

Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update November 2025

Scrutiny Review – Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Select Committee's review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment culminated in a report setting out 17 shared objectives.

Given the breadth of the work, a recommendation lead was identified for each objective.

The lead officer for implementing the recommendations has been attending Select Committee meetings to present action plans and progress to date on a range of initiatives supporting delivery of the objective.

Now that action plans have been submitted in respect of each of the recommendations, the Select Committee will be receiving progress updates from the lead officers at future meetings focusing on progress and impact.

At the December meeting the Select Committee will receive progress updates in respect of:

- Recommendation 6 - Refine teaching strategies
Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.
- Recommendation 7 – Develop Speaking and Listening Skills
 - Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
 - Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills
- Recommendation 10 – Enhance Curriculum Development
Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.
 - Innovate a local curriculum.

Scrutiny Review – Additionally Resourced SEND Provision

The overall aim of the scrutiny review is to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with secondary schools to secure additional applications from the secondary sector, exploring the barriers to the schools becoming Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs) and identifying ways in which we may overcome this to secure the provision required for children and young people in the borough. Not having a full complement of secondary schools taking up the places risks undermining the effectiveness and reach of this key element of the local SEND Strategy and means that there may be implications for children upon transition to secondary that there may not be the same type or level of support available to them, potentially creating pressure on special school places and missed opportunities for inclusive education in mainstream settings. The Select Committee will therefore be exploring the following key lines of enquiry as part of the review:

- How will the transfer improve the outcomes for children with special educational needs across our Borough?
- How does the project support the Council's vision and strategy for SEND provision?
- What does DfE Guidance tell us?

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- Will the changes ensure that there is sufficient and suitable educational provision for SEND pupils in both primary and secondary?
- What are the barriers to secondary schools becoming additionally resourced provision? How can the number of ARP placements in secondary be increased?
- To what extent do families and schools understand the changes and how will they be engaged during implementation?
- Can lessons be learnt from the primary ARP model and the higher uptake?
- Is the funding provided to ARP adequate and sustainable for them to provide the support needed?

Since the last Executive Scrutiny Committee, Select Committee Members have visited the following schools with ARP provision:

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

The Government's SEND White Paper expected to be released in autumn 2025 is now likely to be released in the New Year. The White Paper will outline the intended approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reform and is significant as it comes amid increasing calls for action regarding the rising number of registered SEN pupils and the associated challenges faced by councils.

As a result, the Select Committee's review has been paused to understand the implications of the White Paper with work resuming in the New Year.

Scrutiny Review – Children Not in School

A draft scope and project plan and introductory presentations will be considered at the November meeting.

Children not in school covers a range of scenarios where a child is not accessing a full-time education. The range of reasons a child may not be accessing a full-time education at a school is vast and covers:

- All reasons for absence from school including authorised absence, unauthorised absence
- Pupils on reduced/part-time time tables
- Pupils who are accessing Alternative Provision not in a registered school (whether arranged by the school or the local authority)
- Pupils receiving Home and Hospital Provision
- Pupils who are CME (Children Missing Education)
- Children who are EHE (Electively Home Educated)
- Children who have no school base and are EOTAS (Educated Other Than at School)
- Children who move into the borough and are waiting for a school place

Strengthened systems for Children Not in School has the potential to:

- improve attendance further
- improve pupil outcomes
- reduce associated anti-social and criminal activity
- reduce demands on community safety resources

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Overview / Performance and Quality Assurance	
Key Issues / Problems or concerns	No reports since last update.
Problems or concerns	None
Requests for more information	None

Monitoring	
Key Issues / Problems or concerns	<p>Outstanding monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Contextual Safeguarding and Youth Relationships - A further progress update to be scheduled in due courseNarrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment - Ongoing

Next Scrutiny Review
To be determined.

Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 5.00pm unless stated)
12 November 2025 17 December 2025 14 January 2026 11 February 2026 11 March 2026