

Cheshire East Annual Education Report 2012-13 : Executive Summary

The overall aim of this report is to provide an overview of educational outcomes for young people across Cheshire East in a format which is accessible to a range of stakeholders. This detailed report will be shared with all schools, governors and elected members over the coming weeks.

The key messages provided for each Key Stage from Early Years through to Post 16 capture the achievements of learners and the position of Cheshire East's performance compared to both the national position and statistical neighbours. The overall picture emerging from the results for 2012-13 is that Cheshire East Schools continue to perform very well compared to national performance for the majority of key indicators. The exception to this is at the end of Key Stage 4. Collectively, our schools provide a high quality learning experience when using Ofsted Inspection outcomes (87% of schools are good or better) and there are many examples of excellent practice in terms of the high achievement, diversity and breadth of curriculum experiences especially within primary schools.

It is clear from this report that the rates of improvement across some of our schools has slowed in recent years. There are many factors which have contributed to this plateauing effect some caused by national policy change but one of the more influential factors has been the move to a more diverse education system where sector led improvement has been strongly promoted. The transition to establish effective school to school systems has not been coherent and whilst there are examples of highly effective partnership working, it has not been universally applied and not rapid enough. In addition, gaps in achievement between certain vulnerable groups have not closed and this is particularly concerning in Secondary Schools. The authority has to urgently achieve the position where the best educational opportunities are available to all with a total commitment to collectively respond to any underperformance.

Significant work has been undertaken over the last 6 months to establish a coherent strategy for raising achievement across the Borough to urgently address gaps in performance. The establishment of the Education Board (and constituent focus groups) and the generation of the 3 Year 'Raising Achievement Plan' has had real impact in providing a consistent framework through which all schools will strive to improve. There is real and genuine commitment from the vast majority of schools, regardless of status, to share resources and best practice. Programmes put in place are already having impact based around three key priorities: *Improving outcomes for vulnerable groups, establishing coherent school to school support mechanisms and improving educational and business links*. There is a growing acceptance of collective responsibility and accountability across the partnership to address these priorities and a real desire to close achievement gaps.

The initial focus has had to be placed on Secondary School performance. The overall results for 2012-13 for both attainment and progress have halted the decline from the previous year and it is now imperative that accelerated progress is seen. Significant investment has already been put in place by the Partnership to close gaps in performance especially for our disadvantaged learners and the attached table captures these interventions and intended outcomes. The recent conference on closing achievement gaps, attended by close to 200 school representatives has acted as a 'watershed moment' in collectively identifying the issues and agreeing the solutions going forward.

The Cheshire East Education Partnership of schools has to be the future for tackling priorities and key to its success will be the role and functions of the Local Authority and its education services. These services, whilst reduced, remain valued by schools and will provide much of the impetus and coordination to bring about the necessary improvements. Included within this function will be the need to reinforce the LA's statutory duties and collective monitoring role to champion the interests of all young learners. It is important that the partnership continues to draw upon national excellence in education to supplement that available locally.

The future national drive for curriculum reforms and changes to assessment methodology will require our schools to be flexible and proactive in responding to change. The last 6 months has shown that the partnership of schools can harmonise its resources and collaborate together on common priorities.. The test of this new collaboration will be demonstrate that the activity is robust and effective in bringing about the changes needed, especially for our more vulnerable learners. There is much to celebrate in our schools and there is certainly a commitment to accelerate improvements in key areas in achieving the best educational outcomes for all. Ofsted have recently commented on the rigour of our commitment to close gaps across the Borough and we are confident that our strategies will have the impact in both the short and longer term.