

**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
2 MARCH 2015**

**UPDATE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENSURING HIGH  
QUALITY EDUCATION IN LEICESTERSHIRE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the paper is to provide an update to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the current arrangements for ensuring that schools are performing well and are appropriately monitored, supported and challenged. The paper will cover the development of the Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership and how the Governor Development Service works with schools.
2. In addition, Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on the current landscape with regard to academies and age range changes. This is attached as Appendix A. The information in this appendix provides additional context for the main body of the paper.

**Background legislation and regulation**

3. Local authorities' statutory responsibilities for education are set out in section 13(a) of the Education Act 1996. That duty states that a local authority must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards. Local authorities are discharging this duty within the context of increasing autonomy and changing accountability for schools, alongside an expectation that improvement should be led by schools themselves. These statutory responsibilities are regulated through Ofsted's inspection framework for inspecting local authority arrangements for supporting schools improvement. This is not a universal framework which means that local authorities are inspected where the inspections of schools or other providers raises concerns about the effectiveness of a local authority's functions to support school improvement, or where Ofsted becomes aware of other concerns. There are four key reporting areas for this inspection framework:
  - Corporate leadership and strategic planning;
  - Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support;
  - Support and challenge for leadership and management (including governance)
  - Use of resources
4. The Schools causing concern guidance was revised in January 2015 and provides specific information about the actions that the local authority should

take in relation to maintained schools which are underperforming and likely to fail an inspection. This guidance also provides information about the expectations of local authorities where there are concerns about governance, academies and independent schools. In addition, the guidance usefully provides a summary of the role of local authorities as champions of excellence with the expectation that they:

- (i) Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data to identify those schools that require improvement and intervention.
  - (ii) Take swift and effective action when failure occurs in a maintained school, using Warning Notices and IEBS (Interim Executive Boards) whenever to get leadership and standards back up to at least good.
  - (iii) Intervene early where performance of a maintained school is declining, ensuring that schools secure the support needed to improve to at least 'good'.
  - (iv) Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement and support to other schools.
  - (v) Build strong working relationships with education leaders in their area and encourage high calibre school leaders to support and challenge others.
  - (vi) Delegate funding to the frontline, so that as much as possible reaches pupils.
  - (vii) Enable maintained schools to purchase from a diverse market of excellent providers.
  - (viii) Signpost where schools can access appropriate support.
  - (ix) Secure strong leadership and governance for maintained schools that are not providing a good enough education, by identifying and supporting successful sponsors.
  - (x) Seek to work constructively with academies and alert the Department for Education when they have concerns about standards or leadership in an academy.
5. At its meeting on 9 April 2013, the Cabinet agreed to the development of a new policy through a partnership approach with maintained schools and academies. The Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership (LEEP). At a further meeting on 9 July 2013 the Cabinet approved the continued development and implementation of LEEP including that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would provide assurance. Since that time LEEP has evolved to become a key element of the local authority's wider arrangements for supporting school improvement which are outlined in this paper.

## **Leicestershire's context and current approach**

### Corporate Leadership and strategic planning

6. The approach that Leicestershire has taken to ensure high quality education for all children and young people reflects the strategic intent of the Council to become a commissioning organisation and to increase the capacity of communities.
7. Leicestershire schools have embraced the opportunity to develop a strong and autonomous self-improving system. There has been a significant shift towards school networks emerging as strong and effective drivers of school improvement. The networks that have emerged are diverse. In most cases these are a combination of local authority maintained schools, faith schools and academies. There are six Teaching School Alliances of which 67% of all schools are members. A number of schools have joined multi-academy trusts and there are also a number of collaboratives, some of whom have created companies through which they operate. In addition, the Leicestershire Heads groups (Leicestershire Primary Heads - LPH, Leicestershire Secondary Heads - LSH, and Leicestershire Special School Heads - LSSH) continue to strengthen their role.
8. Within these networks Leicestershire has a number of National and Local Leaders in Education, National Leaders of Governance and Specialist Leaders in Education. Appendix B provides a useful glossary of the different roles and the way that they are currently operating in Leicestershire.
9. In turn, the local authority role has become one of performance monitoring, quality assurance, commissioning and enabling. These functions are discharged through LEEP, working on whole system initiatives, as well as through a co-ordinated and proportionate, local authority led approach where individual schools are not yet judged to be providing a good education. The principles that underpin the current arrangements have been shared and agreed with school leaders and other partners. As schools improve towards becoming outstanding the direct work with the local authority reduces and it is expected that schools will work in a collaborative way to secure ongoing improvement.
10. Governance and performance reporting is carried out through the LEEP strategic group which is comprised of representatives from the Local Authority, the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses, head teacher associations, Teaching School Alliances and Governor Development Service. The Director and Lead Member for Children and Family Services are members of this group. Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee also receives quarterly performance reports which provide information about pupil achievement and school inspection outcomes.

### Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support

11. Since April 2013, the responsibility for ensuring that schools are performing well and that the local authority is meeting its statutory responsibilities with regard to

school improvement and inspection rests in the Education Quality team working closely with school leaders and other partners. This team currently has three key posts that support this work: Service Manager 5-11; Service Manager 11-16; Service Manager 16-19 all of whom are managed by the Head of Strategy for Education Quality. This team works very closely with Human Resources advisers, the Governor Development Service, and the business partners for finance and performance data as well as teams within the Children and Family Services department. Most significantly, the team works with leaders in schools, through the LEEP and with the Teaching School Alliance leads to ensure that all schools have access to effective improvement partnerships which are focused on the key strategic priorities for Leicestershire.

12. The quality assurance role focuses on the performance of schools using a range of evidence to determine the level of support and challenge that may be needed to ensure that all schools are at least good. The information gathered from a range of sources focuses on specific criteria which have been shared with schools:
  - Pupil achievement;
  - Inspection outcomes;
  - Changes in leadership;
  - Complaints to the local authority or Ofsted;
  - Concerns raised through finance, HR, Governor Development Services or safeguarding;
  - Concerns shared by school leaders.
  
13. The operating model for these arrangements has three key components: collaborative support for schools; targeted local authority support and monitoring; intensive support for schools causing concern and requiring intervention. This structure reflects the current target operating model for the Council and is outlined in Appendix C. The diagram also indicates the approach to working constructively with academies.

#### Schools causing concern – intensive support

14. Where a school is causing concern because it has been judged to be providing an inadequate education to its pupils or is at risk of doing so, the local authority will consider using its powers of intervention. If a local authority school fails an inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) will direct it towards sponsorship. The local authority is required to write a statement of action and to ensure that there is an intensive support package in place to address immediately the areas of identified weakness. At subsequent monitoring visits Ofsted will comment on the quality and effectiveness of the local authority arrangements. In all cases inspectors have commented favourably on the local authority's role and in particular, its close partnership with the teaching school alliance that is supporting the school.

### Local authority supported schools – targeted support

15. Through the Education Quality team, the local authority has commissioned Education Quality Advisers (EQA) to carry out monitoring visits to local authority maintained schools that require improvement or where standards have declined. The EQA has ensured that the school is taking appropriate action to raise standards and be judged at least good at the next inspection. The EQA brokers or signposts support from a Teaching School Alliance or NLE/LLE where necessary and will report to the local authority about how the school is progressing. The EQA will also speak to the lead inspector during an inspection to give the local authority perspective about how well the school is performing. Typically the EQA will ensure that governors are informed about the local authority's involvement and will often work with governors to carry out shared monitoring sessions, in order to equip them to carry out their statutory role in evaluating the school's effectiveness. Another important element is monthly meetings which the Education Quality team has with Teaching School Alliance leads. At these meetings, information is shared to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach and no duplication. Fundamental to this approach is a presumption of success and the intention that schools will raise standards and be judged good or outstanding.

### Collaborative support for all schools – system driven improvement

16. Where schools are improving and are judged to be good or outstanding it is acknowledged that they have the capacity to continue to improve and raise standards with minimal input from the local authority. As LEEP has developed it is in this area of the operating model that it has had most success. The ability of the local authority to analyse and evaluate whole system performance data and to gather a range of intelligence in order to identify and support strategic priorities has helped school leaders to see the value of LEEP. It has been important, however, to maintain a climate where LEEP can enhance the already emerging arrangements, rather than stifle school-led innovation. There have been a number of successes which are directly attributable to LEEP. Most notable is the implementation of induction programmes for new head teachers and aspiring leaders which are run by LPH and LSH which are intended to complement any other programmes that new head teachers may have access to.
17. Teaching School Alliances also have an important role to play. For example, two alliances have recently been successful in securing the lead for a mathematics hub across East Midlands South and another two have secured funding to run Early Years hubs. Another alliance is taking the lead on establishing a pupil premium network. All of these are priorities for Leicestershire, identified through LEEP. Appendix D provides a summary of the current collaborative projects that are in progress and supported by LEEP.

### Support and challenge for leadership and management (including governance)

18. Included in the proportionate approach outlined above is a focus on developing effective leadership. A priority of LEEP is to encourage future leaders into

headship and to provide opportunities for new head teachers to be supported by an experienced colleague and become familiar with systems and processes in Leicestershire. Where schools are targeted for support the head teacher and senior leaders will work alongside a National or Local Leader in Education and their senior leadership team, focusing on agreed priorities and working to an action plan. Where schools are causing concern and requiring intensive support a National Leader in Education will provide more structured and regular support as a consultant head teacher. Occasionally an experienced head teacher will take on an interim role if the substantive post holder is absent for any reason.

