

Children and Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 17th September 2025.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lynn Hall (sub for Cllr David Reynard), Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Emily Tate, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Katie Weston

Officers: Mandie Rowlands, Craig Taylor, Vanessa Housley, Elisha Dyball and Judy Trainer

Also in attendance: Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary and Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal, North Shore Academy

Apologies: Cllr David Reynard

CYP/19/25 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/20/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interests recorded.

CYP/21/25 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CYP/22/25 Monitoring of Recommendations - Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Committee's final report of the Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment had been considered by Cabinet in October 2024 who had accepted all 17 recommendations.

Given the breadth of the work, a recommendation lead had been identified for each objective to present actions plans and report progress to the Select Committee.

The meeting considered action plans in relation to Recommendation 11,15 and 16.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

Recommendation 11 - Strengthen our approach to career pathways for children, young people and their parents

- With regard to the Stockton Careers Network, it was acknowledged that schools often experienced difficulties in releasing staff. The timing of these meetings was

being reviewed to improve attendance and, where schools could not attend, there was a need to find other ways of taking messages back

- Members praised the reintroduction of work experience and standardised approaches to careers education and support
- Close working between the careers team and the economic development team was commended
- The Stockton Born and Bred initiative highlighted pathways to success that could be achieved locally
- The Tees Valley Youth Guarantee Trailblazer was running from spring 2025 until the end of March 2026 and confirmation of funding till March 2027 had been received
- The importance of masterclasses for the gifted was also highlighted

Recommendation 15 - Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need

- Children's services enjoyed positive working relationships with the various Academies with long standing relationships with school staff and the Stockton Strategic Education Board had recently opened up their membership to Trusts
- A Risk of Disengagement Indicator would identify and RAG pupils that needed some additional support to improve attainment

Recommendation 16 - Strengthen Support for Parent / Carers to develop language and reading skills

- Following the success of the national Multiply programme, new 'Bitesize' funding flexibilities for 2025/26 had been negotiated and secured. These were short 1-3 hour programmes that targeted individuals in innovative, flexible and non-threatening ways
- Members noted that the teaching of English as a foreign language took place in various settings such as churches
- Members requested full details of the numbers engaging across the whole Borough in future progress updates
- Officers confirmed that now the action planning stage was complete, future updates would focus on progress and impact

AGREED that the Action Plans be approved and progress updates be scheduled into the Select Committee Work Programme.

CYP/23/25 Scrutiny Review of Holidays are Fun

The Select Committee received an updated action plan in respect of their previous review of Holidays are Fun along with an update on the summer programme.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- DfE funding. Although free school eligibility had increased, there had been a reduction in funding. For 2025/26 the funding for Stockton on Tees was £883,540
- Auto enrolment for free school meals might result in an increase in funding
- On Thursday 28 August 2025 the Government announced that HAF would continue under the Best Start in Life mission and had committed a further £600million for the next 3 financial years
- A snapshot of summer activity was provided which revealed:

Total approved sessions – 14166
Average sessions attended – 6.4
Unique attending learners – 1713
Free sessions attended – 10937
Paid sessions attended – 105
Total sessions cancelled by provider – 522
Total sessions cancelled by booker – 3053
Total sessions declined – 2741

- The range of provision was outlined which included a teen offer as recommended by the Select Committee. The strong partnership working with Tees Active was commended
- Members queried communications with town and parish councils and officers undertook to follow this up with the communications team
- There were strict criteria from the DfE that 85% of places had to go to those children and young people in receipt of free school meals, and that the prime objective was to ensure that they received a meal each day during school holidays. However, consideration as to how paid for places could be introduced to help make the programme sustainable had been a recommendation from the Select Committee
- Members expressed concern about the number of cancellations and it was noted that the new booking system would provide better information for planning going forward

AGREED that the update be noted and a progress update be presented to the Select Committee in due course.

CYP/24/25 Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

The Select Committee received presentations from Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary and Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal, North Shore Academy on their experiences of moving to Additionally Resourced SEND Provision (ARP).

ARP and SEN (Special Educational Needs) units had created 155 school places, with Stockton Council investing an extra £730,000 a year to create them. Primary schools were on board, but there had been a disappointing response from secondary schools leaving parents with concerns.

The presentation from Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary outlined:

- Defining Our Moral Purpose as:
 - Every decision is rooted in doing what's best for children
 - We are driven by equity, compassion, and ambition and most of all LOVE
 - Education as a tool for transformation
 - Inclusive practices in teaching and leadership
 - Celebrating diversity and removing barriers
- The strategy for Improving Outcomes included:
 - High-quality teaching and learning
 - Targeted support and interventions
 - Data-informed decision making
 - Staff development and wellbeing
 - Parental involvement

- Multi-agency
- Our Wider Officer: Inclusion in Action:
 - Every child deserves access to enriching experiences — regardless of background or need.
 - Trips and experiences are free or heavily subsidised
 - ARP pupils are included in all mainstream opportunities
 - Examples : ice skating, farm visits, theatre, sleepovers, residential
- Impact so far:
 - Improved progress and attainment for individuals
 - Positive pupil voice and engagement
 - Staff reflections on inclusive practice
 - Strong parent feedback
 - Positive impact on mainstream pupils
- Barriers:
 - Complexity - Many pupils present with multiple and overlapping needs, including often unmet SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health), which make daily school life a challenge — for them, staff, and peers
 - Data vs. Humanity - These children may impact headline data, but they are not just numbers. Their stories matter. Their progress may not always be linear, but it is meaningful
 - Beyond Categories - Pupils don't fit neatly into boxes. We must move beyond labels and see the whole child.
 - We must challenge the narrative that some children are too difficult to include
- Call to Action
 - Encouraging reflection and collaboration
 - Identify and remove barriers
 - Funding – to suit the needs of the child
 - Invest in supporting parents
 - Reaffirming collective responsibility

