
Meeting: Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 5 January 2009

Subject: Children and Young People's Plan - Enjoy and Achieve

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children, Families and Learning

Summary: This report outlines the current position in relation to standards in Central Bedfordshire's schools and provides an overview of the progress made with the priorities within the Enjoy and Achieve Plan.

Contact Officer: Patrick Shevlin, Assistant Director (Learning and School Support)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Enjoy and Achieve Plan is one of the five outcomes plans which will support the Central Bedfordshire Strategic Plan (2009-11) particularly in educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

Working with partners to deliver services together in a more integrated way, with a focus on prevention and early intervention is a key driver of the Children and Young People's Plan and this will deliver efficiencies.

Legal:

The Children's Trust and the Children and Young People's Plan will enable the council and its partners to exercise the 'duty to co-operate' under section 10 of the Children Act 2004.

Risk Management:

Key risks in failing to deliver on the actions in the plan centre on young people not achieving as well as they could and ultimately not accessing employment, training or further education. Also there is a risk of reputational damage to the Council in being perceived as not providing good quality education to young people. Risk management is a key part of delivery planning for the Children and Young People's Plan and will be managed and mitigated through this process.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None.

Equalities/Human Rights:

During the development of the plan equalities issues and impacts were considered and included in the priorities are a number of strategic actions which identify children and young people who are not achieving, who are excluded or who are in vulnerable circumstances.

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote race, gender and disability equality. The analysis of results has therefore included consideration of the outcomes for vulnerable groups.

This has identified particular issues related to performance for; lower ability girls; boys; students on Special Education Needs (SEN) action and action plus; students with free school meals; looked after children and some racial groups such as Pupils who are Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma, Pupils from Black Caribbean background and Pupils for whom English is an additional language.

These issues have been identified as a priority in the Children and Young People's Plan Priority 10: Raise achievement for all learners particularly underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances and will need.

Community Safety:

None.

Sustainability:

The Enjoy and Achieve Plan aims to encourage schools to seek positive solutions to improving sustainability though utilising greener buildings which have increased energy use from new technologies and longer opening hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the
 - (a) Committee note the current position regarding standards in Central Bedfordshire's schools; and
 - (b) the Committee comments on the progress made with the priorities in the Enjoy and Achieve Plan.

The Enjoy and Achieve Plan

1. The Enjoy and Achieve Plan is one of the five outcomes plans which make up the Children and Young People's Plan for Central Bedfordshire.

2. The plan has been established by:
 - analysing evidence and consulting with children and young people;
 - holding workshops with key stakeholders to consider the evidence and identifying priorities for the plan;
 - consulting on the emerging priorities; and
 - finalising the draft plan at Delivery Group meetings and considering the analysis of feedback from the consultation, partner agencies and Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
3. The Enjoy and Achieve Plan has three priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan:
 - Priority 9: Transform teaching and learning and strengthen leadership to ensure that every school and early years' setting is at least good.
 - Priority 10: Raise achievement for all learners particularly underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances.
 - Priority 11: Improve engagement and enjoyment for all children and young people.
4. In addition there is one cross-cutting priority which is overviewed by the Enjoy and Achieve Group:
 - Develop an integrated workforce which is ambitious for all children and their families and expert in its practice.
5. Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the draft Children and Young People's Plan at its meeting on the 11 August 2009.
6. The Committee considered the importance of the many statutory education indicators and agreed it would be appropriate to recommend to the Local Strategic Partnership that the Local Area Agreement indicators should make reference to the statutory indicators and the importance of a partnership approach towards their achievement.
7. A range of strategic actions has been developed and there are specific indicators and targets for each priority in the Enjoy and Achieve Plan to measure the impact of actions and to know what progress is being made. These are set out in Appendix A.
8. The Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee also felt the Children and Young People's Plan should emphasise the importance of schools providing access to facilities out of hours for community use.

9. In response to this priority 11 has been strengthened to include:
- improving extended school services, out of hours learning, and a wide range of outdoor recreational and play activities and opportunities including volunteering;
 - a programme of positive, out-of-hours/extra-curricular activities for children and families that involves innovative approaches to learning, play and recreation at a range of localities; and
 - pyramids of schools to produce comprehensive development plans for out-of-hours learning and positive activities and submit these to the Local Authority along with regular financial breakdowns of spend to date.

Standards in Central Bedfordshire's schools

10. Standards and achievements in schools are variable. Outcomes at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (age 5) and Key Stage 1 (age 7) continue to be strong compared to those nationally and those of statistical neighbours. At Key Stage 2 (age 11) Central Bedfordshire is below the performance of statistical neighbours. Provisional results, at Key Stage 4 (age 16), show progress has stalled this year and standards are broadly comparable to those achieved in 2008. Performance for young people achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is in line with the national average and similarly performance for achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C is in line with the national average. However, there is a need to improve performance so it compares favourably with that of statistical neighbours. A separate report on standards is included in Appendix B.
11. No schools are currently in an Ofsted category of special measures but over half of middle and upper schools have satisfactory Ofsted judgements. The new Ofsted Framework for inspecting schools was introduced in September and indications are that it is more rigorous than the previous framework and consequently there is an increased risk of schools being judged as inadequate. Schools have received training on the new framework.

Progress with the Enjoy and Achieve Plan

12. The Enjoy and Achieve Plan priorities and actions have been developed and there are processes in place to ensure that all staff working in Learning and School Support have work plans which link directly to each priority. This aspect of planning needs to be extended to ensure that all work plans of teams working with schools, settings and teams have direct links to the Enjoy and Achieve priorities.
13. The actions in priorities 9 and 10 are all on track and are aimed at improving provision across schools and raising achievement. The work on Transforming Learning has involved a number of meetings with headteachers and chairs of governors to develop principles and criteria which would inform any future changes to school organisation in Central Bedfordshire.

14. These principles were:-

- the need to raise education standards and outcomes across all key stages, taking account of contextual added value, i.e. how much improvement a school can make for each pupil whilst they are at that school;
- continuity of education provision across the pupil age ranges of 3 -19 years;
- that learning should take place in schools that is based around the needs of the community;
- that what is best for children and families should be at the centre of any change;
- that as far as possible services should be delivered locally;
- that any strategy should take account of new models of leadership, e.g. schools trusts, shared headships, work across school boundaries; and
- that any change should be reflective of very recent curriculum reform.

15. Schools need to develop strong, governed partnerships which have the core purpose of improving outcomes and raising achievement by providing a well planned, continuous curriculum and high quality learning experiences for young people from the age of 3 to 19. Effective collaboration across schools and settings is an important way of increasing the capacity of schools to deliver the Every Child Matters agenda and to improve outcomes for young people. Schools will be encouraged to join together in strong, governed partnerships so they are able to work together to provide:-

- an agreed, continuous curriculum;
- improved recruitment and retention of staff;
- leadership development at all levels and new forms of leadership across schools;
- shared policies particularly for inclusion and assessment;
- shared professional development opportunities;
- shared strategies to manage exclusions and attendance; and
- support services that meet the broader needs of children and families including access to extended services.

16. A key action to raise achievement in schools is to adopt a differentiated model for the support given to schools, through the School Improvement Strategy, in order to accelerate the improvement of satisfactory schools. In order to move towards a position where all schools receive good or outstanding Ofsted judgements all schools will be categorised according to a shared evaluation by the School Improvement Partner and the school. This will determine the support each school will receive from Central Bedfordshire staff and National Strategy programmes. Satisfactory and weaker schools will receive more intensive support. Good and outstanding schools will be expected to work in partnership to support other schools in improving outcomes.
17. There is good progress in developing out-of-hours activities for young people. Greater progress needs to be made in ensuring that these activities support the needs of children in vulnerable circumstances and to develop further ways of measuring the difference such activities make to children in these groups. Some progress has been made in developing structures to improve attendance and behaviour and there is evidence that exclusions are falling. However, there is still a major area of work needed in ensuring that the resource available through the Pupil Referral Unit at Kempston – a shared provision with Bedford Borough – is locally available in Central Bedfordshire to meet the needs of young people.
18. Work on improving the Children's Workforce is going well. A strategic group has been established and The Children's Workforce Development Strategy is being presented to Executive in January. A Directory of training opportunities for the children's workforce has been published and will be further developed and improved. Successful partnerships with training schools have been developed so training for school staff is provided locally, wherever possible. Safer recruitment training is on target with the safer working practices document agreed by trade unions and professional associations and publicised to schools. Clear policies on educational visits and journeys and safe practice are well established in schools.

Re-commissioning School Support and School Improvement Services

19. At its meeting on 3 September 2009, the Children's Trust Board agreed that in its first year of operation, the Commissioning Group should take forward work on two priorities; one under Enjoy and Achieve through re-commissioning school support and school improvement services, and the second, to develop locality based integrated services, one of the cross cutting priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan. The Commissioning Brief is in line with the Children's Trust Strategic Commissioning Framework and identifies the objectives, the duration of the project, its scope and the intended outcomes (Appendix C).

20. The Enjoy and Achieve Group will develop a programme to lead to rapid improvement in schools and outcomes for young people. Progress will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Commissioning Group by the project manager, and from there to the Children's Trust Board. Project and quality assurance are independent of the project manager and will be overseen by the Commissioning Group. There is an expectation that innovative ways of securing improvement in schools will be developed and that, wherever possible, central services will be relocated in trusts and partnerships or commissioned from other providers. A saving of 20% is expected in the next three years.
21. The key strands of the project are:-
- Strengthening leadership and management in schools.
 - Improving practice in assessment and the intelligent use of data.
 - Developing new forms of governance in schools.
 - Improving outcomes for children in vulnerable groups.
 - Developing new forms of learning for 21st Century Schools.
 - Developing accommodation, ICT and infrastructure.
 - Early intervention and prevention.

Conclusion and Next Steps

22. The Enjoy and Achieve Group will continue to monitor the progress of the priorities within the Enjoy and Achieve Plan. These will be regularly reported to the Children's Trust through the quarterly reporting arrangement. A cycle of meetings has been established with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to have reports from each outcome group which contributes to the Children and Young People's Plan.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire's Children and Young People's Plan – Enjoy and Achieve Priorities

Appendix B – Standards in Central Bedfordshire's Schools – November 2009

Appendix C – Re-commissioning School Support and School Improvement Services