

Meeting:	Children and young people scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Monday 16 March 2020
Title of report:	School Examination Performance 2019
Report by:	Head of learning and achievement

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose and summary

To consider school performance for summer 2019 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 2019.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- (a) reviews school performance and determines any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive to enhance the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternatives to the recommendation: it is a function of the committee to make reports or recommendations to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive.

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 the vast majority of key assessment indicators from the early years to the end of the primary phase. Ofsted has identified primary education in Herefordshire as 'strong and improving'. Herefordshire has made good progress in ensuring that the majority of children are given every opportunity to achieve, are kept safe, and have a great start in life. Performance in the secondary phase has not seen the same improvements and the county ranks in the third and fourth quartile for the majority of key assessment indicators at Key Stage 4. In particular outcomes achieved by secondary school pupils in the attainment 8 and progress 8 measures at key stage 4 need to improve.
3. 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 over the past three years, outcomes continue to demonstrate considerable fluctuation across the Key Stages year on year.
4. Herefordshire reflects national trends and developments that have seen rising exclusions and more children entering home education. Reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions, ensuring that schools are focused on improving outcomes for all groups of children and preparing our young people for the world of work are key priorities that form part of Herefordshire's refreshed Education, development and skills strategy.
5. 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 (SEN), and those who need support to be safe
 - commissioning and providing a range of services, including social care, to deliver the council's statutory responsibilities
 - providing strategic leadership in the development of education and skills in the local area

The information below is summarised as a presentation (appendix 1) and will be presented at the meeting of the children and young people's scrutiny committee.

6. In February 2020 96.8% of Herefordshire children were taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 78.3% of pupils in the secondary phase were in good or outstanding schools; 99% of early years' group settings inspected were judged as good or outstanding; 97% of childminders inspected were good or outstanding.
7. Herefordshire's youngest learners in the reception year, year one and year two have continued to outperform their peers nationally for a fourth consecutive year. At the end of the primary phase in key stage 2, historically a weakness in Herefordshire, pupils' results ranked in the top quartile nationally for combined attainment in reading, writing and

mathematics, compared with the second quartile in 2018. As a result Herefordshire ranked 31st nationally, an improvement of 61 places since 2017. These successes are set out below:

- The percentage of five year old children reaching a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in 2019 was 75.4%, above the national average of 71.8%. This is in the top quartile when compared with all local authorities in England, ranking Herefordshire 22/151 Local Authorities nationally. Both boys and girls performed better than the national average with girls' performance ranking in the second quartile and boys in the top quartile. Boys outperformed their peers nationally by 5.6%. 38.3% of Children with special educational needs support also achieved GLD compared to 28.5% of children with special educational needs support nationally.
- The performance of children eligible for free school meals (cohort of 234 pupils) in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire decreased marginally in 2019. There is a three year downward trend for this measure. A good level of development was achieved by 52.6% of children eligible for free school meals in 2019; nationally 56.4% of children eligible for free school meals met the good level of development. The performance of children eligible for free school meals is now in the third quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of success rates over time highlights an improved performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire: (64.1%) EAL pupils reached a good level of development in 2019 compared with 59.3% in 2018. This ranks Herefordshire in the 2nd quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of data for the small numbers of looked after children in 2019 (cohort of 12 pupils) shows that they performed less well than their looked after peers nationally in the early years foundation stage with 25% reaching the good level of development (GLD) compared to 48% of looked after children nationally.
- In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children continues to be better than the national average although in 2019 there was a small decrease in the number achieving the phonics screening check from 84.2% achieving the expected standard in 2018 to 82% in 2019. For the last four years we exceeded the national average. The percentage of free school meals children achieving the phonics threshold (69.2%) is broadly in line with the national performance of FSM pupils (70.1%).
- At key stage 1, the proportion of Herefordshire children reaching the expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was again above the national average and in the top quartile for reading (79%), writing (73%) and mathematics (79%). The percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in both reading (25%) and writing (15%) was in line with national and 2nd quartile whereas mathematics (20%) lagged behind their peers nationally (22%) and was in the third quartile.
- The attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils at key stage 1 demonstrated some improvements on last year's results. The percentage of free school meals (FSM) pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading (61.5%) was again just above the national average (60.4%). Pupils eligible for free school meals also made improvements in their attainment in writing (52.1%) and maths (59.4%) when compared to last year's results but were still performing in the third quartile. Pupils

with special educational needs (SEN) but not having an Education Health care Plan (EHCP) achieved better than their peers nationally at key Stage 1 in reading (37.3%, second quartile), writing (27.0%, second quartile) and maths (47.1%, first quartile) for the third year consecutive year. The performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in writing and mathematics higher than their peers nationally with 69.9% achieving the expected standard in writing (second quartile) and 78.2% (second quartile) achieving the expected standard in maths. Reading was also in the second quartile, with 71.3% achieving but was marginally below the national average of 72.0%. The achievement of looked after children showed a strong performance in reading at KS1 with 63.6% achieving the expected standard compared with just 52.0% of their peers nationally. In writing and maths the performance was equally as strong with again 63.6% of Herefordshire's looked after children achieving the expected standard compared to 42.0% and 49.0% of their peers nationally.

