

Agenda Item: 7

Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 29 June 2009

Subject: Position Statement on Central Bedfordshire Council FMSiS Assessments

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

Summary: To update the Schools Forum on the current position with regards to schools which have passed the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS).

Contact Officer: Roger Willoughby, Audit Manager – Internal Audit

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: Authority-wide

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. To discuss and comment on the position statement.**

Background

1. The Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) was introduced by the DCSF (then DfES) in 2004 and compliance was made statutory from 2006. The Standard consists of a series of criteria which, when combined, depict a model standard of best practice with regards to financial management in schools.
2. The assessment of schools against the Standard has been undertaken by Internal Audit and Schools Finance staff on a rolling programme since 2006-07, when all Bedfordshire schools were notified of the year in which they would be assessed. The schools scheduled for assessment in each financial year (for example, all Upper schools were assessed in 2006-07) are required to compile a portfolio of evidence which is submitted to the LA for assessment. Those that meet the Standard are reassessed every 3 years, and those that do not meet the Standard are reassessed to an agreed deadline, usually within a few months.

Current Position

3. The summary table below indicates the current status of Central Bedfordshire Council's schools in terms of passing the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS). The assessment process is managed by Internal Audit.

Current Status	Number of Schools at this stage	As percentage of schools programmed for assessment	Comments
Pass	46	42%	This includes some schools that have previously failed
Fail	17	16%	Due for reassessment in 2009-10
Assessments in progress	46	42%	This includes some schools that have previously failed
Total schools programmed for assessment	109	100%	Further 30 schools due for assessment in 2009-10

4. Problems have been encountered with many schools submitting their evidence portfolio for assessment at the very end of each financial year (e.g. March 2009 for 2008-09) which has contributed to a backlog of assessments. For example, all the assessments currently stated as 'in progress' are 2008-09 assessments, many of which could only be started once schools had submitted evidence in March 2009. A further issue has been non-submission of evidence by schools which results in an automatic fail, and a rescheduled deadline for assessment at a later date.
5. It should be noted from the above table that a large volume of assessments are currently in progress and are at various stages of completion. The assessment process can take several months in order to enable schools to supply as much evidence as possible to support their assessment against the Standard, and as noted above, historically many schools have tended to submit their evidence for assessment late in the financial year.

Schedule for 2009-10

6. The 2009-10 schedule of assessments includes a further 30 schools that have yet to be assessed. In addition to these 30 schools, assessments will also be completed for:
- schools that were scheduled for assessment in 2008-09 that are currently being completed
 - schools that failed during 2008-09 and require reassessment
 - schools that passed during 2006-07 and are due for reassessment.

7. It is anticipated that a revision of the guidance provided to schools combined with a more rigorous approach to the scheduling of assessments in 2009-10 will facilitate a prompt reduction in the current backlog. This will be essential given the reduced capacity of Internal Audit (relative to the number of schools) for completion of assessments following the Local Government Reorganisation. Failure on the part of schools to comply with the agreed deadlines will result in notification to the Head of Business Finance in Corporate Services and the Assistant Director- Learning & School Support.

Appendix

Appendix A - Schedule of Central Bedfordshire Council Schools and FMSiS status