

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 12th December 2013

Subject: Director's Response – Scrutiny Inquiry into Raising Attainment in Maths and English

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Between December 2012 and May 2013, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board conducted an inquiry into raising attainment in maths and English as it was evident there are a number of barriers preventing a significant number of children and young people in Leeds from achieving mathematics and English qualifications.
2. The Board conducted its inquiry over five sessions during which written and oral evidence was presented and discussed. The inquiry heard from a range of key stakeholders involved in supporting young people in this area including council services and schools leaders (including those from Teaching School Alliances).
3. Members of the Board hope that the findings will contribute to providing better outcomes in English and mathematics for young people in Leeds.

Recommendations

4. The Board are requested to note the responses to the recommendations, based on their findings.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the formal response of the Director of Children's Services to the recommendations of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board inquiry into Raising Attainment in Maths and English

2 Background information

- 2.1 In June 2012 the Scrutiny Board was presented with an overview of The Leeds Education Challenge, a city-wide campaign to accelerate improvement in learning outcomes for 180,000 children and young people. The presentation highlighted that whilst general attainment is close to national averages, improvement rates are slow. Comparative data also highlighted that Leeds' position when compared to 151 other authorities was particularly low for GCSE attainment at 5 A*-C, which included English and maths. As a result, the Board resolved to undertake an inquiry into raising attainment in maths and English as it was evident there are a number of barriers preventing children and young people in Leeds from achieving maths and English qualifications.

- 2.2 The purpose of the inquiry was to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- The approach of educational establishments to teaching maths and English
- Leadership, strategies and systems for improvement
- Teaching methods, skills and capacity
- Targeted maths and English support for children and young people, monitoring progress, tracking improvement and target setting
- Assisting parents and carers to support children and young people in maths and English education

- 2.3 During the course of the five sessions the inquiry received a range of written and oral evidence from range of key stakeholders involved in supporting young people in this area including council services and schools leaders (including those from Teaching School Alliances)

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The response to each of the recommendations of the Board is set out below.

- 3.2 **Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Children's Services in collaboration with Cluster Partnerships undertakes detailed analysis of schools who are achieving in challenging circumstances to identify the source(s) and reasons for their success which may then assist other schools in similar challenging circumstances. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.**

- 3.3 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children's Services. Building on our comprehensive knowledge of schools in Leeds, we are in the process of undertaking an in-depth analysis of four successful schools (two primary and two secondary) to clearly identify the source (s) and reason for their success (including with vulnerable learners). This analysis will result in case studies which

will then be shared more widely with less successful schools in similar challenging circumstances. Some of these schools have Headteachers who are National/Local Leaders of Education and are therefore already supporting other schools but we will consider how these and other leaders in these schools can be effectively deployed more widely to share their good practice. The EMA Hub programme is a key element of this and we intend to roll out this successful initiative to a wider group of schools.

3.4 **Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Children’s Services undertakes an investigation and detailed analysis to identify the underlying issues that create barriers to achievement in Maths and English for vulnerable children in Leeds. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.**

3.5 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children’s Services. A ‘deep dive’ of 2013 data is taking place which will provide an up-to-date picture of the current level of (under)achievement in maths and English for vulnerable learners at all stages (Early Years Foundation Stage profile and Key Stages 1,2 and 4). An additional piece of work will also take place with colleagues in other Children’s Services teams to clearly identify the underlying issues - we already know that there is a clear link between levels of deprivation and levels of literacy and numeracy.

3.6 **Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Children’s Services scrutinises the early entry policies for maths and English GCSE examinations for secondary schools in Leeds to ensure that policies are not counterproductive to pupil attainment. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.**

3.7 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children’s Services. Since the scrutiny inquiry took place there have been some significant announcements at national level about early entry policies in all subject, including English and maths. As a result, Children’s Services has already ensured that awareness of this issue has been raised with senior and middle leaders in Leeds schools in two ways: firstly, a discussion has already taken place between Leeds Headteachers about early entry policies and the potential for this to be counterproductive to pupil attainment. Secondly, detailed discussions have taken place at subject level through Leeds Learning Partnership subject networks. The next stage is to monitor the progress of Y11 cohorts at a selected group of schools (including those who have pursued early entry policies for English and maths and those who have not). The 11-19 learning improvement team will monitor progress during the year and progress to date will be reported at the April 2014 Scrutiny Board although final outcomes will not be known until August 2014 after which we will undertake a detailed analysis to ascertain whether early entry policies have been advantageous to young people or not.

