

Rutland County Council School / Setting Improvement Service Report 2015

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Contents

A. Background	3
B. Review of service, review of impact	3
b.1 What impact the service is having (see appendix)	3
b.2 Key points of review.....	3
C. Outline proposals.....	4
D. Proposed Changes	4
E. Detail of Proposed Changes	5
1. Specifically addressing inclusion of all children, especially SEN, in each school review.....	5
2. Re-defining the role of the Service to address structural issues.	5
3. Specify the role of Council and Members in relation to schools and performance.	5
4. Clarify and simplify school categorisation.	6
5. Clarify action in relation to schools causing concern.....	6
6. Clarify where a charge is made for services.....	6
7. Define relationship with providers of school support/improvement.....	8
8. Clarify the vision; role of school improvement where provision is good.	8
F. Recommendation	9
G. Appendices	9
Appendix 1 – Review of Impact of School Improvement Service	9
Appendix 2 – Review of Schools	9
U:\SCHOOLS SETTINGS\School judgements V3 120815.docx	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 3 – Categorisation of Schools	10
Category: Green: self-sustaining	10
Category: Amber: Vulnerable to “Requiring Improvement”	10
Category: Red: Vulnerable to going into an OFSTED category or already in a category	11
Appendix 4 A Charter – introduction	12
An Education Charter for Rutland.....	12

“...local authorities retain a legal responsibility for performance in the area as a whole, under the 1996 Education Act. 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.”

A. Background

The school/setting improvement service has been re-established over the past 12-18 months following a period of planned reduction. In early summer 2015 the learning and skills (including, inter alia, school improvement) service merged with the special educational needs and inclusion services. The merged education service conducted an internal review in late summer 2015 and identified key priorities for development. The school improvement service was reviewed as part of this.

An Education Strategic Plan has been prepared and associated action plans are in preparation.

This report indicates the key findings of the review and recommends actions to be taken.

B. Review of service, review of impact

The review was undertaken both separately and as part of the overall review of education services in Rutland (see report re: Education Strategic Plan 2015-2018). A summary is provided of conclusions.

b.1 What impact the service is having (see appendix)

- Clear evidence of impact within individual schools and settings
- General reputation of the service is improving
- Some continuing uncertainty about the services provided
- The impact upon a very small number of individual schools/settings is evidenced but not sustained. Some are failing to make sustainable improvement.
- Target has been individual schools having impact across the service, only within individual schools
- Some emerging evidence of improving collaboration between schools/settings
- Valued by those who have drawn upon it
- Service brings focus to heads; increases accountability
- Schools have valued the Service's focus on data-sourced intelligence and support in developing this in school

b.2 Key points of review

- Clear beneficial impact is evidenced
- Arrangements and operation are understood but documentation needs refinement
- Service is small and resilience is a challenge
- Need to increase the impact – more rapid

- Need to clarify work with TA other improvement agencies – danger of too many people involved
- Some schools are struggling to acquire school improvement services not offered by Rutland
- Need a range of strategies to be made available to schools
- Need better integration with, e.g., SEN, inclusion, budget
- Too many small schools struggling in isolation with low levels of collaboration
- Need to build inter-school collaboration
- Need a unifying vision and purpose
- Need to reduce leadership and management demand, cut costs by merging schools
- Inclusion is becoming an issue in some schools

C. Outline proposals

- Clarify further the strategic role of the LA in relation to its citizenry
- Clarify HR strategy in relation to school improvement
- Conform to most recent statutory changes, so change the categorisation of schools
- Clarify role of local authority, particularly in relation to its role in school improvement where performance is good
- Foster a culture of initiative and responsibility through collaboration
- Quality assure partnership or outsourced provision that affects LA statutory provision
- Enhance the system leadership of schools and LA together
- Clarify a vision in collaboration with schools
- Deal with some weaknesses in the service (data analysis, intelligence)
- Increase the accountability of schools and strengthen the role of Elected Members in school improvement

These changes will mean simplifying and adapting documentation, and emphasising certain features of current operation. They will require changes in procedures, e.g., in relation to information gathering and analysis regarding SEN and the actions of Members in Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee. They also strengthen the Council's role in creating an ambitious culture for education in Rutland. The changes set the context for a full charter for education in Rutland.

