

TITLE OF REPORT: Role of the Council in Supporting Educational Outcomes with a particular focus on Vulnerable and Poorly Performing pupils

REPORT OF: David Bunce Strategic Director - Care, Wellbeing and Learning

Summary

Council agreed that the Committee should review how the Council supports educational outcomes in Gateshead, with a specific focus on vulnerable or poorly performing pupils. This is in recognition of the rapidly changing educational landscape, including the emergence of Academies, the increasing autonomy of schools, and the promotion of “school to school” support as the vehicle for school improvement. The review has focused on the Council’s overall role, remit and approach and will, in addition, focus on vulnerable children through a focus on the use of Pupil Premium and improving the educational outcomes of Looked After Children.

This report gives an update on the progress, to date, following the Committee’s and Cabinet’s approval of the report.

1. Background

The Committee identified the following recommendations from the review:-

Information and transparency

- a. On an annual basis, the Committee to receive a pupil performance data report that focuses upon the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils. This “closing the gap” report to show performance trend over time and to be school specific.
- b. While the secondary “closing the gap” initiative is active, for Committee to receive an annual assessment of impact.

Governor’s role in supporting and challenging school leaders on ‘closing the gap’

- c. The Governing Body Support team to review its training programme to ensure that Governors have access to a range of courses that support them in holding school leaders to account.

The strategic delivery of education services

- d. Care, Wellbeing and Learning to review the implementation of the Council's Education Strategy to:
 - review how support for the most vulnerable pupils is provided and funded;
 - determine how a focus on school improvement can be best delivered in view of the ongoing financial constraints
 - ensure the right balance between core funded services and those traded

Special schools

- e. An annual conversation with special schools to include examples of innovative work to achieve outcomes.
- f. The specific issues around support for pupils with complex health needs. Agree to focus a case study in the 2015/16 work programme on the issues around targeted and specialist support from the NHS for special schools. This will focus on the delivery of therapeutic support, the role of the Community Children's Nursing Team and Continuing Care.

2. What has happened since completion of the review?

The findings of the review were agreed by Committee on 2nd April and presented to Cabinet for comment on 2nd June. Officers have begun to implement the necessary changes or reviews in response to the Committee's findings.

Information and transparency

- Reports have been produced for pupil performance data that are in line with the reviews finding based on 2013/14 examination data i.e. the reports show school specific "gap data" between disadvantaged pupils and others. 2014/15 examination analysis is well advanced.
- The Headteacher of the virtual school for looked after children has produce a "data dashboard" that specially details the performance of looked after children. This dash board will be produced on an annual basis.
- An annual assessment of the impact of the secondary "narrowing the gap" project has been incorporated in to a senior officer's performance management targets.
- The Governing Body and Inspection Teams have begun to review and assess the present Governors' development programme. The key theme is supporting Governors to give robust but appropriate challenge to school leaders. The theme of developing appropriate challenge for Governors will be central to the Governing Body Team's Business/Action plan.

The strategic delivery of education services

- The strategic delivery of education services is a key part of the Council's reviews that are taking place at this time as a response to a reducing budget. To retain high quality provision and intervention that delivers excellent outcomes for children and young people at a significantly reduced cost will need highly creative and innovative thinking.

Special Schools

- Special Headteachers will welcome the opportunity to both share concerns and successes with Committee on an annual basis.
- The extension to Eslington School, on the Tyne View site, has been completed and is running. Children and staff are extremely positive about their new building.
- The Case Study exploring the issues around targeted and specialist support from the NHS for special schools has not yet been discussed with the Special Headteachers.

3. What impact has this had for users?

At this stage the data does not exist to show that there has been an impact on schools or children and young people. The work across education teams is ongoing and the findings from the Committee have begun to direct the approach.

4. What will we do next?

- Data analysis of 2014/15 Key Stage 2 SATS and GCSEs will be carried out following statistical release in line with the Committee's requirements.
- A reviewed approach/programme to developing the skills of Governors to appropriately challenge school leaders will be created and shared based on the present good practice.
- The Council will continue to assess the likely impacts of a significant reduction in funding. This will include how and what it wishes to fund in Education and all other services. This may require the development of new delivery models.
- Special Headteachers and Council officers will plan the Case Study that investigates the issues around targeted and specialist support from the NHS for special schools. This will focus on the delivery of therapeutic support, the role of the Community Children's Nursing Team and Continuing Care.

5. Recommendations

The views of the OSC are sought on:-

- Whether the OSC is satisfied with progress against actions to date?

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