3.8 **Recommendation 4 – That the Director of Children’s Services investigates the viability of collaborating with schools in the design and implementation of city wide standardised reporting format for feeder schools to provide consistent high quality information to secondary schools to aid the**

transition process. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.

- 3.9 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children's Services. There will be a detailed analysis of current reporting formats by which feeder schools provide information to secondary schools. A working party (comprising primary and secondary school leaders, cluster managers and representatives from Learning Improvement and Children's Performance Teams) will then draw up proposals for a standardised reporting format and clear protocols.
- 3.10 **Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Children's Services facilitates dialogue and action at the appropriate level/forum to reinforce the importance of providing accurate and realistic pupil information to secondary schools throughout the whole transition process. The Director is requested to advise the Scrutiny Board of the proposed process for facilitating dialogue in the Director's response.**
- 3.11 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children's Services. There are current issues around lack of trust in the accuracy of pupil information passed on to secondary schools (including attainment levels achieved in national assessed SATs). We believe that the way forward to address these issues is to encourage and facilitate more joint working across the primary and secondary phase including cross-phase moderation of pupils' work to develop a deeper understanding of pupil levels. One of the Children Services primary consultants has already begun a specific piece of cross-phase work (involving pupils in year 5 to 8 in Leeds primary and secondary schools) to build a better understanding of different attainment levels in English across the primary and secondary sectors. It is intended to draw this work together into a case-study to share more widely across the city and also offer similar approaches to mathematics. In addition, we intend to highlight good examples of information sharing in relation to vulnerable pupils as they transfer from primary to secondary school – the Closing the Gap team have already begun work on this with specific groups of schools and we intend to share this information more widely.
- 3.12 **Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Children's Services evaluates the improvement in education provision as a result of traded service and School Improvement Service engagement and identifies which interventions and support are the most effective in driving improvement forward. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.**
- 3.13 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children's Services. The School Improvement Service have begun the process of evaluating the effectiveness of core and traded services on provision and pupil outcomes. Evidence being compiled includes case studies for partnership schools, comments made by Ofsted and HMI about the effectiveness of LA support, evaluation of National/Local Leader of Education support, case studies of best practice, course evaluations and the results of independent questionnaires. The above evaluation will also include the impact of initiatives led by the Closing the Gap team, such as the work with EMA Hubs.

- 3.14 **Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Children’s Services investigates how the service can be effective in raising awareness about the benefits of Teaching School Alliance membership and making more extensive use of National, Local and Specialist Leaders of Education with Headteachers and Governors. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board at the April 2014 meeting.**
- 3.15 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children’s Services. We are addressing this matter in a number of ways. One of these is the establishment of a ‘one-stop shop (particularly at secondary level) where schools have access to information about Teaching School Alliance (TSA) support through an on-line resource which will also ensure cross-referencing with support available through Children’s Services. In addition, at secondary and primary level, we will continue to promote the benefit of TSA support through a range of documentation relating to school improvement. Leeds LA is recognised by the National College as an effective broker and commissioner of National and Local Leaders of Education (N/LLEs). The deployment of this group of leaders is strategic and effective. In addition, we intend to capitalise on potential external funding that is available through the National College for Teaching and Learning to further develop N/LLE support partnerships. So far, the use of Specialist Leaders of Education has been underused. However, we are now working closely with TSAs to ensure that this valuable resource is used more effectively to drive school improvement in focused areas across the city.
- 3.16 **Recommendation 8 – That the Director of Children’s Services investigates how Leeds City Council and the YorksITSA can utilise project funding to research Maths and English attainment in Leeds and the action required for improvement. The Director is requested to advise the Scrutiny Board about the progress of the investigation in the Director’s response.**
- 3.17 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children’s Services. Children’s Services officers have already had initial discussions with YITSA about this recommendation. Whilst neither the Local Authority nor the Teaching School Alliance currently have any specific funding to support such research, we will apply to external organisations for funding to undertake this valuable piece of research. The evidence relating to other recommendations in this inquiry will be used as key elements in this research project.
- 3.18 **Recommendation 9 - That the Director of Children’s Services reviews the intervention strategies and projects implemented in schools and school collaboratives across the City to identify successful outcomes. Plus, also investigates how, working collaboratively with schools, the effective processes can be expanded and embedded in the city to effectively narrow the gap in Maths and English attainment. The Director is requested to provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Board in April 2014.**
- 3.19 This recommendation is accepted by the Director of Children’s Services. Work is already underway to evaluate the impact of intervention strategies and projects across the city on pupil outcomes. These include an evaluation of school to school support in maths and English and such initiatives as the Arooj project, the EMA hubs, Maths4All. Focused research and effective practice and provision on

