

Schools Forum

10th January 2017

School Ready Report

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share information and monitoring data with Schools Forum regarding their £250,000 'school ready' investment. The report will reassure members that the fund is being used to deliver a comprehensive, value for money, outcome focussed action plan. The report will also detail improved outcomes for children, families and practitioners and will include progress and attainment data.

The report also seeks clarification on School Forum's position regarding money being used for refreshments for training and conferences.

2. Background

- 2.1 School Forum investment aligns to the vision that as many Walsall children as possible, will achieve 'good levels of development' at five years of age, giving them a secure foundation in learning, relationships and life experiences.
- 2.2 At the time of the investment, in 2014, Walsall children's outcomes at five were one of the lowest in the country, with only 53% achievement.

| Area | 2014 % Good Level Development |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Walsall% | 53 |
| Walsall rank | 137 |
| W Mid% | 58 |
| Statistical neighbours | 55 |
| Nat % | 60 |

- 2.3 Detailed data analysis was carried out to identify the underlying barriers to children not achieving good levels of development.
- 2.4 Data demonstrated that there were extremely low levels of achievement particularly more disadvantaged children, those entitled to FSM, Looked After Children, SEND, Boys and Summer Born.
- 2.5 Reading, Writing and Maths were the particular areas of learning that children did not achieve so well which could be underpinned by lower achievement in the area of communication and language and understanding the world.

- 2.6 Clear actions were planned to progress early year's agendas to narrow the attainment gap such as Early Years Pupil Premium and early learning for eligible two year olds.
- 2.7 The 0-5 School Ready Strategy was written to provide a clear focus to LA improvement work and to direct the spend of the 'school ready' schools forum investment.
- 2.8 In line with the wider school improvement strategy an action plan was drawn up to address the priorities in the strategy with a particular focus on strengthening Early Years Leadership and School to School Support.
- 2.9 A partnership was formed between Walsall EY Team and Ryders Hayes Teaching School as it offered particular expertise in early years. In year one two leadership projects were developed and delivered to include: a) Hub Leaders who were trained to coach and support other school leaders and b) Maths and Literacy Leaders who lead learning in their own setting and disseminate best practice through network meetings and training events. In year two leadership groups were planned to support leaders in improving outcomes. The leaders are from schools with particularly with high numbers of disadvantage, low levels of GLD (good levels of development at 5 years) or Inadequate/ Requires Improvement Ofsted Grades. There is also a group for new leaders.
- 2.10 A partnership was also formed with Rushall School to provide training and development with a focus on outcomes for children with SEND.
- 2.11 A comprehensive programme offered training and improvement projects to all schools, settings and childminders has been developed and delivered. Every school has had opportunities to participate and the menu of activity included Maths and Literacy training, SEND courses, parent partnership workshops, a nursery practitioner conference – 'Every Moment Matters', a borough wide reading audit – 'We love to read – every day in every way', Wellcomm language screening.

3. Progress

- 3.1 The percentage of pupils achieving a 'Good Level of Development' within Walsall improved from 53% in 2014 to 61% in 2015 giving an 8% increase. National outcomes for this measure improved by 6%, from 60% in 2014 to 66% in 2015. The gap to national narrowed from 7% to 5%.

| Area | 2014 | 2015 | % improvement |
|--------------------------|------|------|---------------|
| Walsall % | 53 | 61 | +8 |
| Walsall Rank | 137 | 131 | |
| West Midlands % | 58 | 64 | +6 |
| Statistical Neighbours % | 55 | 62 | +7 |
| National % | 60 | 66 | +6 |

- 3.2 By July 2016 there had been a further increase of 4% in Good Levels of Development, resulting in 65% of children achieving. The National Average only increased by 3% (to 69%) which means that again the gap has decreased, this time by 1%.
- 3.3 Networks for EY Leaders and training events have been well attended. Clear messages and examples of best practice, particularly around Early Years Pupil Premium, have led to

improved practice. 97% of schools submitted claims in Spring 2016 which was an increase from 84% in Autumn 2015. 65% of settings submitted claims in Spring 2016 which was an increase from 48% in Autumn 2015. 71% of eligible children receiving EYPP in Spring 2016. This was an increase from 51% in Autumn 2015.

- 3.4 In February 2016 Ofsted inspected the local authority arrangements for supporting school improvements. They confirmed that 'although the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is below the national average in the early years in mainstream schools, standards are improving faster than those nationally. This reflects the positive impact of the authority's 0-5 strategy and some effective school-to-school support for early years'. Ofsted also reported that 'partnerships, networks and localised initiatives, such as 'early help' for families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, are having a positive impact on children and families in some areas of Walsall. This, for example, is helping more young children in the early years to reach a good level of development, and families are engaging more with the early years in schools, nurseries and other settings'.

4. Future plans

- 4.1 The School Ready/ Early Years Lead Adviser and team will continue to work in partnership with wider LA teams, teaching schools, regional partners and national expertise. Actions will continue to be delivered addressing priorities in the 0-5 School Ready Strategy.
- 4.2 There will be a greater focus on targeting vulnerable groups, particularly boys. A second EY Improvement Plan has been written and is being delivered, as is an EY/LAC Plan and an EY/SEND Plan.
- 4.3 Training and project participation will be monitored and schools/ settings that are RI or inadequate will be contacted individually to encourage take up.
- 4.4 A targeted support plan for schools and settings will be delivered to those with RI or I grades or lower than Walsall average GLD.
- 4.5 A borough wide EY Toolkit is being developed and all frontline EY practitioners from health and children's services will use it to identify and address children needs.
- 4.6 A module of learning for EY Teaching Assistants and support staff is being developed and a 'train the trainers' model will be cascaded to all clusters.
- 4.7 Outstanding EY leaders will be identified from each cluster and they will become Specialist Leaders in Early Years Education in order to offer training and support to others.
- 4.8 English as an additional language training will be delivered to whole EY school staff cohorts.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 In 2015/2016 priorities for investment included: a) partnership with the teaching school to deliver the SLE/hub leaders programme and the literacy and numeracy specialist programmes, b) bringing innovative and inspiring Maths and Literacy Trainers into Walsall, c) delivering the training and projects programme to reach all parts of the early years workforce

focussed on improving outcomes for boys, disadvantaged children and children with SEND d) good practice visits to Fullbrook Nursery with a focus on SEND/ EYPP and the roll out of an Early Years newsletter.

- 5.2 In 2016/2017 priorities for investment include: a) partnership with the teaching school to deliver two leaders programmes and a new leaders programme as well as more maths and literacy leader programmes, this time including more private sector practitioners, b) school to school support through the hub leaders, c) Reading Every Day in Every Way project, d) Partnership with Parents Projects focussed on writing and maths, e) English as a new Language training and toolkit, f) TA training, e) Conferences for Nursery and Reception Practitioners focussed on children's levels of engagement, understanding the world and boys learning, f) Good Practice visits to more schools, g) subscription to national best practice and information sources and h) production and dissemination of EY templates, documents, case studies and best practice examples.
- 5.3 The total actual spend between Jan 2015 and to date (Jan 2017) has been **£60,170.61**. To deliver the completion of the 2016/2017 priorities, listed in 6.2, there is a further commitment of approximately **£40,000**. To date this has included tea/coffee costs for most events and a lunch for delegates at the two conferences or all day events.
- 5.4 There will be a further investment of **£75,000** in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. A detailed evaluation of the impact of the projects to date alongside further data analysis will inform the plans for this future investment.

All financial spend is delivered in line with Walsall's LA policy and practice to ensure value for money linked to improved outcomes.