

		AGENDA ITEM 7
		PAF/06/16
Committee:	People and Families Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	10 March 2016	
<u>Outstanding Items</u>		
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Purpose of the Paper: To update members on progress on actions further to the work of the Task and Finish group

Progress update on Task and Finish group report – Educational Attainment in Essex

1. Purpose of the Paper

This report sets out progress made further to the series of actions and recommendations presented to the People and Families Scrutiny Committee in July 2015. The final report included an initial response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to the findings of the Task and Finish group and this report provides an update to that response.

2. Progress update

There follows an update to each recommendation and action as set out in the published report:

2.1 Working with schools to address Recruitment and Retention requirements

RECOMMENDATION: *Where staff shortages exist, schools be encouraged to pool their resources and employ subject specialists to work for a cluster of schools.*

The secondary Head teacher Association (ASHE) and local cluster groups of heads organise overseas trips or interviews over the internet to support the recruitment of staff in subject shortage areas each year. These are predominately for English, maths, science subjects; however other areas of shortage include geography, technology, and Religious Education. Schools also have used the strategy of over

staffing themselves in particular shortage areas, to then develop local agreements to share staff across clusters in these shortage areas.

ECC works with the teaching school alliances (TSAs) in Essex, who have a key priority to support schools in recruiting high quality specialist staff, which can be shared across the cluster, where appropriate.

ACTION: *More work is needed to understand the nature, level, and location of teacher recruitment and retention issues throughout Essex.*

ECC is working with EES for Schools, and with the headteacher professional associations in Essex, to develop a more long term strategic approach to teacher recruitment and retention in the county. As this work develops, links will be made to district and borough councils, and teaching school alliances.

A small task and finish project group has been formed to plan initiatives in response to feedback from head teachers of primary, secondary and special schools. Representatives of each sector sit on the group. Work has already begun with a “Teach in Essex” campaign, aimed at raising the profile of the County beyond our borders, promoting the benefits of both working and living in Essex. Through the remainder of the spring term, further promotional activities are planned. A survey has been created which will provide exact data from schools in terms of where pressures are greatest and in which subjects/phases. This will enable ECC to focus initiatives and incentives, as appropriate. The issue of in-year supply cover is also being addressed as part of this work, as this is proving a challenge for schools in terms of both availability and the quality of teachers.

2.2 Early Years

RECOMMENDATION: *The County Council should consider how best to link Early Years provision with Infant/Primary Schools in order to create a seamless transition from pre-school; and to prevent the discrepancies that have been reported to the Group with regard to the attainment levels of some EYFS children entering school. The Task and Finish Group heard conclusive evidence that linking provision would have a decisive impact on the literacy and numeracy skills of children. This would have a particular impact upon children from deprived backgrounds.*

The Good Level of Development (GLD) measure, extracted from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results from July 2015, provide the starting point for identifying the key focus of work with schools and early years settings for 2015/16, in order to raise attainment in the future, particularly the most disadvantaged children and support children’s smooth transitions.

Other work includes both the expansion of current School Readiness projects in Harlow and Colchester as well as the commencement of new School Readiness projects in districts with particularly low GLD in 2015, including Braintree and Castle Point. These projects engage colleagues from schools, settings, health and district councils, who work collaboratively to improve children’s ‘school readiness’ and support their transition into school. Key activities for the locality are identified. For example in Braintree, activity is focusing primarily on supporting parental

engagement in their children's learning and supporting early language and communication development, whilst in Harlow there is a focus on Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) children and their families.

Within the Basildon School Readiness project, schools are being surveyed on the readiness of the most recent cohort of pupils to start school and to share any improvements they think might enhance the *readiness* of the children. This has been complemented by the development of a 'Transition Passport' jointly developed between schools and settings to support transition.

Access, analysis and interpretation of a range of data sets are a key part in the work to support transition. Steps are also being taken to identify barriers to sharing of data between pre-school and school provision.

'Mind the Gap! – Inequalities in School Readiness' postcards have been shared with schools and settings via Learning Communities in November 2015, to encourage practitioners to know the attainment 'gap' in their district for the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and to consider ways of closing the gap and ensuring more children are 'school ready'.

The Early Years Foundation Stage profile (EYFSP) Moderation model for 2015/16 is focusing on schools where GLD was below national, enabling targeting of training and resources, particularly focused on the specific early learning goals of literacy and mathematical development, and the importance of providing the right learning opportunities within the school, transition information and the Home Learning Environment.

Opportunities to develop early years provision within new school building work are also being discussed as a strategic priority to further aid transition by the co-existence of provision on a shared site.

2.3 Support for Governors

RECOMMENDATION: *The County Council should consider ways to encourage employers to enable governors to be released from their employment to increase their contribution and commitment to schools.*

EES for Schools have been looking at innovative ways for employees who come from a variety of employers across the region to be able to become governors, without necessarily having to physically attend meetings which could be introduced in Essex to encourage employers to continue to enable their staff to volunteer to be governors.

