

## Education Performance

To: Children & Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 14 January 2025

From: Executive Director, Childrens, Education and Families Directorate

Electoral division(s): ALL

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Executive Summary: To inform the Committee about educational performance in 2024 across Cambridgeshire at the end of each Key Stage, up to and including Key Stage 4.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to note the findings of this paper and comment as appropriate

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# 1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 This report relates to Ambition 7 – Children and Young People have opportunities to thrive.

## 2. Background

2.1 The Service Director for Education reports to the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) on the performance of Cambridgeshire's maintained schools and academies in the end of Key Stage assessments and tests for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is the end of Reception year; Year 1 Phonics tests, Key Stage 1 (KS1) which is the end of Year 2 and Key stage 2 (KS2), which is the end of Year 6 and in the end of Key Stage 4 examinations (GCSEs or equivalent).

2.2 The data included within Appendix 1 presentation was last updated in December 2024, the final release is due June 2025. Therefore, it is very likely to change, and these changes can sometimes be significant. However, this data will be used to challenge schools and settings, identify schools and settings of concern and for intervention. There is a close focus on challenge for schools where the data forms part of a trend rather than where there is evidence it is cohort specific. It is also notable that the lowest performing schools both at phonics and key stage 2 are a mix of local authority maintained and academy from a range of trusts and are from across the county. It is, therefore, currently difficult to determine other factors, such as budget positions, that may be impacting on outcomes although this may become a factor over the longer term. The data will also be analysed in depth (including question level analysis of subjects) to identify key areas of concern across the county which will also feed in to training and work with schools.

2.3 It is important to note that the impact of the pandemic has led to a growth in SEND in areas such as EBSA (emotionally based school avoidance) as mental health and anxiety has grown in children and young people who have had their education disrupted. Attendance has been impacted at a national level post pandemic promoting a more rigorous approach within the new DFE requirements where it is an expectation that local authorities work with every school to improve attendance through a Multi-disciplinary approach.

## 3. Main Issues

### Performance and Outcomes Headlines

3.1 The 2024 outcomes show an improving picture in some areas. We have seen improvement in most of the key indicators both in absolute terms and also in relative terms compared to other Local Authorities. This position should be celebrated and will help our children in their next stages of their education.

3.2 Outcomes for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are not in line with other children. Work is being undertaken under the Inclusion for All programme to draw from expertise in our virtual school to enable our schools and settings to have the right training and support to enable children with additional needs to thrive. Placements are also being reconfigured so that more children are supported in mainstream and we are looking at developing more provision on our mainstream school sites, including through Enhanced Resource Bases (ERBs) and also extending the support from our special schools through

satellite provision.

### 3.3 Headlines – Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Outcomes

- Across the LA the average number of early learning goals at expected level per child is **14.3** compared to the national of **14.1 same as 2023**.
- There has been an improvement in the Good Level of Development (GLD) outcome for Cambridgeshire children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and the gap is closing between Cambridgeshire and National outcomes for this group.
- Cambridgeshire outcomes were above National outcomes for 15/17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). This indicates that GLD is not being achieved due to children missing only a small number of goals (“cusp” children) – this will be a focus at new, free to attend, moderation sessions in 2025.
- Fine motor skills and writing have been identified for focused support in Cambridgeshire in 2024/25. This will include a whole service approach to supporting Early Years settings and schools with motor skills (gross and fine), emergent writing, phonics and developing writing. A new funded course ‘An Introduction to Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy)’ will be rolled out across the county from September 2024.

### 3.4 Headlines – Phonics

- For the first time, there were no schools below 50% demonstrating a rising trajectory from improvements in phonics and the move to accredited synthetic phonics programmes in most schools.
- Increase in outcomes in year 1 from 2023 but have not reduced the gap to national.
- Significant improvement in Fenland, linked to Opportunity Area/ Priority Area funding and training.

### 3.5 Headlines – Key Stage 2

- KS2 data was disappointing with only reading increasing in 2023 but has not yet returned to the level to 2022.
- Writing continues to be the weakest subject area. The School Improvement Service (SIS) is supporting schools to be forensic in identifying and addressing challenges and share messages from moderation e.g. common barriers to awarding judgements. The English team are writing sample plans to support teaching writing using high quality texts.
- Within the SIS, a working party is looking at disadvantaged groups, forensically reviewing data, creating plans and providing case studies to support improvement in schools.

### 3.6 Headlines – Key Stage 4

- Cambridgeshire’s Attainment 8 average score is above England, which has been a continuing trend since 2022. Attainment 8 is a measure of how well pupils in state/funded schools in England perform in key stage 4, which is usually completed when students are 16. It is calculated by averaging a pupil’s points across GCSE level qualifications.
- KS4 Maths and English continues previous years with above England score for all pupils.

## 4. Alternative Options Considered

Not applicable.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The School Improvement Service is focusing on the challenges identified within the data to continue their support to schools to monitor and respond to below average figures. With support from the Virtual School team, the services will collaborate together to further support vulnerable groups including children and young people with EHCPs and those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

## 6. Significant Implications

### 6.1 Finance Implications

There are no financial implications.

### 6.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

### 6.3 Risk Implications

There are no risk implications.

### 6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications.

### 6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

There are no climate change or environmental implications.

## 7. Source Documents

- 7.1 N/A