

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

REPORT OF: Alison Elliott, Interim 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.
- b. While the secondary “closing the gap” initiative is active, for Committee to receive an annual assessment of impact.

Governors’ 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 traded services

Special schools

- e. An annual conversation with special schools to include examples of innovative work to achieve better 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 2015 and presented to Cabinet for comment on 2nd June 2015. 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 review's finding based on 2013/14 examination data i.e. the reports show school specific "gap data" between disadvantaged pupils and others.
- The Headteacher of the virtual school for looked after children has produced a "data dashboard" that specifically details the performance of looked after children. This dash board will be produced on an annual basis and was shared with the Ofsted Inspection Team during the recent inspection. A SEN data dashboard is also being produced.
- 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 ongoing review that is taking place at this time as a response to the reducing budget. To retain high quality provision and intervention that deliver excellent outcomes for children and young people at a significantly reduced cost will need highly creative and innovative thinking. In the financial year 2015/2016 no further resource has been taken from mainline funding for those services in Schools and Learning that support the needs of vulnerable children e.g. Educational Psychologists, LAC services or Educational Welfare. As a consequence, no voluntary or compulsory redundancies were required.

Special Schools

- Special Headteachers have shared concerns and successes with Committee and will continue to do this on an annual basis.
- The extension to Eslington School, on the Tyne View site, has been completed and the facility is now operational. 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 will form part of the Committee's annual discussion with Special School Headteachers.

3. What impact has this had for users?

Summative exam data indicates that there has been a further reduction in the attainment gap by the end of primary school age. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has increased by the end of Key Stage 4.

4. What will we do next?

- A reviewed approach/programme to development of the skills of Governors to appropriately challenge school leaders will be further reviewed 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 Education and other related services it wishes to fund in the future. This will require the development of new delivery models, especially following the publication of the Whiter Paper, "Educational Excellence Everywhere".

- Consultation between the Council and Special School Heads and Governors will be accelerated to ensure that Gateshead is providing the correct number and type of places in special education.
- Careful analysis of 2015/2016 assessment information will be conducted to assess the level of impact in closing the attainment gap between vulnerable pupils and others, especially at Key Stage 4. Results of the analysis will have a significant influence on the Council's future strategy.

5. The White Paper

Every school an academy

The Government produced an Education White Paper, "Educational Excellence Everywhere" in March 2017. Key points include:

- Most schools will be expected to form or join multi-academy trusts.
- By the end of 2020, all remaining maintained schools will have become academies or will be in the process of conversion.
- "Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the smallest schools will have to form or join a MAT. But other successful, sustainable schools will still be able "to continue as single academy trusts if they choose to do so".
- New government powers will be created to direct schools to become academies in local authority areas which are underperforming or where the local authority no longer has capacity to maintain its schools or where schools have not started the process of becoming an academy by 2020.
- Views will be sought on a number of changes to the school admissions system to make it simpler and clearer, including "requiring local authorities to coordinate in-year admissions and handle the administration of the independent admission appeals function".
- The government will consider how parents may be able to petition regional schools commissioners for their school to move to a different MAT "where there is underperformance or other exceptional circumstances".
- New accountability measures for MATs will be launched, MAT performance tables will be published in addition to the continued publication of, and focus on, inspection and performance data at individual school level.

- ***“In the short term, local authorities will continue to have responsibilities which include: employment of staff in community schools; ownership and asset management of school buildings; and responsibilities relating to the governance, organisation and curriculum of maintained schools. Those responsibilities will shrink as each school in their area becomes an academy; when every school has done so, they will fall away entirely.” [4.73]***

The Future Role of Local Authorities as envisaged in the White Paper

- **Ensuring every child has a school place:** including that there are sufficient school, special school and alternative provision places to meet demand. Local authorities will retain responsibility for this in a fully academised system. The government will support them by continuing to provide substantial funding to allow them to deliver sufficient places, as well as by creating places through the free schools programme.
- **Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met:** including identifying, assessing and making provision for children with special educational needs and disability and looked after children; promoting school attendance and tackling persistent absence; ensuring that alternative provision is available for headteachers to commission for children and young people excluded from school or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream school, leading on safeguarding responsibilities for all children, including those in unregulated settings, educated at home and children missing education, as well as children at risk of radicalisation.
- **Acting as champions for all parents and families:** including listening to and promoting the needs of parents, children and the local community – working alongside elected mayors; supporting parents in navigating the system through a continuing role in admissions; supporting children, young people and parents to navigate local SEND arrangements (such as providing information, advice and support) and engaging them in designing and co-producing local SEND policies, service commissioning and delivery; and championing high standards locally for all pupils, for example, by encouraging high performing providers to establish new school places and where necessary calling for action from the Regional Schools Commissioner to tackle underperformance

6. Recommendations

The views of the OSC are sought on:-

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

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