

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 25 February 2014

RE: Support for School Improvement

1. Context

Key national messages from the annual report 2013 of the Chief Inspector are that:

- ❖ children in England now have the best chance they have ever had of attending a good school
- ❖ the proportion of children attending good or outstanding primary schools has increased considerably this year
- ❖ regional variation is holding some children and young people back
- ❖ greater accountability and more focused inspection have contributed to improvement in many of our weaker schools
- ❖ English and mathematics are still not taught well enough in too many classrooms
- ❖ weak leadership must be challenged to improve; strong governance is therefore critical
- ❖ white children from low income backgrounds are being left behind
- ❖ raising the achievement of disadvantaged children is a moral and economic imperative

2. **An overview of the West Midlands and a focus on Walsall.**

In 2012/13 the number of good and outstanding primary schools increased in the West Midlands. Despite this a child attending primary school in the West Midlands is less likely to attend a good or better school than in most other areas in England.

- ❖ 72% of West Midlands secondary schools are good or better, and fewer schools are deemed inadequate
- ❖ in Walsall the number of good or better schools has increased in Walsall. However recently this trend is changing
- ❖ for both primary and secondary schools Walsall ranks low in the national league tables. Primary schools were ranked 140th in 2012/13, with 66% good or

better schools, secondary schools were ranked 11th in 2012/13, with 66% good or better schools

- ❖ Walsall has a higher percentage of children in inadequate or requiring improvement schools than the rest of the West Midlands or England.

3. What is school improvement doing to halt the decline of schools and how is Walsall SI offering support and challenge to improve number of children attending good and outstanding schools?

School Improvement strategy

Led and managed by heads and governors: commitment by schools across the local authority (LA) to improve outcomes for all children and focus on eight improvement challenges: underpinned by operational and delivery plans produced by school leaders. The priority areas are:

All schools in Walsall, whether local authority maintained or academies, have something to offer to others on these priorities or something to learn from others in the interests of all the children in Walsall.

- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- narrow the gap for those vulnerable to under-achievement and potential exclusion using early intervention, nurturing and inclusion
- improve transition to, within and from each phase of learning and training through curriculum challenge and cross phase curriculum continuity and progression
- work better together to improve children's behaviour, care, safeguarding and attendance to maximise their learning by involving schools, parents, educational services and agencies
- improve schools' and pupil achievement through high quality school to school improvement support
- strengthen school leadership and management, support new head teachers and succession planning at all levels
- strengthen school governance and promote succession planning for governing bodies; raise awareness in the community of the importance of school governance in order to recruit more good governors
- work to ensure all our schools are good or outstanding and make best use of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), National Leaders of Governance (NLGs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) as important forces in driving improvement across all schools and as leaders of sector-led improvement

School Improvement Recovery programme

Connected into school improvement strategy, this is the LA's programme to address underperformance through five workstreams:

- towards a school led system:
- schools causing concern
- school leadership and governance
- school ready and
- achievement for Vulnerable learners.

Funding is being allocated to address and achieve priorities.

Core offer

All primary schools, including academies are allocated to one of four bands according to school performance:

Schools causing concern Intervention programme designed to bring about rapid improvements (primary schools: A = 46, B = 19; C = 9; D = 26)

Core offer process being extended to secondary and special schools

Halting decline

DCS and AD hold individual school meetings with all heads and chairs of governors (and sponsors if academy) going into Ofsted category: also planning similar meetings with schools causing concern.

Dedicated group of Improvement Advisers focused on schools causing concern (band C and D) to bring about rapid improvements through clarifying improvement priorities, brokering support, quality assuring delivery and monitoring improvements

Links established with all sponsors of academies - regular communications

External consultants engaged to work with Improvement Advisers (IAs) to add capacity and develop existing IA capacity, including two serving heads working as IAs in C/D schools – piloting this as model to add temporary capacity and bring about rapid improvement

Monitoring improvement and impact through Improvement Review process, to evaluate both the school's strategies and LA brokerage, overseen by Assistant Director

Register established for school-to-school support framework – coherent centralised system used by IA for brokerage (band A schools invited to be on framework): support brokered from good / outstanding schools

Where judgement made leadership does not have capacity to improve, close monitoring and/or leadership changes take place

Reviews of governance – used to identify strong, sound and weak practice in governance

Where governance causing concern, Interim Executive Board (IEB) established; or pre-warning letter sent; or review of Governance: borough wide action plan established for improving governance

Following analysis of issues, targeted training for schools across borough to be organised, e.g. writing skills in early years; improving boys' writing; science at key stage 2, literacy skills in key stage 3 onwards.

Support and challenge to improve number of children attending good and outstanding schools

Raising aspirations of school leadership through, for example, school improvement conferences, supporting teaching school initiatives, research seminars and developing best practice portal

Building stronger links across schools e.g. federations, clusters, to improve capacity and capability

Building leadership capacity through developing a strategy for leadership development, talent management and succession planning:

Supporting creation of Walsall Governors Association - to be run by school governors

Implementing an improvement plan for governance focused primarily on band C and D schools

Series of workshops targeted on improving progress between key stage 1 and 2 (i.e. years 3, 4 5 and 6) in writing and maths

Early years leadership programme developed targeted at developing EYFS middle leaders and building EYFS leadership capacity in school causing concern

School ready is key priority in both Early Help strategy and School Improvement Recovery plan

Six nursery schools with focus on home learning environments and early literacy

Reviewed training programme to focus around evidence based priorities e.g. letters and sounds training, EAL, mathematics (working in numbers to 20) and developing best practice portfolio of case studies

Five to Thrive programme to be introduced to support early development 0-3 years

FAST programme to be run through 6 nursery schools with focus on home learning environments and early literacy

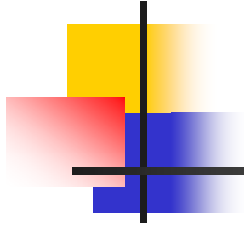


Walsall School
Improvement Strateg

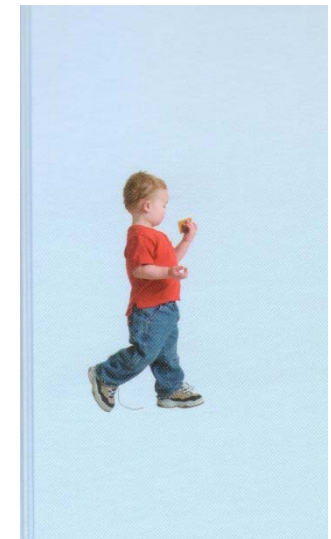
Rose Collinson
Interim Executive Director Children's Services

Children & Young People Scrutiny & Performance Panel

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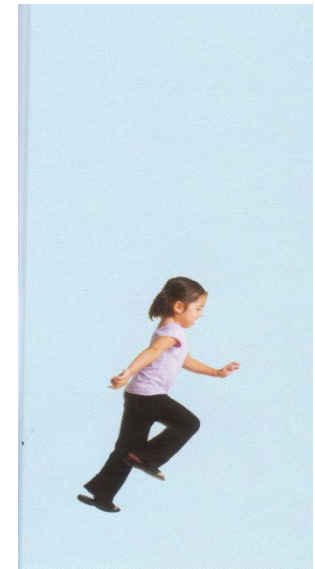


A view from the bridge – the
Annual Report of Her Majesty's
Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills



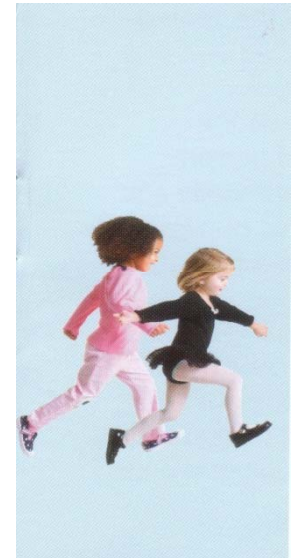
A view from the bridge

- second annual report by Sir Michael Wilshaw
- 4 parts:
 - ❖ overall state of the nation commentary
 - ❖ overview report on schools
 - ❖ overview report on FE and skills sector
 - ❖ 8 regional reports
- Dataview (www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk) provides comparisons of regional and local performance of schools, colleges and childcare providers
- report on Early Years coming in early 2014



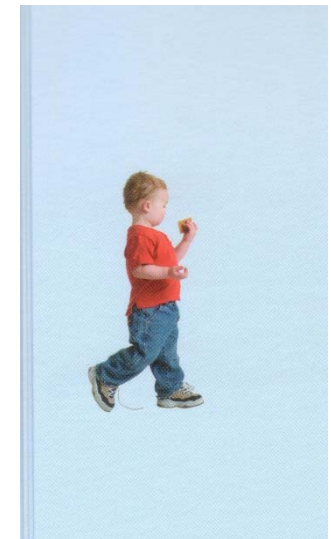
A view from the bridge – key messages

- schools are getting better – but more to do to close the gaps
- too much variation – between schools and across local authorities
- still not good enough for lower attainers and younger pupils in either primary or secondary schools or for poor white children
- concerns about match of college/skills provision with employers' needs



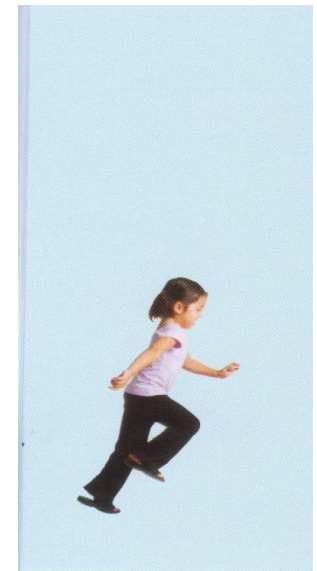
A view from the bridge – the school 'to do' list

- who teaches which groups?
- consistent expectations?
- forwards to fundamentals
- closing and narrowing gaps
- developing leadership
- good governance
- academy trust performance
- 'raising the game' in LAs



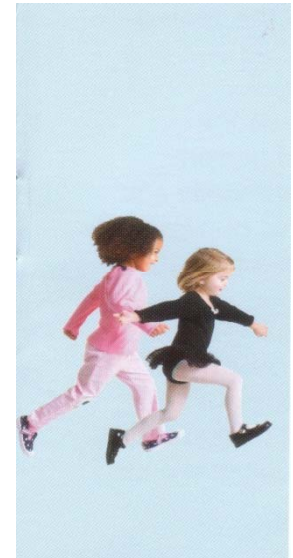
Our school photo: our 'to do' list

- seriously more children in 'good or better' schools:
 - on 12/13 data:
 - ❖ 60% of pupils in good or better primary (range 56% to 97%)
 - ❖ 78% of students in good or better secondary (range 14% to 100%)
- improve performance especially at Key Stage 2
- high expectations, no excuses – both for academic success and behaviour that supports learning, for every child
- great leadership, great governance



A view from the bridge – learning and skills

- reasons to be cheerful: providers are improving (Walsall College and WACC showcased)
- but on the more 'to do'
 - ❖ staying in learning and succeeding in learning
 - ❖ maximising apprenticeship potential
 - ❖ quality of teaching and learning – vocationally competent and work ready





And finally...

'The 'lucky' poor child is born in the right postcode, gets to the right school and has the widest opportunities. The unlucky poor child does not' (HMCI, December 2013)

so our challenge is to ensure that through our collective leadership Walsall's unlucky children are turned into lucky children.

