

2 July 2019		ITEM: 7
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
SEND Inspection Outcome		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health.		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

In March 2019 the local area, including the local authority, the CCG, and schools, underwent a joint inspection of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is an inspection in which Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) focused on how well the local area had introduced the SEND reforms from 2014 and the support that is provided for children and young people with special educational needs in line with the statutory code of practice.

The Inspection findings concluded that the leaders in the local area had not made enough progress in the introduction of the reforms and as a result were issued with a Written Statement of Action.

As a result of the findings the local area is required to produce a written statement of action (WSOA) on how it will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:

- Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight mean that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have.
- Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.
- EHC plans and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC plans need reviewing or updating. Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written

information within specified timescales. Too often, EHC plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families. The information from EHC plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That O&S to note the work that has been undertaken to prepare our statement of action as a result of the result SEND inspection.

1.2 That O&S to monitor the progress of the statement of action in preparation for our re-inspection

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 In 2014 central government introduced a new system for supporting children and young people with additional needs – this moved away from the previous Statement of Special Educational Needs to a more holistic approach and the introduction of Education Health and Care plans (EHCP).

2.2 One of the key areas initially was the conversion process from the previous Statement of Special Educational Needs into an EHCP – Thurrock had just under one thousand statements of special educational need that needed to go through the review and conversion process resulting in the new EHC plans. The new plans have a central focus on the participation of children and young people and their parents/carers in the decision making and a strong focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes.

2.3 The introduction of the EHCPs meant that a whole system change was required in both the development and review of the plans and, as such, Thurrock invested in developing the partnership arrangements. The recent inspection did acknowledge that Thurrock has strong partnership working and particular strengths in the work with children in their early years. The report also highlighted the strong performance of educational outcomes across all year groups.

2.4 The report also identified the significant increase in demand for EHC plans – many parents expressed the view that unless they had a plan they would not be able to access the appropriate support needed for their child. At the time of the inspection there were 1562 EHCPs a significant increase in workload for the team. This is clearly not what the reforms seek to achieve. Thurrock has worked with its schools on the support that is provided at SEND support where pupils do not have an EHCP. Thurrock will be further developing its engagement work and training in this area with both parents/carers and schools to address support in school and its link to resources and outcomes.

2.5 The inspection identified areas for further development across the local area. These areas were in line with the local area's self-assessment and are being worked through as part of an ongoing improvement process.

2.6 At the time of the Inspection there had already been a significant improvement in the statutory service's delivery of EHC Plans within the statutory 20 week timescale, at 94% - this is above the national average.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The Local Authority has to submit a WSOA by 12th August 2019 this will then be reviewed by Ofsted. The WSOA will cover the three areas for concern raised in the inspection and nothing more. However, other areas of development are monitored through the SEND Development Action Plan. Once approved the LA has 18 months before local area is re-visited Ofsted on the areas outlined in the letter. This is not a re-inspection. There will also be monitoring visits by the Department for Education Regional Advisors to monitor progress against the WSOA.

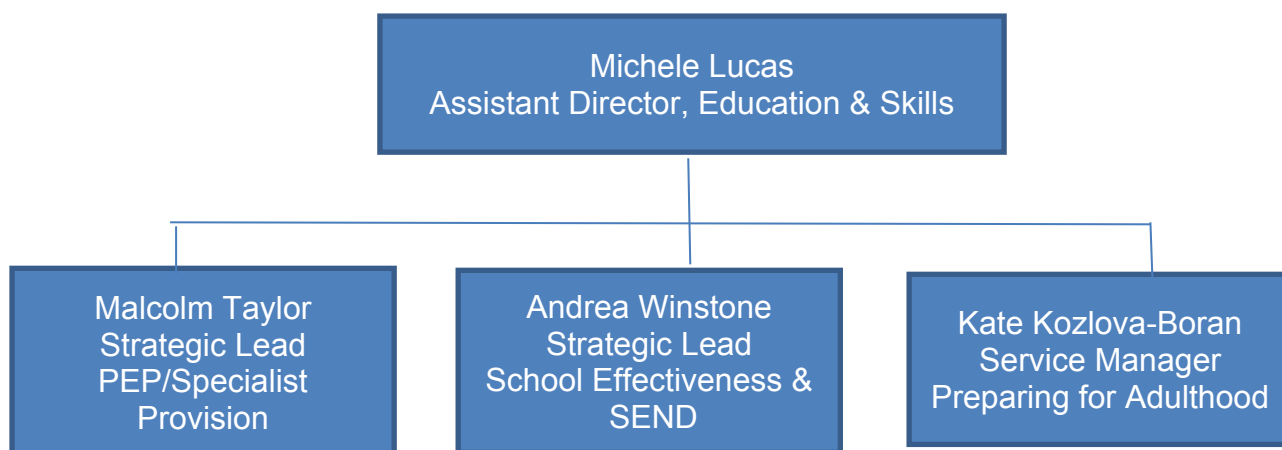
3.2 **The effectiveness of record keeping** – we are currently reviewing the current systems and processes that are used to support children and young people with SEND requirements. Clearly the report identified that electronic record keeping was not strong enough and, as a result, we are increasing the resources in this area and implementing recommendations that were identified within a previous health check.

3.3 **The quality of provision** - we are strengthening the monitoring and review of all specialist in-borough and out-borough provision to ensure that the children and young people are receiving high quality provision that ensures they are meeting their educational outcomes. This work will also include a review of our current quality assurance framework and how we are implementing this across the service.

3.4 **The quality of education healthcare plans and annual reviews** - the LA recognised some of the challenges related to the increased demand and, as a result, increased the staffing capacity in the SEND department by 50%. We have also introduced further capacity into our preparing for adulthood team. The team is in the process of undertaking extensive training to ensure that the plans are within timeframes and that the annual reviews are undertaken as outlined in the guidance.

The whereabouts of all children is monitored on a monthly basis as is the nature of the provision they are attending. The whereabouts of all children and young people with SEND are tracked and monitored by the Strategic Lead for SEN.

3.5 A review of the management oversight has been undertaken and outlined below is the new management team with responsibility for this area of work:-



4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health will chair a SEND Development Board which will be attended by the Corporate Director, senior representatives from the CCG, head teachers, and parent representatives. This Board will oversee progress against the WSOA and the wider action plan for SEN.

In addition, it is proposed that Children’s Overview and Scrutiny are part of the overall governance structure for the monitoring of the Written Statement of Action.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:
- create a great place for learning and opportunity

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead of Finance

Additional resources have been identified to ensure that we implement the change programme that is being developed to support children with special needs. This will be monitored alongside the written statement of action to

ensure that they have been targeted in the appropriate place to see improved outcomes for children and young people.

In addition, the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2018/19 prioritised resources to make permanent the additional capacity required to respond to the increase demand in EHCP.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Officer

Supporting our children and young people who have special education al needs is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. We have recently redesigned our work around how we engage with children young people and parents/carers who require additional support. To support with this work we have recently recruited an engagement officer who will be working with local stakeholders to enable us to gain feedback and how we can ensure it is linked to the service transformation that we are undertaking.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: OFSTED letter of SEND Inspection

Report Author:

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