

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

To: **Children and Young People Committee**

Meeting Date: **24 May 2016**

From: **Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **The purpose of this paper is to address the issues raised by Ofsted about the quality of education and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in Cambridgeshire schools.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to comment on the Local Authority's response to the issues raised and suggest any further actions it would like Officers to take.**

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 23rd March 2016, Andrew Cook, Ofsted's Regional Director for the East of England, published a letter expressing concern about the quality of education and the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in Cambridgeshire schools (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2 Specifically, Andrew Cook raised issues about:
- the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and non-FSM;
 - a dearth of good practice in Cambridgeshire schools from which school leaders can learn;
 - a decline in Ofsted outcomes in primary schools in autumn 2015; and
 - problems with teacher recruitment.
- 1.3 The Local Authority (LA) shares the expressed concerns about the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in Cambridgeshire and about the higher than average proportion of secondary and primary schools that require improvement or that are inadequate. We are aware of all of the issues raised in the letter and are – and have been - taking action to address them.
- 1.4 The LA's response to the letter is given in **Appendix 2**. It outlines many of the actions being taken and evidences the significantly improved Ofsted outcomes in primary schools in spring 2016.

2.0 THE PERFORMANCE OF DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

- 2.1 The performance of groups vulnerable to underachievement, and especially those eligible for FSM, has been a stubbornly persistent issue for Cambridgeshire for a number of years. Overall, these groups are making progress but, with the exception of children with EAL (English as an Additional Language), not at a fast enough rate.
- 2.2 For the **Early Years Foundation Stage**, results for 2015 show that the performance of vulnerable groups improved but only three groups improved at a faster rate than their peers: boys, those speaking languages other than English and those speaking Central or Eastern European languages. The relatively slow rate of improvement of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and of pupils with SEN who are also eligible for FSM continues to be of concern.
- 2.3 At **Key Stage 1**, using Level 2+ in Reading, Writing and Maths combined as a benchmark, apart from pupils who are not eligible for FSM and pupils with no SEN, the performance of most groups has improved and vulnerable pupils have closed the attainment gap by around 1ppt with English as an additional language (EAL) pupils making the most ground (a 4ppt rise).
- 2.4 At **Key Stage 2** apart from boys and pupils with SEN who were also eligible for FSM, the performance of all vulnerable groups improved with the most notable improvements by pupil premium pupils (a 4ppt rise), pupils speaking languages other than English (a 5ppt rise) and pupils speaking Central or Eastern European home languages (a 14ppt rise). The performance of pupils eligible for FSM, of pupils with SEN and of pupils with SEN who are also

eligible for FSM continues to be of concern; this group of 257 pupils saw a decline of 5ppt between 2014 and 2015.

- 2.5 At **Key Stage 4** outcomes for vulnerable groups show a mixed picture with boys and girls improving at the same rate; pupils speaking English as an additional language improving at a faster rate than their English speaking peers; and neither pupils eligible for the pupil premium or pupils with SEN closing the gap with their peers.
- 2.6 **Post-16** educational outcomes for young people studying in Cambridgeshire's academies and state funded colleges are above the national levels in each of the main benchmarks except for students achieving three or more substantial vocational qualifications which is lower. The outcomes for 19 year olds who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at the age of 16 are lower than those of their peers nationally and remain of concern.

3.0 SUPPORT FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

- 3.1 The LA's strategy for Accelerating the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups (see source documents) sets out our shared ambition with schools to address these issues. Andrew Cook acknowledges in his letter that strategies are in place and we accept that it is the impact of these strategies that is paramount. There is no quick fix for a deep seated problem but the progress that has, and is being made is, we believe, an encouraging sign that improvement will become sustained and more rapid.
- 3.2 A great many actions are underway, including:
- A detailed analysis of the performance data, and monitoring of children's progress, by both the LA and schools, so that actions can be targeted.
 - A Pupil Premium toolkit and a good practice guide on the use of pupil premium has been published.
 - Governing bodies have been encouraged to appoint a pupil premium champion - almost all have done so.
 - Leadership briefings, conferences and courses have been provided for classroom teachers, school leaders and governors.
 - Good practice has been identified and disseminated through the Directory of Effective Practice on the Learn Together website <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/learntogether/> for primary schools, and through inviting secondary schools to present at conferences.
 - The good practice identified in the Member led reviews of GCSE and KS1/2 'gaps' has been disseminated to all schools and governors¹
 - The importance of this issue has been raised with all LA staff working with children, young people and families so that they can support families to support their children's learning.

¹ ASSESSING THE GCSE ATTAINMENT LEVELS OF MATERIALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

<http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Agendaltem.aspx?agendaltemID=6495>

FINAL REPORT OF MEMBER-LED REVIEW OF NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP AT PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

<http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/Agendaltem.aspx?agendaltemID=9477>

A key priority for the Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board is to 'Commission programmes to accelerate the achievement of our disadvantaged groups', and a range of initiatives are underway, including 'Bridging the Gap', a project that supports schools to work in clusters that brings together the Teaching School Alliances, Cambridge University's Faculty of Education and the LA

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/learn-together/homepage/298/school_improvement_board.

3.3 The Accelerating Achievement Strategy is currently being refreshed. We know a great deal more about these children than we did in the past and this intelligence will inform the new plan. For example, we know that the issue is more complex than 'just' FSM: if you compare 'just FSM' with other authorities, the difference is not that great. However, there is a significant difference for children with FSM and 'SEND Support' (SEND without a statement or plan) with other authorities. Consequently, we will be bringing forward guidance and support for this particular group.

3.4 The single biggest impact on accelerating achievement is great teaching, which is why so many of the actions aim to improve teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills to support disadvantaged groups. There is also a link between great teaching and the recruitment issues in 5.0 below.

