

Meeting:	Children and young people scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Monday 5 February 2018
Title of report:	School Examination Performance
Report by:	Director for children's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To consider school performance for summer 2017 and the effectiveness of the Herefordshire school improvement partnership strategy and framework in improving outcomes for Herefordshire's children and young people.

To enable the committee to scrutinise pupil and school performance in Herefordshire as assessed in 2017

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- (a) considers school performance; and**
- (b) make recommendations to cabinet on how the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy could be enhanced**

Alternative options

1. Alternative options are not listed as it is for the committee to decide what actions it wishes to undertaken within its scrutiny role.

Key considerations

2. Over the past five years, educational outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire have demonstrated significant improvement. The county now ranks in the top or second quartile of local authority area performance for a number of key assessment indicators, from the early years to the end of the secondary phase. Raising standards for vulnerable groups, particularly disadvantaged children and young people and those eligible for free school meals, remains a key priority for the council despite there being some improvement in outcomes for these groups last academic year. Moving forward, more work is needed to ensure that all education provision is judged as good or outstanding and to secure improved outcomes in mathematics at the end of the primary phase. Further, a systematic approach to evaluating how highly educational provision is valued by children and young people, parents and carers, the community and employers has yet to be developed across Herefordshire. However, Herefordshire has made good progress in ensuring that children are given every opportunity to achieve, are kept safe, and have a great start in life.
3. In addition to educational standards across the county, the council is responsible for:
 - ensuring there are sufficient high quality places for the local area
 - providing focus and leadership on the experiences and outcomes for vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who need support to be safe
 - commissioning and providing a range of services, including social care, to deliver a local authority's statutory responsibilities
 - providing strategic leadership in the development of education, skills and economy in the local area
4. In January 2018 93% of Herefordshire children are taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 72% of pupils in the secondary phase are in good or outstanding schools; 97% of early years' group settings inspected have been judged as good or outstanding; 95% of childminders inspected are good or outstanding.
5. Herefordshire's youngest learners in the reception year, year one and year two have continued to outperform their peers nationally for a second consecutive year. This success is set out below:
 - The percentage of five year old children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in 2017 was well above the national average and in the top quartile when compared with all local authorities. Both boys and girls performed better than the national average with girls' performance ranking amongst the very best nationally. Children with special educational needs support also achieved in the top quartile when compared with all local authorities.
 - The performance of children eligible for free school meals in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire improved at a faster rate than nationally in 2017. A good level of development was achieved by 59% of children eligible for free school meals; this exceeded both the regional and national average for the first time.
 - Analysis of success rates over time highlights the improvement in attainment for English as an additional language (EAL) pupils in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire: in 2013 a good level of development was achieved by only 46 out of

144 EAL pupils; in 2017 this figure increased to 137 pupils from a total EAL cohort of 217 pupils, with Herefordshire ranked in the second quartile when compared with all local authorities for a second year.

- In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children improved markedly and now ranks in the top quartile of all local authorities. This improvement in the county's overall phonics performance was recognised in recent correspondence from Nick Gibb, Minister of State for School Standards, who congratulated schools and pupils for the 3 percentage point increase on 2016 results which represents one of the ten largest increases in results by local authority in the country. When phonics screening was introduced in 2012 only 51% of year 1 pupils in Herefordshire met the threshold mark with performance in the bottom quartile of all local authorities.
- At key stage 1, the proportion of Herefordshire seven year old children reaching expected levels of attainment in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics was again above the national average and in the top quartile for both reading and writing when compared to all local authorities.
- The attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils at key stage 1 demonstrated some improvements on last year's results. Pupils with English as an additional language achieved well in reading and mathematics. Pupils with identified special educational needs support again achieved results in the top quartile when compared to all local authorities. However, the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals lagged behind their peers.
- At key stage 2, the percentage of children attaining the expected level by the end of the primary phase in reading, mathematics and writing overall was broadly in line with the national average for a second year. However, pupils again achieved less well in mathematics. The percentage of pupils working at greater depth was one percentage point below the national average.
- The overall attainment of both boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics ranked in the third quartile of all local authorities in comparison with their peers. More girls achieved the expected standard than boys, reflecting the national picture. Nevertheless, pupils' made good progress with progress data in both reading and writing at key stage 2 in 2017 ranking in the top quartile of all local authorities. Progress in reading over the past two years has been particularly strong.
- In 2017 Herefordshire secondary schools and academies outperformed schools nationally against key performance indicators which include Progress 8, attainment at grades 9-5 and grades 9-4 in GCSE English and mathematics, and attainment in the E-Baccalaureate.
- From their starting points at the end of primary school, pupils in Herefordshire made good progress; this is reflected in the county's Progress 8 figure which ranks in the second quartile in comparison with other local authorities.
- National data on the performance of pupils with specific characteristics (pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils identified as having special educational needs support, pupils who have English as an additional language) will be published on 25th January. Given changes to assessment nationally, at this stage it is difficult to

