

Council – 8 April 2019

Portfolio Holder - Education and Skills

What do we know?

There are 122 schools in Walsall. 79% are rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding, down from 82% in March 2018. One new school has opened (The Ladder School) which has not yet been inspected.

Walsall's school children have more economic, language and health challenges than regional, national and statistical neighbours:

- 19.0% of primary school children and 17.6% of secondary school pupils are in receipt of Free School Meals.
- 24.5% of primary school pupils and 19.7% of secondary school pupils have English as an additional language.
- 24.2% of reception aged pupils and 40.7% of year 6 pupils are overweight.

With the exception of Phonics, outcomes for pupils remain behind those of their counterparts regionally, nationally and in similar council areas, but they are improving at a faster rate:

- The percentage of children achieving a good level of development is 68.1% in 2018 up from 65.7% in 2017.
- 66.1% achieved the expected standard across all early learning goals in 2018 up from 62.2% in 2017.
- The percentage who achieve the expected level in the phonics test was 83.0% in 2018 up from 80.0%

Outcomes for children at the end of primary school have improved significantly - progress in reading is better than regional and statistical neighbours and progress in maths is better than national results:

- The percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard at keys stage 2 in reading, writing and maths is 61.0% in 2018 compared with 53.0% in 2017.

Improvements in outcomes at key stage 4 are smaller and remain below national, regional and comparator averages:

- The average Attainment 8 score in 2018 was 43.8 up slightly from 43.2 in 2017.
- The average Progress 8 score was -0.19 an improvement from -0.25 in 2017.
- 56.9% of pupils achieved a score between 9 and 4 compared with 54.6% in 2017.

The proportion of children who are identified as having special educational needs is lower than national, regional and comparator averages and their outcomes are not as good:

- 12.9% of pupils have a special educational need compared with 14.6% nationally.
- Just 15.0% of children with SEN Support achieve the expected standard at KS2 in reading, writing and maths compared with 24.0% nationally.
- The gap at KS2 between children with SEND Support and those without a special educational need is 56 percentage points compared with 50 percentage points nationally.

Poorer and disadvantaged pupils perform worse than their counterparts elsewhere and the attainment gap is bigger:

- 42.0% of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved the expected standard at KS2 in reading writing and maths compared with 46.0% nationally. The distance from those who weren't eligible was 25% in Walsall compared with an England gap of 22%.
- For disadvantage pupils, 49.0% achieved the expected standard with a gap of 21.0% compared with non-disadvantaged pupils. Nationally the gap is 20.0%
- At KS4, the average Attainment 8 score for those pupils eligible for free school meals was 34.4 with a gap of 11.5 compared with those who are not eligible for free school meals. Nationally the gap is 13.9, however, this is because young people who aren't eligible for FSM perform better than those in Walsall.
- The average Attainment 8 score for disadvantaged pupils was 35.9 with a gap of 12.6 compared with a gap of 13.5 nationally, although again, this is because non-disadvantaged pupils perform better nationally.

1. Introduction

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council's mission is to secure the very best opportunities for all its children and young people, in the very best settings with the highest quality teaching and learning to enable them to realise their full potential, providing academic excellence and an outstanding social and civic education for every child and young person in Walsall.

Walsall is an ambitious local authority that wants to achieve excellence for all the children, young people and families in our borough. We are committed to ensuring that children have the best start in life and are safe from harm, happy and learning well. In order to achieve this the introduction of our 'Right for Children' vision sets out the need to ensure that we have the right children, in the right educational setting, getting the right support, at the right time.

The Directorate has three service areas, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, Early Help & Commissioning and Access & Achievement. As Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills, my report details those activities within Access and Achievement we are most proud of, the challenges we face and the areas upon which we are focussing attention to ensure better educational outcomes for all children and young people in the borough.

The role of the local authority has fundamentally changed. All but three secondary schools in the Borough are now Academies and a number of primary schools have followed suit or become federated with other schools. This means that the role for those schools is now primarily about influencing and ensuring effective strong relationships with schools, Trusts and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Our focus has shifted, as set out in our Inclusion Strategy, to be champions for parents, carers and children and young people, by knowing our schools well and challenging them when necessary acting now as convenors; working in partnership with schools, their Trusts and those that support schools such as health and finally, we are commissioners using robust evidence to inform our priorities and interventions.

Over the year, the Regional Schools Commissioner identified Walsall as a priority area for Wave 13 funding for Trusts wishing to establish Free schools. This has led to the approval of a new secondary Free school (Windsor Trust), and a further 3 expressions of interest accepted by the DfE. This includes the following primary schools Beechdale Park Primary Academy and Harmony Primary school. The trusts involved are Victoria Academies, Sandwell and Mercian, Walsall. The third expression has come from Avanti Trust to set up an all through Hindu Faith School. This has been challenging for the council in identifying the right areas of the borough where we know there is a need for more school places and finding sites which are suitable for these schools.

