

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Meeting to be held on 16 April 2013

Electoral Division affected: All

Impact of Partnership Working on School Improvement

(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

This report sets out the procedures for identifying schools in difficulty and assessing the level of risk they face in improving the quality of provision and standards of achievement. It also highlights the impact of the partnership working between the local authority, schools and diocesan and church authorities in improving the performance of low attaining schools and helping schools to sustain their improvement.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement is asked to note and comment on the report as appropriate.

Background and Advice

The past two years has seen a change in the statutory role of the local authority in supporting school improvement. In the light of these changes the relationship between schools and the local authority is increasingly important and Lancashire has developed a very strong partnership with schools over the past decade. The great majority of schools buy into School Improvement Services and the Schools Forum provides additional support to schools in difficulty where appropriate.

In order to identify schools which are at risk of low attainment an Early Warning system has been established. The advisory service uses both data such as examination performance, attendance information and the rate of exclusions as well as local intelligence that is gained from the work of school advisers to identify and provide early support for schools. The Early Warning Groups for both primary and secondary schools (EWG) meet each half term to review the list of schools which are causing concern and similar reviews are held with representatives of Church and Diocesan Authorities. This review process looks at the progress of schools in difficulty and considers:

- The addition of schools to the list
- The removal of schools from the list
- The impact of support and challenge on school performance
- The introduction of new improvement strategies

In assessing the level of risk of schools being unable to make the necessary improvements themselves and sustain them over time, the following key criteria are used:

- Has the school been below Floor Standard over time?
- How well do leaders drive improvement?
- What is the profile of teaching in the school? (good, outstanding, satisfactory, inadequate)
- Are standards improving?
- Does the school ethos impact positively on pupil outcomes?
- Is the leadership and management of the school able to sustain improvement without LA intervention?

Following the review process a report is presented to the School Improvement Challenge Board which is chaired by the Director of Universal and Early Support Services and decisions about the level of support, challenge and intervention are made by the Board. A flowchart is contained at Appendix A that provides further information on how this process works.

Over the past 3 years this process of identifying schools in difficulty and providing support, challenge and intervention in partnership with schools and partners, including Church and Diocesan Authorities, has been highly effective in raising attainment in the lowest attaining primary and secondary schools. During this period a number of proven strategies to improve the quality of education have been used and these are set out in Appendix B. Through this partnership with schools the proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics has risen by over 25% in the lowest attaining primary schools, a much faster rate than the national average. At the same time the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics has increased by 15% in the lowest attaining secondary schools, again a much faster rate of improvement than in all schools nationally.

Impact on the quality of provision in the lower attaining primary schools

Over the past 3 years the support for the lowest attaining primary schools has had a positive impact on the quality of education and the standards achieved. Of the 74 primary schools which were below the Floor Standard in 2009, 68 schools reached or exceeded the floor standard of 60% of pupils gaining level 4 or above in English and mathematics in 2012. Around half of this group of schools were above the floor standard in all 3 years and almost three quarters were above the floor standard in two of the 3 years. Only two of the schools did not go above the floor standard in this period and one of these had fewer than 10 pupils in Year 6. It is also worth noting that just under 60% of the schools were judged to be good in their most recent inspection and only three schools were judged to be inadequate.

Of another group of schools which had been identified as consistently low attaining in 3 or more years leading up to 2010, the strategy of support and challenge has also proved effective in raising standards and improving the quality of provision. As a result there is currently no school in Lancashire which has been below the Floor

Standards for more than the last 3 years and only 1 school which has more than 10 pupils in Year 6 has been below for each of the last 3 years.

Of those schools which had been below the floor standards before 2010, currently half are considered to be at a low level of concern, around 38% are considered to be a medium level of concern with 12% requiring intensive support and challenge.

Impact on the quality of provision in the lower attaining secondary schools

Over the past 3 years the support for the lowest attaining secondary schools has had a positive impact on the quality of education. Of the 19 secondary schools which were below the Floor standard in 2009, 15 schools reached or exceeded the floor standard of 40% of pupils gaining 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2012. Of these schools almost half were above the floor standard in all 3 years and around three quarters were above the floor standard in two of the 3 years. Two schools did not go above the floor standard in this 3 year period. Over one third of the schools were judged to be good or better in their most recent inspection and one school has recently been judged to be inadequate. The current risk assessments indicate that around one third of schools are considered to be at a low level of concern, just over half judged to be at a medium level of concern with around 10% receiving intensive support.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

No significant risks have been identified in relation to the proposals contained within this report

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Primary School performance tables 2009/2011	2009-2012	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People (01772) 531663
Secondary School Performance tables 2009/2011	2009-2012	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People (01772) 531663

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A