determine whether the achievement of these groups has demonstrated improvement this year.

- There were 10 looked after children in the eligible cohort for GCSEs in 2017. Both their performance across the range of 8 GCSE subjects (Attainment 8) and the progress they have made from their starting points (Progress 8) indicate that, from their starting points, they achieved better results than looked after children nationally. All of these young people were in education, training or employment in September 2017.
 - At key stage 5 maintained school and academy sixth forms were above the national average for state-funded school students in key performance indicators, including the percentage of students who achieved at least 2 A levels and the percentage of students achieving 3 A*-A grades or better.
 - Across Herefordshire the average points score recorded by students at A-level ranked in the second quartile in comparison to all local authorities; the percentage of students attaining 3 A*-A grades or better at A-level also ranked in the second quartile. Students following a less academic route were less successful as performance in level 3 qualifications ranked in the third quartile compared to all local authorities.
 - Last academic year the combined percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose destination is unknown in Herefordshire was slightly higher than the national average at 6.5%. A recent key focus for Herefordshire has been the implementation of a new data system, the purpose of which is to ensure increased accuracy and more in depth analysis of the NEET cohort and their needs.
6. Herefordshire Council champions all children in Herefordshire, whether they are in a maintained or academy school. The council's approach to school improvement has been developed in collaboration with the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership (HSIP). This group comprises of school leaders in both maintained and academy schools, the Diocese of Hereford and the Archdiocese of Cardiff. Its focus is on using performance data to identify areas of strength and concern in pupil outcomes, and developing systems to disseminate good practice and improve standards across the county.
7. All schools and academies in Herefordshire are subject to the council's annual risk assessment, developed by the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership (HSIP), which is now embedded in schools' improvement calendar. This information informs the council's approach to monitoring schools causing concern which includes termly monitoring meetings and may include the issue of pre-warning or warning notices. Herefordshire Council continues to highlight issues with the underperformance of academies with the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office.
8. Centrally generated targets, developed with members of the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership, were issued to schools by Herefordshire Council for the first time last year. This approach has improved the council's ability to be pro-active in addressing poor pupil outcomes. Schools who are in danger of not meeting targets are prioritised for school-to-school support funding from the council on the completion of a funding bid with either a supporter school or one of Herefordshire's teaching schools. An additional academy secondary school was successful in being accredited as a teaching school last academic year.

