

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## REPORT TO: C&F Scrutiny Committee

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**Date of Meeting: September 1<sup>st</sup> 2014**

**Report of: Mark Bayley, Corporate Manager : Standards & Learning**

**Subject/Title: Relationships with Schools & Raising Achievement Plan**

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

The Purpose of this report is to inform and update Scrutiny Committee in the ongoing work of the School Improvement Service Teams in relation to :

- Fostering positive relationships with all schools across the Borough which utilises existing best practice and promotes highly effective sector led improvement.
- Providing an overview of the work of the Education Board and its three year Raising Achievement Plan.
- Improving outcomes for all learners so that local provision addresses the needs of young people in order to maximise learning opportunities.
- Providing an early summary of school performance for academic year 2013-14.

This report refers regularly to various sections of the Raising Achievement Plan, as attached, which provides the detailed summary of the considerable work undertaken to improve learner outcomes over the last 14 months.

It is important to stress from the outset that considerable work has been undertaken to work with all 150 schools across the Borough regardless of their size and status. With the increasing number of academies and the emergence of Studio Schools, Free Schools and a proposed University Technical College (UTC) within Cheshire East, the Education Board needs to draw upon excellence from all schools to promote sector led improvement. This work also includes the involvement of three Teaching Schools within Cheshire East and others which are used from local regions to provide targeted support for our more vulnerable schools.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The contents of the report to be discussed and comments invited with a view to:

- Shaping & influencing the ongoing work of the Education Board and its strategic plan to raise the achievement of all learners.

- To consider how best to ensure that the key Ofsted judgement relating to the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement is strongly delivered. Two options are recommended to address this issue. These are :
  - a. Option A – To maintain school improvement as a regular item on the agenda of C&F Scrutiny Committees allowing all members to develop their knowledge, engagement and influence on service delivery.
  - b. Option B – To establish a dedicated group of elected members led by Cllr Rhoda Bailey who would hold separate meetings to address school improvement themes and then report back to full Scrutiny Committee. This approach was previously adopted on an informal basis as part of the previous PDG structure.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations including context and background**

- 3.1 There is a clear requirement as part of the Ofsted Inspection framework for Local Authorities to ensure that there is effective strategic leadership for school improvement which includes the important role of elected members ( see Appendix 4 for details of Ofsted framework ). Both options outlined above will allow for the regular and detailed discussions of the progress of school improvement activity and ensure that members are adequately informed and influential in the work of the school improvement service teams.
- 3.2 Maintaining the high profile of school improvement and securing the best outcomes for young people ensures that key workstreams associated with Objective 3 of the three year Corporate Plan are met ('People have the life skills and education to thrive').

#### **Context & Background**

- 3.3 In April 2013, the first meeting of the Education Board took place following detailed consultation with key stakeholders from a range of education institutions. At this meeting, the Raising Achievement Plan was presented and discussed with several further changes made prior to final approval.
- 3.4 The Board has continued to meet over the last 14 months and at its final meeting of this academic year, undertook a detailed review of its work, progress and impact. A comprehensive RAG rated summary is presented within the overall plan which outlines the progress against the three strategic priorities.
- 3.5 Whilst much work has been undertaken to establish and promote the work of the Education Board, the most important task is to see clear impact of its work. There have been many key initiatives targeted at improving the outcomes for all learners but most importantly, the considerable work to close achievement gaps for our disadvantaged learners has had the highest priority. The impact analysis of the various workstreams is shown in Appendix 3.
- 3.6 As from June 2013, Ofsted introduced an inspection framework to judge the overall effectiveness of a local authority's role in school improvement. This framework strengthens the important role the Local Authority retains in remaining highly influential on supporting all schools to accelerate the achievements of all learners. We judge ourselves as being effective and a summary of our self-evaluation is shown in the overall plan. (See Appendix 4 for detail).
- 3.7 As part of the work of the Education Board during the last 14 months, a structured Peer Challenge framework has been established involving Liverpool

and Warrington Authorities. Cheshire East was one of the first Authorities in the North West to receive such a peer challenge for school improvement which was a positive and informative process (See Appendix 5 for detail).

- 3.8 At the point of writing this report, the analysis of school performance for the academic year 2013-14 is being undertaken. All performance summaries are provisional at this stage and will be consolidated as further statistical releases are produced through DfE websites. Initial headlines have been included in Appendix 6.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 The work of the Education Partnership impacts on all 150 schools and wards and is dependent upon the agreed level of support

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 One of the potential impacts of the school improvement agenda is that there will be a proportion of Ward members who will be School Governors. It will be important going forward to organise briefings/training for members particularly those who are governors to highlight the importance of this role.

#### **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change / Health**

- 6.1 N/A

#### **7.0 Financial / Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

- 7.1 The move to Academy status will further reduce available funding for schools via Dedicated Schools Grant – clearly charging for services has to be considered.

#### **8.0 Implementation**

- 8.1 The work of the Education Board and Partnership will now be further refined based upon the performance of schools over 2013-14 so that the levels of support and challenge are appropriate. As outlined, the effectiveness of strategic leadership of school improvement functions including elected members needs to be as strong as possible to ensure that there is a consistency and understanding of the educational landscape going forward and allow the Authority to respond swiftly to any potential changes in national policy and practice.