

Cabinet – 27 July 2011

The Strategy for Primary Education across Walsall

Portfolio: Councillor R Andrew, Children's Services

Service: Walsall Children's Services - Serco

Wards: All wards

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 The Strategy for Primary Education sets out the way forward for primary education and the overarching vision to support all primary schools in Walsall to become good or outstanding. Consultation has taken place with all head teachers, governors, Diocesan representatives and professional associations.
- 1.2 The strategy aligns with the Council's determination to drive up standards and to encourage greater collaboration to provide local solutions against shared priorities. The strategy responds to the proposals outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan; seeking to provide an infrastructure whereby schools continue to improve, take full advantage of their autonomy and respond to their greater joint accountability for the outcomes of children and young people within the Borough. This will be achieved through further collaboration, accessing school to school support and an integrated service model delivery delivered within the existing Area Partnerships, recognising the crucial role that parents and carers have in securing better life chances for our children and young people.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet approves The Strategy for Primary Education.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Strategy for Primary Education (Appendix 1) sets out our ambition to ensure every school is on a journey to become good and outstanding, with no school performing below current national threshold measures.

- 3.2 The Strategy responds to the government's requirements to address underperformance in schools which fall below the new floor target – 60% Level for English and mathematics combined the median level for two levels of progress from Key Stage One to key Stage Two in English (87%) and mathematics (86%). Plans have been requested by the Secretary of State in relation to these schools and discussion with Head teachers prior to the completion of the 'Gove Plans' have taken place. The plans were submitted by the due date in April 2011. We are already delivering these plans with the schools concerned. The plans will also take into account the recent announcement of structural solutions proposed for those schools underperforming, as the Secretary of State has made it clear that he sees Academisation as the appropriate solution for these schools. Further clarification of criteria will determine schools in the borough which may appear on the initial list of 200 and the later list of 500
- 3.3 The strategies and delivery plans that will assist delivery of this strategy are the Early Years' Strategy, Aspire and Attain Strategy and the School Improvement Strategy. The Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Plan underpin the strategy. However, it is intended to create, in the near future, one document that will outline the School Improvement Strategy for all settings once more government guidance is received and will reflect the diversity of school provision in the future.
- 3.4 The Strategy sets out the high level framework within which relationships and plans with individual schools are set. All of these reflect the principle of 'Intervention in Inverse Proportion to Success'.
- 3.5 The strategy is written to reflect the Education Bill that is currently working through parliament and the continued commitment to improve standards.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 With the reduction in central government grants the use of centrally employed staff will be aligned to the implementation of this Strategy, targeting the needs of children and young people who are vulnerable to underachievement, identified through data analysis and from the tracking of progress within schools. This will be implemented in a cost-effective way at school, school network, area or borough-wide levels.
- 4.1.2 Schools will be responsible for commissioning services for school improvement, which in the past have been provided free at the point of delivery and will operate through traded services and service level agreements that will be outcome focussed.
- 4.1.3 Where structural changes to the leadership and governance of schools would bring educational and economic advantages, these will be considered through the appropriate legal and Cabinet approval processes following the consultation processes with all interested parties.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 Any structural changes arising from the Strategy will go through the appropriate legal procedures and Cabinet approval processes, as required.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 Proposals will use existing staff working differently to deliver the strategy through partnership and joint leadership with Head teachers and Governing Bodies and other relevant agencies.
- 4.3.2 Senior Achievement Officers will take responsibility for a two area footprint, North, West and South-East. Their work will align closely to the Area Managers within the council to ensure an integrated approach recognising the diversity of our communities and the specific needs within individual areas.
- 4.3.3 They will be supported by Improvement Advisers who will assume responsibility for an area- two per foot print and will lead on the support for 'Gove schools' in their area, as well as a range of other staff providing core services, increasingly organised to support the area agenda.
- 4.3.4 Local Leaders of Education or National Leaders of Education and the nominated Lead Adviser, working closely with the local authority, will add capacity to schools for sustained self-improvement.

5. Citizen impact

As the focus of the Strategy is to accelerate the pace of improvement of the attainment of individuals and groups vulnerable to underachievement, it should have a positive impact on the outcomes for the children, young people and families associated with the primary schools across the borough.

6. Community safety

No direct implications.

7. Environmental impact

No direct implications.

8. Performance and risk management issues

- 8.1 **Risk:** Any proposed structural changes will be discussed fully with schools and communities through the statutory processes. The strategy will build on current best practice and therefore will minimise risk.
- 8.2 **Performance management:** Schools will have increasing autonomy and responsibility in relation to their performance. From April 2011, school improvement partners (SIPs) will no longer be funded by the DfE, and will no longer be a requirement.

