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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 12 January 2009  
**Subject:** Raising Achievement in Central Bedfordshire's Schools  
**Report of:** Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report sets out the direction of policy to raise achievement in Central Bedfordshire's schools.

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**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children, Families and Learning

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

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Executive

**Key Decision** Yes

**Reason for urgency/  
exemption from call-in  
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

Raising Achievement supports the aims in the Central Bedfordshire Strategic Plan (2009-11) particularly in educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

### **Financial:**

The proposals outlined in this policy are aimed at producing a very different way of supporting and challenging schools. There will be a reduction in centralised services through developing a commissioning model which will reduce expenditure on School Improvement and School Support teams by 20% by April 2011.

### **Legal:**

All statutory functions will still be held centrally by the Council but other functions will be delegated to schools or commissioned through other providers.

**Risk Management:**

Schools will need support to adapt to a new way of working where they both challenge and support each other. The Council role will be to co-ordinate the move to this way of working, commissioning for pupil outcomes and support as local regulator for schools. The most vulnerable schools will require targeted support in this transitional period and an ongoing review of schools will be needed to determine possible risks particularly of schools receiving inadequate judgements in Ofsted inspections.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

The necessary change management processes will be followed and trade unions will be fully involved in this process.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

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 with special educational needs (action and action plus), students receiving free school meals, looked after children and some 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 to be addressed as part of the raising achievement plan.

**Community Safety:**

n/a

**Sustainability:**

It should be noted that schools represent over 50% of the Council's carbon footprint and over 60% of the emissions that the Council has to pay for in the energy efficiency scheme (allowances come to the value of approximately: £207,672). It needs to recognise that depending on how this strategy is embedded there will be opportunities to have a positive or negative impact in these areas.

**Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:**

Overview and Scrutiny will be receiving a report, on the 5<sup>th</sup> January, which 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 including key actions to raise achievement. The evidence in this report will support the need for this direction and draw the attention of the Scrutiny Panel to the outcomes that they agree to monitor as part of the forward plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**That the Executive agree the direction in policy to further raise achievement in Central Bedfordshire's Schools.**

*Reason for Recommendation(s): So that there is clear direction in policy for improving outcomes for young people and that this policy is centred on a radical change in the approach to school improvement and in schools developing partnership arrangements so there is a one phase, 3 to 19 approach, to learning.*

### **Executive Summary**

There are four key areas of work which establish the direction for policy to further raise achievement in Central Bedfordshire's schools:

- for schools 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;
- to use all available resources to support the priorities set out in the Enjoy and Achieve section of the Children and Young People's Plan (endorsed by Executive on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009);
- 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; and,
- to re-commission School Support and School Improvement Services so increasingly support is commissioned from the strongest partnerships and schools or from other providers.

## **Background**

### **The current position in Central Bedfordshire's schools**

1. Whilst no schools in Central Bedfordshire currently have an Ofsted judgement of requiring special measures only 46% of upper and middle schools have received good or outstanding Ofsted grades in their most recent inspections. This compares with 62% of the secondary schools of statistical neighbours and 60% of secondary schools nationally receiving a good or outstanding grade. 42% of sixth forms received a good or outstanding grade compared to 64% (statistical neighbours) and 67% (nationally). The position in lower and special schools is stronger. The new Ofsted Framework will present new challenges to schools and may well result in some schools being judged as inadequate. This will in turn impact on the Council's Ofsted grading and eventual score in this area.
2. 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. However at Key Stage 2 (age 11) and Key Stage 4 (age 16) Central Bedfordshire is generally below the performance of statistical neighbours.

## Principles to support schools in raising achievement

3. As part of the work on transforming learning headteachers and chairs of governors were consulted with to determine principles which would underpin any future configuration of schools in Central Bedfordshire. The key principles to emerge from this work included the need to raise standards and to improve the continuity of learning across schools for young people. Respondents were also clear that the child, the family and the community should be considered first when making any changes and that, wherever possible, services should be locally based. New models of leadership should also be considered for schools and any changes should reflect curriculum provision. These principles have been used to determine the direction for raising achievement and they have been reported to the Executive on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

## Direction in policy to raise achievement in Central Bedfordshire's schools

4. The four key areas of work which establish the direction for policy to further raise achievement in Central Bedfordshire's schools outlined below.
5. Schools 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.
6. Use all available resources to support the priorities set out in the Enjoy and Achieve section of the Children and Young People's Plan. The Enjoy and Achieve group reports to the Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust and its priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan are:
  - To transform teaching and learning and strengthen leadership to ensure that every school and early years' setting is at least good.
  - To raise achievement for all learners, particularly underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances.
  - Improve engagement and enjoyment for all children and young people.

7. 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. Different models of school support will be explored during the ensuing year and the service restructured accordingly.
8. Re-commission School Support and School Improvement Services so increasingly support is commissioned from the strongest partnerships and schools or from other providers. The Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Commissioning Group has commissioned the Enjoy and Achieve Group to develop a programme to lead to rapid improvement in schools and outcomes for young people. 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.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

9. Current plans will lead towards improvement but in order to make rapid progress a complete system change is required. This change needs to raise aspirations and outcomes across all key stages and needs to be based on schools working in partnership across communities. The role of the Local Authority needs to be an empowering one where statutory functions are maintained but where trusts, federations and partnerships of schools are encouraged to take on functions which have traditionally come from the Authority. The commissioning of services needs to be fully exploited as a way of providing excellent services for schools. The expectation is that there will be less central support to schools from Central Bedfordshire's School Improvement and School Support teams leading to a reduction in expenditure on these services of 20% by April 2011.
10. During the next two years there will be a significant shift in the way support is given to schools. The intention is to provide less centralised support and increasingly commission support from the strongest partnerships and schools or from other providers. Innovative practice needs to be developed across the areas which will lead to the greatest improvement in schools. All schools and communities need to benefit from leaders with the vision and skills to ensure that this practice is embedded across communities of schools so that there is continuous provision; shared high expectations; skilled delivery of the curriculum and improved outcomes for all young people. Any restructuring will be included in the overall Council staffing proposals.

11. These proposals are the first steps in the transforming learning strategy that will lead to its final conclusion in the strategy for change document on the Executive work plan for February 2010. However, Executive approval is needed for these first steps so that they can be discussed with schools and implemented in advance of the strategy for change document.

### **Background Papers**

The Central Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Plan

Location – Priory House, Shefford.