The presentation from Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal, North Shore Academy outlined:

- ARPs across the Northern Education Trust
- The ARP at North Shore was referred to as the “Hub” – a protected area of the school
- Why we have said yes to an ARP?
 - We recognised that we need to adapt in response to the levels of need coming through our doors
 - We needed to have a provision that promotes inclusivity and can adapt to meet the needs of our complex EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) students
 - We wanted a space that bridges the gap between school and home. A mainstream school that caters for students who may have not been successful or be able to transition to secondary school
 - A space that provides their key person and an opportunity to regulate in a safe space
 - We wanted these students to be successful, to achieve GCSEs, to develop life skills and to be able to go to their local school

- We wanted the resources and funding to be able to develop expertise and provide appropriate ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) support working with Stockton Local Authority to develop and improve
- What does it bring to our Academy and Trust?
 - It brings inclusion
 - It develops our CPD (Continuing Professional Development), our expertise, our experiences
 - It promotes a school wide commitment to HQT (Highly Qualified Teachers), adaptive practice and meeting student's needs – being a core part of the school ethos
 - It brings a richer, more diverse learning environment
 - It allows NSA (North Shore Academy) students to fully accept inclusion and potential differences
 - It upskills our staff to use expertise from our Hub into mainstream lessons
- Opening the Hub doors...
 - It allows the expertise we develop and space we have created to access other vulnerable students in our academy
 - We promote social inclusion - so hub students regularly interact with other students
- Enrichment/ PFA (Preparing for Adulthood)
 - SEND / Hub specific enrichment
 - Trips
- The Impact
 - One student had never attended a PE lesson at primary school – he now attends
 - One student couldn't change himself – he now is independent in changing for PE
 - One student refused technology lessons – it took a while but he now goes
 - One student refused to engage with other students – he now has friends
 - One student hid under the table in transition – he finished year 7 at 98% attendance
 - One student would bolt home to play on this play station – he now stays for enrichment twice a week
 - One student never received praise in an educational setting but now floods the room with positive praise cards
 - One student wouldn't leave the safety of the Hub but now goes to meet friends at social time
 - One student would never give themselves credit but now is understanding he can overcome challenges he couldn't in the past
 - One student will now attend 1:1 maths tutoring with a separate member of staff
- Challenges – Things to consider
 - NSA go through a formal EHCP consultation process for students being named in our ARP
 - It is really important that we (NSA and Stockton LA) get the right students named
 - Too complex needs “unsettles”, consumes resources, impacts on the success of other students
 - Early intervention before barriers escalate
 - Parent/ carers, LA and setting to work together
 - Clarity and strong parental engagement from the start is crucial with a clear understanding of what our expectations are and what provision will be in place
 - In the current “SEND crisis” the importance of innovation and shared success

- We constantly need to develop and evaluate our inclusive practice so it becomes a thread across everything that we do

Kerry Coe, Headteacher, St John the Baptist Primary reported that the school had two ARPs with a total of 30 places, a 24-place SEND unit. It had also taken in children excluded or at risk of exclusion and ran a virtual school hub for 32 children who had been in care.

She challenged the narrative that some children were too difficult to include. The new provision had resulted in improved progress and attainment although the impact on overall school performance could be an issue for some schools, and for some children it could take a long time to see small progress.

Another barrier was that some children had multiple, overlapping and complex needs. However, barriers to learning needed to be removed and children with SEND needed to be able to access activities the same way as other pupils. Funding was not considered to be a barrier and schools were challenged to think more creatively about how they used their funding.

Andrew Murphy, Senior Executive Principal at Northern Education Trust and former head of North Shore Academy which has a communication and interaction ARP, encouraged every school to have an ARP in their building as it added so much to school life. He advised that parents had reported a real difference in their relationships with their children at home and that children were succeeding under the new provision. It had also made a huge difference to the children that were not yet diagnosed but needed extra support. He commented that it was not just about GCSEs, but the life chances and making sure those children could communicate and add to society.

Site visits had been arranged for Committee members to visit the following schools with ARP provision:

- North Shore Academy
- St John the Baptist Primary
- Billingham South Primary
- Bishopsgarth Academy

The Select Committee was advised that the Government's SEND White Paper was expected to be released in autumn 2025, outlining the intended approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform. This White Paper was significant as it came amid increasing calls for action regarding the rising number of registered SEN pupils and the associated challenges faced by councils. It was therefore proposed that the Select Committee's review should be paused to understand the implications of the White Paper on the Select Committee's review with work resuming in the New Year.

AGREED

- (1) that the presentations be noted and Members advise the Scrutiny Officer of their availability for site visits.
- (2) that, following the site visits to schools with ARP provision, the review be paused to await the outcome of Government White Paper.

CYP/25/25 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

Consideration was given to the Select Committee's work programme.

It was noted that as the Select Committee's review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision was to be paused until the New Year, the work programme would be amended to schedule work on the Committee's second in depth review of Children Not in School.

AGREED the work programme be noted.

Chair: