

9 EXCELLENCE CLUSTER AND LEADERSHIP INCENTIVE GRANT

Report By: Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance Service

Wards Affected

The existing Education Action Zone (EAZ) Wards (Golden Valley North, Golden Valley South, Belmont, Stoney Street, Hollington, Pontrilas, Valletts, St Martins and Hinton)

Purpose

1. To up-date the Committee on the Excellence Cluster Bid (EC) and the Leadership Improvement Grant (LIG).

Financial Implications

2. The Excellence Cluster in Herefordshire will receive an annual grant of £660,000 from the DfES for three years beginning September 2003. In addition, the three high schools in the Excellence Cluster (Haywood, Kingstone and Fairfield High schools) will each receive £125,000 annually for three years as part of the Leadership Improvement Grant (LIG). None of this funding requires matched funding from the Council, although a significant amount of senior officer time has been used in securing the bid and will be needed to support the programme from September 1st onwards.

Report

3. Herefordshire was able to bid for an Excellence Cluster (EC) because the County already had a successful Education Action Zone (EAZ). A Transformation Outline Plan (TOP) describing how the EAZ would be 'transformed' into an EC was sent to the DfES and was approved in late Autumn 2002. As a result the county was given permission to submit a more detailed Transformation Action Plan (TAP) by March 31 2003. This plan was accepted, with amendments relating to the details of individual school targets and identified pupil cohorts in the 'Gifted and Talented' strand. The Excellence Cluster begins its formal work in September 2003.
4. The Core Group of schools will participate in, and benefit from, the whole programme. Approximately 90% of the funding will be directed at the core schools which are:

Fairfield High	Hunderton Juniors
Haywood High	Little Dewchurch CE Primary
Kingstone High	Marlbrook Primary
Blackmarston Special	Our Lady's RC Primary
Hunderton Infants	St Martin's Primary

For further information on the subject of this report is available from
Ted St George, Head of Inspection Advice and School Performance Service (01432) 260803

5. The Associate Group of Schools will be linked with particular strands of work such as the 'Gifted and Talented' strand and be supported for networking, INSET and the dissemination of good practice. The Associate Group of 9 schools are:

Clehonger CE Primary	Madley Primary
Clifford Primary	Michaelchurch Escley Primary
Holme Lacy Primary	Much Birch CE Primary
Kingstone and Thruxton Primary	Peterchurch Primary
Longtown Primary	

6. The Excellence Cluster is required to follow the pattern of the successful Excellence in Cities (EIC) national initiative and its work is centred around three strands.
- (a) **The Gifted and Talented Strand** which will identify, resource and provide challenging activities for 10% of the highest achieving pupils in the cohort for each year group.
 - (b) **The Learning Support Unit and Learning Mentor Strands** which will be combined to create a learning support base and a number of behaviour support assistants and learning mentors whose role will be to support individual pupils, improve behaviour and attendance, and seek to engage pupils at risk of exclusion or disaffection.
 - (c) **The Leading School Improvement Strand**, which will build on the work of the EAZ in supporting leadership at all levels within schools to overcome personal, institutional and community barriers to learning.
7. During the spring and summer terms 2003, the Headteachers of the Core group, in particular, have been meeting regularly under the leadership of the current EAZ Director to work out the details of how the project will function at the start of next term. The EAZ Director has been instrumental in synchronizing the ending of the EAZ with the beginnings of the Excellence Cluster and will be co-ordinating the work of the Cluster in its first year of operation.
8. It is important to remember that the Excellence Cluster has been granted as a result of the work of the EAZ. In turn the Leadership Incentive Grant (LIG) is to be given to the three high schools because of their location in the Excellence Cluster. In return for the funding available for both the Excellence Cluster and the LIG, the 3 high schools and the LEA have signed-up to some challenging targets and will be expected to demonstrate evident progress towards them. In addition to the Excellence Cluster Plan the three high schools have had to write a LIG plan with the help of a LIG Consultant. A further meeting is to be held with the DfES in late July to ensure that the plan meets the government's criteria for the grant. The LIG is essentially about improving the quality of leadership in the secondary phase of education and the funding can be used for a wide range of purposes, including staff re-structuring.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee consider the Excellence Cluster and Leadership Improvement Grant proposals and identify any issues to be included in future reports.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- **None identified**