

Report to the Education and Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 November 2015

Education and Schools Strategy and Improvement Plan – Position Paper
October 2015

Purpose of the Report

To share progress on the Strategy and Improvement Plan with Members.

Recommendation

That Members consider progress and identify any specific areas of improvement work for further Scrutiny.

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Background

The Education and Schools Strategy and Improvement Plan was signed off by the Education Quartet on 1 December 2014 and a programme of work was launched at that point, with the approved document as its baseline.

The strategy was based on the following 3 strands of work:

Getting the Basics Right: ensuring that robust systems to underpin effective safeguarding and governance of schools are in place.

Positioning the Council: focussing the work of the council on delivering its core statutory education duties. This includes strengthening oversight and strategic leadership of schools and the education service.

Improvement through Partnership: promoting innovation, improvement, attainment and overall resilience through new models of collaboration and system leadership with all partners working with children and young people.

This was to be delivered via 11 workstreams:

1. Safeguarding in Schools.
2. Strengthening School Governance.
3. Our Leadership in Education.
4. Improving our Schools.
5. Local Leadership and Accountability.
6. Alternative Delivery Models.
7. Special Education Needs and Disabilities.
8. Educational Infrastructure.
9. Early Years Provision.
10. Recruitment & Retention.
11. Communications.

The programme has since been expanded (in July 2015) to cover workstream 12: Equality and Community Cohesion.

Appendix 1 sets out the themes with their strategic aims and components.

Progress

The programme has made strong progress on the delivery of the original 134 actions (and the new 18 actions introduced for workstream 12). Progress is summarised in the outcome report (Appendix 2).

The following priorities have guided this work:

- Strengthening safeguarding in schools.
- Improving governance in schools.
- Developing a new way of working so that all data available on schools is analysed and in the round rather than silos via the new Education Data Dashboard (EDD).
- Commissioning the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) to deliver the Council's duties under the Schools Causing Concern guidance and broader school improvement work.
- The delivery of a Curriculum Entitlement Statement (including the underpinning legal framework and guidance) for Birmingham schools in September 2015 to ensure that school leaders and governors are fully supported in dealing with any pressures to narrow the curriculum.

The **Council's BEP contract** went live from 1 September 2015. The Council is offering full support to BEP over this term to ensure it gets off to a strong start. The Intelligent Client Function (ICF) is currently under development via an externally-commissioned education adviser. Full contract management of the BEP services via the ICF will commence from January 2016.

The **Education Data Dashboard (EDD)** has been used within the Council since April 2015 (for the cross-cutting examination of schools where there is a range of risks and potential vulnerability). A version of EDD went live at the beginning of September to support all service areas including BEP delivery. The EDD was shared with schools in Birmingham at a major event at the National Motorcycle museum on 18 June 2015 and since September 2015 we have been sharing with each school the Council data held within EDD for them.

The Curriculum statement was sent out to schools at the start of the new term in September 2015 with an introduction from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

The Council has improved communications with schools and launched a new School Noticeboard published every week during term time. The first edition included a document summarising the Council's Core Education Offer to schools. The Council's traded services to schools offer will follow shortly. All new headteachers in the city are now contacted and visited by a senior officer within the first months of the school year. All new heads, including acting heads, are invited to the successful Headteacher Induction programme.

Effective working relations with DfE, West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and OfSTED have been improved by the establishment of the **Education Improvement Group (EIG)** which meets monthly in Birmingham. Senior representatives from all agencies meet to ensure our partners are fully

briefed on progress delivering the Improvement Plan and to assess progress with the 21 schools inspected during the Trojan Horse round in 2014. Additionally, where there are shared concerns and risks in other schools/academies judged to require improvement or special measures, risks and actions are considered and planned together. The Chief Executive of BEP now attends these meetings. Additionally, where there are concerns regarding individual governors or members of staff in schools, there is regular contact between the Council and the DfE Due Diligence and Counter Extremism Group (DDCEG) to ensure a joined up approach to managing risk.

Work to improve the functioning of the **Schools Forum** is also underway. There is a three point action plan that addresses:

- the introduction of a strategic overview of how schools in Birmingham are performing.
- improving and quality assuring finance papers with the support of EFA.
- improving relationships between members of the Schools Forum and officers.

Work continues to establish full clarity on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant and Education Services Grant.

Outputs and Outcomes

The programme has had a strong focus on output delivery in year one. By the end of September the programme was reporting 82% completed actions overall, with strong progress maintained for the priority areas of safeguarding (98%) and governance (97%). For year two, from January 2016, the emphasis moves towards embedding the programme, ensuring sustainability and assessing impact and securing outcomes.

The Council has commissioned DfE advisers to undertake an early review of the impact of the work to improve safeguarding and governance. Their recommendations have been incorporated into the programme to improve the delivery of these themes. They continue to offer support to the workstream leads for safeguarding and governance. It is recognised that the former area is over-dependent on a small number of posts to sustain safeguarding and resilience and this is being addressed by looking at extra resources in these areas.

