

PEOPLE (Children) SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday 13th February 2014

Learning and Achievement Strategy (School Improvement Strategic Plan)

Report of the Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To inform Scrutiny Panel about the changing policy, guidance and statutory responsibilities that inform the role of the Local Authority in relation to educational outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.2. To propose a new strategic approach to learning and achievement and to delivering school improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. **That Scrutiny Panel discuss this report and the approach of the Learning and Achievement Strategy and The School Improvement Strategic Plan (Appendix A) and comment on the proposed approach.**

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. The role of Local Authorities in relation to education has significantly changed as a consequence policy initiatives introduced by successive governments.
- 3.2. The long term policy direction has been to take schools out of Local Authority control; in Rutland (as in some other Councils) most children will be in non-maintained schools by the end of the 2013/14 academic year (10 out of 21 schools)
- 3.3. This has been accompanied by a transfer of funding for school improvement from the Local Authority to schools, and reduced capacity to monitor, intervene, challenge and support.
- 3.4. All schools, but academies, in particular, have been encouraged to see themselves as not accountable to Local Authorities and conversely government has indicated to Local Authorities that they are not responsible for the performance of non-maintained schools.
- 3.5. In May 2013 this changed when Ofsted made it clear that Local Authorities have both responsibilities to monitor performance and powers to intervene, and stated its intention to inspect Local Authorities on how they discharged this responsibility

3.6. From the LA perspective this has required a review of what is required to meet the new expectations and how they can be resourced

3.7. While this changes the position for Local Authorities it also, by implication, alters the way in which schools are expected to relate to Local Authorities, which, if it is to work will need schools to cooperate with information sharing and the creation of a new partnership approach

4. BACKGROUND

4.1. The Local Authority along with its partners in early years settings, schools, colleges and adult learning have a wide range of responsibilities both statutorily and in the form of guidance to deliver a range of outcomes for children, young people and adult learners. The Diocese, Governing Bodies and Trusts also have a significant role. The educational landscape is in a state of significant change and transition including the creation of academies, free schools, the extension of education to children aged 2, Raising the Participation Age requiring compulsory education to age 18 by 2015 and significant changes to the curriculum in schools and adult learning and the assessment framework.

4.2. However, the Local Authority remains bound by legislation from the Education Act 1996 onwards which includes a total of 196 duties which might be summarised as follows:

- The requirement to ensure sufficient provision and to plan for the future;
- The requirement to ensure that educational standards and outcomes are high and are met for all learners;
- The requirement to ensure that children and young people and indeed all learners are safeguarded and their well-being is promoted.

4.3. In May 2013 Ofsted published two further guidance documents which clarify the role of Local Authorities in terms of school improvement.

- The framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement (Ofsted 2014)
- Handbook for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement (Ofsted 2014)

4.4. The Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements framework states:

In order to make a judgement about the effectiveness of arrangements to support school improvement, Ofsted inspectors must take into account the following aspects:

- the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement;
- the clarity and transparency of policy and strategy for supporting schools' and other providers' improvement, and how clearly the local authority has defined its monitoring, challenge, support and intervention roles;

- the extent to which the local authority knows schools and other providers, their performance and the standards they achieve and how effectively support is focused on areas of greatest need;
- the effectiveness of the local authority's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools, including the use of formal powers available to the local authority;
- the impact of local authority support and challenge over time and the rate at which schools and other providers are improving;
- the extent to which the local authority brokers support for schools and other providers;
- the effectiveness of strategies to support highly effective leadership and management in schools and other providers;
- support and challenge for school governance, where applicable;
- the way the local authority uses any available funding to effect improvement, including how it is focused on areas of greatest need.

4.5. These documents draw distinctions between academies and maintained schools in terms of the Local Authority's statutory powers of intervention, but clearly state the following:

"...local authorities retain a legal responsibility for performance in the area as a whole, under the 1996 Education Act.¹ In addition, the Secretary of State has made clear the expectation for local authorities to act as strategic commissioners for all schools. Where the local authority has concerns about the performance of an academy, inspectors should explore whether the local authority has, within the confines of its responsibilities, taken reasonable steps to discuss this with the individual establishment, the executive leadership and governance of the chain, and/or the Department for Education, where appropriate."