The responsibility to make arrangements for performance management and quality assurance of the impact of the school on outcomes for young people now resides with schools and governors.

The LA will have powers to intervene where standards are cause for concern, to notify the Secretary of State of concerns or to call for an Ofsted Inspection (including Academies).

9. Equality implications

This will help to promote opportunities for all children who are vulnerable to underachievement, targeting individuals and groups where there is a gap between their levels of attainment and that of Walsall children or young people as a whole, locally or nationally.. Our vision takes a strategically integrated approach to inclusion, embracing the challenges of community cohesion, safety and the need to drive up attainment within the context of the whole development of children and young people and their preparation for active participation in adult life.

10. Consultation

All Head teachers; All Governors; Diocesan representatives and Professional Associations

Background papers

The Strategy for Primary Education in Walsall.

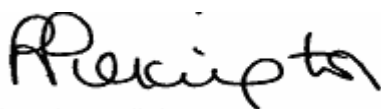
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Signed:

Executive Director: Pauline Pilkington

Date: 18 July 2011

Signed:



Interim Managing Director, Walsall
Children's Services, Serco: Graham
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Date: 18 July 2011



Signed:

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rachel Andrew

Date: 18 July 2011

The Strategy for Primary Education in Walsall



"My Walsall, my future"

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Introduction

The implementation of the strategy, in light of current government legislation outlines how schools will, with new roles and responsibilities, and greater autonomy and accountability, contribute to ensure that every learner in Walsall is provided with the best opportunities for learning. The strategy aligns to the vision and priorities outlined in the corporate plan to ensure that growing up in Walsall is as good as it can be and that young people fulfil their potential, engaging with local communities and agreeing key priorities. Schools will be encouraged to work collaboratively, promoting school to school support, sharing good practice. The strategy will outline the relationship between schools and the local authority and also focus on how other service providers can work together effectively to meet the needs of children and their families.

The strategy presents the ways in which primary schools work closely with families and the communities they serve. This will help to address and promote the need for high aspirations and high expectations of our learners. Working closely with families and other service providers, primary schools will contribute to the Borough's ambition, to promote life long learning, developing knowledge & skills and preparing them for employment opportunities in the future.

The role of parents is critical to secure better life chances for our children and young people. A successful home-school relationship is a key element in making a school stronger and more effective, in particular, making a real difference for groups of underachieving pupils and their families. Schools working well with parents expect significant, consistent and lasting benefits including increased parental participation in, and support for, the life and work of the school, a greater willingness for parents and school to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage and improved levels of achievement – parents' active encouragement and support for children's learning produce tangible academic benefits that last throughout a child's school career. Area Partnership plans, the parenting strategy and family learning strategy can all contribute to the schools ambition to secure successful parental engagement, raising aspiration and expectations and providing parents with opportunities to accept and engage in their crucial role

This co-ordination of services will ensure better outcomes for our communities and a more effective use of resources in line with working smarter principles. The strong link with regeneration activities will support families and help address child poverty and early identification of those children vulnerable to under achievement.

The importance placed on the role of governors to support and challenge schools has been made very clear and the strategy will support the principles and practices that contribute to outstanding governance. Schools will be responsible for robust self evaluation and identification of priorities and the commissioning of services to secure sustainable improvements for the future.

The focus on collaboration and joint leadership between the Walsall family of schools and the local authority will ensure that the strategy helps to deliver greater success for children and young people, as schools become familiar with their new

roles and responsibilities. This is within the context of the Borough's vision with strategic partners of the key priorities, as outlined within the Children and Young People's Plan.

Context

As with many other councils, Walsall is exploring options for its future relationship with schools in response to government legislation and the increasing independence of schools. This framework contributes to the partnership plans for the borough including the Sustainable Community Strategy which is the overarching community plan for the borough

The Secretary of State for Education (M Gove) notified all local authorities in March 2011 making it clear that all primary schools would need to reach a minimum standard and that under achievement was to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The benchmark for schools nationally is now 60% of children to achieve Level 4 combined English and mathematics and median levels of 87% in English and 86% in mathematics for two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

'I want local authorities to draw up plans for improving performance in all schools (excluding academies) below the floor. I am not going to be prescriptive about what the plans might entail. I'd like you (LA) to be ambitious and would encourage you to spell out how all those schools which cause concern might improve'
(M Gove, March 2011)

Schools falling below these floor targets will have robust plans, which will be approved by the department, to address the underperformance; these plans are already in place and are being regularly reviewed and monitored by the local authority.

'School to school' support will play a major role in this development as will the effective use of Local and National Leaders of Education. The continued focus on the role of governors to support school improvement will be a key driver within the strategy.

Our strategic plan will address the following key priorities

- Improve and sustain the overall attainment of schools.
- Narrow the achievement gap for individuals and groups of children who are vulnerable to underachievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning until it is at least consistently 'good', particularly where schools are of concern to the local authority.
- Secure good and outstanding leadership in schools, encouraging the Head teachers of outstanding schools to become Local and National Leaders of education and to use their expertise and that of their staff, to help other schools and all governors to become critical friends.
- Improve attendance and behaviour for learning and the understanding of the link between good attendance, behaviour, successful learning and individual progress.
- Promote the development of a relevant, challenging and motivating curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils in partnership with schools, building on their interests and aptitudes.
- Promote school to school support across the borough and beyond, encouraging our outstanding and our improving good schools to play an active role in school improvement.
- Share good and developing practice effectively to accelerate improvements.
- Co-ordinate service provision and promote integrated service delivery
- Increase the proportion of schools that attain a good or better overall Ofsted judgement by providing or brokering effective support and challenge and

through joint leadership between Head teachers, governors and the local authority.

Our commitment

- Advocating for the children and young people of Walsall, particularly those vulnerable to underachievement.
- Facilitating collaboration and school improvement between schools.
- A partner in future models.
- A provider of high quality traded services including back office and School Improvement Services.
- A provider of advice and guidance to governing bodies to support their increasingly important role.
- A local contact officer for each school to provide targeted early intervention and support to children and their families.
- Encouraging community engagement , responding to local innovation and need through:
 - Area Partnerships
 - Children's Area Partnerships
 - Integrated Young People's Support Service (IYPSS)
 - Children's Centres
- Supporting the whole child through aligning/targeting to schools:
 - Leisure services
 - Health services
 - Regeneration
- A provider of core service provision for School Improvement including intervention where necessary.

As well as statutory duties including SEN, transport, rising of the participation age.

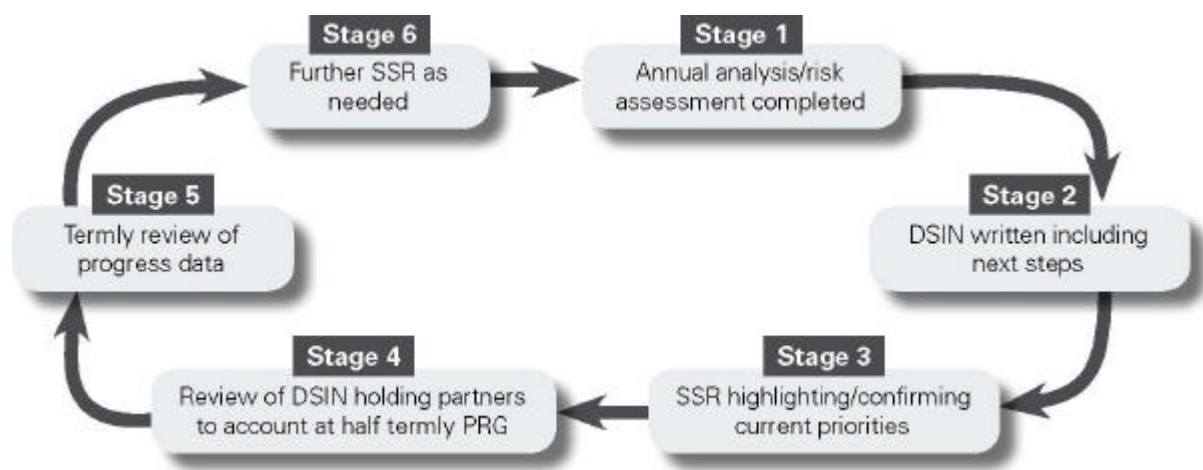
Joint vision and joint leadership has underpinned our work with headteachers which has been evidenced in some of the strategies used within our school improvement strategy.

These include Supported Self-Review (SSR) and Partnership Review Groups (PRGs) where the underlying principle has been joint responsibility and the holding of the school and the LA to account. This includes clear joint scrutiny of the impact of interventions that have been implemented, so that developing capacity in our schools to be self-evaluating and to be able to drive sustainable improvement remains at the core of our approach.

The focus on narrowing/eliminating the gaps in attainment for children and young people that are vulnerable to underachievement is at the centre of what we do collaboratively;
sub regionally and locally through the Black Country LEP and our Walsall Child Poverty Strategy.

