

Meeting:	Children and young people scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Monday 11 March 2019
Title of report:	School Examination Performance
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 2018 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 2018

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 secondary 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.
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, particularly in the early years and the primary phase, outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 have demonstrated considerable fluctuation.
4. Moving forward, more work is also needed to ensure that all education provision is judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted. Outcomes achieved by secondary school pupils in the attainment 8 measure at key stage 4 need to improve. In addition, our county should aim for a greater percentage of children to achieve at the higher standard (greater depth) in Key Stages 1 and 2.
5. 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.
6. 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 will be summarised as a presentation at the meeting of the children and young people's scrutiny committee and made available following the meeting.

7. In January 2019 93.5% of Herefordshire children were taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 77.6% of pupils in the secondary phase were in good or outstanding schools; 100% of early years' group settings inspected were judged as good or outstanding; 94% of childminders inspected were good or outstanding.
8. Herefordshire's youngest learners in the reception year, year one and year two have continued to outperform their peers nationally for a third consecutive year. At the end of the primary phase in key stage 2, historically a weakness in Herefordshire, pupils' results ranked in the second quartile nationally for combined attainment in reading, writing and

mathematics, a significant improvement on last year. As a result Herefordshire ranked 29th nationally, an improvement of 62 places. 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 2018 was 74.1%, above the national average of 71.5%. This is in the top quartile when compared with all local authorities in England. Both boys and girls performed better than the national average with girls' performance ranking in the top quartile. 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 showed a slight decrease in 2018. A good level of development was achieved by 56% of children eligible for free school meals; nationally 57% of children eligible for free school meals met the good level of development. The performance of children eligible for free school meals however remains in the 2nd quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of success rates over time highlights a small decrease in the performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire: 118 out of 200 (59%) EAL pupils reached a good level of development in 2018 compared with 63% in 2017. This ranks Herefordshire in the 3rd quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of data for the small numbers of looked after children in 2018 shows that they outperformed their looked after peers nationally in the early years foundation stage.
- In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children has continued to improve with 84.2% achieving the expected standard, above the national average of 82%. 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. The percentage of free school meals children achieving the phonics threshold (74%) was above the national average (70%) and ranked in the first quartile when compared to all local authorities for the first time.
- 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 both reading (79%) and writing (73%). However, the percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in both reading (25%) and mathematics (21%) lagged behind their peers nationally.
- 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%) was above the national average (60%) and ranked in the second quartile. Pupils eligible for free school meals also made improvements in their attainment in writing (50%) and maths (57%) when compared to last year's results. Pupils receiving support for special educational needs (SEN) performed in the top quartile in reading (53%), writing (45%) and maths (51%) for the second year consecutive year. The performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) demonstrated a decline in reading and mathematics in 2018. The achievement of looked after children was variable with a strong performance in reading at KS1 but performing less well than the same cohort nationally in writing and mathematics.

- At key stage 2, the percentage of children attaining the expected level by the end of the primary phase in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average of 64% with 68% of pupils reaching the expected standard in Herefordshire. This ranked Herefordshire as the top local authority in the West Midlands. Herefordshire had the joint highest increases nationally in reading (up seven percentage points) and in mathematics (up six percentage points). The percentage of pupils working at greater depth (10%) was in line with 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 40%, ranking in the top quartile nationally. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) also outperformed their EAL peers nationally with 69% achieving the expected standard in reading writing and mathematics.
- More girls at key stage 2 achieved the expected standard (73%) than boys (63%), reflecting the national picture. Nevertheless, both boys and girls outperformed their peers nationally, with the boys ranked in the second quartile nationally and the girls in the top quartile. Pupils made good progress in the progress measure in reading (+1.4), writing (+1.0) and mathematics (+0.6) at key stage 2 in 2018. Progress in reading over the past three years has been particularly strong. Pupils eligible for free school meals also made good progress in reading (+1.3) and mathematics (+1.0) whilst their progress in writing (0.0) was in line with their peers. Looked after children made exceptionally good progress in reading and mathematics at key stage 2, however, their progress in writing and overall attainment was below that of their looked after peers nationally.
- In 2018 Herefordshire secondary schools and academies at key stage 4 performed broadly in line with schools nationally against key performance indicators which include Progress 8 (-0.03), Attainment 8 (45.9), GCSE English and mathematics attainment at grades 9-5 (42.7%) and grades 9-4 (64.5%) and attainment in the E-Baccalaureate (Average Points Score 4.01). Performance for all indicators was in the second quartile for all external national measures barring Attainment 8 which saw performance ranked in the third quartile.
- 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 (-0.03) which ranks in the second quartile in comparison with other local authorities. Nevertheless girls' progress (+0.21) continues to be better than that of boys (-0.26) in Herefordshire. This reflects the national pattern. Both girls and boys ranked in the second quartile nationally for the Progress 8 measure.
- National data on the performance of pupils at key stage 4 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) were published on 24 January. The national picture indicates that the gap between disadvantaged pupils (a group which comprises of FSM pupils, pupils who have been FSM in the last six years and those looked after) and their better off peers at Key Stage 4 grew by 0.6% 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, pupils eligible for free school meals performed at above national and in the second quartile for the Grade 9-5 in English and mathematics measure. Pupils with SEN support also performed slightly better than national in both the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measure, putting them into the second quartile.

