

27th June 2018

DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Forum on the proposed approach to developing a revised School Improvement Strategy 2018- 2021.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Hertfordshire's Strategy for Improvement 2014-17 set out the vision, aims and priorities to ensure a step change in improved performance for Hertfordshire schools, children and young people for the future. The vision was to have 'a good school for every child in every district'.
- 2.2 The period of time that the Strategy originally covered has ended, and the environment in which education takes place is now very different. But for a number of reasons, it is valuable to produce a new one. For Hertfordshire to maintain and improve further its current high standards, we need to bring together a range of independent, significant local bodies, defining roles, responsibilities and accountability, alongside agreeing common priorities.
- 2.3 The purpose of the new Strategy will be to do this – to create a framework for all the key partners that will support delivery towards the vision of having a 'World Class Education for all Hertfordshire Pupils'. It will set out the common priorities that need to be addressed, define the roles and responsibilities of key partners as well as the support available for schools. It is intended for all involved in schools leadership activities, Headteachers, senior leadership teams, staff teams and governing bodies. Annex A sets out a scope or outline of the areas that we believe the strategy should cover, which would form the basis for its possible structure.
- 2.4 Whilst HCC can play a role in facilitating the creation of this strategy, it cannot be the County Council's strategy alone. To do what is described above requires engagement and ownership from all the major local stakeholders. Later in this report we set out how this might be achieved.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To consider and debate the proposed scope for the revised School Improvement Strategy 2018-2021, as set out in Annex A.
- 3.2 To nominate members of Schools Forum to help contribute to the development of the School Improvement Strategy.
- 3.3 To agree that a sub-group of the Schools Forum and other key stakeholder representatives will be established in the Autumn to oversee the approval and implementation of the strategy.

4. Background

- 4.1 The creation of Herts for Learning (HfL) in 2013 as a 'Schools Company' enabled much of the previous strategy to be delivered successfully in partnership with schools and the local authority.
- 4.2 The strong partnership that exists between schools, the local authority and Herts for Learning contributes to the excellent performance of Hertfordshire schools. From 2013 to 2017 the percentage of Good/Outstanding schools in Hertfordshire rose year-on-year.
- 4.3 However, there are many challenges, both in maintaining existing areas of good performance and in addressing weaknesses. The importance of raising the attainment and progress of all pupils, but especially disadvantaged pupils, must be a priority. Some approaches and techniques in relation to this were identified in our recent Peer Review and HCC Scrutiny.
- 4.4 A review process has also been undertaken recently nationally by an organisation called ISOS under the auspices of the LGA. This LGA/ISOS report titled 'Enabling School Improvement' is attached as Annex B. It sets out the conditions needed to establish effective local school improvement systems including:
 - Strong relationships between schools, academies, the LA, and other local and regional partners
 - Being focussed on context and place, and taking account of these contextual factors in developing an effective local vision
 - Clear local priorities and clarity about roles and responsibilities
 - High-quality school improvement capacity, utilising school and other capacity, and effectively marshalling limited resources
 - Evidence of impact in improving outcomes, developing school leadership and capacity and strengthening partnership working
 - Supporting all children in the local area including the more vulnerable.
- 4.5 Hertfordshire as a school improvement partnership needs to ensure that all these conditions are in place to ensure long-term sustainability and that we "provide education that we are confident is 'World Class

for All Hertfordshire Pupils' so children and young people can realise their potential". Part of the purpose of the proposed strategy is to support this.