- At key stage 2, the percentage of children attaining the expected standard by the end of the primary phase in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average of 65% with 69% of pupils reaching the expected standard in Herefordshire. This ranked Herefordshire as the top local authority in the West Midlands for a second consecutive year and in the top quartile nationally. The percentage of pupils working at greater depth (12%) was above the national average for the combined attainment measure in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN) support who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was 35%, ranking in the top quartile nationally. 64% of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) achieved the expected standard in reading writing and mathematics, slightly below their peers nationally and a small decrease on last year (third quartile performance).
- More girls at key stage 2 achieved the expected standard (72%) than boys (67%), reflecting the national picture. Nevertheless, both boys and girls outperformed their peers nationally, with boys ranked in the top quartile nationally and girls in the second quartile. The gap in attainment between girls and boys in Herefordshire closed in 2019. Pupils made above average progress in the DfE progress measure in reading (+1.5), writing (+1.4) and mathematics (+1.0) at key stage 2 in 2019. In all subjects Herefordshire was in the top quartile of all local authorities for all measures of progress. Progress in reading over the past three years has been particularly strong. Pupils eligible for free school meals also made good progress in reading (+0.01) compared to -0.8 for their peers nationally. FSM progress in writing (0.5) was better than the national figure (-0.7) as was progress in maths (-0.1 in Herefordshire versus -1.0 nationally). Disadvantaged pupils (this includes FSM6 pupils – free school meals at any point over the last 6 years, LAC and post LAC pupils) made better progress than their peers nationally with progress scores of 0.75 in reading, 0.77 in writing and 0.31 in maths. Looked after children made exceptionally good progress in reading (1.89), writing (1.80) and mathematics (1.59) at key stage 2, outperforming their peers regionally and nationally. Attainment for looked after children at Key Stage 2 in 2019 improved greatly from 2018 with 50% of looked after children reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 37% of looked after children nationally.
- The performance of children with an education health care plan (EHCP) was below national (4.0% compared to 9.13%) in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths. This ranked Herefordshire in the fourth quartile

- In 2019 Herefordshire secondary schools and academies performance at key stage 4 was below national (state funded schools) in the key performance indicators which include Progress 8 (-0.19 versus -0.03), Attainment 8 (44.7 versus 46.8), GCSE English and mathematics attainment at grades 9-5 (40.1 versus 43.4%) and grades 9-4 (62.4 versus 64.9%) and attainment in the E-Baccalaureate (Average Points Score 3.96 versus 4.08). Performance for all indicators was in the third quartile for all external national measures, except progress 8 which was in the fourth quartile.
- Girls' progress (0.03) continues to be better than that of boys (-0.41) in Herefordshire, reflecting the national pattern. Despite this both girls and boys also ranked in the fourth quartile nationally for the Progress 8 measure. Despite the disappointing progress data three secondary schools' progress data was above the national average: The Steiner School, St Mary's High School and Fairfield High School and seven were classified as performing in line with national expectations.
- The national picture for vulnerable groups indicates that the gap between disadvantaged pupils (pupils who have been FSM in the last six years, post looked after and looked after) and their non-disadvantaged peers at Key Stage 4 continued over the last academic year. In Herefordshire the performance of disadvantaged pupils in the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measure was well below national and in the fourth quartile. However, despite performing below their peers nationally, those eligible for free school meals performed in the second quartile for the percentage achieving Grade 9-5 in English and mathematics measure for a second successive year. Pupils with SEN support also performed below national in both the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures, putting them into the fourth quartile.
- There were 19 looked after children (LAC) in the eligible cohort for GCSEs in 2019. Their performance across the range of 8 GCSE subjects (Attainment 8) was better than that of looked after children nationally (Attainment 8 was 24.0 versus 19.0 nationally). Herefordshire's looked after cohort also performed better than their peers nationally in Progress 8 (-0.73) compared to looked after children nationally who scored -1.27. In September 2019, 94.2% of these young people were in education, training or employment.
- Pupils in Herefordshire with an EHCP (education and health care plan) performed in the fourth quartile in the Attainment 8 measure and the third quartile for the progress 8 measure.
- At key stage 5 provisional results show maintained school and academy sixth forms performed well against the national average for state-funded school students in key performance indicators. Across Herefordshire the average points score per entry, recorded by students at A-level was 33.98 at A Level, an improvement on 2018 (32.40). In the progress measure our school sixth forms performed in line with national or better than national. One school sixth form was well above average with a score of 0.48. For students following a less academic route performance improved with an average points score per entry in applied general qualifications rising from 25.08 in 2018 to 30.79 in 2019. It must be remembered that the cohort reported on nationally for these qualifications was relatively small (184 students in Herefordshire in 2019).
- The 2019 annual outturn published by the DfE (Department For education) shows that the combined percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose destination is unknown in Herefordshire was 5.8%, which was higher than the England average of 5.5%. Individually 4.5% were reported as

NEET with 1.3% activity not known. England figures were 2.6% NEET and 2.9% activity not known. A recent key focus for Herefordshire has been the procurement of a new data system, the purpose of which is to ensure increased accuracy and consistency of reporting.