A pilot for e-governors has been set up with SGOSS (Schools for Governors) and The Key (Support for School Governors) and five e-governors have now been appointed to pilot arrangements for governors to participate in meetings via technology. This is seen as an important initiative to encourage high quality candidates to contribute to effective school governance.

RECOMMENDATION: *There should be encouragement and incentives for school governing bodies to work collaboratively with other governing bodies to ensure best-practice is shared throughout the county.*

The Governor Effectiveness Mark (GEM) is being used by Basildon Excellence Panel (BEP) (31 schools), and Harlow Education Partnership (HEP) (26 schools) to support governing body effectiveness. Both groups are developing a collaborative approach to the process and this is being developed through a review of evidence across schools and bespoke training (CPD) linked to the nine characteristics of Effective Governance. Outside of the two groups, one pilot school has had their validation visit and gained the award. Schools have been provided with information about GEM through EES for Schools marketing and we have had several requests for further information and two more schools have recently registered to undertake the award.

Governor Services has also been working with schools to encourage collaborative governor and clerk training based on local need. Workshops are being run across the County for groups and clusters of schools to share best practice around improving themselves by working in partnership in a school-led improvement system.

An example of this has been work with the Colne Valley Consortium. This group of schools identified a particular need for upskilling inexperienced governors and specific training was arranged for them, including a 'Hot Topic' session, updating on changes to education such as Ofsted, safeguarding, Education and Adoption Bill, curriculum and school-led improvement. As more schools start to develop formal, mutually accountable partnerships there will be more opportunities to run training for governors across clusters.

2.4 Data and Standards

RECOMMENDATION: *The County Council should commit to interim and ultimate targets to move to the express aim of being in the top quartile of educational achievement in the county at all Key Stages. It should also set the ambition that the improvements already seen in Essex in the secondary sector are matched in the primary sector.*

There are three priorities that drive ECC's work with schools. These underpin a relentless focus on key outcomes to ensure that by 2018:

- Every school in Essex to be a good or outstanding school;
- Outcomes at all key stages are in the top quartile nationally; and
- Reduce the gap in achievement between children and young people from deprived backgrounds and their peers, in line with the highest performing 25% of local authorities nationally.

The Annual report on attainment and progress in the 2014/15 academic year sets out the positive progress made across a range of measures (see page 9 of annex report).

However, Members may be aware that assessment frameworks across the primary and secondary school phases are due to change considerably in a phased way until 2023 (see table at end of report):

- 2016 will be the first year of new Key Stage 2 (KS2) tests for pupils who have studied a sufficient proportion of the new national curriculum introduced in 2014. The method of reporting used for the new tests will be very different than for previous years as a scaled score will be used rather than levels. The new national standard will be calculated from pupils taking the test in summer 2016 and therefore it is difficult to estimate accurately beforehand the proportion of pupils who have reached the new national standard.
- Similarly, there are substantial changes taking place within GCSEs over the next few years which make estimating attainment similarly difficult. Students will take exams for the new GCSEs, in 2017. These will be linear, meaning that all students will take their exams at the end of the course; there will be a new numeric grading scale from 9 to 1 instead of from A* to G; and schools will be measured on pupils progress in a broader range of results across 8 subjects.

The changes, coupled with the significant raising of the bar in expected standards, means that it is not possible to provide accurate targets for achieving top quartile status going forward until we have the new test data available for KS2 and KS4.

Therefore, the following estimates have been calculated for 2016, to enable members to understand the pupil numbers likely to need to improve across Essex schools to move the County into top quartile performance levels:

- Key Stage 2 – for Essex to have reached the top quartile nationally in 2015, an additional 460 pupils would have needed to attain Level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Maths. Based on current cohort numbers, and an assumption of a 1% increase each year in Essex and nationally, then approximately 460-470 additional pupils would need to achieve the threshold each year for Essex to reach the top quartile in 2016;
- Key Stage 4 – For Essex to have reached the top quartile nationally in 2015, an additional 335 pupils would have needed to gain 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths. Based on current cohort numbers and an assumption of a 1% increase each year in Essex and nationally for the thresholds and top quartiles, approximately 330 additional pupils would need to achieve 5 or more A* to C grades including English and Maths for Essex to reach the top quartile in 2016.

ACTION: *The Task and Finish Group would wish future Educational Attainment in Essex Annual Reports to provide detailed information to afford more clarity where improvements have been made.*

The Annual report and detailed annex on attainment and progress in the 2014/15 academic year sets out the improvements made, along with work undertaken. The report has been simplified from previous years, with an executive summary added.

RECOMMENDATION: *The County Council should encourage all schools under Local Authority control to proactively and creatively make full use of the Pupil Premium to develop ways of improving the attainment of children from more deprived backgrounds.*

An educational specialist organisation, the National Education Trust, was commissioned in the autumn term 2015 to review the use of Pupil Premium grant (PPG) across schools in Essex, and develop a toolkit for low cost impactful practice to enable all schools to focus on sustaining improving outcomes for their disadvantaged pupil group.

