

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People & Families PPB

**DATE:** 24th February 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Learning and Achievement Strategy

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform PPB of the newly developed Learning and Achievement Strategy, and to seek comments prior to implementation
- 1.2 To outline what actions are being taken to ensure the school Improvement Service is prepared in the event of an Ofsted inspection.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The PPB notes the Learning & Achievement Strategy for Halton.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The framework for the inspection of Local Authority arrangements for supporting School Improvement was published in May 2013.
- 3.2 Sir Michael Wilshaw in his 'Back to school' speech 9 September 2013, said *"The best local authorities know the future lies with outstanding heads like you, and are already using you to effect change in their area. The worst local authorities haven't yet woken up and adapted to the new educational landscape. They have failed to appreciate that increasingly autonomous Headteachers, working in local partnership are driving improvement. They don't engineer and facilitate these partnerships and are not pro-active in using their existing powers to challenge schools to do better"*.
- 3.3 Since the publication of the above framework, several local authority school improvement services have been inspected.
- 3.4 The inspection reports identify strengths particularly where local authorities have intervened successfully in schools at risk of being judged inadequate by Ofsted.
- 3.5 The key themes identified in areas for development in most inspection reports has been the lack of a well understood, strategic approach to building a sustainable model for school improvement and within it a

coherent approach for school to school support.

- 3.6 Whilst most schools in Halton where the local authority have intervened successfully understand our approach to school and setting support and intervention, schools that have never been in adverse Ofsted categories will have very limited working knowledge of our support and intervention policy.
- 3.7 Halton has used good and outstanding schools to support under-performing schools effectively through the use of National Leaders in Education, Local Leaders in Education and Headteachers of good and outstanding schools. Some of the processes in place are based on relationships and local intelligence. This now needs to be formalised
- 3.8 Since the introduction of Teaching Schools and the reduction of resources in local authorities for school improvement, the market place for school improvement services has grown and become more diverse over the last two to three years.
- 3.9 The capacity for local authorities to provide school improvement services they used to provide before the coalition government has been significantly reduced.
- 3.10 The strategy does not apply to Academies or free Schools, however should concerns arise about these schools consideration will be given about notifying the Regulator, Ofsted.

#### **4.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY**

- 4.1 Teaching Schools were introduced by the current government in 2011. Their remit is to provide school improvement services within and outside their local authority area. In Halton, the first teaching school (The Heath) has under its wing mostly good and outstanding schools within its Teaching School Alliance. Another Teaching School (Wade Deacon) should be approved soon. In both Teaching Schools the local authority is a named strategic partner.
- 4.2 Schools within the Teaching School Alliance are responsible for offering support to other schools within the Teaching School Alliance.
- 4.3 Teaching Schools have a key role to play in school improvement. Their Role is to co-ordinate expertise from the Teaching School Alliance by using the best leaders and teachers to:  
(The big six)
  1. play a greater role in training new entrants to the profession
  2. lead peer to peer professional leadership development
  3. identify and develop leadership potential
  4. provide support to other schools
  5. designate and broker specialist leaders in education (SLE's)
  6. research and development

- 4.4 The local authority, in order to increase its capacity for school improvement, will work with Teaching Schools at a strategic level to secure and sustain school capacity across the local area.
- 4.5 The local authority will work with Teaching Schools in the following areas:
- developing school leadership and succession planning
  - school to school support
  - professional development for teachers and leaders
- 4.6 Such an approach will address some of the criticism levelled at school improvement services that were inspected recently. Local Authorities' School Improvement Services are often criticised for not having a coherent strategy for school to school support.

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 The attached Learning and Achievement Strategy, once approved by SMT, will be sent to all schools. The Strategy will be available through Perspective Lite in early January 2014.
- 5.2 Following the launch period with schools, a survey (See Annex 2) with the key questions that inspectors would ask Headteachers and Governors if they were inspecting school improvement service will be sent to all schools again through Perspective Lite. This will be done early in the spring term 2014.
- 5.3 The outcomes of the survey will be used to inform our school improvement service action plan.
- 5.4 In addition, members of Children and Enterprise Senior Leadership Team will be visiting schools in the spring and summer terms 2014. For schools visited before the survey is sent out, SMT could use the survey questions to prompt discussions with Headteachers and Governors. Any post survey SMT visits to schools could focus on the gaps identified in the survey.
- 5.5 The outcomes of the survey will be analysed before the end of the spring term.
- 5.6 An action plan based on the survey outcomes and our internal self-evaluation process will be used to inform future practice.
- 5.7 The plan is to conduct a similar survey after 12 months.

## **6.0 Financial Implications:**

- 6.1 The Council's School Improvement Services have been significantly reduced over recent years with the vast majority of funding now directly

allocated to schools. The small remaining Team will focus on the statutory responsibilities of the Council, detailed within the strategy. Whilst the Council will deliver the strategy on a cost neutral basis, it will have to rigorously prioritise service according to available resources as we go forward.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 7.1 The above proposals will ensure that children and young people in Halton will have access to a good or better school in the local area.

## **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 8.1 Failure to engage with schools and partners within the context defined by the Learning and Achievement Strategy could have an adverse impact on underperforming schools and the attainment and progress of their pupils.
- 8.2 Failure to prepare and/or use the framework for inspecting local authority school improvement services as a self-evaluation tool could lead to a poor rating of LA school improvement services.

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 9.1 Implementation of the Learning and Achievement Strategy will seek to ensure that all children have equality of access to a good or better school.
- 9.2 All children and young people will have opportunities to succeed and access higher and further education.
- 9.3 This strategy will contribute towards increasing the number of young people in education and training.