D. Proposed Changes

1. In the light of the review, key areas of action of strategy will include:
 - Increasing both informal and formal partnerships between schools as a key strategy to foster improvement, e.g., mergers, joining multi-academy trusts (MATs). This is addressed under amendment 2. below;
 - Specifically addressing inclusion of all children, especially SEN, in each school review.
2. Re-defining the role of the service to address structural issues. This means the Service will actively address the structural problem of a large number of small schools and academies working independently and poor levels of inter-school collaboration.
3. Specify the role of Council and Members in relation to schools and performance. At present, the involvement of Members is not specified in the school improvement procedures.

4. Clarify and simplify school categorisation (see 4 below).
5. Clarify action taken in relation to “vulnerable schools” and “schools causing concern”.
6. Clarify services and indicate those for which a charge is made.
7. Define relationship with providers of school support/improvement, e.g. Teaching Alliance.
8. Clarify the vision; the role of school improvement where provision is good.

E. Detail of Proposed Changes

1. Specifically addressing inclusion of all children, especially SEN, in each school review

The school improvement policy will be amended once this report is approved so that the school officers review the school’s provision in relation to SEN. The review will include: SEN policy and outcomes for children, access to curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, admission, retention and exclusion.

The matter of formal partnerships is dealt with under 2, below.

2. Re-defining the role of the Service to address structural issues.

The Service will encourage and facilitate the creation of medium-sized, formally-organised groups of schools, e.g., join a multi-academy trust, merge with another school or family of schools. A clear policy, programme and agenda for change will be developed and agreed in partnership with school governors and head teachers.

Where schools are categorised as “amber: vulnerable to requiring improvement” they will - in addition to the support indicated in the policy - be strongly encouraged to establish formal, enduring partnership with a partner school and/or academies/MAT.

Where schools are categorised “red: vulnerable to going in an OFSTED category (or already in one)” they will – in addition to support indicated in the policy - be required to become an academy in a MAT or merge. This amendment will be made to the policy for school improvement.

3. Specify the role of Council and Members in relation to schools and performance.

Purpose

- Deliver strategic role of LA in relation to quality of education for its citizenry
- Ensure accountability of schools
- Ensure Councils fulfil statutory duty
- Encourage a culture of initiative and responsibility
- Foster a collaborative approach

Proposal

- Increase the direct involvement of Council Members in school improvement function.

- In particular, to provide a clear context and expectation of direct communication between the Leader, Portfolio Member, lead officers of the LA, chairs of governors and head teachers regarding inspection outcomes. This will take place particularly where underperformance is identified via statutory inspection.

Response to Inspection Findings: Council Members

1. **OFSTED Grade 1 Outstanding:** opportunity for chair of governors and head teacher to appear before Cabinet and Scrutiny for congratulation.
2. **OFSTED Grade 2 Good:** opportunity for chair of governors and head teacher to appear before Cabinet and Scrutiny for congratulation and to share their plans how to progress to Outstanding.
3. **OFSTED Grade 3 Requires Improvement:** head teacher and chair of governors to attend Cabinet to explain in what respects the school requires improvement and indicate the key actions to be taken to be classified as “good”. Reports are presented to Portfolio Holder every quarter on progress; Cabinet to call in head teacher and chair of governors if no clear evidence of improvement. Commence *Schools Causing Concern* procedures if not already commenced: warning letter.
4. **OFSTED Grade 4 Inadequate:** chair of governors and head teacher appear before Cabinet and Scrutiny to indicate why their school has received a grade 4 categorisation. Interventions described under *Guidance for Schools Causing Concern* will be confirmed. The school will be required to become an academy.
5. **Special measures:** as above. The Cabinet will propose the school becomes an Academy with a strong sponsor.

4. Clarify and simplify school categorisation.

At present, schools are divided into 5 categories which define the level of support they receive from the school improvement service. This categorisation is too complex and does not match the statutory categories of “vulnerable schools” and “schools causing concern”. The proposed model contains only 3 categories, matches the statutory categories and is better suited to the local context. (See Appendix 3)

5. Clarify action in relation to schools causing concern.

The school improvement policy (including “vulnerable schools” and “schools causing concern”) will be amended to reflect the category arrangements described above. The policy will also include the arrangements for amber and red schools.