A major LGA Peer review of the programme took place 16-20 November 2015 to test the progress and impact of the programme via extensive fieldwork with headteachers, chairs of governors, school business managers and a range of external partners

Additionally, the Council's Audit team has begun a schedule of review work with schools to test good practice relating to safeguarding, governance and finance, with termly reports due as the reviews take place. This work started in September 2015, with a plan to have visited all Council maintained schools within 3 years.

It is anticipated that there will be a Local Authority School Improvement inspection, based on the LASI framework, by summer term 2016 to test progress of the newly commissioned contract with BEP.

A survey of schools' views of the Council's education services was introduced in autumn term 2014. For the first time in summer term 2015, there are significant improvements in the percentage of schools which view leadership of education and the delivery of school improvement via BEP as effective or highly effective.

Planning for the future

Long term leadership of the education service will be secured by the appointment of a permanent Executive Director of Education. The interim Executive Director of Education will continue for the full school year 2015/16 to ensure there is a strong handover and continuity of approach.

Now that the Improvement Plan actions are largely in place and, overall, Birmingham's maintained schools and academies are safer places, we are focussed on identifying risks to children in other education settings such as independent schools. On 21 September, we met with DfE, RSC and OfSTED to discuss and form an action plan regarding risks in the city's independent schools. All independent schools in the city are being invited to a meeting with the Education Commissioner, Interim Executive Director of Education and colleagues from safeguarding and community cohesion. OfSTED inspections have revealed further risks this term. We are planning a similar meeting with the leaders of supplementary schools.

Risks

Risks and how they are mitigated are reviewed regularly. The most significant risks are set out below.

RISK	MITIGATION
Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) is a new and unproven provider of services. It is discovering greater numbers of vulnerable schools as District Leads learn about the schools in their areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council has put support in place for 4 months (from September 2015 to December 2015), including a help and support desk within the Council.• The ICF (and contract management) will be in place by January 2016.• We have moved from weekly mobilisation meetings to holding fortnightly stabilisation meetings and reviews with BEP (no major issues have been reported).• The Council and the Education Commissioner will review the level of resources available to BEP in the light of its operation this term to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the education system to ensure the intended outcomes of continuous school improvement are achieved.

<p>The Birmingham City Council (BCC) Intelligent Client Function (ICF) will not be in place until January 2016 for managing the BEP services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support has been commissioned to shape the ICF function and the options from this are being evaluated.
<p>The vision and future operating model (FOM) for education is still being developed and is needed to fully embed the changes from the programme and plan the next phase(s) of changes (for 2016/17).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has established improved communications around clarity on the Core Offer and Traded Services (the traded offer is work in progress). • An education vision/FOM workshop took place on 2 October 2015 (which the Education Commissioner attended during the morning session). A plan is being produced for producing the vision and operational framework and this will form the new single plan for 2016/17. • Early work has been undertaken on visioning work to establish a FOM. In line with the statutory guidance on the role of the Director of Children's Services it will be important that the FOM exploits the obvious synergies of being located in a Directorate for People whilst having, nevertheless, a strong identity and presence in its own right.
<p>The programme still has to fully test its outcomes (through delivery of the actions).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong push to complete all actions in the Strategy and Plan. • Develop a bank (i.e. a map) of clear outcomes. • We have learnt lessons from the early work (in March 2015) on testing outcomes for safeguarding and governance. • The planned LGA Peer Review (November 2015) and BCC Audit work (from September 2015) to test outcomes for the programme.
<p>The dependency on improvements in children's safeguarding and social care is critical, particularly with respect to children missing from education and the responsiveness to schools of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) when concerns about a child are raised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Safeguarding Children Board's Education Sub-Group is being refreshed under the overall direction of the Interim Executive Director of Education. • A stronger education presence will be established in the MASH via the deployment of senior staff whose experience and skills are in the education/schools field.

In year one the strategy and plan has made strong progress completing deliverables and making changes during 2015. There is a risk that as the Council moves onto the new single plan for 2016/17, changes made are not properly embedded and sustainable. As a result the situation may regress and similar problems (which initiated the original plan) could start to arise again (eg. schools become isolated and vulnerable).

- The appointment process has started to recruit a permanent Executive Director of Education to (ideally) start post circa April 2016, with a handover period from the interim (Colin Diamond).
- The new single plan will encompass actions to:
 - complete the outstanding (not completed) actions from the original plan.
 - address any reported deficiencies in outcomes from the Council Audit and LGA peer review work.
- There are actions in place to ensure:
 - future funding is in place to ensure BAU work is properly funded and prioritised.
 - resources (people) are in place to take on the ongoing work from the plan (eg. development and support of EDD).