Work to date has involved a survey of school websites to review how schools are meeting their statutory duty to communicate the outcomes of their disadvantaged pupil group; a survey of schools to gauge best practice and review PPG spend; and a series of focus groups run during the Spring term to capture effective practice to use in the forthcoming toolkit. A conference is planned for mid-April 2016 to launch the toolkit and showcase good evidence based practice.

ACTION: *The Task and Finish Group would wish the Cabinet Member to report if, and how, the County Council is working with the public sector to work with hard-to-reach groups to raise educational engagement and attainment.*

A range of services within the Education and Learning service work with a broad range of other stakeholders, including external agencies and other specialist providers, in order to secure the best support for disadvantaged and hard to reach groups.

As part of the work being carried out by the National Education Trust, outlined in the section above, schools will be surveyed on their work to raise educational engagement and attainment, in order that good practice can be shared. This work is being supplemented by research being undertaken by a small group of Essex TSAs, who will feedback on good practice in schools around parental engagement and work to raise aspirations of both parents and their children and young people.

2.5 School Organisation and Planning

ACTION: *The Task and Finish Group invites a response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning with regard to the influx of migrant children into Essex and the subsequent impact this has on class sizes in the county.*

One of the challenges in exploring any links between migrant number increases into Essex and the consequent impact on class sizes is that 'in-year' migration is only one of a number of factors affecting class size. The other main factors that need to be considered are the natural increase in the population of Essex i.e. the birth rate of the population residing within the county, out migration, and the number of school places available.

The county has a legal duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in Essex for every resident child of statutory school age whose parents apply for a school place. As part of future planning for school organisation, additional places can be added by the expansion of existing schools or the opening of new schools.

A detailed analysis based on Essex level data has been undertaken by the School Place Planning team, which in summary shows:

- The number of children attending primary schools in Essex has increased by 8% from 2010/11 (an increase of 8,446 pupils). An additional 4,103 places were provided across primary schools across the county in that time period. As the rate of increase in pupil numbers was higher than the provision of additional places, the level of surplus places has fallen to 7% in 2014/15 (above the DfE recommended surplus rate of 5%).
- The number of children attending secondary schools in Essex has fallen by 5% from 2010/11 (decrease of 4,683 pupils). Over the same period secondary school places available have reduced by 1,562, attributable mostly to academy conversions. Even with this reduction, the level of surplus places has increased from 8% to 12% since 2010/11.
- Primary class sizes have increased to 27.7 pupils per infant class in 2014/15 (from 26.8 in 2010/11) and to 98 infant classes with more than 30 pupils; and 28 pupils per junior class (from 27.6 in 2010/11) with 341 junior classes with more than 30 pupils. There is no equivalent figure for secondary classes, however projection analysis shows that there should not be a significant increase in class sizes, due to planned expansions of existing schools.
- Essex is a net exporter of pupils (i.e. the numbers travelling out of the county for their education exceeds the numbers travelling in) at both primary and secondary level. The numbers are very small so there is little impact on availability of school places or class sizes.

The Task and Finish group report included this action as it was raised as a potential issue by one school; however the data available to the school place planning team does not suggest that 'in-year migration' is causing significant issues for class sizes across the county at this stage.

The organisational intelligence team will continue their monitoring of the data – and review available district data to see if there is evidence of impact on class sizes being more localised, particularly at primary school level where average class sizes have increased over the last 5 years.

In addition, ECC officers will be scheduling a series of workshops for members during the summer term, to share school place planning forecast data for local areas. This will enable members to review the data and school organisation priorities.

Annex 1: Assessment framework changes

New performance measures:

Key Stage 2		Key Stage 4	
Attainment	Progress	Attainment 8	Progress 8
% pupils at expected national standard	New value added model to measure progress from KS1 to KS2	Attainment 8	Progress 8
% pupils achieving a 'high score'		% achieving grade C+ in English and Maths	
Average score (scaled score)		% achieving the EBacc	
		% pupils entered for EBacc	

Assessment and accountability changes:

Year	Introduction of changes
2015	New reception baseline
2016	New KS1 tests and teacher assessment New KS2 tests and teacher assessment New KS2 accountability indicators KS4 1-8 scale used for Attainment 8/ Progress 8 EBacc continues, EM C+ (Basics) introduced New KS2 assessments into Year 7
2017	Updated KS1 and KS2 teacher assessment criteria First reformed GCSEs taken (English and maths) KS4 1-9 Scale used for performance tables 'Basics' becomes EM 5+
2018	First cohort to finish KS1 with reception baseline (progress) More reformed GCSEs
2019	More reformed GCSEs
2020	First KS2 cohort to finish full 6 years in the new curriculum and new KS1 prior attainment
2021	Pupils with KS2 assessment (from 2016) are now Y11
2022	First cohort to finish KS2 with reception baseline (progress measured using reception or KS1 baseline)
2023	Reception baseline used to measure progress of all pupils finishing KS2