

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 15th November 2011
Report of: Mark Bayley & Anne Gadsden
Subject/Title: **Addressing School Underperformance : Local Authority interventions including the 'Improving Outcomes Programme' (IOP)**

Portfolio Holder : Cllr Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Local Authority to monitor the quality of educational provision for all learners and, where necessary, initiate its powers of intervention where there is clear evidence of underperformance over a sustained period.
- 1.2 At a strategic level, the Local Authority has had to recently satisfy the Department for Education (DfE) School Improvement Division that it has both the capacity and ability to tackle underperformance in schools through intensive monitoring regimes and, where necessary, structural solutions. The DfE have recognised the high quality programmes put in place for identified schools and Cheshire East currently has no schools within the national programme which require external interventions and 'enforced' conversion to an Academy.
- 1.3 Section 72 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all Local Authorities to have in place a 'Schools Causing Concern' policy and to have regard to any additional guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State relating to school underperformance. Within Cheshire East, this policy is known as the 'Improving Outcomes Programme' (IOP). Identified Schools are brought into this programme through a structured process and follow a robust monitoring system to ensure that identifiable improvements are made within realistic timescales. (See Appendix A)
- 1.4 The Local Authority has established a Monitoring & Intervention Team as part of Children & Family Services whose principal purpose is to track the progress of schools to ensure, where resources allow, that high quality provision is provided to all learners. The main focus of this team will be schools within the IOP programme.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Committee with the systems in place to monitor underperforming schools and in particular, outline the process and impact of the Improving Outcomes Programme. Appendix B provides an example of the monitoring process as used within an identified IOP school last year. Appendix C refers to the schools currently within the IOP programme and the impact to date.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 That the report and evidence provided in various appendices be received and noted.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The reason for presenting this information is to report on the impact and progress of the IOP programme as the key process by which underperformance in schools is addressed.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All wards will be affected.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 The IOP programme has had to be recently updated in line with changes to the national Schools Causing Concern process and the expectations of the DfE School Improvement Division. Further potential changes will be needed if, as expected, structured monitoring arrangements are put in place relating to Academies.

7.0 Financial Implications (Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 Performance data has been used to shape the Children & Family service and identify schools in need:

- where the Leadership & Management within schools is judged as not having the capacity to improve,
- where there is poor progress,
- where teaching & learning is less than satisfactory,
- where there is poor attendance.

If schools meet some or all of the above criteria then these schools are brought into the IOP programme. The financial implication for the LA is dependent on the specific needs of the school. The Monitoring & Intervention (M&I) team have an overall commissioning budget of £250,000 to support those schools currently within the IOP programme and the 40+ schools that are identified as Targeted (requiring additional support). The M&I team also monitor the progress of the groups of vulnerable children within these schools.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 Applies in exceptional circumstances where there is a need to remove underperforming teachers/staff within schools including leadership. In addition, the recent example of the establishment of an Interim Executive Board at one of our primary schools has required specific legal involvement.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The key risk relates to the accuracy of reporting and recommendations to ensure that specific interventions are based upon robust processes. Structures are in place to quality assure the accuracy of reported data and it is essential that, where required, national frameworks are accurately adhered to in ensuring that the right outcomes are achieved for the benefit of learners.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Cheshire East has developed a robust process for monitoring and intervening in schools where performance is a concern. This process attempts to ensure that the Local Authority meets its statutory responsibilities and the needs of all of its children and young people. The recent reduction in school improvement funding to Local Authorities has resulted in a major review of school improvement functions which has seen the retention of a small monitoring and intervention team with a commissioning budget to secure intervention strategies where required.
- 10.2 The Monitoring & Intervention Team (M&I) has the responsibility for reviewing the performance of schools on a range of issues and use national benchmarks as well as localised categorisation in order to agree a judgement for the outcomes for pupils. If a school has been inspected during the previous school year the LA will be strongly influenced by this judgement in deciding upon the level of intervention required.
- 10.3 All schools across the Authority are categorised according to our Levels of Support and Intervention (LOSI). This three phase model allows a range of judgements to be used using hard as well as soft data to establish appropriate levels of intervention according to whether a school is categorised as UNIVERSAL, TARGETED or INTENSIVE. In response to this, the Local Authority (LA) monitors the progress schools are making in an effort to intervene before a school is identified as a school causing concern. To this end, the Monitoring & Intervention Team use data held by the LA: OfSTED reports, recent School Improvement Partner records of visits and end of Foundation Stage and Key Stage data to arrive at a judgement which determines which Level of Support & Intervention the school is given.
- 10.4 Appendix A shows the key documentation associated with the IOP programme and the process by which schools are brought into this programme and exit when there is significant evidence of impact and improvements. Over the last 18 months, there is clear evidence of the impact of the IOP programme in tackling underperformance. Some of the successes during this period include :

a. Audlem Primary School

The establishment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the existing Governing Body which was not providing the necessary challenge to school leaders in terms of the quality of provision for learners. This is an example of where the Authority has initiated its statutory powers to intervene through the issuing of a formal warning notice and subsequent application to the Secretary of State for an IEB.

b. Haslington Primary School

The establishment of a robust monitoring framework (as shown in Appendix B) ensured that there was clearly identifiable evidence of progress following the school being placed in an Ofsted category of 'Special Measures'. This school was removed from this Ofsted category in the shortest time period (3 termly Ofsted monitoring visits) and was one of the few schools nationally to move from the lowest category to one of 'Good' overall.

c. Macclesfield High School (now Academy)

The appointment of the previous interim leadership team was secured through IOP funding and this new leadership team was responsible for the significant rise in pupil attainment from 30.7% 5+A*-C including English & Maths in 2009 to 41.5% in 2010. The focus on school standards and effective monitoring of performance was of significant importance during the turbulent period of conversion to an Academy.

d. Oakefield Primary School

The identified actions include the 'removal' of the Headteacher and the establishment of an Executive Headteacher through the National Leader in Education programme (NLE). See Appendix C for ongoing work within the school.

10.5 Appendix B shows an example of the detailed monitoring framework which has been adopted in many IOP schools. This process has to be supported by Ofsted if the school is placed in an Ofsted category and will be customised for each school to ensure that there is one single plan which addresses areas of underperformance. The important issue to stress here is that the monitoring by the Authority should be to validate and quality assure the ongoing work of the leadership team and Governors to raise performance. It is not the task of the Authority to initiate the required actions unless the situation has significantly deteriorated.

10.6 Appendix C shows those schools currently identified within the IOP programme, the factors for their inclusion as well as the range of interventions and monitoring which have been identified. Authority Officers are happy to return to Scrutiny at a future meeting to provide a more detailed analysis of impact of current IOP schools.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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