

**A report on the local authority's leadership of school improvement support**  
(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

Contact for further information: Bob Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services, Directorate for Children and Young People, 01772 531652  
Bob.stott@lancashire.gov.uk

**Executive Summary**

The report outlines the draft strategy for school Improvement in Lancashire and the main features of the evaluation model which is being used to review the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements in Lancashire. Key findings from the initial review of support for school improvement including strengths and priorities for development are highlighted.

**Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the report on the local authority's leadership of school improvement support.

**Background**

In June 2013 OfSTED published a Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement to evaluate how well local authorities carry out their statutory duties in relation to promoting high standards in schools so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential. Whilst OfSTED's inspection programme will focus on local authorities where there are specific areas of concern, the framework and the accompanying handbook provide a useful tool to support the self evaluation of school improvement arrangements in local authorities.

The local authority has for many years worked in partnership with schools to monitor their performance and provide support and challenge to promote improvement. Where necessary the local authority has also developed clear strategies to intervene in schools in difficulty. The Strategy for School Improvement in Lancashire is currently being revised and the draft Strategy document is attached at Appendix 'A'. In order to help evaluate the support for school improvement in Lancashire a self evaluation tool (see Appendix 'B') has also been developed based upon the OfSTED Framework and Handbook for the inspection of local authorities. This has been used

to carry out an initial review of the current support in Lancashire and will be modified in the light of additional information and feedback from stakeholders.

The report outlines out the draft Strategy for School Improvement and highlights key findings from the initial review of support for school improvement including strengths and areas for development. It is recognised that schools across Lancashire can and do access support from a wide variety of providers in addition to services provided by the local authority. The report focuses on the dedicated school improvement support services offered by Lancashire and does not cover other areas of support such as Human Resources, Finance and Governor Services in any detail.

### **Strategy for school improvement (see Appendix 'A')**

Lancashire County Council is committed to ensuring that all children receive an excellent education in schools at the forefront of outstanding practice. To achieve this, the strategy aims to ensure that there is:

- Supported self-evaluation for schools so that school improvement is sustainable.
- Partnership working with all key stakeholders including schools, professional associations, diocesan and church authorities.
- Leadership and management development to ensure that there are future leaders and governors to sustain the high quality of provision in Lancashire's schools
- The promotion and development of school to school support and the sharing of best practice
- High quality support and advice from school advisers who are traded on a full cost recovery basis.
- Monitoring and intervention in schools in difficulty.

### **The evaluation of the local authority's school improvement support arrangements**

The key evidence for the effective leadership of school improvement lies in its impact on pupil achievement and the quality of education provided in Lancashire's schools. There is an improving picture of attainment in all Key Stages in Lancashire with overall results being above the national average at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2013, and consistently above average at the end of the primary school and secondary phase. There has also been a rapidly increasing proportion of good or better schools in Lancashire over the past year with the proportion of good primary schools increasing from 67% to 81% and the proportion of good secondary schools increasing from 63% to 74%. These figures are in line with or better than the national average and compare favourably with our statistical neighbours. There is also evidence that a high proportion of schools engage with the local authority on school improvement issues as around 99% of primary schools, 80% of secondary schools, 75% of special schools and all nursery schools buy into the school improvement support through the School Service Guarantee.

The evaluation tool (Appendix 'B') focuses on three areas of the local authority's work on school improvement:

- The leadership of school improvement
- The management of challenge and support
- The capacity to deliver the required support.

## **Key findings from the initial review of the arrangements for school improvement using the evaluation tool**

### **Leadership of school improvement support**

- There is a well established strategy for school improvement which is being shared with stakeholders to gather their views.
- There are effective governance structures to ensure accountability
- The vision for school improvement reflects the developments in school improvement nationally such as the increased focus on school to school support

### **The management of challenge and support**

- LA improvement plans are set appropriately in the context of national and local priorities
- Improvement plans set appropriately challenging targets for all pupils – including those identified as vulnerable (Free School Meals, Children Looked After, geographical districts)
- Procedures to monitor, identify and challenge schools and to tackle under performance through intervention are clear and well understood
- There is a clearly defined and effective cycle of monitoring and evaluation that is used to inform future planning and which is focused on standards and the quality of education
- A range of appropriate and effective strategies to tackle all schools causing concern is used, including school to school support

### **The capacity to deliver the required support**

- LA officers have the appropriate skills and expertise to meet schools' needs
- The LA provides effective expert advice and differentiated training for headteachers, governors and middle managers
- The LA has a comprehensive knowledge of best practice within and beyond the LA which is drawn from a wide range of sources.

### **Key priorities for action in supporting school improvement**

- Raising the achievement of all pupils.
- Closing the gap between the achievement of vulnerable groups and their peers including pupils eligible for free school meals, Children Looked After , pupils with special educational needs and their peers.
- Closing the achievement gap between different districts within the County.
- Increasing the proportion of schools that are judged to be good or better through OfSTED inspections.
- Reducing the proportion of schools which are judged inadequate
- Supporting and strengthening governance in schools.

**Consultations**

N/A

**Implications:**

N/A

**Risk management**

There are no implications for risk management arising from this report.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985****List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement	May 2013	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People 01772 531663
Handbook for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement	May 2013	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People 01772 531663
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		