

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>General overview an scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>School examination performance</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Head of learning and achievement</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To consider school performance for summer 2016 and the effectiveness of the Herefordshire school improvement partnership strategy and framework in improving outcomes for Herefordshire's children and young people.

## **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 undertake within its scrutiny role.

## Reasons for recommendations

2. To enable the committee to scrutinise pupil and school performance in Herefordshire as assessed in 2016.

## Key considerations

3. The role of a local authority in education has not fundamentally been changed in legislation despite the past year's publications under the previous prime minister. In summary the role of Herefordshire Council in relation to education, across all schools including academies, continues to focus on:
  - championing all children in Herefordshire, irrespective of the education setting they are attending
  - shining a light on pupil performance and opportunity, brokering links between schools (including links external to Herefordshire) and holding school leadership to account (this includes the Regional Schools Commissioner)
  - 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 SEND, and those who need support to be safe
  - supporting school governance and leadership in maintained schools
  - 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, including potentially a new university
4. Herefordshire council plays a central role in school improvement in collaboration with the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership (HSIP), established with all schools in Herefordshire. HSIP includes representation from national leaders in education, school leaders in maintained schools and academies, the Diocese of Hereford and the Archdiocese of Cardiff. Whatever the designation, status or structure of a school, be it a maintained school or an academy school or a school in a collaboration, federation, or trust, the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership is collectively aiming for:
  - all children and young people to achieve the best they can so that Herefordshire ranks in the top quartile of local authority area performance in education, health and care measures
  - all education provision to be judged good or outstanding.
  - all education provision to be highly valued by children and young people, parents and carers, the community and employers

5. Herefordshire council's approach to school improvement is subject to Ofsted inspection, which examines the role of the council in relation to pupil outcomes in maintained schools, academies and free schools.
- In January 2017 92% of Herefordshire children were taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 80% of pupils in the secondary phase were in good or outstanding schools; over 98.8% of early years' group settings were judged as good or outstanding; 95% of childminders inspected were good or outstanding.
  - The successes of Herefordshire's youngest learners in the reception year, year one and year two were highlighted in a communication from Ofsted's West Midlands Regional Director. This particular 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 2016 was 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. The attainment difference between children eligible for free school meals and their classmates closed marginally. A good level of development was achieved by 51% of children eligible for free school meals. Although this is an improvement on the previous two years, the achievement of children eligible for free school meals remains below regional and national averages. In contrast, the performance of pupils for whom English is an additional language improved to 62% which ranks in the second quartile when compared with all local authorities.
  - In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children improved and is now in line with all pupils nationally. Lorna Fitzjohn, the Ofsted HMI Regional Director for the West Midlands commented 'The percentage of pupils in Herefordshire who met expected progress in year 1 phonics met the national average, which is positive. These are firm foundations for future success.'
  - At key stage 1, pupils were assessed for the first time against the new more challenging curriculum introduced in 2014. The proportion of Herefordshire seven year old children reaching expected levels of attainment in 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average in the second quartile when compared to all local authorities. The percentage of more able pupils who achieved the higher standard and so were identified as 'working at greater depth' was in line with the national average.
  - The attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils was mixed at key stage 1. The inequality gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their non-disadvantaged classmates was significantly greater than the national average. Pupils with English as an additional language achieved poorly in comparison to both regional and national averages. However, pupils with identified special educational needs support achieved results in the top quartile when compared to all local authorities.
  - At key stage 2, the percentage of children attaining the expected level by the end of the primary phase in reading, mathematics and writing was broadly in line with the national average although pupils achieved less well in mathematics. In comparison with all local authorities Herefordshire was ranked in the second quartile. Similarly, the percentage of pupils working at greater depth compares favourably with that found nationally. Unlike performance at other key assessment points, boys in Herefordshire outperformed boys nationally overall at key stage 2; this was not the case for girls in Herefordshire

who fared less well than girls nationally. Overall, pupils' progress in reading was particularly strong.

- The performance of Herefordshire secondary schools and academies was more mixed in 2016 against the new range of performance indicators introduced by national government which includes: Attainment 8, Progress 8, attainment at A\*-C 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. Attainment was less strong. In key attainment performance indicators the percentage of pupils achieving good passes in 8 subjects (Attainment 8), the E-Baccalaureate and an A\*-C pass in GCSE English and mathematics in Herefordshire was slightly below the national average.
- Nevertheless, the attainment and progress of vulnerable groups of pupils in secondary schools and academies demonstrated some significant successes. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieved an A\*-C pass in GCSE English and mathematics was in the top quartile when compared with other local authorities; the progress 8 and attainment scores for this group of pupils were equally strong. Similarly the attainment of pupils with identified special educational needs support ranked in the second quartile nationally. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language was exceptionally positive.
- There were 18 Herefordshire looked after children in the cohort for GCSEs in 2016. Of these young people, 23.5% left school having achieved the equivalent of five GCSE passes at grades A\*-C, including English and mathematics; this is higher than last year's national average for LAC of 13.8%. All of these young people were in education, training or employment in September 2016.
- At key stage 5 maintained school and academy sixth forms were above the national average in key performance indicators, including the percentage of students who achieved an A\*-E grade pass at A-level (99.1%:98.1%) and the percentage of top performing students who achieved an A\*-A grade (31.7%:25.8%).
- Across Herefordshire the average points score recorded by students at A-level ranked in the top quartile in comparison to all local authorities; the percentage of students attaining 3 A\*-A grades or better at A-level 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.
- From September 2016, as a result of changes implemented by central government, the numbers of young people in Herefordshire who are identified as not in education, employment or training (NEET) decreased to include only young people resident in the county until the end of the academic year when they turn 18. For the first time the percentage of young people who are identified as 'not known' to be in education, employment or training will be used as a key performance indicator.
- Last academic year the NEET figure in Herefordshire was broadly in line with national average at 4.5%. However, the percentage of the cohort identified as 'not known' has consistently been very low at 2.2%. 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. Developing strong leadership across the county has been a priority for council activity. The November 2016 leadership conference focussed on 'diminishing the difference' between the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people and their peers and was well-attended by school leaders, including governors. The conference was also supported by Ofsted HMI and the Chief Executive of Herefordshire council. Feedback from attendees was exceptionally positive and several cited the input from the headteacher of Vauxhall primary school in London (awarded Times Educational Supplement primary school of the year) into his approach to raising standards for children eligible for free school meals, as inspirational.
7. Herefordshire council is committed to a self-sustaining model of school improvement for raising standards across the county where best practice is shared across the system and schools who require support benefit from the expertise of leading headteachers and national leaders of education. A Herefordshire primary school and a Herefordshire headteacher who applied last year to attain teaching school and national leader in education status respectively have successfully been designated; there are now three teaching schools in the county and eight national leaders in education. Herefordshire council recently supported applications from an additional two schools for teaching school status.
8. School-to-school support is the main driver of school improvement and schools and academies have been encouraged to bid for projects which aim to raise standards by collaborating with other schools. These bids are monitored by the HSIP to ensure both transparency in the allocation of available resources and to gauge whether projects have successfully impacted on improving standards.
9. The Secretary of State for Education has stated that she expects all maintained schools will become academies in the future and will also benefit from being part of multi-academy trusts (MAT). However, the primary focus of national work will be on raising standards and dealing with poor performance. Currently the majority of academies in Herefordshire are single converter academies and are not in a MAT arrangement. Senior officers from the council ran a series of workshops in the summer months of 2016 to explore with headteachers from both academy and maintained schools in Herefordshire whether the council should consider establishing a local authority multi-academy trust. Although it was decided that this is not an appropriate step at this moment in time, Herefordshire Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study into the benefits of establishing Children's Trust arrangements.
10. Herefordshire Council continues to work in partnership with the Regional Schools Commissioner to highlight issues of underperformance in academy schools and in schools and academies identified as 'coasting' through the analysis of performance data. The HSIP's approach to the risk assessment of schools and academies' reported results is now in its third year; a new initiative to use performance data to issue schools and academies with centrally-generated targets with the aim of achieving the standards which would see the council rank in the top quartile of all local authorities has recently been implemented.
11. Supporting the quality of leadership at governing body level in both maintained and academy schools is a key aspect of the council's work. Over the course of the year the council has worked closely with the West Midlands National Advocate for Leaders

in Governance to address shortcomings in governance which could impact on standards in a small number of schools and academies.

12. The council's statutory duties 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.
13. Last year the moderation of teacher assessment at key stages 1 and 2 was undertaken by Marlbrook teaching school on behalf of the council. Arrangements for moderation were deemed to meet requirements by the Standards Testing Agency (STA) and their feedback was extremely positive. These arrangements will continue this academic year as teachers from Marlbrook successfully completed STA's new testing requirements and are now approved to cascade the national moderator training and to undertake external moderation activity during the 2016/17 assessment cycle.
14. Council officers continue to support leaders across the county to ensure that safeguarding arrangements in schools and academies meet requirements.

## **Community impact**

15. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
16. 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.

## **Equality duty**

17. 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.
18. The Herefordshire Leadership Conference organised by the council in autumn 2016 highlighted the need to diminish the difference between the achievement of vulnerable pupils and their classmates. Presentations by HMI Ofsted and the headteacher from Vauxhall primary school in London highlighted the issue and offered practical advice on removing barriers to achievement.
19. The Herefordshire Teaching School Alliance is now 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.

## Financial implications

20. There are no specific financial implications contained within this report
21. The performance outlined in this report is the result of the dedicated schools grant (schools block funding) of £96.13m in 2016/17. Schools and academies also receive additional grant funding direct from government, for example pupil premium.
22. School improvement funding has changed radically from April 2017 as a result of the national £600m reduction in the education services grant (ESG). ESG transitional funding provides £50k for the period April 2017 to August 2017 plus a provisional allocation of £124k from the new school improvement and brokering grant for the period September 2017 to March 2018. In addition there is the opportunity to bid to the DfE for a share of the national £140m strategic school improvement fund.

## Legal implications

23. Consideration of this report falls within the definition of responsibility delegated to the general overview and scrutiny committee as set out in part 3, section 5, paragraph 3.5.2.1.n of the council's constitution.
24. 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 for education and training; and
  - c. promoting the fulfilment 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 plan is maintained).

## Risk management

25. 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.
26. 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

27. None

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: National curriculum assessments key stage 1

Appendix 2: National curriculum assessments key stage 2

Appendix 3: Key stage 4 Outcomes 2016

## **Background papers**

- None identified.