**Notes for Slough Education Board Meeting – Wednesday 21st February 2024**

**Introduction**

* Simon Tattersall
* Deputy Headteacher – The Langley Academy
* Previously DSL as well until we appointed a non-teaching DSL in September 2024 therefore experience of strategic and operational aspects.
* All members / schools on the call will have varying experiences and potentially different challenges and therefore have tried to look at the broad umbrella areas and some potential ideas for solutions across Slough.

**School Safeguarding Pressures**

* **Community Issues Breaching the School Gates**
  + Majority of safeguarding issues stem from issues that started beyond the school gate.
  + Young peoples use of mobile phone apps for instant messaging causes particularly tensions and frictions.
  + Welcome the DfE solutions for mobile phones in schools, however in reality a large proportion of the messaging etc happens outside of school hours so this will not single handedly solve the issue.
  + Serious incidents of youth violence in the community can impact both attendance immediately post incident and the views the public have of the students who attend schools within that community.
* **Case Load**
  + Without doubt there has been a spike in safeguarding cases and the age profile also appears to be lowering with a number of young people exhibiting complex needs and safeguarding needs.
  + Whilst outside agencies are rightly asking for and valuing the support and knowledge schools have it needs to be kept in mind that that causes extra strain on staff and the safeguarding team. E.g. Schools providing increase levels of universal support, delivering aspects of Early Help, Police Intelligence sharing, being the people to support students post event.
  + I am fortunate to work within a school where this was recognised and therefore to ensure we could fulfil these expectations we appointed a non-teaching DSL. This meant a redeploying of finances to enable a new vacancy to be created which has a knock-on impact elsewhere. The non-teaching DSL is already operating at full capacity and the wider team is heavily involved in cases.
* **Case Management**
  + Due to high turnover of social workers, we are finding a number of cases that are ‘drifting’ and / or little impact is being made.
  + As professionals when escalated the response is sometimes to step-down the case rather than step-up the case. This leaves a sense of frustration from the school staff working with the young person as ultimately they are being let down / failed and not having the support that we feel is needed. An example of this is a student who is; Child in Need, attendance below 50%, no engagement from Mum with any service, possibility of substance use in the home. When challenged that there is potential grounds for educational neglect as shown by the non-engagement with all professionals the case was stepped down to Early Help due to non-engagement with Mum. This leaves professionals confused and deflated.
  + In addition, linked to parental engagement below is the idea of professional challenge. It is important that professionals are open to challenge but this has to be in the correct way. The challenge should not happen in front of parents as it risks agencies alienating each other and the parent using one agency against the other.
* **Parental Engagement**
  + Whilst I believe that the offer of services within Slough is strong and there are a number of services available the parental engagement is a limiting factor as to whether these services are engaged with.
  + The lived experiences of the current parental generation is vastly different to those of there children. Do they fully understand what it is like to be a child in 2024?
  + A number of the communities around schools are very close where parents know each other and sometimes when children fall out with each other parents directly contact each other / fall out with each other and this adds ‘fuel to the fire’ and you end up with feuding student and feuding parents all contacting the school or police.
* **Contextual Safeguarding**
  + One of the major ‘buzz words’ in recent times but what is true contextual safeguarding? Is there a community understanding of what this means?
  + An example of this has been the selling of ‘vapes’ to children. True contextual safeguarding would be that the shopkeepers not only feel confident in not selling the vapes to young people but feel confident in reporting those trying to buy them.
  + Likewise businesses / shops seeing anti-social behaviour or older students potentially grooming younger students need to have the understanding and confidence to report. What might seem small could be part of a bigger picture.
  + Ensuring that there is high presence from agencies (doesn’t have to be police) in key hotspots at key times to mix and integrate with young people and complete some ‘soft touch’ early intervention / preventative work.
  + Early and strong intervention with relation to anti-social behaviour might support with reducing serious violence later on.

**Opportunities / Areas to Consider**

* **Networking and Mapping**
  + More opportunities for school staff to map key links and students. Complex strategy meetings involving multiple families can take time but can be a rich source of information and potentially have more impact than discussing families / young people in isolation.
* **Schools Safeguarding Curriculum**
  + Whilst covered in many ways by schools within PSHE, RSE and other curriculum areas are we confident of the safeguarding diet that students in all schools are receiving both primary and secondary?
  + Could agencies sit with schools and create a universal offer so we know what all students receive in each year group?
  + Could the local authority help with funding of quality assured external speakers to be part of this curriculum?
  + All agencies could be part of this curriculum including police, health, social care.
  + Headteachers could then sign up to the ‘Slough Schools Safeguarding Charter’.
* **Outside of the School Gate**
  + Students on the whole feedback that they feel safe in schools.
  + External agencies want to place schools at the centre of keeping children safe which is correct.
  + However, for the majority of students this covers 8am – 4pm. How are we keeping students safe 4pm – 8am? What is needed in Slough? What is needed in individual communities?

**Final Thought**

* Based on a number of meetings attended the final question I would keep going back to with partners is:
  + Are the strategic plans delivering on an operational level that has impact on young people and families in Slough?