

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 27 February 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Learning and Achievement Strategy

**WARDS:** All wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Executive Board of the newly developed Learning and Achievement Strategy
- 1.2 To seek Executive Board's approval of the Learning and Achievement Strategy
- 1.3 To outline what actions are being taken to ensure the school Improvement Service is prepared in the event of an Ofsted inspection.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board endorses and approves the proposed implementation of the Learning and Achievement Strategy.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The framework for the inspection of Local Authority arrangements for supporting School Improvement was published in May 2013.
- 3.2 Sir Michael Wilshaw in his 'Back to school' speech 9 September 2013, said *"The best local authorities know the future lies with outstanding heads like you, and are already using you to effect change in their area. The worst local authorities haven't yet woken up and adapted to the new educational landscape. They have failed to appreciate that increasingly autonomous Headteachers, working in local partnership are driving improvement. They don't engineer and facilitate these partnerships and are not pro-active in using their existing powers to challenge schools to do better"*.
- 3.3 Since the publication of the above framework, several local authority school improvement services have been inspected.
- 3.4 The inspection reports identify strengths particularly where local authorities have intervened successfully in schools at risk of being

judged inadequate by Ofsted.

- 3.5 The key themes identified in areas for development in most inspection reports has been the lack of a well understood, strategic approach to building a sustainable model for school improvement and within it a coherent approach for school to school support.
- 3.6 Whilst most schools in Halton where the local authority have intervened successfully understand our approach to school and setting support and intervention, schools that have never been in adverse Ofsted categories will have very limited working knowledge of our support and intervention policy.
- 3.7 Halton has used good and outstanding schools to support under-performing schools effectively through the use of National Leaders in Education, Local Leaders in Education and Headteachers of good and outstanding schools. Some of the processes in place are based on relationships and local intelligence. This now needs to be formalised
- 3.8 Since the introduction of Teaching Schools and the reduction of resources in local authorities for school improvement, the market place for school improvement services has grown and become more diverse over the last two to three years.
- 3.9 The capacity for local authorities to provide school improvement services they used to provide before the coalition government has been significantly reduced.
- 3.10 The strategy does not apply to Academies or free Schools, however should concerns arise about these schools consideration will be given about notifying the Regulator, Ofsted.

#### **4.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CAPACITY**

- 4.1 Teaching Schools were introduced by the current government in 2011. Their remit is to provide school improvement services within and outside their local authority area. In Halton, the first teaching school (The Heath) has under its wing mostly good and outstanding schools within its Teaching School Alliance. Another Teaching School (Wade Deacon) should be approved soon. In both Teaching Schools the local authority is a named strategic partner.
- 4.2 Schools within the Teaching School Alliance are responsible for offering support to other schools within the Teaching School Alliance.
- 4.3 Teaching Schools have a key role to play in school improvement. Their Role is to co-ordinate expertise from the Teaching School Alliance by using the best leaders and teachers to: (The big six)

1. play a greater role in training new entrants to the profession
  2. lead peer to peer professional leadership development
  3. identify and develop leadership potential
  4. provide support to other schools
  5. designate and broker specialist leaders in education (SLE's)
  6. research and development
- 4.4 The local authority, in order to increase its capacity for school improvement, will work with Teaching Schools at a strategic level to secure and sustain school capacity across the local area.
- 4.5 The local authority will work with Teaching Schools in the following areas:
- developing school leadership and succession planning
  - school to school support
  - professional development for teachers and leaders
- 4.6 Such an approach will address some of the criticism levelled at school improvement services that were inspected recently. Local Authorities' School Improvement Services are often criticised for not having a coherent strategy for school to school support.

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 The attached Learning and Achievement Strategy, once approved by Executive Board, will be sent to all schools. The Strategy will be available through Perspective Lite towards the end of the Spring Term 2014.
- 5.2 Following the launch period with schools, a survey with the key questions that inspectors would ask Headteachers and Governors if they were inspecting school improvement service will be sent to all schools again through Perspective Lite. This will be done in the spring term 2014.
- 5.3 The outcomes of the survey will be used to inform our school improvement service action plan.
- 5.4 In addition, members of Children and Enterprise Senior Leadership Team (SMT) will be visiting schools in the summer term 2014. SMT will use the survey questions to prompt discussions with Headteachers and Governors. Any post survey SMT visits to schools could focus on the gaps identified in the survey.
- 5.5 The outcomes of the survey will be analysed at the end of the spring Term 2014.
- 5.6 An action plan based on the survey outcomes and our internal self-evaluation process will be used to inform future practice.