4.0 OFSTED OUTCOMES

4.1 At **secondary level**, Ofsted outcomes declined from 78% good and outstanding schools in August 2013 to 46% in August 2015. This figure has now risen to 49%. At a strategic level, actions to address this decline are being led by the Regional Schools Commissioner because all but one of the county's secondary schools are academies. The RSC works through the Secondary Academies Improvement Board, and the actions being taken are described in the RSC's response to Andrew Cook's letter (Appendix 1).

4.2 The LA has no power of intervention in failing academies but it still works very closely with secondary schools to influence and support, and to ensure that where the LA does have responsibilities, e.g. with regards to alternative provision, our actions support education outcomes. The LA still has responsibilities in respect of overall educational outcomes and will continue to express a view and challenge when performance needs to be improved. A protocol to monitor the performance of academies, to replace the annual 'Keeping in Touch' visit, is currently being developed and piloted with secondary schools. This will be implemented in September 2016 and will provide the LA with a more robust and informed view of secondary school performance, and will provide useful external challenge for the secondary schools themselves.

4.3 The LA is developing a protocol to monitor the performance of secondary academies, to replace the 'Keeping in Touch' visit, so that we can provide useful challenge and support, and can raise concerns in a timely and informed way. This is currently being trialled and will be implemented in September 2016.

4.4 At **primary level**, Ofsted outcomes have risen steadily from 69% good and outstanding in August 2013 to 81% in April 2016, the highest it has ever been. However, this is still below the national percentage of 87% and our aim is to

be at least in line with that figure by March 2017.

- 4.5 The LA has a well-structured programme of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support for maintained primary schools, which is described in the School Improvement Strategy (see source documents). There is an extensive traded offer to primary schools, with a high level of buy back. Of the 205 primary schools, 39 are academies, a number that will rise over the coming months, and the LA is developing a protocol to monitor the performance of primary academies similar to the one we are developing with secondary schools.

5.0 RECRUITMENT

- 5.1 Recruitment of teachers and school leaders is a growing issue in Cambridgeshire. The official vacancy rate, which the government takes from the schools' annual workforce census, is very low at 0.2%. However, this figure disguises small and poor quality fields and the particular difficulties being faced by some subjects more than others and some parts of the county more than others.
- 5.2 The LA has no direct role in recruitment to schools. In the 2000s the LA was funded by the government to appoint a recruitment strategy manager and to develop a succession planning strategy but this funding ended in 2010.
- 5.3 However, it is clearly in everyone's interest that Cambridgeshire's schools can recruit and retain high quality teaching staff, so the LA continues to support schools, most recently through facilitating and part funding the 'Teach in Cambridgeshire' initiative <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/teachincambs/>.
- 5.4 Senior Adviser and Adviser time is allocated to develop and implement the schools' action plan, whilst HR, IT and Procurement have provided back office support at no charge. County-wide, 57 primary schools and 13 secondary schools have joined this initiative.
- An NQT pool has been established, working with the Fenland Teaching School, and ITT (Initial Teacher Training) placements are being offered more widely with a view to securing retention of good trainees.
 - Senior leaders and recently qualified teachers from schools across the county have attended recruitment fairs at the Universities of Cambridge, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, UCL and Bishops Grosseteste.
 - An internship programme and a return to teaching programme are being launched.
- The website promotes the benefits of working in Cambridgeshire and allows schools to have their own 'micro sites' to advertise vacancies and manage applications.
- 5.5 Andrew Cook refers to 'Teach First' in his letter. This is one of a number of government schemes to support teacher recruitment that Cambridgeshire has not been eligible for because the county's overall level deprivation is relatively low. We welcome his support for Cambridgeshire being eligible for such schemes – pockets of extreme deprivation, rural isolation and the demand from growth are factors that need to be recognised in the government's eligibility criteria.

6.0 MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Members have, and are involved, with education outcomes in a number of ways:

- An annual report is presented to the Children and Young People Committee.
- There is Member representation on the Accelerating the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups Strategy Group.
- The Service Director for Learning meets regularly with the Chairwoman and Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee.
- Member Seminars have been presented on education outcomes and the performance of disadvantaged groups.
- Members have led their own reviews into key issues (see 3.2 above).

6.2 In addition to the above, an Education Achievement Board has been established to enable The Chief Executive and senior Members to hold officers to account. The membership and terms of reference for this Board is given in **Appendix 3**.

7.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 7.1.1
- Improved educational outcomes will provide a more highly skilled workforce; and
 - A key factor in major companies' decisions to move to Cambridgeshire is access to good and outstanding schools for their workforce.

7.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 7.2.1
- There is a positive correlation between educational outcomes, standards of health and independent living.

7.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 7.3.1
- Poor educational progress of vulnerable groups correlates with poor life chances. Children who fall behind find it hard to catch up. In particular, children from low-income families, as measured by eligibility for Free School Meals, achieve badly compared with children not eligible for Free School Meals.
 - Pupils eligible for Free School Meals who also have Special Education Needs achieve particularly badly.

8.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Resource Implications

8.1.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

8.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- 8.2.1
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places upon LAs a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in all schools.

8.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.3.1
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places upon LAs a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in all schools.

8.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- 8.4.1
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places upon LAs a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in all schools.

8.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- 8.5.1
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places upon LAs a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in all schools.

8.6 Public Health Implications

- 8.6.1
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places upon LAs a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in all schools.

Source Documents	Location
Cambridgeshire LA School Improvement Strategy, 2014-16	https://www.learntogether.org.uk/Resources/Documents/SI - Strategy for School Improvement 2014-16 Final 1.pdf
Accelerating Achievement Strategy, 2014-16	https://www.learntogether.org.uk/Resources/Documents/SI - Accelerating Achievement April 2014 v1.pdf