6. Clarify where a charge is made for services.

The school improvement policy and practice will be amended to clarify core and entitlement activity (items a-e). It will also indicate charges made for

a. Core service to schools

The following will apply to all schools:

- **Annual table-top review** of standards and consideration in relation to Council vision, policies, statutory powers and services;

- **Comparative review** by Education Performance Board;
- **Strategic consideration of each school** in the corporate strategic planning of the Council as well as its planning for education;
- **Access to Council services** described as under “Entitlement” below;
- **Services for special needs children** in line with statutory requirements and Rutland policy;
- **Overview by Lead Member** for Schools.

b. Entitlement for schools

The Council will provide, unless declined by schools:

- **Education Specialist Officer** attached to each school/academy;
- **Two review visits from Education Specialist Officer** per year to review learner outcomes, progress, school and partnership priorities;
- Participation in Rutland area **education collaboration programme**;
- **Representation** on Education Performance Board;
- **Telephone advice** from Education Specialist Officer;
- **Access to advice on pupil admissions.**

c. Provision for vulnerable schools and schools causing concern

- **A sliding scale of support and challenge** is available, designed to match the needs of schools facing difficulties. Please see appropriate policy and statements of provision level.

d. Education Performance Board

Cf. the remit of this Board is to review standards of education and all provision within the County. It may recommend to the Council action to be taken affecting policy, strategy provision – including organisation – and evaluation.

e. Rutland Area Education Collaboration Programme

This programme is a core element of the strategy for education in Rutland. It fosters and formalises collaboration between all education providers in the Rutland area. It provides a forum for action for all players to maximise their whole system leadership, creating and sustaining an environment of high achievement beyond the individual school. The core members are the schools in Rutland and their partners beyond the County.

Core matters of education strategy and decision-making are discussed in this programme.

In practical terms, this means a regular and developing programme of activity focused upon formal collaboration between schools and actions that are best achieved across a range of schools.

Participants are head teachers of schools and chairs of governors as well as County officers and Members. Other senior school leaders or substitutes may be invited by the Council.

Details of the activities of this Programme will be available on the County website for education.

f. Additional provision

- Schools are encouraged to use the range of inter-school support, including the Teaching School Alliances.

- Where requested, further support can be provided by the Education Specialist Officers at additional cost.

Charge will be made for f. (Additional provision) where the service is brokered or provided by the Rutland County Council.

7. Define relationship with providers of school support/improvement

Schools are best placed to source their own school improvement. However, it is not uncommon for the Council's school improvement service to be working alongside an improvement partner. This may be a teaching alliance, staff from another school or academy trust, a local leader of education (LLE) or a national leader of education (NLE). A collaborative, professional approach is required to achieve the best outcomes for the school and preserve the quality of the service.

A small number of conditions should be met:

- All school improvement parties should agree to work together to achieve the expected outcomes. This must require due diligence from all parties prior to formal agreement.
- A clear, agreed statement must be created regarding expected outcomes, timescale, responsibilities, resource allocation, evaluation method and exit criteria. This must be agreed with the client, i.e., the school.
- A code of practice applies to the school improvement service. An appropriate code or protocol should apply to all parties.
- A large level of resource is given by the Council to schools in the amber and red categories. The school improvement service may, therefore, monitor the process and impact of improvement parties working with the school.
- The school improvement service fosters a choice of providers for school improvement. The service will establish a memorandum of understanding with local teaching alliances, LLEs, NLEs as appropriate. This will enable the providers to operate easily and efficiently, ensure coherence and secure quality in provision.

8. Clarify the vision; role of school improvement where provision is good.

The Education Service has already instigated a process of engagement of head teachers and chairs of governors. A clear need emerged for a unifying purpose or vision which engages all players in Rutland. The process of creating this unifying vision has begun with the Rutland Area Collaboration Programme (above). The Education Service's involvement is reported in the Education Strategic Plan. It will be pursued during the autumn in a planned programme with schools and reported by the end of the year.

As with other organisations, so with schools; their performance oscillates over time. Small organisations, such as many Rutland primary schools, are more vulnerable; these oscillations can be more extreme and the impact more damaging. For this reason, a school improvement service, however procured, is likely to be necessary.