5.7 The plan is to conduct a similar survey after 12 months.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

6.1 The Council's School Improvement Services have been significantly reduced over recent years with the vast majority of funding now directly allocated to schools. The small remaining Team will focus on the statutory responsibilities of the Council, detailed within the strategy. Whilst the Council will deliver the strategy on a cost neutral basis, it will have to rigorously prioritise service according to available resources as we go forward.

## **7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Learning and Achievement Strategy allows the local authority to support all of its schools. Previously, because of reduced resources support was only targeted at schools in adverse Ofsted categories and schools causing concern to local authority. Collaboration with Teaching Schools will increase the local authority's capacity and enable all schools to be supported and monitored. More importantly, this policy is underpinned by school to school support which will lead to sustainable improvements across the whole school system.

## **8.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications as most of the financial resources to support this strategy and aspects of school improvement have been allocated to Teaching Schools.

## **9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **9.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The above proposals will ensure that children and young people in Halton will have access to a good or better school in the local area.

### **9.2 Employment, Learning and Skills**

Implementing the Learning and Achievement Strategy will ensure that all young people have the skills to stay on in education, employment and training. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is likely to reduce over time. Young people will be well equipped for the world of work if they attend good or better schools in Halton.

### **9.3 A Healthy Halton**

Children and Young people awareness and knowledge of healthy life styles is likely to increase through the provision of good education in Halton schools. The strategy will contribute to reducing health inequalities across the Borough.

#### 9.4 **A Safer Halton**

N/A

#### 9.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

### 10.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

10.1 Failure to engage with schools and partners within the context defined by the Learning and Achievement Strategy could have an adverse impact on underperforming schools and the attainment and progress of their pupils.

10.2 Failure to prepare and/or use the framework for inspecting local authority School improvement services as a self-evaluation tool could lead to a poor rating of LA school improvement services.

### 11.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

11.1 Implementation of the Learning and Achievement Strategy will seek to ensure that all children have equality of access to a good or better school.

11.2 All children and young people will have opportunities to succeed and access higher and further education.

11.3 This strategy will contribute towards increasing the number of young people in education and training.

### 12.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

Since the grant funding for school improvement advisers and consultants under the National Strategies was withdrawn at the end of the 2010/11 financial year, the core school improvement team was significantly reduced. Their capacity to offer a wide range of school improvement services to all schools was significantly reduced.

Working in partnership with our Teaching Schools will increase Halton's school improvement capacity and ensure a sustainable model for the future. School to school support underpins the Learning and Achievement Strategy.

*"Local authorities still have a critical role to play in school-led improvement system, in particular through creating an 'enabling environment' within which collaboration can flourish. We also support the new system which is emerging with recognition that the expertise lies within schools but with local authorities as part of the picture."*

### **13.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The alternative is not to offer any school improvement services to our schools; schools will have to buy these services on the open market. This will lead to a lack of coordination and loss of intelligence on our schools. Local priorities such as *Closing the Attainment Gap* will be left to individual schools to tackle in isolation.

This would leave the local authority and its schools in a very vulnerable position, given that school improvement services can now be inspected and the role of the local authority in enabling school to school support will be scrutinised.

### **14.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

The implementation date of the Learning and Achievement Strategy is April 2014.

### **15.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
The Importance of teaching	Department for Education	Steve Nyakatawa
The Education Act 2011(amended the 2006)	Department for Education	Steve Nyakatawa
Halton's Approach to School and Setting Support and Intervention	Rutland House Runcorn	Gill Bennett
The SEND Green Paper 2011	Department for Education	Anita Parkinson
The Children and Families Bill 2013	Department for Education	Anita Parkinson
The new Code of Practice	Department for Education <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">www.education.gov.uk</a>	Anita Parkinson