mathematics has been undertaken a member of the Learning Improvement team and the findings will be shared with Leeds' schools. At secondary level, there will be a key focus (through the Leeds Learning Partnership) on the effectiveness of Pupil Premium funding and Year 7 Catch-up funding. In addition, the Closing the Gap team will review the effectiveness of projects instigated through that team and will ensure that, where these are successful, they will be rolled out to a wider group of schools. We will also be drawing on the reports from cluster managers to analyse the effectiveness of partnership working. The underlying thrust of the action in relation to this wide-ranging recommendation is to ensure that where an intervention strategy is working well, the impact is shared more widely and the strategy is more widely used across the city.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The scrutiny process underpinning this report meant that members were able to have face to face consultation with both representatives of the school sector and council services. The recommendations are based on their engagement in this process.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Some young people are statistically more likely to have lower attainment and progress levels in English and maths such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities, those from some ethnic minority backgrounds, those with EAL and poor school attenders. The purpose of all the strategic and operational activity relating to this area of work is to reduce the inequalities that prevent young people from achieving their potential in English and maths. Closing the Gap is therefore a key element of our work in relation to many of these recommendations.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Raising Attainment in Maths and English is at heart of the Children's and Young People's Plan and its core outcome relating to children and young people 'doing well at all levels of learning'. Many of the key indicators for this outcome rely on improving levels of achievement in English and mathematics. It is also integral to the Leeds 4 Learning Strategy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The investment in resources to address this key issue, both at a school level and within Leeds Children's Services is essential if progress is to be sustained. Maintaining and further developing effective communication systems is a key factor here – these include headteacher briefings and other leadership networks and the further development of websites and other on-line resources. Learning Improvement officer contact with schools is extremely valuable in ensuring that lines of communication are maintained with all schools. The core offer adviser work focuses on pupil progress (particularly in English and mathematics) and

identifies opportunities to share and develop good practice – all closely linked to work around the recommendations from this inquiry.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no relevant legal implications to this response to the inquiry.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Raising the attainment and progress levels of young people in English and mathematics is vital to their future success and life chances and also to the economic and social success of the city.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Raising the attainment and progress levels of young people in English and mathematics is a powerful indicator of our overall success in educating and supporting young people. If young people fail to fulfil their potential in the core subjects of English and mathematics, it is likely to have major consequences for their future economic wellbeing. To successfully address this issue we need to tackle a wide range of complex issues as highlighted in the inquiry report.

5.2 There is evidence that progress is being made to improve outcomes in this area but we all acknowledge that there is still a long way to go if we are to deliver on our ambition to become a Child Friendly city. The scrutiny process has been useful in bringing a fresh perspective to the issues we face and has highlighted the need for further work around a number of key areas of activity.

5.3 We look forward to reporting on progress in relation to the key recommendations from the inquiry to the Scrutiny Board in April 2014.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Board are requested to note the responses to the recommendations, based on their findings

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.