

# PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

26 June 2014

## INFORMATION REPORT ON THE LEARNING and SKILLS STRATEGY including the SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2016

Report of the Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	<b>Creating a Brighter Future for All</b>
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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provides information on the Rutland County Council Learning and Skills Strategy 2014-2016 and the School Improvement Strategic Plan 2014-2016.
- 1.2 To receive feedback from the People ( Children) Scrutiny Panel on the strategic intentions of the People Directorate for Learning and Skills Services for the period 2014-16 and priorities for improvement and development of education services within Rutland.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That People (Children) Scrutiny Panel considers the contents of this report noting the overview, strategic intentions and priorities of the service 2014-16 including proposed changes and developments.**
- 2.2 **To note that this report is a redeveloped version of the Report presented to People (Children) Scrutiny Panel on 13 February 2014**

### 3. BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Change

The educational landscape is undergoing significant change and transition including the creation of academies, free schools, the extension of free nursery education to children aged 2, Raising the Participation Age requiring compulsory education to age 18 by 2015 and significant changes to the curriculum and assessment in schools, standards of performance in schools and adult learning provision.

#### 3.2 Responsibilities

The Local Authority, along with its partners in Early Years settings, schools, colleges and adult learning, has a wide range of statutory responsibilities and government policy guidance to implement in order to deliver effective

outcomes for children, young people and adult learners. The Diocese, Governing Bodies and Education Trusts have a significant role in this range of provision and delivery. Specific duties arise, for example, providing support for travellers and unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Local Authority also works closely with the MOD to support the education of service children and related needs of those families including services such as childcare and adult learning, for example.

### 3.3 Legislation and Guidance

The Local Authority remains bound by legislation from the Education Act 1996 onwards which includes a total of 198 duties which can be summarised as follows:

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

Specifically, the new inspection framework is now being implemented using Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI's) powers to carry out an inspection of the performance of a particular local authority function as set out in section 136(1)(b) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Specifically, HMCI can use this power to inspect how well the local authority is fulfilling its general duty to promote high standards and fulfilment by every child of their educational potential as set out in section 13A of the Education Act 1996.

Additionally, In May 2013 Ofsted published 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;
- Handbook for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement.

## 4. INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

### 4.1 The Ofsted inspection framework for Local Authority school improvement arrangements 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.

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

*"...local authorities retain a legal responsibility for performance in the area as a whole, under the 1996 Education Act.<sup>1</sup> 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."*

4.3 Local Authority school improvement services are now being inspected under this new school improvement framework and will be judged to be 'effective' or 'ineffective'. Both Norfolk and the Isle of Wight, the first to be inspected, were judged to be ineffective. Further inspections have seen a significant number of Local Authorities deemed to be ineffective by Ofsted.

4.4 Ofsted inspections of Local Authority School Improvement arrangements are triggered by a **risk assessment** carried out by Ofsted through their monitoring role and usually related to poor performance in schools within the locality.

## 5 INSPECTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR RUTLAND

5.1 Local Authority School Improvement services have been reduced in many local authorities, including Rutland, following budget cuts in recent years in

response to central government policy changes. They are therefore operating on significantly lowered levels of available capacity to respond to a large number of changes in education introduced by a succession of government policies. This reduction in resource has introduced increased levels of risk for Local Authorities, particularly in terms of fulfilling statutory duties and providing support and challenge to education settings, schools and adult learning.

- 5.2 It is expected that Rutland Local Authority, in due course, will be involved in a school improvement inspection by Ofsted and should not delay its preparations. This should include the introduction of revised school improvement priorities, the implementation of an agreed school improvement plan for supporting and challenging schools including systems for monitoring and assessing performance, understanding risk related to school performance and the use of intervention where required. The continued development of partnership working with and between schools is essential to maximise the use of best teaching, management and governance practice, skills and experience in schools and to support and develop school alliances, accreditation of teaching schools and national leaders of education.
- 5.3 The Local Authority will also ensure completion of statutory duties and will respond as required to central government policy and guidance.
- 5.4 It is essential that Rutland achieves the following **school improvement performance standards** to meet the inspection requirements:
- a. Effective corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement;
  - b. Clear and transparent policy for supporting and challenging schools and other education providers;
  - c. Good working knowledge of the performance of schools and other education providers;
  - d. Good focus of resources on priority areas for school improvement;
  - e. Effective system and policy for identifying underperforming schools and intervention where required;
  - f. Clear understanding of the impact of Local Authority support for schools and the extent to which the Local Authority brokers effective support;
  - g. Effective support for leadership, including management and governance;
  - h. Effective use of available funding for school improvement.
- 5.5 It is possible that Rutland's School Improvement arrangements will be inspected by Ofsted during the academic year 2014-15 since three primary schools and the special school in Rutland are currently judged by OFSTED

as 'Requires Improvement' (the category below 'Good' or 'Outstanding') which may act as a trigger for an inspection.