Our methodology

- To use a range of data and intelligence (actual and predictions) to support early identification of schools potentially at risk of underperforming.
- To use the school's self-evaluation and school's development plan as the key documents and develop them to form 'recovery plans'.
- Identify support requirements and broker support from other school leaders, National Leaders of Education and Local Leaders of Education and from the training school or from the LA team.
- Use the Diagnose, Support, Impact Note (DSIN) as the key tool to hold all partners to account.
- Provide School Self Review (SSR) in partnership with school leaders to review impact and quality.
- Set up Progress Review Groups (PRG) as the key forum to hold schools and partners to account and broker future support and interventions through the use of the DSIN.
- To consider with Governing Bodies and headteachers where collaborative arrangements with successful schools under formal or informal arrangements could bring additional capacity, including through federation and other structural solutions.
- Work closely with Governing Bodies to increase and develop their capacity to add support and challenge to schools through training and support.
- Where schools are not making sufficient progress the LA will use statutory powers as required.



Agreed principles

- Schools have always been responsible for their own performance and the achievement of their pupils. Recent legislation gives schools increasing autonomy and responsibility to achieve this and accountability for it.
- More freedom for schools to make decisions and manage resources effectively to focus on continued improvement.
- Governing Bodies will play a critical role in supporting schools and will share the accountability for outcomes.
- The ability to commission services effectively will be a key driver of success and will see schools working more closely together on shared and agreed priorities, with increasing school to school support.
- Continued development and focus on Community Cohesion in all schools.
- The changing role of the local authority, as outlined in the legislation, will demand a good knowledge of current school performance. In an increasingly diverse school provision this will rely on schools sharing high quality school intelligence, including data, with the local authority.
- The local authority will play a key role in facilitating the sharing of good practice and feed-back on the attainment of groups who are vulnerable to under attainment and continuing to ensure that schools have access to support on teaching and learning (centrally based and/or brokered).
- The local authority will work closely with the Council's Area Partnership development to provide coherent support to neighbourhoods and their priorities encouraging family learning opportunities so that families can support the learning and progress of their daughters and sons.
- The Area Partnership Managers and school improvement teams will work closely together to provide timely and effective early intervention and support to the schools and their families to raise aspirations and promote life long learning.
- Continued development in partnership of successful succession planning and recruitment strategies will ensure the supply of effective leaders in schools. Middle leadership development within all schools is a key priority for success.
- Close relationships and partnerships with Children Centres and Sure Start Centres will provide a firm foundation for further improvements, many youngsters need significant support at the formative stage of learning to enable them to access the curriculum at Key Stage one and beyond.

- Early intervention and support for those youngsters vulnerable to underachievement will be a major focus for both schools and the local authority in order to close the achievement gap.

Monitoring and evaluating progress

There are still challenges to ensure that improvement is sustained and further increased, and that transition and progression is secure, targeting support and interventions to help children who are vulnerable to under achievement to make faster progress.

In reporting on the quality of education provided in a school consideration will be given to how well a school provides for different groups of pupils such as gender, minority ethnic heritage, and eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium, looked after children and gifted and talented pupils. In particular Ofsted will consider how well the school meets the needs of pupils with a disability and those with special educational needs and whether expectations for the individuals in these groups are high.

Aligning to the Councils Area Partnerships Senior Achievement Officers will be responsible for one of the following footprints: North, West and South-East. Each Area Achievement Officer will act as the single point of contact for all Nursery, Infant, Primary Junior and Secondary schools within 'their' footprint. They will chair all Partnership Review Groups in the footprint and will directly support and Quality Assure all Supported Self Reviews. They will support Improvement in secondary schools, post 16; primary and special schools and will also support Governor training.

Two Improvement Advisers will be allocated to a footprint/locality and will be responsible for all Nursery, Infant, Primary Junior and Secondary schools, post-16 providers within the local area. Improvement Advisers will produce a Diagnosis, Support, Impact, Next steps (DSIN) for each of the schools in their locality. The DSIN will also contain a current summary and potential areas of development. Improvement Advisers will provide core support for schools that are currently judged as satisfactory or less than satisfactory. Improvement Advisers will liaise directly with the Council's Area Managers within their footprint and will attend the ½ termly Area Manager meetings, as appropriate. They will attend network meetings and CAP meetings as appropriate, and liaise with strategic partners to accelerate progress against key priorities. Improvement advisers will also support Governor and Clerk training within their area.

Weekly school review meetings will be held to focus on quality assuring the evidence to support judgments on schools predicted to be in the OFSTED window. Reports of these reviews will be provided to the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team every half term.