- 5.3 The key to the success of the strategy will be partnership working to ensure high-quality school improvement capacity and effectively using limited resources. A list of the partners is set out in Annex A. It is proposed that the strategy will have a short section clarifying the roles and responsibilities for each of the key stakeholders. This will be considered alongside the DfE consultation on 'Principles for a clear and simple accountability system' when it is published in autumn 2018.
- 5.3 This will then be followed by a section which will set out the framework for how Hertfordshire County Council and Herts for Learning will help and work with the maintained sector including the benefits that maintained schools will receive in terms of support and advice and what is expected of those schools who wish to remain maintained school.
- 5.4 There will also be a section on how all other groups including academies will work together collaboratively.
- 5.5 As mentioned above, in March 2018 Hertfordshire County Council commissioned a peer review to consider effective strategies being used by schools and partners in Hertfordshire which are impacting positively on improving the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- 5.6 The review recommended creation of a specific strategy to drive improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils underpinned by the effective use and sharing of precise data.
- 5.7 HCC and HfL are proposing to include this as a specific element within the new over-arching School Improvement Strategy as we believe that the strategy for disadvantage pupils needs to be interwoven into all elements of the over-arching strategy.
- 5.8 Three common priorities have currently been identified, which would be reviewed as part of the strategy formulation process. These are:
 1. 'Closing the Gap' – diminish the difference between the performance of underachieving groups and all Hertfordshire children and young people. This part will be sub-divided into:
 - Subsection on disadvantaged groups
 - Subsection on SEND
 2. Raising the Attainment - improving the attainment and progress of all pupils, but especially disadvantaged pupils and a part of this will be to continue to strive towards all schools being good or outstanding.
 3. Safeguarding - ensure every school has implemented a clear and robust safeguarding policy with protocols in place to address potential safeguarding concerns.

- 5.9 School improvement encompasses more than just standards and outcomes. The important role that the Governing Body and services such as schools' finance and Human Resources and schools' supporting infrastructure play must also be considered holistically as part of school improvement. The strategy will provide a brief description of the services provided and links to where schools can access further information and contact details.
- 5.10 Accountability including performance monitoring, challenge and support will also be essential to the success of the Strategy and there will be a chapter on how the implementation of the strategy will be implemented, monitored and challenged.

Wider context

- 5.11 The School Improvement Strategy has not in the past sat alone, and would not do so in future. It will sit alongside a range of other strategic documents including the SEND strategy and the CS Childrens Plan; we also envisage preparing an overarching education strategy which will pick up some wider issues such as provision of school places.

Overall governance

- 5.12 It is essential to have appropriate involvement from major partners in the strategy formulation process. We are therefore asking for initial nominees from Forum to assist in this.
- 5.13 In the Autumn we would hope to establish a more formal Board structure for oversight of the finalisation and implementation of the Strategy. Since much of the central resource for delivery is provided via the HCC contract with HfL, funded by money allocated by Forum, it would be appropriate that this body is established as a sub-group of Forum but with a wider membership.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Forum is asked to consider the following debate the proposed structure for the revised School Improvement Strategy 2018-2021 as set out in Annex A.
- (i) the proposed scope/structure for the revised School Improvement Strategy 2018-2021 as set out in Annex A
 - (ii) To nominate members of Schools Forum to help contribute to the writing of the School Improvement Strategy.
 - (iii) To agree a sub-group of the Schools Forum and other key stakeholder representatives will be established to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

ANNEX A: Revised School Improvement Strategy 2018-21 scope

1. Vision – “A world class education for all Hertfordshire pupils’.
2. Context
3. Paragraph on each of the key stakeholders and outline briefly their roles and responsibilities
 - HCC – set out here the 3 HCC roles with regard to:
 - i. Generality of interest for all pupils
 - ii. SEN (reference to SEND strategy)
 - iii. Maintained schools
 - HfL
 - Schools Forum
 - PHF
 - HASSH
 - SSHF
 - RSC
 - MATs
 - Diocese
 - TSA
 - Virtual School
 - ESFA
 - Ofsted
4. Maintained schools
 - Will set out the framework for how HCC/HfL will work with them and expectations of what a maintained school will look like
5. Section on how all other groups including academies will work together collaboratively
6. Common priorities which currently are as follows:
 - ‘Closing the Gap’:
 - Raising the Attainment
 - Safeguarding

followed by sections on the common priorities in more detail.
7. ‘Closing the Gap’ to include:
 - Subsection on disadvantaged groups
 - Subsection on SEND
8. Raising the Attainment

9. Safeguarding

10. Outline part that finances, governance, supporting infrastructures etc. play in school improvement and the support available

11. Accountability including performance monitoring, challenge and support

12. Appendices

- Summary of the services provided by Herts County Council and those provided by Herts for Learning under the core contract and traded
- Summary of functions performed by HfL under the core contract – split for secondary, primary and special
- Monitoring and evaluation of schools
- Schools where performance is a concern
- Targets and measures underpinning success criteria
- Enabling school improvement LGA/ISOS report