

Children and Young People Select Committee Chair's Update March 2026

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

Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carer communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff

Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

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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?
- 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?

The Select Committee's review was paused to understand the implications of the anticipated White Paper. Now that the White Paper has been published, consideration will be given to resuming work.

Scrutiny Review – Children Not in School

A draft scope and project plan and introductory presentations was 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

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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

Evidence sessions have been held on respect of the different categories of CNIS focusing on safeguarding and Member visits are being arranged for March. The April meeting will consider the summary of evidence and consider areas for draft recommendations.

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 course • Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment - Ongoing
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Next Scrutiny Review

To be determined.

Remaining 2025-2026 Meetings (all 5.00pm unless stated)

11 March 2026