As with other organisations, so with schools; the moment at which to launch innovation and venture is when the organisation is towards the top of its oscillation, not on the way down. For this reason, a good school improvement service seeks to stimulate, challenge and spur schools which are doing well, not ignore them when they are at their strongest. This may be contrary to current received

wisdom (“intervention in inverse proportion to success”) but is wholly in line with organisation theory and business good practice.

For this reason, the service will actively create an ambitious, innovative culture in Rutland, seeking to stimulate high performance and enrich young people’s lives. The service will undertake actions to provoke educational thought and ambition amongst schools and other providers. This may involve, e.g., pop-up lectures and workshops, projects with the arts, innovative and experimental practice, enriched connections around the world. The service will seek to create a County that is a beacon in educational thinking and practice.

A Charter will be prepared in the light of this vision and agreements made with providers. (See Appendix 4.)

F. Recommendation

Note the content of the report

Approve proposed actions.

G. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Review of Impact of School Improvement Service

Appendix 2 – Review of Schools

School	Current Judgement	Predicted Judgement	Date of last inspection
A	2	Predicted 3; school judged 2	March 2015
B	RI	4	Oct 2013
C	2	2/RI	March 2013
D	RI	2	June 2014
E	2	2	May 2014
F	2	2	Dec 2014
G	2	At risk of RI/4	April 2014
H	RI	2	July 2014
I	1	2 (Possibly 1)	March 2010
J	1	At risk of RI/4	July 2013
K	2	2	March 2015
L	2	4	Nov 2011
M	2	2	July 2014
N	2	2	Jan 2014
O	2	2	Oct 2014
P	2	Predicted 3; school judged 2	May 2015
Q	1	2	May 2013

R	RI	2	Dec 2013
S	1	2	Feb 2012
T	2	RI	June 2013
V	RI	2	Nov 2014

Appendix 3 – Categorisation of Schools

Category: Green: self-sustaining

- Data shows that favourable proportions of all groups of pupils are making expected and exceeding expected progression reading, writing and mathematics (primary) and on English, mathematics and Best 8 measures (secondary)
- Post-16 attainment, value-added and retention measures are outstanding/good.
- Attainment at the end of each key stage is good or where it is average it represents good achievement from starting points.
- End of Key Stage outcomes are improving at a faster rate than national and predictions for the coming year indicate that good standards will be at least maintained
- Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding make good or better progress
- Where attainment and progress gaps exist for vulnerable groups there is evidence that they are narrowing at a faster rate than they are nationally
- The school has had a recent inspection (within the last academic year) and was graded good or outstanding
- Areas for improvement identified in the last inspection are being, or have been successfully addressed
- The school's capacity for further improvement is at least good
- The school's self-evaluation is secure and monitoring processes are robust
- The quality of teaching is good or better (judged by data, work scrutiny and lesson observations)
- Assessment processes are rigorous and teacher assessments show a close correlation with outcomes at the end of each key stage
- Behaviour and safety is at least good, including pupils' engagement in their learning.
- There is evidence of high quality support being provided to other schools
- Governance is effective and holds school leaders to account
- Comments about the school on Parent View are favourable

Category: Amber: Vulnerable to "Requiring Improvement"

- Progress is not good enough (less than favourable proportions of pupils are making expected and exceeding expected progress) for all groups of pupils in reading, writing or mathematics (primary) or on English, mathematics and Best 8 measures (secondary)
- Attainment at the end of each key stage does not represent good achievement from different starting points. in reading, writing or maths (primary) or on English, mathematics and Best 8 measures (secondary)
- Post-16 attainment, value-added and retention measures require improvement.
- End of Key Stage outcomes do not show an improvement in reading, writing or maths (Primary) or on English, mathematics and Best 8 measures (secondary)

- Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding do not make good progress
- There are gaps in attainment and progress of vulnerable groups of pupils and the gaps show little sign of narrowing
- The school has had a recent inspection and has been judged as Requiring Improvement
- The school is at risk of being judged to require improvement
- Some of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have not yet been successfully addressed
- The school's capacity for improvement is not yet good (possibly new leadership team)
- The schools self-evaluation and monitoring processes are not accurate or effective
- The quality of teaching requires Improvement (judged by data, work scrutiny and lesson observations)
- Assessment processes are not sufficiently rigorous and teacher assessment is unreliable in one or more year groups
- Behaviour and or safety requires improvement and a substantial proportion of pupils are not engaged in their learning
- Governance is supportive but not holding the school to account or monitoring the work of the school
- Comments about the school on Parent View are largely favourable

