

23 November 2020

Mr Chris Munday
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Dear Chris

Education focused meeting with Ofsted held on 16 November 2020

Thank you for your time last week and for the notes that you sent through to support our discussions. As planned, we talked about what is working well and what is of concern to you during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. We focused on provision in early years, schools, and in further education and skills.

Present at the meeting were: Gaynor Roberts (Senior HMI) from Ofsted; Chris Munday (Executive Director of Children's and Family Services) from the London Borough of Barnet; Ian Harrison (Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning), Neil Marlow (Director, School Improvement and Traded Services) and Helen Phelan (Director, SEND and Inclusion) from Barnet education and learning service (BELS).

From our discussions, I noted:

- You described how leaders have worked together over the course of the pandemic to support children and families. In particular, you noted strengthened partnerships between the local authority, public health and early years providers.
- Local authority leaders are carefully tracking the attendance of children and young people at their educational settings. Since September all settings have been open. At the time of our meeting you noted that absence related to the pandemic was rising with 4% of primary-aged pupils and 8% of primary school teachers away from school. The number of children attending early years settings has fallen causing concern about the sustainability of some of these businesses.
- You reported a significant rise in requests for elective home education (EHE). Over the previous three years, the borough received, on average, 15 requests in September. In September 2020, 76 requests were received. The reason

given by most families for their request was related to COVID-19. Some families have expressed a wish for this arrangement to be temporary, and understand that their child may not be able to return to the same school in future. Leaders are carefully cross-referencing this information to ensure that any children or young people known to social care or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are given the support they need.

- Leaders have worked closely with post-16 providers to make sure that young people leaving school are able to take up an appropriate offer. The local authority produced a prospectus of all local sixth form provision to ensure that accurate and full information was available. Barnet and Southgate College launched a 'Back on Track' scheme guaranteeing a place to every young person who applied to the college. The proportion of those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low among 16/17 year olds, but you have noticed a significant rise in those aged over 18 who are NEET.
- Local authority officers have adapted their support for school leaders, providing information and advice on remote education, for example. Another example is the safeguarding advice provided to school leaders on a weekly basis.
- We discussed individual cases where concerns have been raised, either through Ofsted's processes or through the local authority's school improvement monitoring. It was helpful to hear an update on safeguarding arrangements at some of the independent schools in the borough.
- You reported a positive response to the interim visits carried out by Ofsted in the borough this term. This includes the visit to the local area to consider arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

Thank you once again for a very helpful meeting, and for all the work that officers, headteachers and staff across the local authority are doing on behalf of children, young people and their families at this extraordinary time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G Roberts".

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector
Senior HMI, London

Please note: This letter is not published by Ofsted and the comments made have not been evaluated as part of an inspection.