8. All schools and academies in Herefordshire are subject to the council's annual risk assessment, developed by the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership (HSIP). The HSIP group comprises of school leaders in both maintained and academy schools. Its focus has been 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.
9. The annual risk assessment informs the council's approach to monitoring schools causing concern. This includes 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. Local authority officers are currently in discussion with representatives from the RSC and the Department for Education regarding Bredenbury Primary School and Brookfield School, which were recently judged inadequate by Ofsted.
10. Centrally generated targets, developed with members of the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership, continue to be issued annually to schools by Herefordshire Council. 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. These schools are also invited to participate in school improvement projects such as those run by the HSIP project Board. In 2018-2019 schools who did not meet their targets or who were identified as high risk in the annual risk assessment process participated in a variety of intervention measures including a pupil premium project, a small schools leadership project and a curriculum project.
11. Six small primary schools participated in the HSIP small schools leadership project which was run by Whitchurch Teaching School in 2018-2019. A mixture of six primary and secondary schools participated in the cross phase pupil premium project run by Marlbrook Teaching School and four secondary schools took part in the curriculum project run by Fairfield High School. The HSIP project identified for 2019-2020 include subject networks in science and history for primary teachers who lead in these subjects and a raising boys' attainment in KS4 English project with seven participating secondary schools. Eight schools took part in round 5 of the school to school support programme with particular improvements in outcomes seen in two of the participating primary schools.
12. The 'Solid Roots' which began in the autumn of 2018, aims to support the already good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This project comprises of three work streams: developing speech and language in order to close gaps between vulnerable groups and their peers, training and workforce development including developing parental engagement via the home learning environment and supporting parenting skills using the Solihull Parenting Approach. 560 have started courses in the Solihull parenting approach and 143 have received training in this approach and a further 65 have been trained as trainers for this approach.

13. Building on the success of previous school improvement initiatives in Herefordshire, such as our approach to boosting outcomes in phonics and mathematics, local National leaders in education (NLEs) and the teaching schools continue to be involved in projects or support to individual schools to raise standards at the end of the primary and secondary phase. We continue to have four teaching schools across Herefordshire.
14. The annual Herefordshire school leadership conference focused this year on 'creating excellence in education'. Input from key note speakers including Dame Alison Peacock covered subjects such as growing concerns at national level around young people's mental health, creating a culture of safeguarding, the new Ofsted framework, the achievement of pupil premium students and excellent school governance. Positive feedback was received from many school leaders and governors. A second conference was held for all designated safeguarding leads across Herefordshire that focussed on contextual safeguarding issues such as peer on peer abuse and child exploitation. This conference was extremely well attended and very positive feedback was received.
15. Supporting schools and academies with safeguarding arrangements continues to be a key priority for council officers. Individualised tailored support to improve safeguarding practice has been given to 60% of primary schools, 79% of secondary schools and special schools over the past four years. This input includes one day reviews of schools' safeguarding arrangements, quality assurance audits or feedback on published policies and practice.
16. The vast majority of maintained schools and all academies now 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 annual safeguarding audit issued by Herefordshire Council and monitored through the Herefordshire Children's Safeguarding Board. Currently 97% of schools and colleges have made their return. The remainder are being followed up to ensure the same high completion rate as last year (98%). Schools and colleges who fail to complete the audit are targeted for a safeguarding quality assurance visit by council officers.
17. 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 four years.

Community impact

18. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
19. 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 2019-2024 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. The Education, Development and Skills Strategy mirrors this in its vision and includes the core purposes of safety and wellbeing, high standards, equity and a successful transition to adult life.

20. 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

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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. However, further work is required and this is taking place as part of Herefordshire's approach to school improvement and includes the Solid Roots Project for children aged 2-5 years. Herefordshire is currently working on a bid with all Herefordshire secondary schools to the DfE to help address the gap.

Resource implications

24. There are no resource implications associated with the recommendation. The resource implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response.

Legal implications

25. 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.
26. 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).
27. 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.
28. There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation. The legal implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response

Risk management

29. There are no risk management implications associated with the recommendation. The risk management implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response.

Consultees

30. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Examination Results 2019

Background papers

None