

APPENDIX 2 NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Exempt/Confidential under Rule 10.4(1) and (2)

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 13th February 2009

SUBJECT: Annual Standards Report - Secondary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report summarises progress in secondary school improvement in Leeds, with a commentary on successful strategies, and challenges for further improvement. Annexes include summaries of the outcome of recent Ofsted inspections, progress in schools with focused and extended partnerships, and details of trends of improvement for key indicators including for priority groups.
- 1.2 The public interest in maintaining the exemption of Appendix 2 on this subject outweighs the public interest in disclosing information because Education Leeds has a duty to secure improvement and increased confidence in the schools concerned. This would be adversely affected by disclosure of the information.

2.0 BACKGROUND

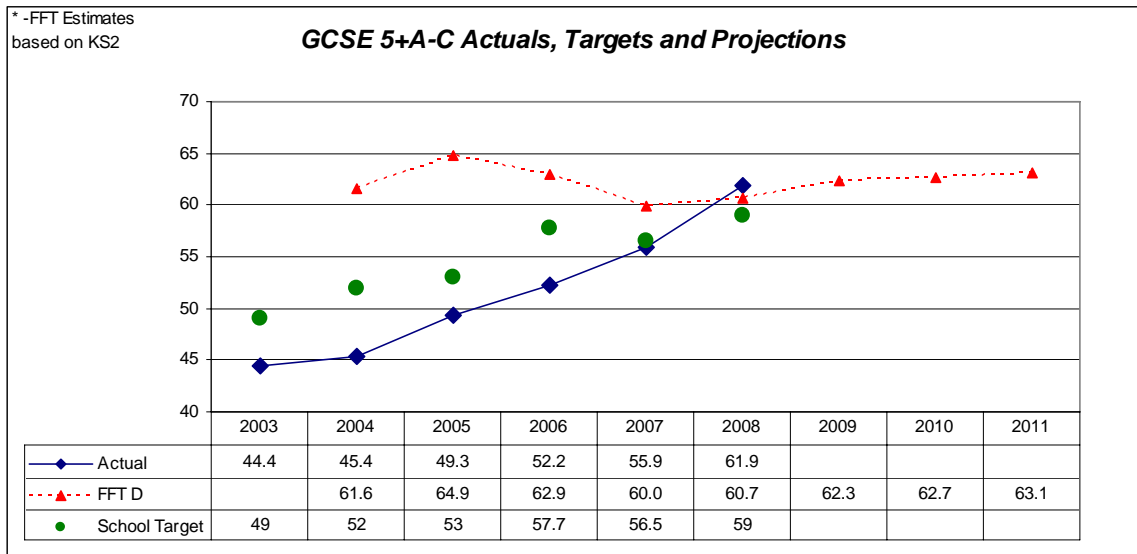
- 2.1 In 2001 performance at Key Stage 4 in Leeds was weak. Under 40% of students achieved 5A*-C; this was 10% below the national figure. In 2008, with 62% of students in Leeds achieving this level, the gap has largely been closed. This paper summarises some of the key improvements made over the past few years, and the challenges that remain.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 After many years of underachievement in secondary schools, 2008 is the first year that outcomes have been in line with national performance. Both the wider indicator of 5A*-C (percentage of students achieving Level 2 by age 16) and the specific indicator of 5A*-C including English and maths are close to national averages, at 62% and 46% respectively. These increases place Leeds in the top performing Local Authorities for improvement in 2008, and show a continuous trend of rising achievement and a narrowing gap with national figures each year since 2001. (See graph below and detailed figures in Annexe 3.) The graph

shows the increased expectations (targets) of schools as well as improved results. This increase represents 1500 students every year with an improved chance of further progress towards higher qualifications.

3.2



3.3 There is a difference in culture in schools in Leeds compared with the time before 2001. Schools are proud of their success and have ambition to improve further. The substantial investment in new buildings and technology offers opportunities for new approaches to learning that can help to engage more students.

3.4 The School Improvement Policy has helped to identify where support should be focused. Schools with the greatest challenges have been supported to improve through extended partnerships. School improvement partners have brought experience from other Local Authorities and have been responsive to the needs and priorities of Leeds schools. The partnership with school improvement advisers, who have been able to spend less time monitoring and more on support and advice, has been a huge strength of the service over the past three years.

3.5 Schools have invested in improved systems for supporting the progress of students, often aided by a more diverse workforce with skills in pupil monitoring or data recording and analysis. Improved tracking, targeting and personalisation coupled with stronger managerial practices and clear accountability has improved consistency and improved standards. Investment in buildings and in technology has opened up new opportunities for learning that pupils find relevant and interesting.

