

19 April 2016

School Improvement Action Plan

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Towe – Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary update to members on the progress and impact of the work undertaken to address the school improvement action plan.

The report draws attention to three areas:

- Strengths and Improvement
- Key areas of progress
- Priority actions for improvement

The report highlights the successful work taking place across Walsall schools and notes the importance of continuing to develop a self-sustaining model of school to school support across Walsall for the future.

Reason for scrutiny:

Although the Local Authority has recently been inspected, the report has not yet been published and therefore the findings remain confidential. The Ofsted inspection report relating to Local Authority school improvement services published in June 2014 found that the Local Authority arrangements for supporting school improvement were ineffective. This resulted in a detailed action plan for improvement approved by the DfE. This report builds on previous reports to Scrutiny this municipal year and is not intended to duplicate or repeat all of that information but to provide a current update.

Recommendations:

To note progress on the action plan and to provide the Committee with the opportunity to monitor and challenge improvement across the Education sector.

Background papers:

Reference to the School Improvement Strategy and Action Plan previous reports to Scrutiny Committee on the delivery of the action plan and reports from the Chair of the Education Challenge Board.

Resource and legal considerations:

None

Citizen impact:

The aim of the action plan is that all Walsall schools will be judged by Ofsted as 'good' or better and meet or exceed national averages on all performance measures by 2018. This will realise the ambition that Walsall's children and young people deserve the best, irrespective of any contextual factors that might otherwise act as barriers to their future progress.

Environmental impact:

None

Performance management:

All staff working in school improvement have a non-negotiable objective linked to the stated aims of the actionplan.

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1. Report

School Improvement Action Plan: Strengths

- 1.1 The School Improvement team continue to meet weekly to ensure that all appropriate challenge and support is provided to maintained schools and Academies. The systematic analysis of assessment information, school performance data and a regular review of the school's categorisation are all ongoing. Senior Officers and the Portfolio Holder hold the School Improvement team to account and provide opportunities for further interventions to be implemented, as part of the agreed Local Authority tiered response.
- 1.2 Rapid interventions are enabled because of more effective communication between the School Improvement Partners, their allocated schools and other colleagues across Children's services. Each school at risk of not being judged good at their next inspection, or where there are concerns about pupil performance or the quality of provision, is part of the Local Authority's School Improvement Review Process. Following a meeting with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, a Local Authority Warning Notice is issued to the school and formal monitoring takes place every six weeks.
- 1.3. There is greater understanding by Headteachers and their leadership teams of the need to engage in school to school collaboration, which offers appropriate levels of support or challenge in order to secure more rapid improvement. The relationship between school leaders, Governors and the Local Authority, in both maintained schools and Academies, are a strength and continue to improve. The Local Authority has strengthened its challenge and support to Academies this year (please see attached Background Report recently prepared for a Council Notice of Motion on Academies – **Appendix 1**)
- 1.4 With the implementation of a revised Walsall Leadership and Management Strategy from September 2016, the Local Authority hosted a Leadership Conference on 11 March 2016 with over a hundred delegates in attendance including Head teachers and Chairs of Governors. Feedback has been very positive and the impact of the Conference in schools will be monitored by School Improvement Partners. This strategy is also impacting on the practice of newly appointed head teachers via training and mentoring.
- 1.5 The improvement work in the Early Years Foundation stage through a school to school support model and multi-disciplinary partnership working is having a greater impact. 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.
- 1.6 There are positive outcomes in post-16 education, where the academic and vocational achievement of students compares favourably with national averages.
- 1.7 The school to school improvement model is developing and more schools are sharing their effective practice with others. This is supported by a Walsall Good

Practice website. Partnership clusters of schools are now more focused on school improvement. A senior manager has been appointed as lead for school to school support to take up a permanent post in September 2016.

School Improvement Action Plan: Key Progress

- 2.1 Positive working relationships continue to be established with sponsored academies and most multi-academy trusts. The Local Authority is now represented on most Academy Improvement Boards. This enables direct challenge to under performance. Academy leaders are working in effective partnership with maintained schools and as a result the Walsall Association of Secondary Headteachers (WASH) is stronger and more effective.
- 2.2 The strategy of school to school improvement through the school clusters with Teaching Schools, National Leaders of Education and Specialist Leaders of Education, is bringing together more effective improvement strategies which are having more impact. This includes a more coordinated and effective professional development and training programme across Walsall. The Local Authority has commissioned David Crossley who is a national leader in developing sector led improvement to work with school leaders in Walsall to develop more formal school to school partnership arrangements.
- 2.3 Each school cluster now has an allocated School Improvement Partner providing an appropriate level of monitoring, support and challenge. With increasing school to school support taking place, this role is being further strengthened with an agreed terms of reference.
- 2.4 Additional Local Authority resource has been allocated to each Cluster focused on raising standards in literacy. There is evidence that this is making a difference, particularly in pupils' achievement in writing in primary schools.
- 2.5 The systematic roll out of the 'early help' offer for vulnerable families is having a positive impact. It 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. The model will be implemented in all school clusters by July 2016.
- 2.6 The Walsall Link continues to develop in providing a directory of effective practice and facilitating further school to school support to take place.
- 2.7 The quality of governance in schools is improving and the number of School Governing Bodies of concern to the Local Authority has significantly reduced. The Governor Support Service supports, challenges, trains and monitors Governing Bodies well and there is much closer working with the Walsall Governor Association which now has over 600 members.
- 2.8 Work continues on the implementation of the Walsall School's Leadership Strategy, involving partnerships with the Black Country Teaching School

Alliance, National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and Birmingham City University.

School Improvement Action Plan: Revised Strategic Priorities

- 3.1 The Proportion of children attending a good or outstanding school meets or exceeds the national average by 2018.
- 3.2 The progress children make and the outcomes they achieve at all Key Stages meet or exceed the national average by 2018.
- 3.3 Close the achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils; particularly white british boys, Pupil Premium and SEND pupils. Improve the achievement of these pupils so they make at least as much progress as other pupils nationally.
- 3.4 Improve attainment and progress of more able children and of all pupils in maths at both primary and secondary
- 3.5 Monitor, challenge and support schools to move more rapidly from Requires Improvement to Good and ensure all good schools maintain good and more become outstanding.
- 3.6 Improve school inclusion to reduce exclusions, improve school attendance and enable more children to access provision in mainstream schools.
- 3.7 Continue to increase the use of effective school-to-school support, in the development of a self-sustaining model. The clusters, partnerships and networks across the Local Authority are evolving and adapting to improve pupil outcomes and leadership more evenly across Walsall but this needs to demonstrate impact in every school clusters, through a more systematic approach.