## 6 LEARNING AND SKILLS STRATEGY

### 6.1 Purpose

The Learning and Skills Strategy has been designed as a single coherent overarching strategy to meet a range of requirements. It is an ambitious strategy and replaces previous disparate delivery plans for areas of Lifelong Learning. An overview including strategic priorities is shown at **Appendix A**.

The document seeks to 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.

The Learning and Skills Strategy is designed to bring 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.

### 6.2 Main Developments

- a) A clear monitoring and governance framework has been developed to provide a coherent strategic framework and context for learning and skills development within Rutland. See **Appendix B**.
- b) A **Learning and Skills Performance Board** will meet at least three times per year and will include appropriate representatives and partners to create a robust and effective monitoring function to support corporate and strategic leadership of educational performance in Rutland (see **Appendix C** for Membership and Terms of Reference);
- c) The School Improvement team will use a new **Education Performance Dashboard** to monitor Early Years settings and schools and to collect data to be provided to the Learning and Skills Performance Board. An example is shown at **Appendix D**. This approach will collect essential data from schools and education settings to enable detailed monitoring of performance, standards of teaching and learning, leadership and management, governance and finance in a way which meets the requirements of Ofsted's new inspection framework;
- d) The Local Authority will expect all educational partners to continue to undertake an annual **Self Evaluation** of their performance. Support and advice will be provided by the Local Authority on self-evaluation and data analysis methods if required including training for governors;

- e) The School Improvement team will complete an **Annual Visit and Report** to each school and Early Years setting which will be made available to the Education Dashboard ;
  - f) The strategy clearly sets out the Local Authority's revised approach to **Schools Causing Concern** which will operate a two-monthly meeting to closely monitor performance of underperforming schools and specific performance issues in other schools;
  - g) The School Improvement Team (Primary and Secondary) will adapt its style and focus to meet the requirements of the strategy within existing resources.
- 6.3 The Learning and Skills Strategy will comprise the following areas of work each with supporting strategic plans:
- a) A Learning and Skills Overview document
  - b) A Learning and Skills Governance and Monitoring Framework document
  - c) The School Improvement Strategic Plan (attached)
  - d) The Early Years Strategic Plan (currently being completed)
  - e) The Adult Learning Strategic Plan (currently being completed)

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The existing Lifelong Learning team structure is inadequate to meet the demands of the challenges and risks outlined above. From September 2014 the team will be called the Learning and Skills Service and will include: School Improvement (Primary and Secondary), Adult Learning, Early Years, Admissions and School Organisation/Pupil Place Planning.
- 7.2 The Learning and Skills Service structure chart is shown at **Appendix E**.
- 7.3 To deliver the Learning and Skills Strategy the following additional capacity will be introduced into the team:
- 0.5 FTE Primary School Officer
  - 0.6 FTE Secondary School Officer
- 7.4 Currently, there is insufficient primary school officer capacity to support the 'Requires Improvement' and 'Special Measures' schools to improve to 'Good'.

7.5 There is currently no specialist secondary/Post 16 school officer post within the service and therefore monitoring of secondary/post 16 performance is weak and provision of support and challenge in this area is a strategic gap.

7.6 A key risk within the Learning and Skills Service is the Rutland Adult Learning Service (RALS) has insufficient specialist management e.g. data manager to lead business critical operational work.

Additionally, the newly sub-contracted Adult Skills Budget element of RALS will require rigorous and effective contract management.

7.7 It should be noted that the Learning and Skills Service currently has the following vacancies arising from retirement and promotion reasons:

- 1.0 FTE Childcare Development Officer (Early Years Team)
- 1.0 FTE Adult Learning Manager
- 1.0 FTE Learning and Skills Team Manager

Recruitment processes are currently being undertaken to appoint to these permanent posts.

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	High	It is possible that Rutland's School Improvement arrangements will be inspected by Ofsted during the 2014/15 academic year. It is of critical importance that the Learning and Skills Strategy and supporting School Improvement Plan is agreed and implemented as soon as possible in preparation for an inspection.
Viability	High	It is also critical that the Learning and Skills Strategy receives the full support of Early Years setting, schools and Adult Learning provision.
Finance	High	Additional resources as set out in 7.3 are essential to enable the strategy to be effectively implemented.
Profile	High	Education outcomes are a high priority for parents, community groups, partners and stakeholders in Rutland.

Equality and Diversity	Medium	The Learning and Skills Strategy is intended to ensure that all children, young people and adult learners have an equal opportunity to reach their maximum potential.
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**Background Papers**

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