2. Achievements and challenges

A Strategic Education and Inclusion Board was established in May 2018 to create a schools led partnership to drive improved outcomes for children and young people across Walsall. Chaired by an experienced Chair of Governors, the Board has representation from every type of school, the Cabinet Portfolio holder, a National Leader of Governance and leaders from local colleges and universities. There are a

number of work streams, led by schools looking at addressing five priority areas; recruitment and retention of high quality teachers, educational outcomes, vulnerable learners, special educational needs and transitions. The funding for this Board comes from the Schools Forum and represents a significant shift in our partnership with schools.

School Readiness

For some time now I have been concerned that children are beginning their school life without the basic skills they need to be educated. Many Headteachers have informed me that children coming into reception are sometimes between 2/3 years behind where they should be. My intention is that every parent offered a place for their child into reception for the next academic year will receive a letter informing them of what will be expected for their child. I list below the following expectations which I believe are necessary;

- Go to the toilet independently and be out of nappies/pull ups.
- Listen to and re-tell a story, and turn the pages correctly.
- Hold a pen/pencil correctly and write their name.
- Hold a conversation with familiar adults and children, and answer questions.
- Use a knife and fork.
- Wash and dry their hands and face.
- Dress themselves independently including doing up zips and putting on their shoes.

Schools Profile and Educational Outcomes

Educational outcomes in Walsall remain below those achieved nationally with the exception of phonics screening. Pupils take the Phonics Screening Check at the end of year one, when most children have reached six years of age. The check is designed to confirm whether pupils have learnt phonic decoding to make sure that they have the skills to read well.

Over the last four years, the percentage of year one pupils working at the expected standard of phonic decoding in Walsall schools has increased from 79% to 83%. In 2018, Walsall's outcomes were one percentage point above the national average and in January 2019, the Minister for Education wrote to the council congratulating us on our schools' performance in this area.

Early years

In Walsall there are a number of ways parents can access Early Year's provision; from childminders to private, voluntary and independent settings as well as nursery schools. In December 2018, 91% of Early Years Foundation Stage inspection grades were good or better which is 3% better than national and demonstrates a 17% increase.

There is a similar picture in the increased numbers of private sector day-care and nursery settings graded as good or outstanding. Currently, 95% of Walsall providers are good or outstanding, which is 1% higher than national. The number of childminders graded as good or outstanding is 96%, which exceeds national by 3%.

In early years, the number of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) was 68%, which is an improvement on previous year but below the national of 72%. There has been an increase in the percentage of children in early years with SEND achieving a good level of development, rising from 14% in 2017 to 24% in 2018 and the gap between girls and boys has closed by 3% from 16% in 2017 to 13% in 2018.

Schools

As of February 2019 Ofsted rated 18 (14%) schools as outstanding and this year the three schools now graded as Outstanding were Rowley View nursery, Oakwood Special School and New Invention Junior. This means that the percentage of schools judged to be good or better in Walsall currently stands at 79%, below the national average of 84.5% and there are 24 schools rated as Requiring Improvement (RI) or Inadequate.

The implementation of a Schools Causing Concern Protocol in September established clear and transparent processes for all schools, including Academies to ensure that they are appropriately, supported, challenged and held accountable for providing a good education for all learners across the borough. In September 2018, 29 schools were rated as Red (the highest level of concern), 36 schools as Amber (some concern) and 54 Green (no concerns). Those schools rated red have had leadership, governance and curriculum reviews and will be taking effective action to address the concerns identified. In all but one case, subsequent Ofsted inspections have confirmed our view of these schools. For example, the recent Ofsted inspection of Palfrey Junior School commented;

“The local authority has very recently commissioned a review of leadership and management. This review has been helpful in identifying strengths and next steps for the school. A system is now in place for the local authority to make termly checks on the school’s progress towards becoming a good school.”

This is the main vehicle for the local authority to hold schools to account and help to drive up outcome to where they need to be.

Key Stage 2

Pupils take national curriculum assessments at the end of KS2 (age 11). They take tests in reading, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling and receive a teacher assessment (TA) in reading, writing, maths and science. In 2018 Reading, Writing and Maths results increased from 53% in 2017 to 61% this is below the national figure of 64%.

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils in Walsall who achieved the expected standard or above in combined Reading, Writing and maths stands at 49%, a significant improvement of 10% from 2017.

