

My ref: KG/FT/SchoolImprovementBoard_allschools
Your ref:

Date: 5 May 2015

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To: Headteachers, Principals and
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Dear Colleague

Subject	Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board
Summary	To outline proposals for a Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board, and to invite comment
Audience	Headteachers, Principals and Chairs of Governors of all schools

As you are aware from the discussions at the headteacher meetings and the termly governor briefings, a task and finish group comprising representatives from nursery, primary, secondary and special schools; a sixth form college; a Multi Academy Trust; the Diocese of Ely; and the Teaching School Alliances has been developing proposals for a more effective school improvement system in Cambridgeshire.

The aim has been to bring forward proposals that will address the potential weaknesses of our increasingly fractured school improvement landscape, e.g. duplication of effort, some schools missing out on school to school support opportunities, and that will build on the County's successes, e.g. the growing network of Teaching School Alliances.

The Task Group agreed that it wanted to achieve a school improvement system that:

- brings the whole system together, preventing further fracturing;
- is led by those best placed to bring about school improvement – schools themselves;
- builds on success, e.g. Cambridgeshire's Teaching School Alliances and school partnerships; and
- is a key factor in delivering the change Cambridgeshire needs.

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Further, the Task Group identified the following potential advantages of a **school-led** system:

- easier and more equitable access to high quality support for all schools;
- more robust professional challenge and support from peers;
- a better understanding of, and response to, local needs;
- a more effective use of school improvement resources;
- better recruitment and retention of high quality teachers, school leaders and support staff; and
- new opportunities for learning what works best in the classroom through action research.

Feedback from the spring term discussions was very positive, although some concerns were expressed, including the potential loss of Local Authority support; a concern that small schools might be left out; the capacity of schools to be involved; and the quality assurance of provision. There was reluctance, at least at this stage, to accept the risk inherent in establishing any of the 'company' models, (for example, in Hertfordshire schools have set up a school improvement company, Herts for Learning, with schools owing 80% of the shares and the LA owning the other 20%). There was a strong preference for a School Improvement Board whose governance would be underpinned by Terms of Reference agreed by all stakeholders.

Consequently, we are now consulting on a proposal to establish a **Cambridgeshire School Improvement Board** with effect from September 2015. We will be discussing this proposal at all of the representative meetings, briefings and breakfast meetings. We will be seeking formal approval at Children and Young People's Committee Meeting on 30th June.

The proposed purpose of the Board is to:

- secure a comprehensive and ongoing needs analysis, informed by hard and soft performance data;
- set school improvement priorities for Cambridgeshire as a whole, for areas and for clusters;
- commission, broker and signpost school improvement support, using the collective resource of the Board;
- encourage and sustain robust professional challenge and support from peers;
- communicate Cambridgeshire's school improvement offer;
- ensure that no schools are left out; and
- evaluate the impact of support.

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The proposed membership of the Board is:

- representatives from nursery, primary, special and secondary schools;
- all of the Teaching School Alliances;
- school improvement clusters, e.g. Wisbech Project, A1 Cluster;
- 6th Form / Further Education;
- Higher Education;
- Dioceses;
- Local Authority;
- Parent representative from Governor Advisory Group;
- Union representative;
- Members; and
- an independent chair.

I look forward to discussing these ideas with you. Draft Terms of Reference are being prepared and I will forward these in due course. In the meantime, if you have any comments, please contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely



Keith Grimwade
Service Director: Learning