

**ACCELERATING ACHIEVEMENT OF VULNERABLE GROUPS STRATEGY AND
NARROWING THE GAPS**

To: **Children and Young People Committee**

Meeting Date: **29th July 2014**

From: **Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults**

Electoral division(s): **All**

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

Purpose: **The purpose of this paper is to describe and explain one of the local authority's key educational priorities, to set out the actions being taken to address this priority and to discuss Member involvement in addressing it.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked:**

- **To note and comment on the contents of the report**
- **To agree Member involvement with this key educational issue.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Although the majority of children do well at school in Cambridgeshire, too many are not achieving 'good' attainment or progress levels and the gap between vulnerable groups of children and young people and their peers is widening.
- 1.2 In particular, children growing up in poverty in Cambridgeshire achieve less well at school than almost anywhere else in the country. For example, the FSM (Free Schools Meals) to non-FSM gap in attainment at each Key Stage is marked:
 - Foundation Stage (5 year olds): 22 ppt (percentage points) - 3ppt wider than that seen nationally but 1ppt narrower than the gap across our statistical neighbours
 - KS1 (Key Stage) (7 year olds): 24 ppt Key Stage 1 Reading, Writing and Maths
 - KS2 (11 year olds): 30 ppt - the Cambridgeshire gap is 7 ppt wider than the gap across our statistical neighbours (23 ppt) and 11 ppt wider than the gap nationally (19ppt)
 - KS4 (16 year olds): 33ppt – 6 ppt wider than the gap nationally (27 ppt)
- 1.3 Levels of attainment in Cambridgeshire vary geographically, e.g. nearly half the pupils who failed to reach the KS2 benchmark in 2013 lived in the Wisbech locality. However, over 75% of children in poverty in Cambridgeshire live in our less deprived areas and it is these children for whom outcomes are worst.
- 1.4 In 2012, Cambridgeshire published 'Narrowing the gap: Cambridgeshire's strategy to help every child succeed 2012-14'. It set out four commitments to achieve by 2015, two of which were met (FSM achievement at KS1 and KS4), but national progress was even better.
- 1.5 In April 2014 a refreshed strategy, 'Accelerating the achievement of vulnerable groups of children and young people with Cambridgeshire 2014-16', was published. This is attached as Appendix 1. It is based on a thorough analysis of need and aims to ensure that all services for children and families will work together with schools and parents to do all they can to eradicate the achievement gap between vulnerable groups of children and young people and their peers.
- 1.6 In April 2011 the Government introduced the pupil premium, which gives schools extra funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils from Reception to Year 11. It is available for:
 - Every child currently registered as eligible for free school meals
 - All children eligible for free school meals at any point in the past 6 years
 - Looked after children who have been looked after for one day or more; are adopted; or leave care under a Special Guardianship Order or a Residence Order
- 1.7 In 2014-15, the pupil premium is set at:
 - £1,300 per pupil of primary school age

- £935 per pupil of secondary school age
- £1,900 per pupil for looked after children

This represents a major resource for schools to use to tackle the underachievement of vulnerable groups.

- 1.8 Action is being taken to increase the percentage of families who register for FSM; some 20% have not registered, which represents a significant financial loss to schools. The Education Welfare Benefits team is working with schools, Children's Centres and partner agencies such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau. A telephone application service is being piloted. The introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals in September has given an added urgency to this work because it means that parents of 5 – 7 year olds do not need to claim to receive a free meal; but they do need to register if the school is to receive the pupil premium. Raising awareness of this issue with parents and making it easy for them to apply has resulted in substantially more applications being received than at this time last year, which is an encouraging sign.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The challenge in Cambridgeshire requires a whole-system response; accordingly, the 'Accelerating achievement' strategy defines two broad sets of actions:
- How Cambridgeshire County Council will marshal its resources to support and challenge schools, settings and professionals working with families, e.g. reviewing the educational progress of children whose families are part of the Together for Families programme, to evaluate the impact of wider interventions on learning; and
 - How we will drive improvement for key vulnerable groups, e.g. low attaining children in the Early Years Foundation Stage; children eligible for the pupil premium at KS2
- 2.2 An action plan to support this strategy has been developed and is being implemented. This plan is monitored and evaluated by a Task Group chaired by Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults.
- 2.3 Examples of specific actions include developing a Pupil Premium Toolkit to help schools identify vulnerable groups and select appropriate interventions; providing training opportunities and conferences; and compiling a Pupil Premium Handbook, which brings together effective strategies for accelerating the achievement of vulnerable groups.
- 2.4 Members have supported this work throughout, with two Member-led reviews ('GCSE Attainment Levels of Materially Disadvantaged Students, 2013', attached as Appendix 2, and 'Good practice in narrowing the attainment gap at primary school level between children receiving free school meals and children overall, 2014', attached as Appendix 3).
- 2.5 In order to understand better the reasons for Cambridgeshire's poor performance, the local authority has carried out an in-depth analysis of the performance of the 1,659 pupils who failed to reach the KS2 benchmark in 2013, attached as Appendix 4. This is the largest analysis of a specific group

of pupils that we have ever carried out. It has brought together everything that we know about these pupils, from their prior performance to their demographic characteristics, to their involvement with other services, e.g. Social Care.

- 2.6 The output of the '1,659 Analysis' has helped understanding, has identified immediate actions for schools to take and has identified a number of recommendations for further investigation, some of which we are taking forward with the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education.
- 2.7 A key finding is that in Cambridgeshire it is not FSM by itself that is significant in underperformance but FSM combined with SEN (Special Educational Needs). The proportion of Cambridgeshire pupils with SEN not achieving the KS2 benchmark was similar to the proportion nationally (68% to 66%) but the proportion of Cambridgeshire pupils with FSM and SEN was significantly different to the national figure (83% to 71%). An immediate action is that schools need to identify FSM/SEN as a vulnerable group in its own right.
- 2.8 The impact of actions is measured annually through an analysis of the end of key stage examination results. Provisional are results available in October / November and will be reported to the CYP Committee as part of the annual analysis of examination results.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Improved educational outcomes will provide a more highly skilled workforce
- The availability of good quality schools is believed to be a factor influencing companies' location decisions.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

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

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Education plays a key role in addressing this corporate priority. For example, children growing up in poverty in Cambridgeshire are nearly three times more likely to not be in employment, education or training beyond the age of 16.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The majority of the resource to accelerate the achievement of vulnerable groups sits with schools, the largest component being the pupil premium. The local authority has sufficient resource to carry out the actions in the Accelerating Achievement strategy. The Learning Directorate's savings plans include a reduction in discretionary spend on supporting schools to 'narrow the gaps' but this is predicated on these gaps being sustainably addressed and will be reconsidered if this is not the case.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

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

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- The vulnerable groups who make poor educational progress include those covered by the protected / significant characteristics of race and deprivation, e.g. Gypsy, Roma Traveller and Free School Meals.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- The Accelerating Achievement Strategy was developed in consultation with schools and partners; these groups be involved in its review.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Officers wish to explore how the localism agenda can support educational outcomes for vulnerable groups.

4.6 Public Health Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Improved educational outcomes will have a positive impact on standards of public health.

| Source Documents | Location |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Attached as Appendices 1 to 4 | |