

Central Bedfordshire Council

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2019

UPDATE REPORT ON PROGRESS WITH MEETING THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS INTO PUPIL ATTAINMENT IN CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE.

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This report relates to a decision that is non-key

Purpose of this report

- 1 The report updates committee members on the progress made by education officers in addressing the recommendations of the committee following its enquiry into pupil attainment in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider, and comment upon, the specific actions, success criteria and deadline dates set in the education department's action plan (see the numbered deliverables in the general deliverables column in the table attached as appendix 2 to this report).
2. Comment on the progress made

Issues

- 2 At its meeting on 11 July 2017 the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CSOSC) requested a review of pupil attainment within Central Bedfordshire in light of concerns raised by members. The purpose of the enquiry was to determine the best possible solutions and support with regards to improving pupil attainment across the region and improve the long-term life chances of children and young people within Central Bedfordshire.
- 3 The enquiry involved Cllrs T Nicols (Chairman), T Swain (Vice Chairman), B Saunders, J Chatterley and Parental Co-optee G Deans. Throughout the course of the review the committee gathered evidence from a range of sources including officers in the Council's children's services directorate, governor training, planning, partnerships and performance and data management. Evidence was also received from other members, schools, head teachers and governors, with national data and best practice processes and procedures researched in order to support the enquiry findings.

- 4 Members agreed that the scope of the enquiry be broken down into three separate elements, each of which would be investigated in turn, acknowledging the cross-cutting nature on occasion. These were:
 - minimising the impact of deprivation on children, specifically speech and language difficulties and the use/management of the pupil premium;
 - the recruitment and retention of good quality teaching staff; and
 - governor training.
- 5 The committee agreed not to take into scope school organisation matters as a wider piece of work was being undertaken by the council, supported by consultants Openbox, focusing on the 'education landscape'.
- 6 Committee members agreed that they would support whichever mechanism the Executive adopted in order to address the future landscape of education within Central Bedfordshire, stressing the importance of ensuring schools were fully supported in any transition they chose to implement.
- 7 In view of the focus on school improvement advisers – and in particular the proposal presently going through the governance process to approve funding for the team over a five-year period - members were keen that the additional school improvement staff resource be used to evaluate how best to enhance and broaden the relationship with schools and governing bodies.

Progress against the committee's recommendations

- 8 Following the committee's recommendations, the head of school improvement added those relevant to education services to the 2018/19 action plan. The recommendations were summarised as deliverables, and for each of these actions and success criteria were added. These are attached as appendix 1.
- 9 The progress made against all recommendations is attached to this report as appendix 2. The recommendations are listed in order in the original report. Of the 20 recommendations, school improvement service is responsible for actions to address eight recommendations; the executive seven; behaviour and attendance three school organisation officers two. The paragraphs below set out the progress made by the school improvement service and the executive, which, taken together, are accountable for most of the recommendations.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

- 10 School improvement advisers (SIAs) have made an immediate impact on the relationship between the council and both its maintained schools and academies. No academy head teacher or chief executive has declined to meet their named adviser – as they are entitled to do. All schools of concern have been visited and statements of actions either drafted or completed. The council has a reliable and comprehensive categorisation, backed up by the evidence of visits to school.
- 11 It is particularly pleasing that many heads have contacted SIAs following visits for specific advice about a wide range of issues – for example, managing behaviour, the performance management of staff, managing parental complaints and preparing for inspections. In some cases, there have been requests for SIAs to undertake traded work, such as the performance management of heads on behalf

of governors. We have so far responded positively but cautiously to these requests, as we need to maintain sufficient capacity to fulfil statutory duties.

12 With regard to the eight recommendations for which the SIAs are accountable, the table in the attachment in this report shows that progress has been made in all. Some highlights are:

- continuous professional development (9,12): there has been a focus on improving the scope and availability of CPD, especially but not solely through teaching schools in the area, as set out in the progress to date against recommendations 12 and 18;
- governor recruitment (18): the lead SIA for governance and leadership moved to organise recruitment events at the major council buildings, there are three 'registers of interest' that are currently being followed up by the charity Governors for Schools, and Central essentials is also used to publicise the way staff and partners can get involved in school governance; and
- the support of SENDCOs (7): the professional study groups are popular, and impact will be evaluated via personal interviews.

Council priorities

14 The proposed action supports the council priority **improving education and skills**. Actions against the committee's recommendations have the potential to improve the outcomes and progress of pupils in Central Bedfordshire.

Corporate implications

15 The funding of the school improvement advisers means the council strengthens the way it addresses the 29 statutory duties that still apply with regard to school improvement, intervention, standards, curriculum and compliance checking. The financial implication is addressed below in paragraph 18.

Legal Implications

16 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial and risk implications

17 There is a financial commitment to funding the school improvement advisers for a five-year period. This has been costed at £321,000 annually. Any variation in costs will be met within existing school improvement budgets. All other actions are being progressed within existing resources.

18 There are two main risks: that some actions are not appropriately progressed; and / or that the actions do not result in a positive impact as measured by the progress and outcomes for pupils in settings, schools and colleges in Central Bedfordshire. It is the task of the head of school improvement to keep track of the actions being taken to address the committee's recommendations, and report to the committee about progress and the impact of the work.

Equalities implications

19 Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The actions being taken as a result of OSC's recommendations have the potential to affect positively the education and life opportunities for disadvantaged pupils generally.

Conclusion and next steps

20 Further reports will be brought to the children and young people OSC as requested by it.

Appendices

Appendix 1: OSC pupil attainment report – progress to date against the committee's recommendations

Appendix 2: OSC pupil attainment report – specific actions and success criteria for the committee's recommendations

Background papers

None

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