19. Governors are supported through the Governor Development Service which works closely with the Education Quality team and Human Resources advisers to provide a co-ordinated support package to governing bodies. The service is delivered in two ways: through the local authority's statutory obligation, and through its traded service. The statutory obligation to provide information and training to governors, free of charge, if necessary, is supported by a successful traded offer. This offer is available to all maintained schools and academies and is well received with high take up across the county. Appendix E provides a more detailed report about the work and impact of Governor Development Services.

### **Resource Implications**

20. Leicestershire has, for some time, ensured that as much funding is delegated to the frontline and into schools as possible. Schools are fully aware that the responsibility and funding for school improvement now sits in their budgets. The streamlined Education Quality team monitors the performance of all schools to determine the proportionate approach as described.
21. The local authority retains a budget of £248, 000 from the Dedicated Schools Grant for schools causing concern. This is used where additional support needs to be commissioned from Teaching School Alliances or National Leaders in Education. The impact of this is closely monitored through action plans and the comments from inspection reports. In addition Education Quality Advisers are commissioned to monitor how well schools are using their resources and where necessary, if there are concerns about a school's finances, the local authority will issue a notice of concern so that the school's budget can be more closely monitored.
22. The LEEP budget is used primarily to support system wide collaboration and sustainable improvement. It also funds the secondments for the LEEP co-ordinator post. This is a critical post to support the next stage of evolution for the self-improving system.

### **Evaluating the effectiveness of this approach**

23. Since April 2013 there has been an increase in the number of schools judged to be good or outstanding. Where schools judged to require improvement have been inspected, the vast majority are now judged to be good. For all maintained schools inspectors' comments about the quality of support are favourable and

particularly positive where the local authority has worked in a targeted way alongside system leaders.

24. Pupil achievement has improved in 2014 in all key stages and is either broadly in line or above national outcomes as reported in previous reports. A focus is still to improve attainment and progress in all key stages and to narrow the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals, children in care and their peers. This will be an overarching priority for all interactions with schools.
25. Feedback from LEEP collaborative projects is positive. Two head teachers have now been appointed to monitor and support school to school collaboration. This has increased the visibility of LEEP within the system and has provided additional capacity for monitoring and supporting schools' networking arrangements.
26. Senior leaders from the education, learning and skills team meet each term with the senior HMI for this region and attend regular Keeping in Touch meetings with the officers from the Department for Education. Feedback at these meetings has been positive and has confirmed that there are no concerns about the approach that Leicestershire has taken and the impact that this is having on outcomes for children and young people. We are due to present our model and practice to a regional conference later this year.
27. The local authority contributed to a second piece of research about the evolving role of the local authority which was published in summer 2014. LEEP was used as a case study in this report along with secondary behaviour partnerships. We have also contributed to a recent Local Government Association publication about the approaches that different local authorities are taking in discharging their statutory roles.

### **Next steps**

28. In order to ensure that Leicestershire continues to increase the proportion of good and outstanding schools and to improve achievement, including narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, we intend strengthen the model that has emerged over the past two years. The key activities planned for the next phase of implementation are:
  - A 'temperature check' for LEEP to gather a wider range of views and support future planning and direction;
  - Implement a commissioning framework for the deployment of Education Quality Advisers and school to school support;
  - Agree a reviewed policy to support the local authority's arrangements for school improvement. This will include the approach that Leicestershire will take to address schools causing concern and the way in which the local authority works constructively with academies;

- Transfer of Governor Development Service into Children and Family Services as part of the Education Quality team;
- Continue to build strong relationships with key partners within the school system, the dioceses, the Regional School Commissioner and the Regional Director for Ofsted so that information is appropriately shared to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people.

## **Conclusion**

29. As stated earlier in the paper, there has been a significant shift in developing a system driven approach to school improvement and this is emerging as a result of the commitment and collective will of key partners. We are confident that this reflects the current expectations of local authorities in its champion role and meets the expectations and criteria within the framework for inspection.
30. There is no doubt that pupil achievement needs to improve in all phases if we are to achieve the vision that Leicestershire is the best place for children and their families to live and this will underpin the priorities that drive the focus of the Education, Learning and Skills teams through LEEP, the emerging quality assurance role and the continued focus on ensuring that children have fair access to sufficient high quality places across the education system.

## **Background Papers**

Schools Causing Concern guidance – January 2015

Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement

Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership – strategy document

## **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

None.

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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Academies/age range change update

Appendix B: Glossary of terms

Appendix C: LA approach to school improvement triangle

Appendix D: LEEP report

Appendix E Governor Development Service report

## **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

The statutory duty to ensure that all children achieve their potential underpins the strategic planning and implementation of Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership, the approach to supporting school improvement and the school place planning strategy, In the Right Place.