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## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 3 December 2008

SUBJECT: 2008 Audit Commission School Survey

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

### Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in  
(Details contained in the Report)

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## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to the Board a summary of this year's Audit Commission School Survey results highlighting the improvement in schools satisfaction with the services provided locally for children and young people.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 This is a national survey that in 2008 involved 95 local authorities across England and Wales. In the past the survey was an assessment of school satisfaction with local education authority services. While the survey retains a focus on support for school improvement it has with the development of children's services broadened its focus to be more a reflection of schools judgement on the quality of local services for children and young people and their effectiveness in securing improvements in outcomes. This supports schools role as key local children's services partners. The survey covers both council services and those provided by partners.
- 2.2 121 schools took part in the survey. This represented 45% of Leeds schools and included 23 secondary schools and 89 primaries. The national response rate was 34%. Pupil Referral Units and Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres also respond

to the survey. Academies are included in the survey although David Young Academy did not respond this year.

2.3 The survey asks 82 national questions that are divided under the headings of the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes and service management. 6 local questions are also asked.

### 3.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

3.1 These are the best ever results for the survey in Leeds. 43 of the 82 questions have shown statistically significant improvements in satisfaction with no questions declining significantly. 87% of questions are rated by schools as satisfactory or better, with the number of questions where on average schools are dissatisfied declining from 23 in 2007 to 11 this year. In terms of comparison to other authorities there has been a strong reduction in the number of questions ranked in the bottom quartile of local authority averages.

3.2 The questions with the most significant improvement in satisfaction relate to:

- Council services support for: behaviour; the use of the common assessment framework; developing personalised learning; gifted and talented pupils; challenge to schools to perform better; and combating bullying.
- Local services support for: promoting community cohesion; promoting sexual health and reducing teenage pregnancies; ceasing smoking and substance abuse; and helping families in danger of harming or neglecting their children.

Pleasingly these reflect some key children's services priorities and some previously poorly rated questions. There were no questions showing a statistically significant decline in satisfaction levels.

3.3 The questions with the highest levels of satisfaction are detailed below, with the exception of support for combating bullying these have been the highest ranking questions for the past two years.

- Training, advice and support on child protection; and the clarity of guidance on when to make a child protection referral.
- Council's effectiveness in challenging schools to perform better; to develop self-management in schools; to raise attainment in schools; and to define monitoring, support and intervention.
- Council support for combating discrimination and racism.
- The council's financial information, including comparative data for schools; and the council's support to improve resource and financial management in schools.
- The effectiveness of the council's support for combating bullying.

3.4 In terms of comparative performance Leeds now has 39 questions with levels of satisfaction above the national average, up from 10 in 2007. The number of questions in the bottom quartile has dropped from 28 to 8. While there is obvious scope to further improve satisfaction levels 2008 results have to be viewed in the context of the ongoing improvement that they represent, in terms of both support for Leeds schools and schools satisfaction with support for children and young people. In 2008 48% of questions were above national average satisfaction levels the previous best was 34% in 2006.

- 3.5 In considering the survey there are differences between primary and secondary schools responses. Secondary school opinions can be obscured with the majority of responding schools being primary. There are 11 questions with statistically significant variations between primary and responses. Provision of 14-19 education is a good example which is rated by secondary schools as above satisfactory although the all schools average is below satisfactory. Declining secondary satisfaction with support for English as an additional language and meeting the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups are the key areas of concerns emerging for from primary and secondary comparison. For primaries these questions have satisfaction levels above the national average. Satisfaction with support for combating racism and promoting community cohesion are in the top quartile of national responses, for both primary and secondary schools. For the majority of questions primary schools express higher levels of average satisfaction than secondary.
- 3.6 While overall the survey the survey is both positive and representative of good progress it does also highlight areas for further investigation and improvement. Survey results are made available to schools, services and partners. There is an expectation that services will use the results as one source of information to inform service improvement activity including service planning. As questions are quite high level they may also warrant further investigation of the underlying reasons for low levels of satisfaction. The Audit Commission makes available a tool for identifying authorities with high levels of satisfaction that allows for good practice comparison.
- 3.7 Key areas of focus will be the 11 questions rated as unsatisfactory. Additionally attention will be given to questions in the bottom quartile of national satisfaction accepting that only 3 of these are rated as unsatisfactory. Of the 11 unsatisfactory questions 5 are borderline unsatisfactory and a further 5 have shown significant improvement over the past year suggesting that improvement activity is working. The majority of these questions are not in the bottom quartile of local authority satisfaction levels reflecting that they are areas schools nationally express low levels of satisfaction with, national quartiles are highlighted in brackets below. Questions rated below satisfactory are:
- Borderline unsatisfactory: effectiveness of the local Youth Service (3rd quartile); reducing the fear of crime in children and young people (3); provision for 14-19 education (4), support to improve building management and development in your school (3); and local services in support for young carers (4).
  - Unsatisfactory but with significant improvement in satisfaction levels: meeting the mental health needs of children and young people (3); deflecting children and young people from anti-social behaviour (3); community and regeneration programmes take account of the needs of children and young people (4); provision for pupils out of mainstream schools (3); and help to families in danger of harming or neglecting their own children (3).
  - Unsatisfactory: The accessibility of the social workers responsible for Looked After Children (3).
- 3.8 As the survey is quite extensive Leeds adds just an additional 6 local questions. These were also used in 2007 and all questions have improved satisfaction levels from 2007. Satisfaction with healthy schools is now rated as better than good. The effectiveness of local services in promoting effective parenting while improving remains unsatisfactory.

#### 4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The Executive Board is asked to :

- note the findings of the 2008 Audit Commission School Survey as set out in Appendix A including the improvement in performance e since last year
- note that the results of the survey will be used to inform children's services and partners service improvement plans

Background Papers:

2008 Audit Commission School Survey – Leeds results October 2008