- There were 18 looked after children (LAC) in the eligible cohort for GCSEs in 2018. 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 they did not achieve better results than looked after children nationally. This was disappointing because in 2017 they did achieve a better performance in both attainment and progress measures when compared with other looked after children nationally. In September 2018, 94.4% of these young people were in education, training or employment.
 - 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, putting them in the first and second quartiles respectively. Across Herefordshire the average points score recorded by students at A-level ranked in the second quartile in comparison to all local authorities. For students following a less academic route performance was more mixed: in the suite of qualifications known as Tech levels, performance rose from the fourth quartile in 2017 to the second quartile in 2018. Performance in Applied General Qualifications fell from the third to the fourth quartile although the cohort reported on nationally for these qualifications was relatively small.
 - Data for last year from the DFE (Department for Education) show that the combined percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose destination is unknown in Herefordshire (4.9%) was better than the national average which was 6.0%. 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 more in depth analysis of the NEET cohort and their needs. The percentage of young people not in education, employment or training plus those whose destination is not known in Herefordshire had fallen further to 4.3% in December 2018.
9. 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, the Diocese of Hereford and Ludlow and the Archdiocese of Cardiff. 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.
 10. 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 The Hereford Academy, which was recently judged inadequate by Ofsted.
 11. 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 new HSIP project Board. In 2018 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 phonics project, the small schools maths project and the urban schools project.

12. Herefordshire Council champions all children in Herefordshire, whether they are in a maintained or academy school. In 2018 in collaboration with head teachers on the HSIP Board, the HSIP strategy was reviewed. A reconstituted project board will scrutinize three major school improvement projects which are running from December 2018-2019. The three areas that data identified for HSIP's initial projects in 2018-19 are: leadership of small schools, outcomes for pupil premium students (including those on free school meals (FSM)) and the secondary curriculum. Each project is led by one of the Herefordshire teaching schools and has between 5 and 7 participating schools.
13. This school improvement approach builds on the success of previous initiatives. For example, in 2018 the small schools mathematics project comprised of 6 participating schools and one lead school who worked together with the aim of improving outcomes in mathematics, a key area of weakness across the county in 2017, through links with approaches identified by the Department for Education's maths hubs. The project resulted in four out of the six participating schools achieving mathematics results at Key Stage 1 either in line with or above the national average in 2018. Whilst at Key Stage 2 only one participating school reached the expected standard in mathematics in 2018, all six participating schools demonstrated a three year rising trend in results from 2016-2018. This contributed to the overall improvement in mathematics results across the county at key stage 2.
14. The urban schools project involved four schools and aimed to share each school's specific strengths, either in numeracy or literacy, enabling teachers to reflect upon what works well in raising attainment. All participating schools saw improvements in their attainment scores at KS2 when compared with their attainment outcomes in 2017 which increased by between 6-31% in either reading, mathematics or reading and mathematics combined. All participating schools met their FFT20 (Fisher Family Trust) target. This means that pupils in all schools made much better than average progress.
15. The phonics project comprised of four schools (one lead school and three participating schools) who worked together with the aim of improving outcomes in Year 1 phonics. This project was successful with all three participating schools achieving outcomes above the national average for phonics in 2018.
16. A new project '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.
17. 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) 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.
18. An additional school, Whitchurch Church of England Primary was successfully accredited last year as the River Wye Teaching School, bringing the total of teaching schools in Herefordshire to four and thus increasing the county's capacity for school improvement.
19. Partnership working with the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office focused last year on the national Strategic School Improvement Fund. The successful Herefordshire Strategic School Improvement Fund bid, led by Marlbrook Teaching School, brought in

£516,000 of resources to boost teaching across the county in both the primary and secondary phases. There are 20 participating schools who have been allocated a National Leader in Education (NLE) and received external training, resources and time to develop 'quality first teaching'. Initial data outcomes from 2018 show improvements. Marlbrook Teaching School are required to regularly report progress on this project directly to the Department for Education (DFE). The DFE has since brought the Strategic School Improvement Fund to an end nationally.

20. Developing the quality of school governance continues to be a key priority for Herefordshire Council. Over the course of the year, the council has supported governing bodies to broker both support and interim school leadership arrangements with NLEs and leading head teachers; their expertise has ensured schools have received appropriate challenge and support which has helped towards improving outcomes.
21. The annual Herefordshire school leadership conference focused this year on 'putting children and young people first'. Input from key note speakers including Sir John Timpson, Rob Hackfath HMI from Ofsted, Alice Cruttwell, Wendy Tomes, Felicity Gillespie and Nina Jackson covered subjects such as growing concerns at national level around young people's mental health, the educational experience of looked-after children, developing a successful sex and relationships curriculum, the new Ofsted framework, the achievement of pupil premium students and excellent school governance. Positive feedback was received from many school leaders and governors.
22. 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 57% of primary schools, 60% of secondary schools and 50% of special schools over the past three years. This input includes one day reviews of schools' safeguarding arrangements, quality assurance audits or feedback on published policies and practice.
23. 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 84% of schools and colleges have made their return. The remainder are being followed up to ensure the same high completion rate as last year (97%).
24. 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

25. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
26. 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. 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.

27. 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

28. 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.
29. 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.
 30. 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.
 31. The Herefordshire Teaching School Alliance and the HSIP pupil premium project are 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

32. 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

33. 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.
34. 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).
35. 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.
36. 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

37. 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

38. None

Appendices

None

Background papers

None