Category: Red: Vulnerable to going into an OFSTED category or already in a category

- Progress for any one group of pupils is inadequate in reading, writing or mathematics (primary) or on English, mathematics and Best 8 measures (secondary)
- Attainment at the end of each key stage is low or represents slow progress in reading, writing or mathematics (primary) or on English, mathematics or Best 8 measures (secondary) outcomes are below floor.
- Post-16 attainment, value-added and retention measures are inadequate.
- End of Key Stage outcomes are declining in reading, writing or mathematics (*Primary*) or on English, mathematics or Best 8 measures (secondary)
- Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding do not make good progress
- There are significant gaps in attainment and progress of vulnerable groups of pupils and there are no signs of the gaps narrowing
- The school has had a recent Ofsted inspection and has been judged as having serious weaknesses or special measures
- The school is at risk of being judged inadequate for its overall effectiveness when it is next inspected
- Areas for improvement identified at the last Ofsted inspection have not been addressed
- The school's capacity for improvement is weak and impact of leaders' work in developing and sustaining improvement is not consistent.
- The school's self evaluation and monitoring processes are not sufficiently rigorous
- The quality of teaching (as judged by data, work scrutiny and lesson observations) requires improvement or is inadequate
- Assessment processes are not methodical and teacher assessment is unreliable in one or more year groups

- There are concerns around behaviour and or safety
- Governance does not hold the school to account or monitor the work of the school
- There are some negative comments on Parent View or complaints we have received about the school have raised concerns about some of its procedures

Appendix 4 A Charter – introduction

An Education Charter for Rutland

The aim of this charter is to raise the effectiveness of education in the schools of Rutland.

It will achieve this by:

- Establishing a clear partnership between the County and schools/academies in its area;
- Clarifying the separate roles of schools/academies vis-s-vis local authority;
- Defining the responsibilities of the County;
- Clarifying the responsibilities of schools/colleges/academies;
- Ensuring effective communication with schools;
- Providing a vehicle for strategic decision-making.

Principles

The Council will operate in accordance with key principles and assumptions:

- Effective schools are able to manage themselves. They are best placed to choose the partners with whom they operate and the nature and operation of their partnerships.
- Effective schools manage not only their internal environment but also their external environment. They manage themselves well and also their relationship with their communities. They also understand and manage well the broader context of education, recognising how they shape expectations and influence the delivery of education in other schools than their own.
- The Council will manage the broader educational context within which schools operate, seeking to promote high standards and
- Collaboration between schools is not an option; they all influence and impact upon each other; the issue is managing it to the best effect for learners.
- The Council will only intervene in schools where they are identified as vulnerable or causing concern, in accordance with its policy and statutory guidelines.
- The Council will actively foster a range of providers of services so that schools benefit from a wide range of high value options. It is for schools to identify the provider(s) that best suit their needs and aspirations.
- School improvement is a continuous process and the Council will encourage all schools actively to pursue improvements for children.
- The Council will advocate the child's best interests in all situations.
- The legal status of different types of schools entails differences in responsibility and operation and accountability. Beyond the differences, the Council will seek to treat all schools equally.
- Many small schools would be more effectively and efficiently managed if they collaborated as one organisation. This could streamline governance, management and operation, provide more consistent and reliable management information and reduce pressure on leaders.

Duties and actions of the County

The County is responsible for the standards achieved in all provision within its borders. It will, therefore:

- Establish positive relationships with all schools/academies and other partners/ stakeholders with interests in the Rutland area;
- Review the standards achieved in all schools;
- Actively create an environment in which schools manage themselves effectively in their own chosen partnerships and with respect to other schools and partnerships in their locality. This may involve engaging and brokering partnerships;
- Celebrate and encourage high achievement and successful learning;
- Challenge and support schools which are struggling - in partnership with other agencies capable of school improvement, e.g., Rutland Teaching Alliance;
- Intervene to raise standards in line with statutory powers and the Council's policies.