The percentage of Special Education Needs (SEN) pupils with a statement or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) shows improved their results by 3% improvement from 2017, and pupils with SEN support show a 4% improvement with

an outcome of 15% in 2018. However, this remains well below the National outcome of 24%.

Provisional outcomes for Looked After Children shows 36% of pupils achieved the expected standard of Reading, Writing and maths in 2018. This is a 2% rise from the 2017 outcome and is 1% above the current indicative national average.

Key Stage 4

Our Key Stage 4 performance remains below national for Progress 8, which means that too many of our young people are leaving school at 16 not making the progress needed to achieve good outcomes in English and Maths. This affects their ability to go on to any form of further education and puts them at a disadvantage in competing for jobs.

Compared to 2017, the percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving a strong pass (Grade 5 or above) in English and maths increased by 2% from 34% in 2017 to 36% in 2018. However, the percentage of pupils nationally achieving a grade 5 or above in English and maths is 40%. So whilst the gap has been closed from national from 5% in 2017 to 4% in 2018, we need to work with schools to significantly improve.

Despite this, our current data for those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low at 1.7%. Specific support is offered by the Information Advice and Guidance team (IAG) up to the age of 25 if they have an EHCP to ensure they make a positive progression into adulthood.

Vulnerable children and young people

The number of requests for assessment for an EHCP is increasing, as is the complexity of the needs of the children. In excess of 2000 children and young people have a plan and the number has risen over the last year. Over 6000 children and young people are identified as needing additional SEN support. The majority of these children and young people are in our mainstream schools where they achieve poorer outcomes, and far too many of them ending up excluded.

The Virtual School is responsible for the educational outcomes of our Looked After Children and there has been an overall improvement in the attainment of primary aged children in 2018, with looked after children in early years performing as well as their non-looked after peers.

We have 35 care leavers enrolled on the Aspire to University course, which sees looked after children in KS3 and KS4 attend a number of events and initiatives run by Wolverhampton University, this to raise aspirations and break down barriers for those young people to access Higher education.

Admissions to schools

Admissions to schools are co-ordinated nationally and the 1st March is the national offer day for secondary places this is when parents/carers are notified of whether they have their first preference or not.

The table below shows the outcomes from 2019 secondary admission rounds, compared to 2018.

Please note that this data is a snapshot of the position at the time the offers were made on 1 March 2019 and is subject to change throughout the admission round. The data relates to on-time applications from Walsall residents only.

On time applications from Walsall residents	2018 Number of applications	2018 Percentage	2019 Number of applications	2019 Percentage
Offered 1 st preference	2516	74.57	2547	72.93
Offered 2 nd preference	412	12.21	437	12.51
Offered 3 rd preference	161	4.77	151	4.32
Offered one of their top 3 preferences	3089	91.55	3135	89.78
Offered one of their 5 preferences	3159	93.63	3236	92.67
Total number of on-time applications	3374		3498	

The table below shows the outcomes from the 2018 and 2017 primary admission rounds at the time the offers were made on 16 April 2018.

On time applications from Walsall residents	2018 Number of applications	2018 Percentage	2017 Number of applications	2017 Percentage
Offered 1 st preference	3056	90.04%	3109	89.8%
Offered 2 nd preference	186	5.48%	158	4.56%
Offered 3 rd preference	50	1.48%	42	1.21%
Offered one of their preferences	3292	97.00%	3309	95.57%
Total number of on-time applications	3394		3417	

Ofsted Inspection of the Local Area.

In February 2019, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted an inspection of the local area to see how well we identify, meet the needs and achieve good outcomes for children and young people across the borough with SEND. The outcome of that inspection has, at the time of writing not been published, but will provide a series of recommendations and actions for the schools, local authority and health services to address to improve our offer to children and families with SEND.

3. Conclusion

Our ambition is to create a culture where there is effective, inclusive, high quality learning provision, combined with meaningful and purposeful school partnerships, focused on the direct pursuit of improved outcomes for all Walsall's young people.

Realising our collective ambition for children relies on us all, whoever we are, and in whatever role we fulfil - elected members, schools, health colleagues, employees, parents, carer or community members, acting as champions for all children.

This report has set out the achievements Children's Services are proud of, the challenges faced by the Directorate and where attention is being focussed to improve outcomes for children, young people and families going forward. Undoubtedly, the circumstances in which the Directorate is operating will continue to be challenging and there is more to do. There is an absolute determination across Children's Services and this Administration to improve outcomes for all children and young people and to make a difference to the lives of those children who need it most.

Councillor Chris Towe
Cabinet Member Education and Skills
29 March 2019