

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>GENERAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>6 JANUARY 2014</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>SCHOOL EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND COMMISSIONING, CHILDREN'S WELLBEING</b>

## **1. Classification**

Open.

## **2. Key Decision**

This is not a key decision.

## **3. Wards Affected**

County-wide.

## **4. Purpose**

- 4.1 To consider school performance for summer 2013 and the school improvement partnership strategy and framework approved by the Cabinet Member for Young People and Children's Wellbeing to improve performance for Herefordshire's children and young people.

## **5. Recommendations**

**That the Committee:**

- (a) considers school performance; and
- (b) comments on how the school improvement framework and strategy can be enhanced to improve the performance for children and young people in Herefordshire.

## **6. Alternative Options**

- 6.1 Alternative options are not listed as it is for General Overview and Scrutiny Committee to decide what options they might wish to pursue in their scrutiny role in relation to school performance.

## **7. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 7.1 To enable General Overview and Scrutiny Committee to exercise its important scrutiny function in relation to pupil and school performance in Herefordshire. It is also an opportunity for General Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the new approach to school improvement developed with schools, the Diocese of Hereford and Archdiocese of Cardiff.

## **8. Key Considerations**

- 8.1 Good educational outcomes are critical to children's and adults wellbeing and to the development of a thriving local economy and strong communities. An effective approach to school improvement drives the performance of schools and the developmental and educational outcomes for children. Developing leadership, management, and teaching and learning are the main elements in sustainable improvement by schools. Effective education is a key driver in reducing costs to support services both during childhood and for adults, for the Council and for the wider public purse.
- 8.2 The strategy and framework plays a significant part in achieving the priorities for the Council, particularly the guiding principles for education, approved by Cabinet with the aim of top quartile performance for education outcomes by 2016, and where there is top quartile performance that Herefordshire is in the top three of its statistical neighbours. The strategy and framework are attached as appendix 1.
- 8.3 Performance headlines are set out below and Members will receive a fuller update in the presentation that will accompany this item. Comparisons against other local authorities are only just becoming available for the summer 2013 results, so where not available are given in comparison to 2012:
- 77% of primary schools were judged good or outstanding, 80% of secondary schools in October 2013. An updated picture will be given in the presentation.
  - The percentage of 5 year old children reaching a good level of development at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in 2013 is above the national average and is in the second quartile of local authorities. Herefordshire's previous performance has seen a rise over the past two years in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to 2012, where the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen to 61% compared to 64% nationally. This represented third quartile performance. In 2013 a new assessment framework was introduced. In Herefordshire the proportion that achieved a good level of development was 55% compared to 52% nationally.
  - At key stage one, the proportion of children reaching expected levels of attainment in 2013 (level 2c+) in reading, writing and Mathematics by the age of 7 has improved. For reading this brings us in line with national average (89%). For writing we have improved from 80 to 84%, against a national average of 85%. For Mathematics we have improved slightly from 89% to 90%, the national average is 91%. We are therefore still below the national average for writing and Mathematics.
  - The percentage of pupils achieving the expected level (4) in reading, writing and Mathematics at key stage 2 in 2013 was 71%, compared to a national average of 76%. Previously the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in both

English and Mathematics had risen from 72% in 2011 to 76% 2012. However, this was in the bottom quartile performance. The national average for achieving the expected level in both English and Mathematics in 2012 was 79%.

