

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
RE: WALSALL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN
DATE: 8th September 2015

Purpose

This report is an updated overview of the progress made against priorities 1& 2 of the School Improvement Strategy Action Plan. Challenge Board members discuss progress against the six priorities alongside a comprehensive tracking system to monitor action and impact.

Priority 1: Strong leadership in all Walsall Schools

Success criteria from the action plan include the following:

- *An appropriate and targeted training programme for school leaders (senior leaders, middle leaders and governors) is implemented by January 2015.*
- *Action taken to remove weak school leadership is decisive and robust so that by July 2015 inadequate leadership in Walsall LA maintained schools is eradicated.*
- *By July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.*
- *By July 2015 less than 25% of 6th form provision will be judged to be inadequate. No Sixth form provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.*
- *No EYFS provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.*
- *Ofsted monitoring visits to schools requiring improvement, report leadership (including governance) to be improving from January 2015.*
- *Leadership is judged to be good or better in 72%+ of schools by July 2015 and 78%+ of schools by July 2016.*

- 1.1 As the Leadership and Management personnel resources have only recently been secured, much of the work to date has been focused on design and development of the strategy. As a consequence the impact of the strategy has been limited.
- 1.2 A comprehensive Leadership and Management Model has been agreed in principle with senior managers and was presented to the headteacher and governor working group in February.
- 1.3 Senior leaders in underperforming schools are held to account through various mechanisms, including the Improvement Review system. Some headteachers have chosen to leave.
- 1.4 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) have led a series of workshops for senior leaders on school improvement. HMI and LA officers have jointly implemented Ofsted-style triad reviews, with feedback from headteachers being extremely positive.
- 1.5 An evaluation of previous reviews of governance has been completed and governing bodies have also been 'RAG' rated using other information, including minutes, which are now collected and collated centrally.

- 1.6 Improvements have been made to the induction of new governors, with the expectation that induction will be seen as mandatory.
- 1.7 Leadership is currently judged to be good or better by Ofsted in 79.3% of Walsall schools.

Priority 2: Ensure the LA improvement strategy is fit for purpose

Success criteria from the action plan include the following:

- *HMI re-inspection judges the LA arrangements for school improvement are effective.*
- *The Walsall School Improvement Strategy has measurable success criteria and milestones to facilitate regular evaluation of impact.*
- *The Strategy is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people, reducing gaps in achievement between pupil groups and preparing children and young people for their next stage in education/employment as citizens of a modern Britain.*
- *The proportion of Walsall children and young people attending good or better schools increases by 10% in 2014/15 and by a further 5% in 2015/16. (Walsall currently at 65%; national 79.8%)*
- *By July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor-led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.*
- *All stakeholders have clarity on how the Strategy is to be implemented and have confidence in the school improvement team.*
- *By July 2015 no school will be below floor standards in key areas.*
- *By July 2016 LA average attainment in KS1, KS2 and KS4 will be at or above national average. By July 2016 LA average progress across KS2 or KS2-4 will be at or above national averages.*

- 2.1 Following our external review of progress (June 2015), which highlighted a number of strengths alongside ongoing areas for development, work has been done over the schools' summer break on revisions to the action plan and the School Improvement Strategy so that both documents continue to reflect high, but realistic ambition.
- 2.2 The secondary strategy is now in place, following input from and consultation with secondary headteachers. The primary documentation will be developed in the first half of the autumn term. Both strands are being led by serving Walsall headteachers.
- 2.3 Two permanent and highly experienced School Improvement Partners have been appointed to add capacity to the School Improvement team to enable us to provide appropriate resource to schools.
- 2.4 Consultation and information sharing is now a regular feature of the LA's engagement with stakeholders. The next electronic survey is due to take place in early October.
- 2.5 Regular revisions to the internal team handbook have been supported by external validation of key aspects of the team's work, including notes of visit. The appendices are being developed further to ensure minimum operating standards and consistency of approach.

- 2.6 Regular reports of progress against the action plan are provided to various stakeholder groups, including the headteacher and governor working group. Documentation is being updated using good practice gleaned from other LAs. The Head of Service has recently met with the new Portfolio Holder to discuss this.
- 2.7 Within the Council's new Employee Performance Development programme, all staff within School Improvement had relevant objectives set by 30th June and these relate to priorities within the action plan. Progress will be monitored through regular 1:1 meetings.
- 2.8 Plans for additional Early Years improvement, financially supported by School Forum funding, have been shared at the primary headteacher forum and directly with heads and Early Years leaders.
- 2.9 Targeted support for sixth form provision is not yet developed, but data has been shared with secondary headteachers and a task and finish group convened to explore ways of improving outcomes.
- 2.10 Ofsted inspection outcomes are closely monitored on a weekly basis. 74.4% of Walsall schools are now judged to be good or better.
- 2.11 The induction and mentoring programme for new headteachers has been completely re-modelled for September onwards.

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