3.6 The improvement made in Leeds has been faster than predicted in recent years. Further gains will be made by achieving more consistent progress across subjects for all young people, and taking advantage of new curriculum and learning opportunities.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Executive Board are asked to:

- Note the progress that has been made in recent years
- Note the key issues and challenges that are currently being addressed

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EXECUTIVE BOARD: 13 February 2009

SUBJECT: Annual Standards Report - Secondary

<p>Electoral Wards Affected: ALL</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)</p>
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<p>Specific Implications For:</p> <p>Equality & Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Eligible for Call-in

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

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 This report summarises progress in secondary school improvement in Leeds, with a commentary on successful strategies, and challenges for further improvement. Annexes include summaries of the outcome of recent Ofsted inspections, progress in schools with focused and extended partnerships, and details of trends of improvement for key indicators including for priority groups.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 In 2001 performance at Key Stage 4 in Leeds was weak. Under 40% of students achieved 5A*-C; this was 10% below the national figure. In 2008 the gap has largely been closed. This paper summarises some of the key improvements made over the past few years, and the challenges that remain.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

3.1 Strengths and Achievements

- 3.1.1 The results at Key Stage 4 in 2008 have been very significant for schools in Leeds. After many years of underachievement in secondary schools this is the first year that outcomes have been in line with national performance. Both the wider indicator of 5A*-C (percentage of students achieving Level 2 by age 16) and the specific indicator of 5A*-C including English and maths are close to national averages, at 62% and 46% respectively. These increases place Leeds in the top performing Local Authorities for improvement in 2008, and show a continuous trend of rising achievement and a narrowing gap with national figures each year since 2001. (See detailed figures in Annexe 3.)
- 3.1.2 In 2001 fewer than two-fifths of students achieved 5A*-C; in 2008 it is more than three fifths. Five years ago only about a third of students achieved 5A*-C with English and maths; now it is about a half. This improvement represents 1500 students every year with an improved chance of further progress towards higher qualifications.
- 3.1.3 There is also clear improvement in achievement at A*-G where the number of young people leaving school with no qualifications has been reduced to below 3% for the first time, and the number having 5GCSEs has risen by 2%.
- 3.1.4 At school level, 32 schools showed improvement at 5A*-C and 26 at 5A*-C including English and maths. Seventeen schools achieved results in the top quartile for progress from KS4. Of the fourteen schools below the new floor target of 30% 5A*-C including, English and maths, eight achieved the target. The gap between the bulk of what used to be lower performing schools and higher performing schools has closed.

3.2 What has worked

- 3.2.1 There is a difference in culture in schools in Leeds compared with the time before 2001. Schools are proud of their success and have ambition to improve further. There is a more creative and optimistic approach to improvement, more collaboration and more recognition of continued changes to school organisation and curriculum. The substantial investment in new buildings and technology offers opportunities for new approaches to learning that can help to engage and extend more students.
- 3.2.2 The School Improvement Policy has helped to identify where support should be focused. Schools with the greatest challenges have been supported to improve through extended partnerships where consultants and staff from Education Leeds have worked with the school and its partners on a shared plan. Additional capacity and expertise has been brought in from partner schools where required. Highly talented school leaders have been prepared to share their expertise and assist other schools. Schools have been supported out of special measures, and many others have improved so that they are no longer in danger of being placed into a category by Ofsted.
- 3.2.3 School improvement partners have brought experience from other local authorities and have been responsive to the needs and priorities of Leeds schools. Over time

they have been able to assist schools in setting clear priorities for improvement and, by working closely with advisers in Education Leeds, have brokered appropriate support. The partnership with school improvement advisers, who have been able to spend less time monitoring and more on support and advice, has been a huge strength of the service over the past three years. Schools expect a challenging conversation with school improvement partners and know that issues can be followed up and supported throughout the term by the advisers. Schools are also more confident about using support from a variety of sources including the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and National College of School Leadership, as well as local consultants.

- 3.2.4 Support for schools has become more coordinated. School improvement advisers have regular discussions about progress with National Strategy consultants who have focused their work in line with priorities agreed with schools, and have had an outstanding impact in particular schools. Advanced Skills Teachers have allowed regular specialist support to be directed to particular schools and subject areas. Staff from Learning Communities have, through courses offered at City Learning Centres, enabled selected groups of students to achieve good outcomes on new courses that they find interesting and relevant. There are good examples of support before and after school, and during holiday periods, that have contributed to improved achievement.
- 3.2.5 Schools have invested in improved systems for supporting the progress of students, often aided by a more diverse workforce with skills in pupil monitoring or data recording and analysis. Improved tracking, targeting and personalisation coupled with stronger managerial practices and clear accountability has improved consistency and improved standards. Advisers and consultants have worked well together to increase the rigour of assessment, school tracking and performance management. Improved curriculum choices allow students to be directed onto suitable pathways, meeting their needs and aptitudes. Schools have paid particular attention in the last year to young people with lower prior attainment, and there is an increased understanding from teachers of how every student and every grade makes a difference to school improvement.
- 3.2.6 Investment in buildings and in technology has opened up new opportunities for learning that pupils find relevant and interesting. Schools that have progressed beyond the short term pressures that accompany such change are using the flexible spaces, easier access to virtual resources and whiteboard technology to improve learning and achievement. Education Leeds is preparing to evaluate more systematically the impact of this investment on pupil well-being and achievement.
- 3.2.7 The lever of national policy including Ofsted inspections and floor targets provides a stimulus for change and improvement. The improvements in achievement have been accompanied by a declining number of schools in an Ofsted category over this period.