- The proportion of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs was 87.4%, in 2012 which was in the top quartile of performance and above the national average of 83.2%. However, the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs including English and Mathematics in 2012 was 56.5%, below the national average of 58.8%. Provisional results for 2013 indicate that 56.3% of pupils achieved 5 A\*-C GCSE (or equivalent) including English and Mathematics.
- There were 14 Herefordshire Looked After Children in the cohort for GCSEs in 2013. One has severe learning difficulties and autism and was therefore not entered for any exams. The other 13 young people have all left school with at least one qualification (92.9%). Seven of the young people have achieved the equivalent of 5 GCSEs grade C and above (53.8%) and two have achieved at least 5 including English and Maths (15.4%). These young people have overcome exceptional difficulties in their lives and all of these young people were in education, training or employment in September.
- At A-levels 91.7% of students entered achieved 2 or more passes in 2012. Herefordshire was in the top quartile for the percentage of students achieving 3 A\* - A grades at 14.9%. However, Herefordshire was also in the worst quartile (and therefore the lowest performance) in terms of proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment.
- Across all ages there were significant variations between schools and between groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals compared to their peers, where the gap overall in Herefordshire was amongst the widest across counties in the West Midlands. For GCEs it was the widest in the West Midlands and in the bottom ten in the country. The Closing the Gap project is an initiative to address this with schools, as is the ongoing work with OfSTED.
- Herefordshire has recently been mentioned in OfSTED's annual report in a number of areas as performing comparatively poorly at a regional and national level and in particular in relation to the percentage of pupils who can attend a good or outstanding school at primary age, and on the gap in progress and achievement between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers.
- A number of strategies are being used to address the improvement issues detailed above. These focus on supporting schools to improve leadership and management (including governance) and teaching and learning. Schools are also supported to focus on specific children and young people through the Closing the Gap project.

Further key information can be found in Appendix 2, contained in the slides to be circulated to General Overview and Scrutiny Committee by 31 December 2013.

- 8.4 The relationship between local authorities, schools, the DfE and OfSTED has changed considerably under the coalition government. The emphasis is very much on the autonomy of schools with a drive from the DfE to increase this, whilst at the same time holding the local authority accountable for the overall sufficiency and quality of education, and the outcomes for children and young people within their area. Herefordshire has had a mixed economy of schools and a policy position of working with all schools, including

academies, as part of the Herefordshire Learning Community.

- 8.5 Schools in Herefordshire have developed significant local school to school support relationships, including 13 headteachers becoming nationally accredited National Leaders of Education (NLEs, 7 schools), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs, 6 schools), and a Teaching School in Wigmore. All of these, along with locally developed relationships, are established to provide school to school support.
- 8.6 The Herefordshire approach to school improvement required significant change and renewal, in partnership with headteachers, the Diocese of Hereford and Archdiocese of Cardiff. It has been encouraging to see the commitment and enthusiasm from schools to establishing a clear approach with the school community.
- 8.7 The Council has clear statutory duties regarding sufficiency and quality of education in its area. The role of a local authority has increasingly moved to one of “place shaping” rather than direct delivery of services and Herefordshire has embraced this approach, including the recent development of the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership strategy and framework. Within this approach there is a clear programme of work, and specific accountabilities set out for the local authority and how it will fulfil its statutory duties, including intervention. Risk assessments have been issued to all schools this term as part of this approach.
- 8.8 The Council has led the Closing the Gap initiative this year, which has focused on pupils at risk of not making expected progress. These have been highlighted to individual schools and a dialogue between officers and schools has promoted a clear focus on the needs of individual pupils. This complements schools own work, including the focus on the use of the pupil premium.
- 8.9 The effectiveness of the approach is overseen by the School Improvement Partnership Group, comprising of the local authority, the Diocese of Hereford, the Archdiocese of Cardiff and local leaders of education that are either nationally accredited or have a track record of improvement locally. This work is monitored through the Strategic Group for Education, which includes the Cabinet Member for Young People and Children’s Wellbeing and the Director of Children’s Wellbeing. The approach will be formally reviewed annually and developed according to the findings.
- 8.10 The Council is developing its relationship with OfSTED regional HMI and with the DfE Academies, Performance and Brokerage Division to coordinate and develop support and challenge to address pupil progress and performance. At the Council’s request, OfSTED HMI will be working with the local authority in the new year to address specific issues such as the performance of pupils with English as an additional language. The Council is also intending to work with the National College for Teaching and Leadership to enhance our approach.
- 8.11 The wider Council has a critical role to play in achieving the priorities for education, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups. Improvements in the availability and quality of housing for vulnerable groups, improvements in children’s health and wellbeing, enhancement of access to and the use of the web and Council communications so that children and families and schools can be signposted to and access services, are all examples of the way the Council and Hoople can play a key role in achieving core priorities of the Council.