4.6. In simple terms Local Authority school improvement services nationally can, and already have been, inspected under this new framework and will be judged to be 'effective' or 'ineffective'. Norfolk and the Isle of Wight, the first to be inspected in 2013, were judged to be ineffective. The most recent published inspection undertaken by Ofsted was of Blackpool in November 2013 where the outcome was that school improvement was judged to be 'ineffective'.

4.7. Ofsted's inspections of Local Authority School Improvement Services are triggered based on a risk assessment usually related to poor performance in schools within the locality.

4.8. Many Local Authority School Improvement services have reduced in capacity in recent years in response to the changes in education introduced by a succession of government policies. It is clear however that Rutland Local Authority needs to revisit its priorities and focus regarding school improvement in order to meet both old and new expectations.

4.9. It is possible that Rutland's School Improvement service will be inspected by Ofsted during the academic year 2013/14 as 6 out of 18 primary schools are now rated by OFSTED as not either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' so it is of critical importance that a strategy is agreed and implemented as soon as possible in preparation for possible inspection.

5. LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGY

5.1. The Learning and Achievement Strategy is intended as a single overarching a strategy to meet a range of requirements. It is an ambitious strategy.

5.2. The document will set out a strategic approach that recognises that education is in a state of transition and that a new approach is needed that will be effective during that transition. A key underlying assumption is that the Local Authority must work in partnership with Early Years settings, schools, colleges and adult learning providers, the Dioceses, Governing Bodies and Trusts to deliver its priorities.

5.3. The approach of the Learning and Achievement Strategy is to bring together all those with a responsibility for education and well-being into a single, structured approach which does not duplicate effort or create additional and differing bureaucracy for the providers concerned.

5.4. Some proposed key developments are:

- A Learning and Achievement Partnership Board which will include all partners to create an appropriate degree of ownership and partnership;
- The School Improvement team will use a new Educational Performance Dashboard to monitor early years settings and schools. This risk based overview approach will enable monitoring to take place of performance, standards of teaching and learning, leadership and management, governance and finance in a way which reflects Ofsted's new inspection framework;
- The Local Authority will encourage all educational partners to complete an annual Self Evaluation;
- The School Improvement team will complete an Annual Visit;
- The strategy clearly sets out the Local Authorities revised approach to schools causing **concern**.

5.5. The Learning and Achievement Strategy will comprises of the following documents:

- The School Improvement Strategic Plan.
- The Early Years Strategic Plan (to be completed)
- The Adult Learning Strategic Plan (to be completed)
- A Learning and Achievement Overview document will be finalised following agreement on the plans above

5.6. Appendices to the Learning and Achievement Strategy (School Improvement Strategic Plan) include:

- Immediate Priorities document
- Education Performance Dashboard.
- Governance Strategy and Monitoring Framework.
- Self-Evaluation, Data Analysis and Annual Visits document
- School Self Evaluation Document

5.7. It is important to note that in order for this strategy to be successful a range of educational providers will need to be prepared to work in partnership and to release information to the Local Authority that currently they are not statutorily required to do.

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1. The draft Learning and Achievement Strategy (School Improvement Strategic Plan) will be further developed using a ‘task and finish’ approach with schools in order to agree a final version of the Strategy which will then return to Scrutiny and then Cabinet for final approval and implementation.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	High	It is possible that Rutland’s School Improvement service will be inspected by Ofsted during the academic year 2013/14 so it is of critical importance that this strategy is agreed and implemented as soon as possible in preparation for an inspection.
Viability	High	Dependent on the support of early years settings, schools, adult learning
Finance	High	Additional resources are required to deliver this strategy
Profile	High	Educational outcomes are a high priority for the community
Equality and Diversity	High	The Strategy is intended to ensure that all children, young people and adult learners have an equal opportunity to reach their maximum potential.

Background Papers

None

Report Author

Mark Naylor

Tel No: (01572) 722577

e-mail: enquiries@rutland.gov.uk

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.