the degree to which Black and other cultures were represented in other areas of the curriculum. The ethos of this approach is that all children benefit from a diverse and inclusive approach to teaching and learning. It was important that Black culture was represented in the curriculum to provide positive reinforcement and empowerment to young Black students but also to provide a diverse and inclusive approach to learning.

6.13 To provide long term change it was important to develop the racial literacy of school staff, school governors and other stakeholders. Hackney Education Service is working with local schools to ensure that their staff are racially literate and that they understand how race and culture may impact on the educational experience and outcomes of their children. The aim of this programme was ambitious but there had been good engagement by local schools and work had already commenced which had included the development of lesson plans and other resources to support teaching.

6.14 Having a diverse and inclusive workforce was also essential to promoting equality and Hackney Education Service had:

- Developed a recruitment tool kit for headteachers to help recruit, develop and maintain Black staff;
- Improvement plans for local schools would now encompass equality and inclusion aims;
- Dedicated spaces would be provided to Black and other minority ethnic staff to enable them to discuss issues that affected them in teaching;
- Training on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion would be available to staff on an ongoing basis.

6.15 It was also important to ensure that the voice of young Black and other minority ethnic children was sufficiently represented in this programme of work and Hackney Education Service would engage both Young Futures and Hackney Youth Parliament to this effect. Hackney Education Service had also issued guidance to schools in developing the 'youth voice' which would be assessed by School Improvement Partners. Hackney Schools Group Board had engaged with Black parents and the learning from this would be rolled out to other schools. A Hackney Parents Conference on race was being planned for the coming year.

6.16 Hackney Education Service was also supporting work to develop culturally competent policies and practices, which included:

- Unconscious bias training and support to schools;
- Improved tracking of pupil outcomes;
- Development of model school policies (e.g. behaviour, uniform, hair).

Questions from the Commission

6.17 In relation to child performance, is there evidence to suggest that Black and other minority ethnic groups perform better where there is Black representation in the school leadership?

- The most important factors for children's achievement were good school leadership, robust policies and practices and engaged and well trained staff. In terms of a child's sense of belonging and inclusion which is central to educational engagement, representation was important.
- It was important that young Black people (young Black males in particular) have better experiences of education as this inevitably affects the numbers of such students who return to education as teachers (and future role models). It was important to ensure that Black and other minority ethnic children see a positive pathway to education and teaching.

- A closer look at the data would be necessary to assess how outcomes are impacted by Black and other minority representation in the school leadership.

6.18 What work is taking place to support the school governor's role in addressing racial inequalities in schools and to ensure that these bodies are representative of the school community?

- Governors do play an important role in school leadership and a range of training and development courses are available throughout the borough. There is clearly more to be done by Hackney Education Service and schools themselves to encourage a wider range of parents to become governors.

6.19 In relation to developing the Black Curriculum, will this be a matter of influence and persuasion with local schools or are there other means available?

- Given the impact of Covid 19 and the death of George Floyd, most local schools have engaged with the black curriculum and other equalities work. This would suggest that there is a recognition in schools that their curriculums need to be adapted. School Improvement Partners would be heading into schools in September with the curriculum on the agenda. Schools appear to be willing but some may need guidance and support to enable that to happen.
- Whilst Hackney Education Service cannot force schools to take on initiatives such as this, it can encourage and influence head teachers and school governors to recognise the importance of such work.
- It was reported that there was an appetite for curriculum development across all school settings in both maintained schools and academies.

6.20 Given the competing agendas in schools (e.g. return to school, catch up in studies) is there any further action that the Council can take to ensure that racial inequality remains a local priority and work continues?

- The role of public scrutiny plays an important role in holding decision takers to account and this does filter back through to schools. Therefore bodies such as the CYP Scrutiny Commission can help to ensure that the issue of racial inequality remains high on the local education and schools agenda.
- Given their response to the death of George Floyd, it was also clear that the voice of young people was also important in driving change and improvements in local schools. Therefore it was important for schools and other bodies to ensure that the voice of young people can be heard and their views are accounted for in decision making.

6.21 The Chair thanked all officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. It was agreed that it would be helpful if CFS could update the Commission on progress on the Anti-Racist Action Plan in the future (6 months) and if possible, to be included within the Children's Social Care Bi-Annual Report process.

Agreed: (1) That further data on the ethnicity of the Hackney Education Service workforce and local teaching workforce is provided to the Commission.
(2) That a further follow up report on the progress to tackle racial inequalities is provided to the Commission within 6 months.

7.0 Work Programme

7.1 Suggestions from local stakeholders together with additional topics suggested in last year's work programme, have been used to develop the plan of work 2020/21. Key areas of work planned for the remainder of the year included:

- Strategies to help close the attainment gap;
- The performance and recovery plan of the SEND team;
- Strategic oversight of mental health services for young people.

7.2 It was not possible to include all those areas of interest to the Commission within the scrutiny work programme for 2020/21. It was therefore decided to hold a number reconnaissance meeting in a number of service areas where members of the Commission would meet with service heads for an update. A short briefing would be reported back to the Commission on the outcome of the meeting and whether any further scrutiny action would be taken. Planned visits would take place for the following:

- Youth Offending;
- Youth Services.

7.3 Members were requested to report back any comments on the work programme to the Chair, and in particular, specific interests in planned scrutiny topics in which they would like to be actively involved.

7.4 Members noted and agreed the work programme.

8.0 Letters to Cabinet members

8.1 The Commission undertook two pieces of work in the 2019/20 from which it developed recommendations for Cabinet: Off-rolling in Schools and proposals for a Child Friendly borough. Letters to relevant Cabinet members detailing the recommendations of the Commission were noted.

8.2 Cabinet will consider and respond to the recommendations set out in these letters in due course.

9.0 Minutes

9.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th July 2020 were noted and agreed by the Commission.

10.0 Any other Business

9.1 There were no additional items. The Commission noted that the date of the next meeting was 2nd November 2020.

The meeting closed at 21.35.