## **9. Community Impact**

- 9.1 Pupil performance plays a key role in the lives of children and young people and provides a measure of their development and achievement. Results play a significant role in achieving employment or accessing higher education.
- 9.2 The development of the strategy and framework has paid particular attention to the performance data at an individual pupil level, for cohorts of pupils for example those eligible for free school meals, at a school level, local authority level and trends over time. This forms the basis of the work of the strategy and framework and enable targeted work with groups of pupils and schools, improving the outcomes at a community level.

## **10. Equality and Human Rights**

- 10.1 The development and implementation has and will pay due regard to our public sector equality duty to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

and the focus on particular vulnerable groups will explicitly address this duty.

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1 The resources available for school improvement have reduced over a number of years in line with year on year reductions in government grant. The service has been cut by 60% (£562k in 2012/13 to £225k for 2013/14) and as a result has ceased some activities in terms of direct provision, including some trading. The accreditation of newly qualified teachers is now being done by the Wigmore Teaching School, and governor support services are now provided by surrounding local authorities or private/not for profit organisations, rather than the local authority itself.
- 11.2 The Council has had a role in brokering this support and still has some statutory duties to fulfil in relation to governors. The new model has a small staffing complement alongside funding to purchase support to act on behalf of the local authority. The budget for school improvement advisors is £225k, for a lead for improvement across early years and schools, and for a school improvement advisor. These are posts which require significant expertise and experience of school improvement. The rest of the money (£40k) will be used to buy in specific support, particularly from national and local leaders of education. In addition, school improvement support is provided by the performance team within Children's Wellbeing Services in relation to data and analysis to enable early years and school improvement to function effectively. The additional needs team also work with schools to address improvement from a special educational needs perspective.
- 11.3 These arrangements will be kept under review and the effectiveness monitored closely as this is a very slim structure and resource. The local authority's role is now established as

being involved in individual schools in inverse proportion to the success of the school. In other words a “light touch” approach for good and outstanding schools where our risk assessment does not highlight any particular issues. This approach is set out in the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership framework and includes the local authority’s approach to warning notices and possible intervention.

- 11.4 The work of the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership will influence the use of the dedicated schools grant (c.£110m) and school to school support, thereby maximising the use of the overall resources available across the Herefordshire Learning Community.

## **12. Legal Implications**

- 12.1 Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on the Council to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in relation to all its education functions and specifically to ensure that all its education functions are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the authority with a view to:

- (a) promoting high standards;
- (b) ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training; and
- (c) promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every child of compulsory school age.

- 12.2 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.

- 12.3 Consideration of this report falls within the definition of responsibility delegated to the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in Part 3 paragraph 3.5.2.1.n of the Council’s Constitution

## **13. Risk Management**

- 13.1 The risks to the Council are that the new model does not deliver the strategic objectives, given that it is a new, untested way of working with considerably less resources available from the local authority than ever before. This will be mitigated through the development of a strong, active Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership Group, by wider engagement with governors through the Herefordshire Governors’ Association which has recently been reinvigorated, and through the clear remit of activity for the new school improvement service. Influencing the use of the dedicated schools grant by schools to address improvement activities would further mitigate the risk.

- 13.2 The effectiveness of the local authority arrangements will be reviewed through performance monitoring. OfSTED may also inspect the local authority, given the performance of some vulnerable groups, particularly those eligible for free school meals in relation to overall progress, and progress in relation to their peers.

- 13.3 There are risks that some schools do not engage with, or value the new approach and still look for a paternalistic model of local authority support. Clear communications are planned, alongside direct work between schools to open up to all to address this risk

## **14. Consultees**

14.1 Herefordshire Schools and Herefordshire Governors

## **15. Appendices**

15.1 Appendix 1 Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership Strategy and Framework

Appendix 2 Presentation of school performance to be circulated by 31 December 2013

## **16. Background Papers**

16.1 None identified.