3.3 **Areas and opportunities for improvement**

- 3.3.1 High schools in Leeds have demonstrated strong capacity for improvement in the 2008 results. We are now working with this capacity on further challenges. Leeds is still below national averages for attainment and achievement and it aspires to be among the best; CVA is still in the lower 990s indicating that more progress should be made. The gap between the successful and the lower achievers is still too

large and evidenced by data on achievement by ethnic group and by social and economic class. There remain a number of important challenges to maintain the improvements of the past few years.

- 3.3.2 Recent improvement at Key Stage 4 has been supported by improvements in earlier key stages. The good results of Year 11 in 2008 indicated that they have fulfilled the potential that they showed in primary school. The levelling-off of performance at Key Stage 2 means that high schools will need to improve the progress of young people further if we are to continue to see improvements in the key benchmark indicators.
- 3.3.3 Most schools can identify subjects which are not achieving at the standard of the best. Schools need further support in performance management systems, and access to specialist advice on assessment, teaching and learning to improve.
- 3.3.4 Although it is possible to demonstrate the impact of projects such as the Black Boys and Black Pupils achievement projects the performance of some ethnic groups, particularly Pakistani groups, remains unacceptably low. A group of schools has met to discuss strategic approaches to improvement and review current practice. The Ethnic Minority Achievement team will present them with further case studies of successful students so that work is disseminated and supported by school leaders.
- 3.3.5 The National Challenge has brought an impetus for change to the small group of schools that are furthest from the floor target. This is welcome, but it comes with the cost of creating short term uncertainty, and sometimes disruption, where major changes are implemented. Managing this change is an area where schools require a lot of support and external expertise. For the majority of improving and lower risk schools it has been frustrating that the national challenge has taken a lot of management time, but that no additional resource has been allocated by the DCSF by the end of the Autumn Term. Unless schools have anticipated the funding, the opportunity to support progress in Year 11 will have been missed. Implementing the programme requires careful management as it ignores existing structures for evaluating, challenging and reporting that have already proved successful in Leeds.
- 3.3.6 Poor attendance continues to be a barrier to achievement. Levels of absence and persistent absence are too high. There are twenty two schools in the DCSF target programme. Monitoring and recording have improved but increases in attendance are small. Sanctions for frequent absence are being balanced by rewards for improved attendance. Students will attend school when they are healthy, safe and successful, and plans for new curriculum and learning opportunities offer the potential to involve and engage more young people. The success of curriculum reform in the next few years will need to be evaluated in terms of attendance and achievement.
- 3.3.7 Reforms at 14-19 with new curriculum opportunities and new investment will help to improve achievement. Schools have engaged positively with area structures, collaborating on new courses and providing services to pupils. Schools will need to rationalise internal provision if students are educated off-site as currently this is frequently an additional cost without any reduction in internal budgets. Analysis of data for post 16 shows numerous small groups studying the same subject within a comparatively small geographical area. Rationalisation can bring improvements in quality and achievement as well as reduced costs, and some groups of schools

are beginning to form powerful consortia that will be able to offer an extended programme at a viable cost.

- 3.3.8 The improvement made in Leeds has been faster than predicted in recent years. Further gains will be made by achieving more consistent progress across subjects for all young people, and taking advantage of new curriculum and learning opportunities.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

- 4.1 The continued low performance of many minority and vulnerable groups means that tackling inequalities remains a very high priority for Leeds, and has strong connections with other areas of council responsibility.

5.0 **LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The need to continue these improvements in secondary education and the scale of the challenge faced by a number of schools, particularly in inner Leeds means that this must remain a high priority when allocating resources.

6.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 Executive Board is asked to:

- Note the progress that has been made in recent years
- Note the key issues and challenges that are currently being addressed

7.0 **Background Papers**

Relevant guidance on national policy is given in:

National challenge: A Toolkit for Schools and Local Authorities. DCSF 2008

Gaining Ground: Improving Progress in Coasting Schools. DCSF 2008