9. Building on the success of previous school improvement initiatives in Herefordshire, such as our approach to boosting outcomes in phonics, local National leaders in education (NLEs) are currently involved in two collaborative projects to raise standards at the end of the primary phase.
10. The small schools maths project comprises 7 schools who are working together with the aim of improving outcomes in mathematics, a key area of weakness across the county, through links with approaches identified by the Department for Education's maths hubs. The urban schools project involves 4 schools and aims to share each school's specific strengths, either in numeracy or literacy, so that teachers can reflect upon what works well in raising attainment.
11. Partnership working with the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office has centred this year on the national Strategic School Improvement Fund. The head of learning and achievement represents Herefordshire on the RSC's sub-regional improvement board which meets to consider applications for this funding. A recent Herefordshire bid, led by Marlbrook Teaching School, to the Department for Education was successful and brings £516,000 of resources to boost teaching across the county in both the primary and secondary phases.
12. Developing the quality of senior leadership in schools is a key priority for Herefordshire Council. The strategic deployment of National leaders in education (NLEs) is central to the council's approach to creating a self-sustaining model of school improvement. Over the course of the year, the council has supported governing bodies to broker interim school leadership arrangements with NLEs and leading headteachers; their expertise has ensured that standards have been maintained.
13. The annual Herefordshire school leadership conference focused this year on supporting the outcomes for vulnerable learners. Input, including that from the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office, Ofsted, the Attachment Research Community and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), highlighted growing concerns at national level around rising exclusions, young people's mental health and the educational experience of looked-after children and provided school leaders with advice and guidance around these issues.
14. Supporting schools and academies with safeguarding arrangements continues to be a key priority for council officers. Over 60% of schools have received detailed local authority input to improve their safeguarding practice over the past 2 years. This input includes one day reviews of schools' safeguarding arrangements or feedback on published policies and practice.
15. The vast majority of schools and academies subscribe to Herefordshire Council's safeguarding service level agreement which funds two school liaison posts within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). In the autumn maintained, academy and independent schools across the county completed the bi-annual safeguarding audit that is issued by Herefordshire Council and monitored through the Herefordshire Children's Safeguarding Board.
16. The council has further statutory duties which include supporting the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) and the moderation of outcomes in the early years and at key stages 1 and 2. The moderation of teacher assessment at key stages 1 and 2 has been undertaken by Marlbrook teaching school for the past 3 years.

Community impact

17. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
18. The council's corporate plan has a priority of keeping children safe and giving them a great start in life. Within this plan sits the council's approach to education and its education strategy which considers performance data at both micro and macro level, including vulnerable groups, and looks at performance over time. This informs the work of the strategy, the HSIP and framework, allowing work to be targeted appropriately. Herefordshire's children and young people's plan contains specific work to enhance the life chances of children and give them a great start in life and also provides a focus to develop family support which can improve a child's educational development as well.
19. In accordance with the council's code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.

Equality duty

20. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
21. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
22. The focus on gaps in achievement between vulnerable groups and their peers has and continues to be a key issue for Herefordshire. There have been some examples of good practice and improvement which has narrowed the gap, particularly at key stage 4. However, further work is required and this is taking place as part of Herefordshire's approach to school improvement.

23. The Herefordshire Teaching School Alliance is leading on work with individual schools to raise standards for vulnerable groups, including for children eligible for free school meals, with assistance from the council.

Resource implications

24. There are no specific financial implications contained within this report.
25. The performance outlined in this report is the result of the dedicated schools grant (schools block funding) of £97.12m in 2017/18. Schools and academies also receive additional grant funding direct from government, for example the receipt of pupil premium.

Legal implications

26. Consideration of this report falls within the definition of responsibility delegated to the children's scrutiny committee as set out in part 3 section 4, of the council's constitution.
27. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, however section 13A of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on the council to exercise its educational functions (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) with a view to:
- a. promoting high standards;
 - b. ensuring fair access to opportunity of education and training; and
 - c. promoting the fulfilments of learning potential by every person under the age of 20 (and persons aged 20 or over and for whom an education, health and care place is maintained).
28. The duty in section 13A applies to community schools, but not to academies. While the Council has no direct responsibility for academies, there is an expectation that there will be a relationship whereby the local authority is aware of standards and in a position to raise concerns directly with the school, or with Ofsted, if there is not a satisfactory response.

Risk management

29. The risks to the council are that the model does not deliver the strategic objectives of council and school improvement partnership. This is being mitigated through the active Herefordshire school improvement partnership group, continuing to develop the engagement with governors and by creating strong links with the regional school commissioner's office.
30. The effectiveness of the council's arrangements will be reviewed through performance monitoring, through Herefordshire's school improvement partnership and strategic education board. The committee also play an important role in reviewing effectiveness. Ofsted may also inspect the council, given the performance of some vulnerable groups, particularly those eligible for free schools meals in relation to overall progress, and progress in relation to their peers

Consultees

31. None

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified