



## **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN ESSEX**

A Report of a Review by a Task and Finish Group of  
the People & Families Scrutiny Committee

**July 2015**







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## **FOREWORD**

To be completed when the Task and Finish Group reports to  
The September 2015 meeting of the Committee



I would wish to thank my fellow Task and Finish Group Members for their diligent approach and professionalism during the course of this review.

I commend this report to you.

**COUNCILLOR MAGGIE McEWEN**

Chairman of the Educational Attainment in Essex Task and Finish Group

## Background

### Background to the Scrutiny

The People and Families Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to review Educational Attainment in Essex in September 2014 following several iterations of the review scoping document (Appendix 1). It was agreed at the September 2014 meeting that the review would identify the levels and trends in educational attainment in schools in Essex at each Key Stage; evaluate how the levels of attainment compare nationally; identify the causes of underperformance and identify and evaluate all options to address the causes of underperformance; understand the barriers to improving school performance; understand the reduced funding regime; and identify how School Governors can influence improving performance. The Group would, ultimately, make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to support improvement in educational attainment across the county.

The People and Families Scrutiny Committee confirmed the membership of the Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 4 September 2014. However, one of the Parent Governor representatives on the Committee subsequently withdrew his membership of the Task and Finish Group.

### Membership

The Membership of the Task and Finish Group was agreed as:

Councillor Maggie McEwen (Chairman), Ongar and Rural  
Councillor Susan Barker, Dunmow  
Councillor Keith Bobbin, Pitsea  
Richard Carson, Parent Governor non-elected representative  
Councillor Ian Grundy, Stock (ex-officio)

### Evidence base of the Scrutiny

Nine formal oral evidence sessions have been held where a range of contributors have been able to provide evidence to the Task and Finish Group. The contributors have been (Essex County Council unless stated):

- Five members of the Young Essex Assembly
- Huw Jones, Senior Analyst
- Pippa Shukla, Lead Strategic Commissioner, Pupil and School Intelligence
- Shamsun Noor, Head of School Admissions and Transport
- Debbie Rogan, Executive Headteacher, The HEARTS Academy Trust
- Leanne Hedden, Governor, Shenfield High School and the Essex Schools' Forum
- Rod Lane, Governor, Great Bradfords Infant and Nursery School
- Sean Moriarty, Governor, St. Benedict's Roman Catholic College
- Linda Oliffe, Governor, South Green Junior School
- Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning
- Chris Kiernan, Interim Director of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning

- Alison Fiala, Lead Commissioner, Primary Education
- Lyn Wright, Standards and Excellence Commissioner: Secondary Education
- Richard Thomas, Executive Director, Association of Secondary Headteachers in Essex (ASHE)
- Councillor Susan Barker, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Uttlesford District Council
- Councillor Graham Butland, Leader, Braintree District Council
- Councillor Terry Cutmore, Leader, Rochford District Council
- Councillor Peter Greig, Castle Point Borough Council
- Councillor Terri Sargent, Cabinet Member for Environment and Community, Basildon Borough Council
- Councillor Neville Watson, Castle Point Borough Council
- Andy Wright, Corporate Director, Braintree District Council
- Dr Tim Coulson, Regional Schools Commissioner for East of England and North-East London, Department for Education
- Ruth Bird, Chairman, Executive Committee of the Essex School Governors Association
- Russell Ayling, Executive Committee of the Essex School Governors Association
- Debbi Botham, Service Manager, Governor Services
- John Clarke, Executive Committee of the Essex School Governors Association
- John Hunter, Executive Committee of the Essex School Governors Association
- Joyce Sweeney, Executive Committee of the Essex School Governors Association
- Clare Kershaw, Head of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning
- Councillor Giles Watling, Chairman Education and Skills Committee, Tendring District Council
- Keri Lawrence, Executive Projects Manager, Tendring District Council
- Malcolm Morley, Chief Executive, Harlow District Council
- Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Commissioning, Healthy Lifestyles
- Jane Richards, Head of Commissioning Public Health and Wellbeing
- Mike Blant, Liaison Officer, Essex Primary Headteachers Association (EPHA)

Additionally, written representations were received from Stavroulla Yiannou, Head of Commissioning Education and Lifelong Learning; David Burch, Director of Policy, Essex Chambers of Commerce; Richard Holmes, Director of Customers and Community, Maldon District Council; and Averil Price, Director of Community Services, Chelmsford City Council. Members of the Task and Finish Group have also, so far, undertaken visits to Wickford Church of England Infant School, Briscoe Primary School, Pitsea and Shenfield High School. Other school visits are planned for early in the autumn term 2015.

The Task and Finish Group is content that it has received, to date, a range of views and received contributions from a number of key individuals and groups to fully review educational attainment in Essex. The contributions received are highlighted in the section below, which is presented together with recommendations for the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning from whom the Task and Finish Group invites a response.

## Issues, Evidence and Recommendations

### Key Evidence

The first meeting of the Task and Finish Group established the scope of the review and it was agreed the following should be tested as part of the review:

- Performance data on all schools in Essex
- An understanding of past and present arrangements for managing the whole school estate, and the influence of new buildings and facilities on educational attainment
- An understanding of any influence the County Council can bring to bear on Academies/Free Schools. How does the Council fund the continuing services?
- The role and influence of LA School Governors with regard to school improvement
- An understanding of the reduced funding regime
- An understanding of statutory requirements
- An understanding of partnership working in local education with District/Borough/City Councils
- An understanding of the Ofsted inspection regime
- How do schools spend the Pupil Premium they receive?

In order to test these areas the Task and Finish Group agreed it would need to:

- To identify the levels and trends in educational attainment in schools in Essex at each Key Stage
- To evaluate how the levels of attainment compare nationally
- Where underperformance exists, to identify the causes
- To identify and evaluate all options to address the causes of underperformance
- To understand the barriers to improving school performance
- To understand the reduced funding regime including the role of The Schools Forum
- To identify how School Governors can influence improving performance
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to support improvement in educational attainment across the county

By theme, the key evidence received at the Task and Finish Group sessions are outlined below:

#### Recruitment and Retention

Essex is a hard area to recruit teachers to in terms of both locality and subject. Subsequently there has been a significant increase in overseas teacher recruitment. The Task and Finish Group heard that between 10-20% of staff in Essex schools are 'imported' from overseas, with Canada and Ireland supplying many staff. There is 100 overseas staff being trained to go into schools in Colchester and Tendring. This is a reflection on a national system that is struggling in terms of recruitment. Last year 50,000 teachers nationally left teaching. The biggest wastage is in the first five years of teaching. Headteacher hours are increasing, with Primary Heads working, on average, 50-59 hours per week; and Secondary Heads working, on average, 59-64 hours per



week. There are 17 Teaching School Alliances in Essex more than any other county in the country. However, there are not enough applicants for training places.

In relation to recruiting to teach subject areas the Task and Finish Group heard there have been 97 jobs advertised for mathematics teachers this year. Two years ago Government data showed that there were not enough mathematicians in training to fill current vacancies. Schools have to exist within the funding envelope and recruitment of staff is problematic. In areas where there is a low level of higher education qualifications it is problematic to recruit teachers into programmes such as Train to Teach. Particular subject areas that are difficult to recruit to are: Mathematics, Physics, Design and Technology, and Religious Education. The Task and Finish Group heard that one of the problems with attainment is if the school is a category three or four school with *Ofsted* there comes with that a problem with recruiting staff; there are also recruitment issues for schools in seaside areas and on the London borders of Essex due to the London weighting allowance paid as a retainer.

With regard to unqualified staff it was reported to the Group on a site visit that unqualified staff can bring other skills and experiences into the classroom and that they are supported by non-class based outstanding teachers and leaders who have performance management targets and accountability for children's outcomes. Although unqualified staff are employed short term it is always as a route to qualified status and not a replacement for it.

Recruitment of teachers is a regional issue and some schools are now taking the opportunity to train their own teachers on the job. The DfE recognises that Academies are no panacea and that some schools have declined since leaving Local Authority control.

Recruitment and retention of staff in those schools which are seen to be failing is the most difficult; yet these are the very schools which require excellent qualified staff. The fluidity of staff within clusters or partnerships allows schools to share resources also. Excellent Headteachers create and motivate staff to stay. However, external support is often needed in supporting schools with a high turnover of staff.

The Task and Finish Group heard that the recruitment of is even more difficult for Headteachers. In deprived areas recruitment is even harder. Schools in the county spend thousands of pounds on recruitment. To assist with recruitment difficulties there are examples of schools providing housing on-site for new recruits.

### Early Years

The Task and Finish Group learnt that a Quality and Development Team started to work with pre-school providers and schools with regard to Early Years in 2011 and 2012 and this work has started to reap rewards. This intervention has led to an improvement in Early Years outcomes in the county.

The Task and Finish Group heard the opinion that the biggest single factor to increase primary school attainment is investing in children prior to statutory school age with Early Years intervention. Until the issue of children meeting the necessary assessments when they join the school is addressed, schools, particularly in deprived areas will always be

trying to catch-up with other schools. Therefore, schools should look to develop relationships with feeder nursery schools.

The Task and Finish Group were informed, on a site visit, that early years children go into Wickford Church of England Primary School from the age of two. In this way, those with speech difficulties are more likely to catch-up with their peers than they are if they join the school in the Reception year. The view was stated that more pre-schools should be attached to infant or primary schools. There should also be a qualified person in a nursery class to monitor the progress of the children; however, this does not always happen in Essex.

Early Years provision is often patchiest in areas of relative deprivation with poor communication links and infrastructure to allow parents/carers to access any provision available.

With regard to Sure Start/Children's Centres the view was expressed that they have had very little impact on the achievement of young children from deprived backgrounds. The provision has little incentive with no statutory obligation to provide data. The provision does have SLAs attached to them; however, there is no moderation when children start school as, very often, the schools are told the children have reached their early learning goals, when they clearly have not. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children would be coming into schools with higher levels of attainment if Sure Start/Children's Centres were working. However, the reverse is true and they are not having the impact they were designed for. This is the national picture not just in Essex. It is difficult for individual officers at a Local Authority to have a handle on what is going on at the centres. Investment in Early Years is key to attainment throughout a child's education it was stated; and pre-schools do not often have access to outside facilities, and this is the reality for many young boys from underprivileged backgrounds who need to be able to access outdoors – this is with particular reference to white British boys being the single biggest underperforming group in the country.

The Task and Finish Group had heard from a number of sources that many children are not school-ready when they start the Reception year. Nursery education in Essex is patchy; and the most effective way to tackle the problem is through the providers which are linked to schools. Much of the nursery provision linked to schools takes children aged as young as two and there is clear evidence across the country that indigenous white working –class children are performing poorly including in early literacy. Dr Tim Coulson stated he is keen on nursery provision being linked to schools to tackle early literacy issues.

Dr Coulson's views echoed those heard on the site visits to Wickford Church of England Infant School and Briscoe Primary School as well as at the Task and Finish Group meeting with the Schools Forum members. It was agreed that the Final Report of the Task and Finish Group would include a **RECOMMENDATION** about linking Early Years provision with Infant/Primary schools.

### **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**

**Owner:** Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

**Implementation Review Date:** March 2016

**Impact Review Date:** September 2016

### School Governors

Cllr Barker queried what governors do to assist in achievement? The Task and Finish Group heard Shenfield High School which was previously rated by *Ofsted* as “requires Improvement” is now rated as “Good”, and crucial to this is having the right governance structures with governors recruited who exhibit a range of skills and expertise. These governors should then be actively involved in the school by attending meetings and conducting monitoring visits that look at something within the school improvement plan.

The Task and Finish Group agreed to formulate a **RECOMMENDATION** that the County Council should think of ways to encourage employers in Essex to enable governors to be released from their employment to enable their contribution and commitment to schools be increased.

### **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**

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Maintained schools have to reconstitute and look at the make-up of their governing bodies by September 2015. Instead of community governors there will be co-opted governors. Therefore, this opens up the opportunity for governing bodies to find people with the necessary skills rather than be people from the community.

Governors who come from business backgrounds are more able to keep up-to-date with training and have the commitment to do this. The training available from County ensures that professional people view the training as professional personal development. Parent Governors are much less likely to take-up training opportunities. The Parent Governor issue might be solved through the reconstitution of governing bodies in September 2015.

ESGA is working with governing bodies to ensure a maximum of two-four Parent Governors.

Some Academies are attempting to move to having no parental or staff representation on governing bodies; and looking to business expertise only. However, there is nothing wrong with having a different range of expertise on a school governing body. When he was Education Secretary Michael Gove stated there should be paid School Governors. Some Governors are in schools three or four times a week; however, the opinion was this was too much. Every school is different but the pressures are practically the same, and these pressures put many potential Governors off. There is an absolute need that people in authority should have a system of joined-up support and thinking to action the one aim of improving the educational attainment of children. If you challenge, as a School Governor, you can get answers.

The Essex School Governors Association (ESGA) answered unequivocally no when asked whether School Governors should receive a retainer? However, there are examples of Governors being paid by the sponsors of Academies.

School Governors play an important role in raising school attainment. The relationship between the Headteacher and the Chair of School Governors is vital to ensure attainment levels are raised. The challenges made of the Headteacher at governing body meetings should all be minuted. It is crucial that School Governors see the school as a business, and with the correct governance Governors can be the critical friend and the challenge to the school and the senior leadership team. Therefore, it is crucial that governing bodies have the right committees, sub-committees and effective terms of reference. Governors also have a role to play in ensuring the health and wellbeing of senior leadership teams. Good governance is crucial in ensuring Governors are part of the leadership of the school. Ofsted can recommend a review of school governance structures.

Different schools and different governing bodies have different strengths and weaknesses; this should enable greater collaboration and support between governing bodies. It was agreed that a **RECOMMENDATION** be included in the Final Report of the Task and Finish Group to suggest more collaboration between governing bodies.

#### **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**

**Owner:** Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

**Implementation Review Date:** March 2016

**Impact Review Date:** September 2016

#### Data

Essex has data-sharing agreements through the National Pupil Database and has been praised by *Ofsted* for its post-16 data-sharing agreements. The Task and Finish Group

has concluded that data gathering is a key to success and was impressed to hear how information is gathered, by schools, on how every child is performing with early baselines established to allow for intervention when necessary. Data drives up standards when the senior leadership team of a school uses the data to assess individual student progress.

The Task and Finish Group were particularly impressed by the data 'war room' established by Shenfield High School which tracks the achievements of all students in Years 10 to 13, enabling the school to make interventions if students are not achieving the levels they should be. Although primarily for staff the 'war room' is also used as a motivational tool for students from time-to-time.

From next year Progress 8 and Attainment 8 standards will be used to measure students. This new measurement aims to erase the false divide between those who achieve a 'C' grade and those who do not. Progress 8 will show how students' progress against eight curriculum areas. However, the concern was raised to the Task and Finish Group that if a student, for example, does not have strong literacy skills and subsequently does not take a Humanities subject it will appear that the school is not achieving.

Essex is, by-and-large, in the third quartile on the key metrics. The Task and Finish Group heard the aim is to move the county into the top quartile. Historically at KS2 and KS4 Essex has only increased at the same pace as the national average; and this places the county in the lower end of second quartile or into the third quartile. However, if outcomes were increased for students in these two Key Stages at a rate higher than the national average this would place Essex firmly in the second quartile. The Task and Finish Group agreed to formulate a **RECOMMENDATION** stating that the County Council should commit to the indicator that the People in Essex have aspirations and achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong learning.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**The County Council should commit to interim and ultimate targets to move to aim of being in the top quartile of educational achievement in the county at all Key Stages.**

**Owner:** Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

**Implementation Review Date:** March 2016

**Impact Review Date:** September 2016

Two years ago, Essex, in line with what occurred nationally, had higher results in Mathematics than in English at KS4. Now, schools have focused so significantly on their English outcomes over the last two years that this has had an effect on Mathematics attainment. Therefore, Mathematics continues to be a significant challenge. There is a scarcity of good Mathematics teachers and there has been recruitment from overseas to plug the gaps. And a new GCSE curriculum is about to be introduced, which will be harder than the present one. One positive intervention, the Task and Finish Group heard about, on Mathematics is at Tendring Technology College, which is developing a curriculum in partnership with local primary schools from KS1 all the way through

schooling. This should help pupils cope with the Year 6 to Year 7 break, which had always proved challenging.

### The Pupil Premium

The Pupil Premium is used creatively across the county, the Task and Finish Group heard. Indeed, the Young Essex Assembly suggested it could be used to fund extra-curricular and revision clubs.

The Pupil Premium enables schools to release staff from classrooms so they can spend time with children who are less able. It enables schools to be, effectively, over-resourced in terms of teaching. Schools also look for innovative ways of utilising the Pupil Premium, for example, the Task and Finish Group were informed that St. Benedict's Catholic College encourages engagement with the parents/carers of Pupil Premium students. The school initiated a credit for Pupil Premium students which is worth £100 a term which they can use for music tuition, uniform, school trips etc. which is linked to attendance and reduces in scale if a student is absent from school. This initiative has proven to be successful.

On a site visit the Group heard the introduction of the Pupil Premium really has improved the educational attainment of the children. The very high level of Pupil Premium pays for uniform (including PE kit and shoes) for some children, and it also pays for a wide range of activities. There are over 20 after- or pre-school clubs, which are all free to children at the school. This has had a huge impact and is used skilfully, targeting the most needy children. The Pupil Premium has enabled the school to do more.

The Task and Finish Group would wish to see more creative and proactive use of the Pupil Premium and agreed to formulate a **RECOMMENDATION** as such.

#### **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**

**Owner:** Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

**Implementation Review Date:** March 2016

**Impact Review Date:** September 2016

### Actions and Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group has agreed its actions and recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning and seeks the formal approval of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee to file these recommendations to the Cabinet Member at its September 2015 meeting. The recommendations are outlined below and are also highlighted within the document itself. In the event that the Cabinet Member

does not accept any of the recommendations below, the Committee should be advised, in each case, the reasons for rejection in writing.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. The County Council should commit to interim and ultimate targets to move to aim of being in the top quartile of educational achievement in the county at all Key Stages.
5. 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
6. The in a variety of formats.

#### **ACTIONS:**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

### **Summary of the Evidence Sessions and Site Visits**

#### Friday, 10 October 2014

The membership and Chairmanship of the Task and Finish Group were established and personal interests in terms of school governorships were declared. The scoping document which had previously been presented to the full Committee was considered and discussed. Although outside the scope of the review it was agreed that the influence

Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) has on educational attainment should be considered. The effect admissions criteria have on attainment was also added to the scope, particularly in relation to Academies acting as their own admissions authority. The Task and Finish Group agreed that the latest available performance data be requested in detailed form relating to both Local Authority maintained schools and Academies.

The role of The Schools Forum was discussed in relation to the impact it has on the funding regime and the recommendations it makes to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning. The nature and scope of the recommendations from The Schools Forum was questioned, and it was agreed to invite members of the Forum to a future meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

It was agreed the correlation between poor educational attainment and socio-economic deprivation be discussed with Borough/City/District Councils. Other issues potentially affecting the review such as the School Estates Strategy; the influence the Local Authority is able to exert over Academies; and Further Education Colleges was discussed.

### Monday, 13 October 2014

As part of European Local Democracy Week the Task and Finish Group held a session with the Young Essex Assembly (YEA) starting at 5.30 p.m. – a time convenient for the five members of the YEA who provided their contribution to the review.

In advance of the meeting the Group had set 15 questions for the YEA which it had considered at a Sub-Group meeting on 20 September. Their responses are outlined below.

1. How effective has your education been in making you ready for work?

Although some schools give guidance on careers and “working for life”, more is needed - not only guidance about job-based skills but also things like mortgages. Cllr Grundy noted that the T&F Group on Financial Inclusion recommended that money matters should be included. It was agreed overall that there should be more and that schools should be more consistent in supplying it.

2. Does school size have any effect on education attainment?

Yes, it has a negative effect in several ways – bigger classrooms mean less quality teaching time and teacher’s attention for individuals. It also impacts on things like punctuality and attitude. Add to that mixed classes are not good, as pupils can feel worried about letting others down, if they make it apparent that they do not understand things.

3. In your experience is the transition between primary and secondary effective?

This can vary quite a lot. It can vary with the schools concerned and who you go with as well. Secondary schools will often do “fun stuff” with visiting pupils – but that is not what it



will be like at all in Year 7. In reality, both primary and secondary schools need to be more focused in how they approach this transition for their pupils.

4. How far are young people involved in school improvement plans?

Several views were expressed. One YEA member was unsure if the school was committed at all; another pointed out that providing feedback at their school was a long process. Another suggested that the plans should concentrate more on the social and extra-curricular side of things; another suggested it should be made more child-friendly.

5. What are your views on teaching and learning strategies?

The emphasis is on teaching staff to be able to model their style according to the pupils they are teaching, and to liaise with each other about this. The size of the school may have a direct bearing on this. Relating to the use of laptops, schools have a supply for pupils' use, and pupils have their own accounts; but they cannot use their own laptops or tablets. There is some use of smartphones.

6. In your view, how important are extra curriculum activities in raising attainment?

These can raise happiness levels, develop life and social skills – including teamwork in some cases – which in turn all give rise to more motivation and academic achievement. These should be entirely voluntary and preferably free, so that nobody is prevented from participation on grounds of cost. One suggestion was to use Pupil Premium to fund extra-curricular and revision clubs. Transport was raised as a specific problem, in that sometimes buses and trains beyond school hours were limited.

7. Do your schools offer extra revision classes during summer and half terms?

Some do – they are a very good idea, but they should be free, and they should be conducted by the school staff themselves, rather than outsiders who are not known to the individual pupils involved.

8. Does your school help and encourage what you wish to do after school? Does your school raise aspiration to join a university?

This depends on the school. There seems to be more emphasis on university in independent schools. More advice/guidance on this topic is needed for all

9. Who, in your view, are the most important people in influencing your educational attainment levels?

Teachers have the most influence, in providing the drive to achieve in pupils. The attitude of parents is also very important and this varies a lot. Some are very supportive, whereas others do nothing and then blame the children. It was pointed out that parents are usually less able to give practical assistance with homework, the older the children get.

10. What are the key influences on educational attainment and aspiration?

Rewards of some kind were suggested as key to attainment. These can take different forms, e.g. trips or electronic credits. Another form of “reward” was noted – when badly behaved pupils received some kind of reward to encourage them to behave better – e.g. a position of responsibility. This could have quite a negative effect on those who were well behaved.

11. What interventions might tackle issues of low educational attainment in certain communities?

This was not seen as major problem, but it might be possible to bring in teachers from outside, to explore different ways of learning. It was seen more of an issue with individuals rather than communities.

12. Research commonly shows that girls have higher educational aspirations than boys. Is this your experience; and what can be done to close this gap?

In general terms, this was not seen to be the case by the YEA members. It is an individual thing and not gender related. However, there are some areas where this may apply. There are certain subjects that show a difference – for example, boys seem to be more motivated in science classes. Also, boys do seem to develop slower than girls. Another element is classroom behaviour – girls tend to speak up more than boys. With regard to segregated classes, these may benefit girls more, as they tend to get on with their work, but, again, it was seen as more being related to individuals’ performances.

13. Do school league tables have an adverse effect on the attainment of young people where the pass-rates at GCSE are lower than average, can it become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The YEA members had no real overall view on this issue. This can be the case with some people, but not all. Some look entirely to their own achievements. It is also possible that it will impact on teachers, in their own view of their abilities, but probably not to any great extent. The Chairman pointed out that such results are not actually yours, but of your predecessors.

14. Does peer pressure have an effect on educational attainment, either positively or negatively?

Peer pressure certainly can be influential, but it can pull pupils either way. The friendship group is very important to almost every pupil, and it can also lead to labelling of groups of friends – such as “geeks” for instance. This can sometimes be negative, especially for those on the edge of the group.

15. How important is a school’s pastoral policies in terms of educational attainment?

The pastoral element is very important, as it cuts across several areas, eg academic, social, friendships groups, etc. Different members had different experiences, with some having the Heads of Year taking on these roles, and others having pastoral managers who move with groups as they progressed through the years. The latter can provide stability and build up relationships with pupils. There is a big difference when pupils

enter Sixth Form, where they are treated more like adults and expected to take on more responsibility for themselves.

### Friday, 19 December 2014

The Task and Finish Group were presented with the key priorities in the ECC corporate priority: People have aspirations and achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong learning and that the three priorities within this that Education Services are measure themselves against are:

- Every child in Essex to go to a good or outstanding school by 2018
- The gap in outcomes for vulnerable children to be closed
- Educational performance at Early Years, KS2 and KS4 to be in the top 25% of Local Authorities nationally

Attainment data was also presented to the Task and Finish Group. The Group heard that data is collected on Academies as well as maintained schools, there being a data-sharing agreement with Academies on school level attainment data. Through the National Pupil Database Essex Education have details of all children educated in Essex schools and have specific data-sharing agreements with bordering authorities, for example Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Unitary Authorities. Essex has been praised for its post-16 data-sharing agreements in the *Ofsted* Annual Report.

The Task and Finish Group learnt that a Quality and Development Team started to work with pre-school providers and schools with regard to Early Years in 2011 and 2012 and this work has started to reap rewards. This intervention has led to an improvement in Early Years outcomes in the county.

At Key Stage 2 there are manifold measures used to assess performance but there is a standard that every child should achieve a level 4 at the end of KS2. In the last two years Essex has improved, but is still in the second quartile nationally.

At Key Stage 4 the standard measure is five GCSEs at Grades A\*-C, including English and Mathematics. From this year there is a different measure in place. Schools are no longer able to include the best result of those students who had been entered early for a GCSE and then re-sit during May/June – schools now have to include the result from the ‘first sitting’ only towards their performance data. This has meant that many schools have stopped the early sit of exams. Equivalencies have also been excluded from the performance measurements, consequently the national scores have gone down this year.

In terms of Ofsted outcomes the last year has shown an increase in the number of primary, secondary and special schools being rated as either good or outstanding. This is an increase of 12% from 2012 for primary schools; and 16% for secondary schools. One of the prime foci of Ofsted at present is the improvement of educational outcomes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Primary and Secondary School Improvement Advisors RAG rank schools to see which of them require support throughout the following year and what level of support they might require.

### Monday, 26 January 2015

The Task and Finish Group received contributions from Members of the Essex Schools Forum. The contributors were School Governors and an infant school Headteacher. The Task and Finish Group also received a verbal response to a question raised at a previous meeting as to whether the county policy on school transport might have an effect on educational attainment. It was explained from September 2015 for new starters the policy of the County Council is to provide free transport to the child's nearest school if the school is above the statutory walking distance. Catchment area schools are no longer a relevant factor in this. It was stated that attainment should not be affected by this policy. Low income families will be protected and this is clearly spelt out in the school application process. A view from other contributors to the session was that school transport policies do have an impact upon attainment.

The Task and Finish Group learned the Schools Forum makes recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning; and makes decisions on other issues, for example the Forum is looking to reduce the spend on high-needs residential special schools outside of the county. The Schools Forum looks at the most pressing cases in relation to reduced funding. There are three blocks of funding which the Forum looks at: Early Years, High Needs and Schools.

The Task and Finish Group were informed about inspirational and energetic school leadership which can have a positive effect on a school. The group were given examples of schools where this had been the case in Clacton and Basildon. For example, improvements to Felmores Primary School have been as a result of leadership which shifted the culture within the school. Previously the culture was that the children being, largely, from deprived areas would not achieve. Alongside this, the school is part of Basildon Education Services Trust (BEST) and in the early days of this initiative learning mentors were appointed from the 'pot' of BEST monies. In 2010/11 the BEST funding was devolved to schools and this also coincided with the school having a new Headteacher. The monies were able to be diverted to teaching and learning. Since this the students have increasingly, over the last four years, narrowed the gap with their peers in terms of their progress. The Task and Finish Group heard the opinion that the biggest single factor to increase primary school attainment is investing in children prior to statutory school age with Early Years intervention. No children entering Felmores Primary meet the necessary assessments when they join the school, and until this is addressed the school will always be trying to catch-up with other schools. Therefore, schools should look to develop relationships with feeder nursery schools.

Schools have to exist within the funding envelope and recruitment of staff is problematic. In areas where there is a low level of higher education qualifications it is problematic to recruit teachers into programmes such as Train to Teach. Particular subject areas that are difficult to recruit to are: Mathematics, Physics, Design and Technology, and Religious Education. The Task and Finish Group heard that one of the problems with attainment is if the school is a category three or four school with *Ofsted* there comes with

that a problem with recruiting staff; there are also recruitment issues for schools in seaside areas and on the London borders of Essex due to the London weighting allowance paid as a retainer.

With further reference to Early Years the Task and Finish Group were informed that early years children go into Wickford Church of England Primary School from the age of two. In this way, those with speech difficulties are more likely to catch-up with their peers than they are if they join the school in the Reception year. The view was stated that more pre-schools should be attached to infant or primary schools. There should also be a qualified person in a nursery class to monitor the progress of the children; however, this does not happen in Essex. With regard to Sure Start/Children's Centres the view was expressed that they have had very little impact on the achievement of young children from deprived backgrounds. The provision has little incentive with no statutory obligation to provide data. The provision does have SLAs attached to them; however, there is no moderation when children start school as, very often, the schools are told the children have reached their early learning goals, when they clearly have not. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children would be coming into schools with higher levels of attainment if Sure Start/Children's Centres were working. However, the reverse is true and they are not having the impact they were designed for. This is the national picture not just in Essex. It is difficult for individual officers at a Local Authority to have a handle on what is going on at the centres. It was queried whether Essex County Council prioritises Early Years and what ECCs strategic direction is related to Early Years. Investment in Early Years is key to attainment throughout a child's education it was stated; and pre-schools do not often have access to outside facilities, and this is the reality for many young boys from underprivileged backgrounds who need to be able to access outdoors – this is with particular reference to white British boys being the single biggest underperforming group in the country.

The Task and Finish Group heard that schools located in areas of deprivation that have spare places become vulnerable schools. Thus, this has an impact upon attainment levels. High turbulence within a school also impacts upon attainment due to the effect it has on the school managing the curriculum, teaching, and on staff.

Cllr Barker queried what governors do to assist in achievement? The Task and Finish Group heard Shenfield High School which was previously rated by *Ofsted* as "requires Improvement" is now rated as "Good", and crucial to this is having the right governance structures with governors recruited who exhibit a range of skills and expertise. These governors should then be actively involved in the school by attending meetings and conducting monitoring visits that look at something within the school improvement plan. A group of governors meet with the Headteacher once a month and look at the emerging data across all key stages. As a result governors have a greater understanding of the data than was the case two or three years ago and, as a result, are able to actively challenge the data and challenge school improvement plans. Governors have moved away from a subject-based approach and have some concentration on the pupil premium, safeguarding as well as school attendance and attainment monitoring. It was agreed that this approach would also work well in primary schools. The advent of a Free School in Brentwood has had an impact on admissions at Shenfield High School; and with another Free School opening from September 2015 admission numbers may be affected further. Shenfield High School is currently a four-form entry school; whereas, in the past, it has been an eight-form entry institution. Leanne informed the Group that

Shenfield High School has a higher than average, for the area, number of children with special educational needs and this affects appropriate intervention for other students. It costs, on average, £10,000 per annum for an alternative education provision for a student.

In relation to the roles and responsibilities of a school governor, it was stated that governors should be knowledgeable and fully committed to the school. The last *Ofsted* report of St. Benedict's Catholic College said "the Governors are able to provide support to the management team at the school". Therefore, if governors have time to devote to the school during the school day to support the school leadership team this would be a positive move in to ensure good governance. The Task and Finish Group agreed to formulate a **RECOMMENDATION** that the County Council should think of ways to encourage employers in Essex to enable governors to be released from their employment to enable their contribution and commitment to schools be increased.

The Pupil Premium enables schools to release staff from classrooms so they can spend time with children who are less able. It enables schools to be, effectively, over-resourced in terms of teaching. Schools also look for innovative ways of utilising the Pupil Premium, for example, the Task and Finish Group were informed that St. Benedict's Catholic College encourages engagement with the parents/carers of Pupil Premium students. The school initiated a credit for Pupil Premium students which is worth £100 a term which they can use for music tuition, uniform, school trips etc. which is linked to attendance and reduces in scale if a student is absent from school. This initiative has proven to be successful.

Groups of schools making each other progress and being accountable for each other is better than raising attainment school-by-school, it was stated. There is no mechanism that looks at how groups of schools can make each other better. It was suggested that it would be fascinating to see how this could be done in Colchester as every year the Grammar Schools are lauded by the local press with little or no coverage of the other schools in the Borough. There was support from the contributors of having schools under an 'umbrella' as it enables sharing of teaching and resources. The Local Delivery Groups have money but not the resources, and some schools don't buy into them and use their own resources.

Thursday, 26 February 2015

Site Visit to Wickford Church of England School, Mount Road, Wickford SS11 8HE

Present:

Debbie Rogan – Executive Headteacher

Louise Johnson – Head of School

Lee Faris, Early Years Manager

Steve Clark – Business Manager

- Part of HEARTS Academy, which now has four schools: Wickford Church of England School (2010); Briscoe Primary School, Pitsea (2011); Waterman Primary School and Stambridge Primary School (both 2015) in Rochford
- The Trust has three directors: Julia Attridge, Michael Maguire and Tim Elbourne (Member of the Chelmsford Diocesan Education Trust)

- The school is rated as Outstanding by both *Ofsted* and Inspector of Church Schools. It is a national support school and a teaching school
- Additional Funding comes from selling services to others
- The Trust makes strategic decisions on HR, finance and financial monitoring, but relies on local governing bodies to make local decisions. The Trust selects the Governing Body.
- There are six teachers at the school.

A question was posed as to whether having only six teachers affects what the school can do with regard to the amount of outreach? Debbie responded that sometimes classes come together. With planning it is ensured the children are not disadvantaged in any way. The school uses a number of specialist teachers, brought in to teach particular skills, and shares staff with other members of the Trust. Leaders also have accountability for targets and achievement and despite the expectation that they will do school to school support and manage this their main priority is ensuring that they focus on children staying on track with high quality teaching at all times.

It was asked whether the school can identify anything that affects the children's educational attainment? Debbie replied the context the children find themselves in. Recruitment is an issue in Basildon, and there are three unqualified teachers at Briscoe Primary School one of whom is on the 12-week assessment route to achieving Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) as well as salaried routes into teaching.

As a supplementary it was asked whether there are issues arising from having unqualified teaching staff? It was answered that unqualified staff can bring other skills and experiences into the classroom and that they are supported by non-class based outstanding teachers and leaders who have performance management targets and accountability for children's outcomes. Although unqualified staff are employed short term it is always as a route to qualified status and not a replacement for it.

A question was raised whether when recruiting the school looks for specialisms? The school often looks at Teaching Assistants with a degree. The school has staff to assist in training classroom management. Standards are maintained by the senior teachers making up the level that inexperienced teachers could not do. Research has shown that the level of care and pre-school education that children receive on a school site is greater than that of a nursery outside a school setting. Therefore, the school can prioritise vulnerable children.

With regard to funding it was asked what the impact of the imminent increase in National Insurance and Pension contributions might be? Steve responded that this will put a lot of pressure on budgets. Across the country contributions will be rising from 14% to 16.5%. The Academy will be able to handle it in the short term, but those schools running a deficit will find it a challenge. The Church of England is an overseeing body but provides no funding for the school. Core funding for the school this year has reduced by £20,000 – which is basically one teacher. In real terms school funding is not protected; the DfE has reformed its funding formula, and this is very complicated. Briscoe Primary School is different as it receives a lot of funding through its high level of deprivation – measured by the number of children receiving free school meals (65%). The school is affected significantly by its community, i.e. what is going on outside it. There is a large senior

leadership team at Briscoe Primary School due to the unpredictability of the local community and time rightly devoted to safeguarding and child protection which is over and above the average a school would normally expect. There are significant problems with many parents, and much less parental support for the children. This in equity can be seen easily across the group of schools and how the curriculum is context driven due to individual school needs. We also think carefully about new models of leadership and what schools need rather than old models which are sometimes unhelpful. We always looking at succession planning and overstaff in all schools.

Lee stated Early Years disadvantaged funding is essentially based on free school meals, which means other factors are not taken into consideration. It is no longer targeted and this has had a big impact. As a pre-school provider, this impacts on the ability to intervene quickly enough, as there is no funding for some pupils. The pre-school at Briscoe Primary is very good, and when children start in Reception the difference between those who have been to the pre-school and those who have not is very noticeable. There is certainly a problem in some private providers, with the quality of the staff due to poor pay and the lack of a qualified teacher overseeing provision. So often these children enter school without being “school ready” with the resulting issues about catching up and missing lost learning opportunities.

Debbie stated there is also a high level of turbulence in Basildon schools generally, as there are significant areas of temporary housing, which leads to many people moving frequently. People do not see the reality of communities that are treated as “White British Underclass” which has a very different culture to what would historically have been called working class. There is a level of chaos faced by many children at Briscoe Primary; it is extremely deprived, with very serious issues, like alcohol, domestic violence and mental health. This impacts on the ability of families to cope with the challenges of bringing up children and living in poverty and on the ability of schools in these areas to cope themselves with the high level of need, deprivation and challenges it brings. The Trust employs mental health workers to provide clinical supervision for staff as a result of this. Pupil premium supports this as it does the leadership structure of the school. Staff do an amazing job.

A question was asked about the support teachers give to children not fulfilling their potential? Debbie responded that at Briscoe Primary School the aim is to reach normal achievement targets and beyond. The support for teaching and the basic intention is that every lesson is good. High quality teaching is the first step. Across the trust, there is also support for reading and maths, but also speech therapy, and mental health – for the children, their parents and staff.

Data gathering is a key to success. Information on how every child is performing is collected and studied by staff. An early baseline is established and then there is early intervention, with tight tracking throughout and half termly expectations which ensure children achieve Age appropriate expectations. Children can achieve, with the right teaching, even with problems such as dyslexia. The number of 11-year-olds who should be able to achieve a Level 4B should be 95%. A link to Indian students is utilised, giving 1:1 tutoring online. There is an emphasis on access to learning, children go on trips. Learning to deal with risks is seen as an important part of the children’s education as is having access to opportunities that they would not normally be able to have such as



tutoring, visits to other parts of the country, residential visits. .We want to balance out the impact of deprivation and open children's eyes to what is on offer in the world.

Debbie stated Essex is a relatively affluent county with seemingly mediocre attainment levels. A great deal of hysteria confronts failing schools, and a culture of blame. There has to be a suitable culture to build confidence in the staff and ensure that in those areas where there are the most challenges and where the most resilient and skilled people are required there are systems, support and structures to allow the best people to lead there. Old models of leadership and support constrain this.

A question was posed about what the Trust is doing right, and what ECC can do to help? Debbie responded that *Ofsted* is irrelevant, but we try not to worry about them. Mostly all we are worried about is teaching the children. We have a responsibility to the children and their parents, not to *Ofsted*. The *Ofsted* approach impacts on the local authority and sometimes results in a stress and pressure on schools which has the opposite effect of what is intended. Public humiliation is not the answer. The attitude should be "this is an opportunity to develop and improve the school" not "You're rubbish". The best qualified and most special people should be employed to work in Basildon and Harlow and the Local Authority should be supporting this process, rather than trying to micro-manage failing schools. The Local Authority should be looking to help, but the achievements of the schools are the responsibility of the schools themselves. For instance, a RAG rating may could be done by the schools themselves, but not by the Local Authority or in the case of academies the HT board. Schools need to be talked up, not battered by the kind of hysteria that accompanies failing schools. All children in Essex, whether they be at a Maintained School or an Academy, are still Essex children and the Task and Finish Group should be interested in them all – not just those in maintained schools.

#### Site Visit to Briscoe Primary School, Felmores End, Pitsea SS13 1PN

Present:

Erica Barnett – Head of School

Lee Faris, Early Years Manager

- The school is 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 863 schools in Essex in terms of social deprivation
- The school is close to an estate with a lot of temporary accommodation. It had a 45% turnover in some year groups last year. The spirit of the Fair Access protocol was not in our view employed by planning and admissions during the journey out of special measures.
- School provides social care as well as education.
- The level of SEN in the school is well above average.
- The school pays for speech therapists and educational psychologists and health workers, who also offer counselling to parents
- The maintained nursery ('The Orchard') offers three-hours a day, five days a week but does not offer childcare. At the age of 3 children go to the school nursery, which is run by a qualified teacher. There are currently 26 children at age 3, but next year there will be 42. Unless they are Early Years Premium the children do not get automatic admission to the maintained nursery

- School achievement is now at national average or above.

A question was posed as to what the benefit of the affiliation with Wickford Church of England School is. Erica responded the Wickford Church of England School has good structures and they worked brilliantly which enabled us to transfer them here. Over the last two years we have very much become our own school. The school was one of Michael Gove's 200 failing schools. The school has a very high turnover and it is difficult to be consistent. Behaviour was appalling but we set in place a very strict policy and now the school's behaviour is outstanding. The culture of the school has changed – the children are now proud to be here. However, it is an exhausting place to work and at times has odd days.

Erica stated that the introduction of the Pupil Premium really has improved the educational attainment of the children. The very high level of Pupil Premium pays for uniform (including PE kit and shoes) for certain children, it also pays for a wide range of activities. There are over 20 after- or pre-school clubs, which are all free. It has a huge impact and is used skilfully, targeting the most needy children.

A question was raised whether the school would you have been able to achieve what it has without the Pupil Premium? Erica responded the Pupil Premium has enabled us to do more but creativity, recruitment and retention of high quality staff is key. Open thinking of senior management can change the teaching. Education has changed over the last 15 years. The ethos of good schools linking with other schools is such a good thing.

Erica stated that Local Authorities occasionally give the impression of “our schools” and Academies. School to school support could be used more strategically and effectively.

A question was raised about Children's Centres. Lee responded that they are usually very good but that the quality varies and not all Children's Centres regulate their nursery. Two and 3-year olds being taught/overseen by qualified teachers would increase future educational attainment.

Erica referred to the Nurture Group at the school which assists in growing the self-esteem of children who, for whatever reason, are being encouraged back into the education system. Many of these children are emotionally damaged and the school is able to get them back into mainstream education. The school has an application to extend the Nurture Group and has high quality resources funded by the County for the children within it.

### Task and Finish Group meeting

The Task and Finish Group received a contribution from Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning; Chris Kiernan, Interim Director of Commissioning: Education and Lifelong Learning and Richard Thomas, Executive Director of the Association of Secondary Headteachers in Essex (ASHE). Following Member feedback on the visits to Wickford Church of England Infant School and Briscoe Primary School conducted in the morning the contributors responded that many Headteachers with on-site provision, make comment on the standards of children coming

into pre-school from private sector providers; and such comments should be judged on this basis. *Ofsted* reports of pre-school private providers in Essex show that 80% are either outstanding or good; and that none in Basildon are inadequate. Essex has moved from 135th to 50th last year; and 57th this year in terms of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) results at the end of the Reception year.

The County is looking at things that sustain successful schools through a commitment to accountability; and it is recognised that Essex County Council needs to give a clearer message of what it is doing as the distinction is blurred with schools, at present, in terms of school improvement. Steps had been made in the last five years which have been significant in terms of improving educational attainment, including in primary schools in Basildon. In general Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results are improving and becoming sustainable.

There is reliable data available which compares Essex with the rest of England; with the county's ten statistical neighbours; and the rest of the East of England. With regard to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Essex is one point ahead of the rest of the country; two points behind statistical neighbours; and level with the rest of the region. At KS2 in 2011 Essex was 91st and is now 68th which puts the county just ahead of the rest of England; generally ahead of the East of England and even with the statistical neighbours. At KS4 Essex is 0.2% behind the national average; but us doing well at KS5.

Since September 2014 40 schools in Essex have been subject to an *Ofsted* inspection and 80% of these have been good or better which is hitting the national average. School attendance has improved in the county. The introduction of fixed penalty notices has had a significant effect. The attendance levels at primary schools in the county are now outstanding at above 96% The overall absence rate is 3.84% including unauthorised absences – this compares very favourably with the national rate of 3.89%. The penalty notices have focused minds that sanctions are in place and will be used.

Following a question from Cllr Bobbin about whether there has been any improvement in attainment levels at schools which have become Primary rather than split Infant and Junior Schools the Task and Finish Group heard that transferring from one school to another can become traumatic for a child so a seamless process is a preferred option. Both in Essex and nationally Primary Schools do better than Infant and Junior Schools. However, Essex County Council has no jurisdiction to force this. A review of Infant and Junior Schools was undertaken last year and a report was produced.

Following a question from Cllr Barker relating to Children's Centres a response came that indicated Children's Centres need to become a more targeted service and go back to first principles. There are areas of concern in the county despite Essex having *Ofsted* reports better than the national average.

Following a question from Cllr Barker relating to schools, potentially, changing behaviour due to the first entry rule, the Task and Finish Group heard it would be interesting to see the results based on best entry. The new measurements will be a fairer measurement of progress but will be more demanding in challenging areas.

In relation to school staffing in the county it was reported that between 10-20% of staff in Essex schools are 'imported' from overseas, with Canada and Ireland supplying many

staff. There is 100 overseas staff being trained to go into schools in Colchester and Tendring. This is a reflection on a national system that is struggling in terms of recruitment. Last year 50,000 teachers nationally left teaching. The biggest wastage is in the first five years of teaching. Headteacher hours are increasing, with Primary Heads working, on average, 50-59 hours per week; and Secondary Heads working, on average, 59-64 hours per week. There are 17 Teaching School Alliances in Essex more than any other county in the country. However, there are not enough applicants for training places. The Cabinet Member stated recruitment is very difficult in certain subjects, for example there have been 97 jobs advertised for mathematics teachers this year. Two years ago Government data showed that there were not enough mathematicians in training to fill current vacancies.

With regard to vocational education the Task and Finish Group heard that there has never been the investment in this country as there is in other parts of Europe. It is also likely that the new performance measures will push schools away from vocational programmes.

The Cabinet Member informed the Group that there is no evidence that there are differences in attainment levels in single sex schools. Indeed, most independent schools are now co-educational. Social development also works better in a co-educational environment. The Cabinet Member also stated there is likely to be a significant issue regarding teachers taking early retirement, due to the change in pension and national insurance contributions. This might influence teaching staff when they are budgeting and planning for the in-between years between early retirement and the national retirement age. There could be a 3% increase in staffing costs for a school. In real terms this could mean a 5% fall in overall budget taking into account salary increases and non-teaching staff. Schools will need to plan how it will budget for this change. Some schools are holding excessive balances at around 10% and they will need to reduce this.

## Wednesday, 4 March 2015

### Task and Finish Group meeting (morning session)

The Task and Finish Group received contributions from Dr Tim Coulson, Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England, Department for Education (DfE); Councillor Terri Sargent, Basildon Borough Council; Councillor Graham Butland, Leader and Andy Wright, Corporate Director, Braintree District Council; Councillor Peter Greig, Councillor Ray Howard and Councillor Neville Watson, Castle Point Borough Council; and Councillor Terry Cutmore, Leader, Rochford District Council. Additionally, Councillor Susan Barker provided a contribution on behalf of Uttlesford District Council where she is Deputy Leader.

### Braintree District Council

Councillor Butland and Andy Wright highlighted issues in the Braintree District. The Braintree town area has three secondary schools all of which are performing below national averages. Therefore, people in the town have no real choice when it comes to selecting a school for a quality provision. There are also difficulties in Witham; however, the two schools are now improving, with the teaching at Maltings Academy having

improved markedly. The Headteacher of the school is leading from the front and there are now no excuses for not performing well.

Braintree District Council provided a synopsis in advance of the meeting (see Appendix n) outlining the schools in the district as well as attainment levels and other issues affecting the district in terms of education, growth and housing, and health. Cllr Butland stated he saw a role for district councils in improving educational attainment. The council is going to establish an Educational Improvement Group as agreed by the ECC Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Students joining secondary schools in Braintree town are significantly behind what might be expected. Andy Wright mentioned the School Improvement Team at ECC has been looking at the data relating to schools in Braintree. There is a pattern throughout the district of individual schools turning themselves around, for example The Rickstones School and The Ramsey School in Halstead which jumped two Ofsted levels after its last inspection.

EYFS has Braintree as the worst performing district in the county in terms of attainment. The County is currently undertaking an Early Years Strategy Review. Primary Schools in the district, which were once performing well, are now playing 'catch-up' due to the EYFS results.

Following a question from Cllr Bobbin, Cllr Butland stated the district council, in terms of economic growth, sees the gap between the high-earners and low-earners as important to encourage people into the district for inward investment. The district area is a net-importer in terms of migration.

Recruitment of teachers in Braintree district is a major issue with one school going to Australia, Canada and Ireland to recruit staff. Many of the teaching staff live outside the district.

#### Castle Point Borough Council

Councillor Greig and Councillor Watson stated Canvey Island is a unique area, it is difficult to get teachers to the island. Travelling into or off the island is a real issue. Therefore, many of the teachers at island schools actually live there. There is apocryphal evidence that teachers on the island are concerned about class sizes. If there is a large influx of migrant children it might become a serious problem for the schools. It was agreed that this is, potentially, an issue across Essex and should be referred to in the final report of the Task and Finish Group.

#### **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**

**Owner: Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

### Basildon Borough Council

Councillor Sargent informed the Group that Basildon is an area of low attainment and has had an education panel for the last four years involving Basildon County Members, Basildon Borough Council Cabinet Members and the ECC Cabinet member for Education and Lifelong Learning. There are 76 Primary Schools in the district rated either outstanding or good; and the development of Early Years is very good. There are no schools in the Primary sector now rated as inadequate. However, there are children in the borough who are not ready to start school. The County Council launched an initiative in the Lee Chapel North area of the borough which is now making very good progress. It is important that once intense work is undertaken the school should continue to run with the improvements.

Basildon has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies. There are projects ongoing which are improving the situation but the Borough Council is concerned what might happen if funding is withdrawn. To date, the County Council has been a great help.

The focus of the Excellence Partnership Panel in Basildon has been on Early Years as well as getting good school governors. The concentration is on the Basildon town area, rather than the entirety of the Borough.

Following a question from Cllr Barker, Cllr Sargent agreed that the provision of an on-site pre-school, whilst potentially expensive, does have great benefits. Having the Early Years experience is absolutely vital and children in Basildon are benefitting from Early Years intervention to help prepare them for school.

### Rochford District Council

Councillor Cutmore stated that there are areas of concern in the Rochford district related to primary schools. The skills of pupils coming forward into secondary schools is an issue as a result. Cllr Cutmore stated that there are many self-employed people that require help and support to update their skills so the standards in Further and Adult Education should be considered too. The Group has requested data on Further Education College performance.

Cllr Cutmore mentioned the development work that is to be undertaken in the Rochford DC area, and, therefore, there is a concern over the capacity of schools in the area to take on additional student numbers. Cllr Sargent stated that Noak Bridge Primary School has a planning application for a five-year extension of its Portakabins. All the extra housing within local plans needs to come into the mix, and it should be ensured that there are school places going forward. A further issue in Rochford is transportation as much of the district is rural.

### Uttlesford District Council

On behalf of Uttlesford District Council Councillor Barker stated when reflecting upon data it should be ensured that what is presented is correct. Data for particular schools should be reviewed so that any potential problems can be picked up before any problems arise. Moving forward there could be an issue if schools are closed and then need to be re-opened due to the increase in housing.

### Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England

Dr Coulson explained his role at the Department for Education (DfE) working with Academies and Free Schools as well as other individual institutions. Dr Coulson works across the region and Essex is in a good situation, but it could be better. Norfolk and Suffolk are struggling and Cambridgeshire has the poorest funding and attainment in the region. Essex is performing at the level of the national average and it would not take a great deal of impetus to push the county further forward.

The secondary schools in Clacton-on-Sea, Harlow and Witham will soon all be rated as good schools; there have also been great improvements in Brentwood and Rochford, with Basildon improving also. There are, however, concerns about Braintree. Both Chelmsford and Colchester are unfulfilled areas with the schools, outside the Grammar Schools, not achieving as well as they could. Dr Coulson confirmed his opinion that there is now a real opportunity to influence the next drive for school improvement in the county. Dr Coulson stated that the school which stands out as the best in the region is Burnt Mill Academy in Harlow.

Dr Coulson confirmed the recruitment problems schools in the region have; and schools are now taking the opportunity to train their own teachers on the job. The DfE recognises that Academies are no panacea and that some schools have declined since leaving Local Authority control.

*Ofsted*, in its annual report, stated in the East of England nursery education, on the whole, is better than it is nationally; but then there is a sliding scale in primary, secondary and further education where standards get worse as each transition is reached.

Dr Coulson posed himself two questions: how do we shift the agenda to have the ambition and determination to succeed? How can we expect more from schools? He stated that there are some schools which aspire; whilst others do not. In the London Borough of Redbridge half the secondary schools are outstanding; and in the London Borough of Haringey every single secondary school is at least good. Therefore, we need to raise the level of what schools should be able to achieve. Cllr Barker posed whether the ethnic diversity of these two London Boroughs meant parents had more demanding expectations of their children? Dr Coulson responded that what the two London Boroughs have are different circumstances to Essex. They had momentum and positive leadership which said they could improve and this gathered steam. In Essex the positive leadership is there in a number of schools with Witham and Clacton being good examples of such localities. Tendring, in particular is a real success story for secondary education and replicating this success is the challenge for the county.

Cllr Barker posed the question whether the increase in National Insurance and pension contributions will have an impact upon schools? Dr Coulson answered that school funding will get more difficult and that some schools will do better through collaboration. Schools are, in the main, developing better business acumen. It is likely, however, that primary schools will come under pressure in terms of funding in the next five years; and may, therefore, be forced to work collaboratively to find savings. Governance has not been strong enough in schools. Many schools have become only as good as their latest headteacher, and strong governance would be able to guard against this. Schools are increasingly on their own with regard to funding and there is an imperative for them to think about their own ways of making savings in a continued regime of lower funding.

Cllr Howard stated Canvey Island has excellent schools; but when a school fails it gets poor press. One primary school on the island has a situation where the Headteacher has been seconded to a failing school in London. The management team at the island school, which is trying to get out of special measures, have all gone off sick. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for the school to get out of its situation. There have been examples, on the island, of other schools being turned around from being placed in special measures. Dr Coulson responded that the challenge of the system is to have enough educational leaders who allow the teachers to perform. There is a plan for the school in special measures on Canvey Island and Dr Coulson assured Cllr Howard that he will make sure colleagues at ECC let the local Members know.

Cllr Barker stated the Task and Finish Group had heard from a number of sources that many children are not school-ready when they start the Reception year. Therefore, is there any evidence which backs this up? Dr Coulson responded that Headteachers are saying this and that ten years ago it was not an issue. Nursery education in Essex is patchy; and the most effective way to tackle the problem is through the providers which are linked to schools. Much of the nursery provision linked to schools takes children aged as young as two and there is clear evidence across the country that indigenous white working-class children are performing poorly including in early literacy. Dr Coulson stated he is keen on nursery provision being linked to schools to tackle early literacy issues.

Dr Coulson's views echoed those heard on the site visits to Wickford Church of England Infant School and Briscoe Primary School as well as at the Task and Finish Group meeting with the Schools Forum members. It was agreed that the Final Report of the Task and Finish Group would include a **RECOMMENDATION** about linking Early Years provision with Infant/Primary schools.

With regard to his own roles and responsibilities Dr Coulson stated schools who wish to become Academies have to come through him; this is also the case for any organisation wishing to become an Academy sponsor. Additionally he deals with applications for Free Schools; Academies which merge and he carries-out interventions when Academies are not performing.

Cllr Barker asked when will the time come when Local Authorities no longer become necessary for education as more-and-more schools become an Academy; and as a result what will Education Services of Local Authorities do? Dr Coulson responded that one way might be through sharing services with other Local Authorities. The formal responsibilities may subside but there will still be a role and influence for Local Authorities. Dr Coulson stated that Essex has the best Schools Human Resources Department in the region, and he would expect schools to continue to buy into ECC Schools Human Resources.

Dr Coulson mentioned evidence relating to summer-born children who are 25% more likely to get a statement of special educational needs; much less likely to get into school sports teams and do not achieve as highly in GCSE examinations.



### Task and Finish Group meeting (afternoon session)

The Task and Finish Group had been invited to attend the meeting of the Essex School Governors Association (ESGA) Executive Committee by Ruth Bird, Chairman of the Committee. Cllr Maggie McEwen thanked Ruth for the invitation. As well as Ruth, Russell Ayling, Debbi Botham, John Clarke, John Hunter, Rod Lane and Joyce Sweeney from the Executive Committee were in attendance.

Cllr Bobbin asked, given the changing role of School Governors, how can the Local Authority find suitable Governors for schools and how can the Governors assist in raising educational attainment?

It was responded that just because somebody has been a Governor for a long time it does not follow that they are, necessarily, a good Governor. The National School Governors Association is encouraging Chairman to issue reports, once a year, on the effectiveness of Governors and the contribution they make to the school. Schools are also encouraged to do similar with the Chair of School Governors. With Multi-Academy Trusts the School Governors are practically all business people.

Maintained schools have to reconstitute and look at the make-up of their governing bodies by September 2015. Instead of community governors there will be co-opted governors. Therefore, this opens up the opportunity for governing bodies to find people with the necessary skills rather than be people from the community.

The Task and Finish Group heard that two threads impact upon attainment. One is that there is very rarely any joined-up thinking in terms of the multi-system of governance across Academy Trusts, Sponsored Academy Trusts, Academies, Maintained schools and Foundation schools. Wider than this the ways in which Governors are expected to keep up-to-speed as much as school senior management teams also has a lack of joined-up thinking. Therefore, too much time is spent on doing this than considering raising attainment levels.

Governors who come from business backgrounds are more able to keep up-to-date with training and have the commitment to do this. The training available from County ensures that professional people view the training as professional personal development. Parent Governors are much less likely to take-up training opportunities. The Parent Governor issue might be solved through the reconstitution of governing bodies in September 2015. ESGA is working with governing bodies to ensure a maximum of two-four Parent Governors.

Some Academies are attempting to move to having no parental or staff representation on governing bodies; and looking to business expertise only. However, there is nothing wrong with having a different range of expertise on a school governing body. When he was Education Secretary Michael Gove stated there should be paid School Governors. Some Governors are in schools three or four times a week; however, the opinion was this was too much. Every school is different but the pressures are practically the same, and these pressures put many potential Governors off. There is an absolute need that people in authority should have a system of joined-up support and thinking to action the one aim of improving the educational attainment of children. If you challenge, as a School Governor, you can get answers. Cllr Bobbin asked whether School Governors

should receive a retainer? This was answered emphatically “no”; however, there are examples of Governors being paid by the sponsors of Academies.

The Task and Finish Group heard that the recruitment of teachers is difficult, and even more so for Headteachers. In deprived areas recruitment is even harder. Schools in the county spend thousands of pounds on recruitment. To aid recruitment there are examples of schools providing housing on-site for new recruits.

The Task and Finish Group heard a prediction that in five years’ time there will not be any Local Authority maintained schools in Essex; and that schools will work in cluster-groups. The Local Authority has been looking at local needs and training for schools who work in cluster-groups.

Cllr McEwen asked whether, in the opinion of ESGA, there is anything that holds children back in educational achievement? The response was that good quality teaching and Headteachers was critical in ensuring student achievement. School finances were also raised as a concern, with some schools likely to be £250,000 worse off next year.

The ESGA reflected upon the understanding of data and how it is used within a school setting. Data drives up standards when the senior leadership team of a school uses the data to assess individual student progress. Governors need to be more focussed on data and performance management it was stated.

School Effectiveness Plus is being piloted in 70 schools. It is an online system that will provide a school effectiveness plan and make comparisons within a group of schools. This was highly commended by the ESGA and it was suggested the Task and Finish Group look at the system.

Playing devils’ advocate it was asked why do we need the Pupil Premium? Many parents do not claim free school meals that they are entitled to and this has an impact upon funding.

Cllr McEwen asked whether Governors play an important role in raising school attainment? The response was that they do; and the relationship between the Headteacher and the Chair of School Governors is vital to ensure attainment levels are raised. The challenges made of the Headteacher at governing body meetings should all be minuted. It is crucial that School Governors see the school as a business, and with the correct governance Governors can be the critical friend and the challenge to the school and the senior leadership team. Therefore, it is crucial that governing bodies have the right committees, sub-committees and effective terms of reference. Governors also have a role to play in ensuring the health and wellbeing of senior leadership teams. Good governance is crucial in ensuring Governors are part of the leadership of the school. Ofsted can recommend a review of school governance structures.

Different schools and different governing bodies have different strengths and weaknesses; this should enable greater collaboration and support between governing bodies. It was agreed that a **RECOMMENDATION** be included in the Final Report of the Task and Finish Group to suggest more collaboration between governing bodies.

Friday, 17 April 2015

Site Visit to Shenfield High School, Alexander Lane, Brentwood, CM15 8RY

Present:

Carole Herman, Headteacher

Leanne Hedden, Chairman of Governors

Sal Blewett, Deputy Headteacher

Jenny Comerford, Deputy Headteacher

Carole Herman joined the school as Headteacher in September 2011. At this point the school was expecting to take pupils in from Sawyer's Hall College which was closing. Shenfield High School was to establish a vocational centre on the site of Sawyer's Hall College. However, within six months a Free School (Becket Keys Church of England Secondary School) application was made and approved for the site. As a result, Shenfield HS did not receive the funding it was expecting and, thus, the vocational centre did not materialise.

Shenfield High School was associated with a failing school and admitted a number of students from that school. As a result, the school's reputation was affected. An *Ofsted* inspection in 2009 rated the school as "satisfactory"; previous to that the rating was "good". There have been significant changes in the *Ofsted* frameworks, however. Then following an inspection in 2012 the school was rated as "requires improvement", basically the same as "satisfactory". The school was given two years to improve and it was inspected again in November 2014 and received a "good" rating. The school is of the opinion that it was very close to being rated as "outstanding". *Ofsted* recognised the pride the students had in the school; and that staff have worked hard to get the school where it currently is.

The school has changed its ethos. The values and philosophy of the school are agreed with the whole school community, working with parents, students, staff, governors and community leaders.

When Carole Herman joined the school she decided that every aspect of the institution be reviewed. Management systems were reviewed and a decision was taken to grow the staff within the school. The leadership team has changed almost completely, with only two of the current leadership team having served on the leadership team prior to the arrival of the Headteacher. These changes have assisted in moving the school forward.

The school is now more outcome focused, also aiming to ensure the students are geared up for when they leave school. The school has established a 'war room' and forensically looks at the achievements of all students through the analysis of data, with interventions taking place if students are not achieving at a level they should be expected to. The 'war room' is largely for staff, but is used for motivational sessions for identified students. The school has several data entry points throughout the year. However, the shifting of grade boundaries sometimes leads to students who are expected to achieve a certain grade not quite achieving as projected. Data is at the heart of everything the school does.

The walls of the 'war room' have all students in Years 10 through to 13 with their target grades identified, across all subject areas. Those identified as wavering between a 'C'

and a 'D' grade are classed as 'C-' and have the level of improvement required to enable them to achieve a 'C' grade listed against them. The wall also identifies the number of students who need to improve their outcomes to achieve different percentage levels of five 'A\*-C' grades at GCSE. However, this school year is the last that will have the five 'A\*-C' measurement as standard, as schools, from next year, will be measured against the Progress 8 and Attainment 8 standards. This new measurement aims to erase the false divide between those who achieve a 'C' grade and those who do not. Progress 8 will show how students progress against eight curriculum areas. Carole stated that this is philosophically better but will be difficult to measure and manage.

Progress of children is measured from the end of Key Stage 2; however, primary and secondary assess differently. Carole informed the Task and Finish Group that secondary schools often find Year 7 students coming in to the school with a Level 5 but when they are tested they are actually lower than that. However, the primary school measurement is the starting point used for progress assessment. With regard to Progress 8 if students do not take the eight subjects because, for example, their literacy skills are not strong enough for them to take a Humanities subject it will make it appear that the school itself is not achieving.

With regard to A-levels Shenfield High School has a progress-led measurement and interventions are taken when progress is not being made as expected. The school sixth form has a base area, common room and study spaces with lessons taking place throughout the school site. Around 60% of the previous Year 11's are admitted into the sixth form; plus others students are admitted from outside the school. The school does some BTEC qualifications in sport and performing arts alongside traditional A-levels.

The school has a Football Academy and a Cricket Academy, and a Performing Arts Academy starts in September 2015. Students receive professional coaching and Masterclasses at the Academies which supplement their A-level and BTEC studies.

Shenfield High School is in a competitive area. Admissions at the school have been hit by the opening of the Becket Keys Free School. The opening of the Ongar Academy is also likely to have an effect. Additionally, changes to the Essex County Council school transport policy is likely to see parents sending their children to the Ongar Academy because of the cheaper travel rather than go to schools in Brentwood.

In terms of Special Educational Needs the school works closely with the students and parents to ensure specific needs are met and the school is aware of the prevalence of mental health needs of young people. The school has a nurture group, known as the Oasis Centre, with specialist staff for children who are having difficulties and need respite from mainstream education. The aim is to nurture the young people through their difficult periods back into mainstream education, if possible.

Sal Bluett informed the Task and Finish Group about the approach to staff development at the school. Staff at the school are in receipt of professional development to support student attainment, progress and achievement. The approach to staff development has three strands to it:

- the needs of the individual
- the needs of the department

- the needs of the school

School staff are asked to identify their own development needs. Staff development programmes are broken down into three sessions. Sal stated that colleagues have better practice if they are able to reflect and put what they have learned into practice; and then reflect again after putting the development into practice. Schemes of work are prepared through departmental training.

The school creates a 'pen portrait' of teaching staff and grades them as practitioners from a broad evidence base. Through cleverly crafted questions, the school asks the students how they learn within specific lessons and curriculum areas. The school has a two-week marking cycle. Students like the new way of marking the school has introduced which includes comments on what they are doing well, and what they need to do to improve further still. The students have to respond to the marking comments. As part of their monitoring visits the school governors look at marking.

Shenfield High School has several IT suites, one specifically for use by the sixth form. The school library has been re-vamped and is now a much more vibrant space and is used by book groups, craft groups etc. The school opens between 8.00 a.m. and an hour after the final school bell.

Jenny Comerford informed the Group that the interventions team at the school provide support on all the different aspects of student wellbeing. Both student mental health and self-harming is quite prevalent, so the school looks at patterns of behaviour and provides targeted support.

The vocational centre and the Oasis Centre are part of the strategic developments to support students. The Oasis Centre is a provision for any child who, through behaviour patterns, finds mainstream school difficult. Adults in the school provide 1:1 mentoring. A national programme *Achievement for All* provides support for children and families from a triangle of support. The first point of the triangle is the mentor within the school, whether a teacher or a member of support staff; the second point of the triangle is the student themselves. The mentor and the student meet together at least once a fortnight. The final point of the triangle is the parent/carer. The mentor within the school should liaise with the parent/carer to assist in the identification of the issue; and then a programme of support is developed from this triangulation. The parent/carer comes into the school once a year with other required communication on at least three other times in the year; however, the communication is usually much more frequent than that and helps in maintaining good dialogue. The school had a pilot programme involving 40 students and this whole cohort achieves as well as, if not a little better, the rest of the school's students. It is recognised that 'one size doesn't fit all' in terms of interventions. Each year between 20-30 students are identified in each year group for intervention (this is around 15% of the school population). Services, for example Child Mental Health Services, are at capacity outside of school so Shenfield High School provides the services otherwise the student would fall through the gap.

The nurture group is funded from mainstream resources rather than the pupil premium. *Ofsted* recognised that the school retains students that others exclude to ensure they are able to achieve.

A question was raised as to what the County Council can do to improve the lot of schools? In response it was stated that issues are coming back as the responsibility of the school because the services outside the school system are at capacity. Schools are developing expertise within diminishing budgets; and having to change systems to tackle the next potential hurdle. Monies are going down yet demands are increasing. There needs to be a more appropriate overview recognising the finite resource.

### Task and Finish Group meeting

The Members who had attended the visit to Shenfield High School highlighted the special needs provision, the impact on the school of the opening of two new Free Schools in the locality, the marking schemes at the school and the impact of the data the school collects on every child from Year 10-13 to support attainment and intervention. The impact on the school of the new transport policy of Essex County Council was also mentioned, particularly with reference to the creation of the new Free School, Ongar Academy. This will mean a reduced choice for those who cannot afford transport.

The Task and Finish Group considered the data presented to the full People and Families Scrutiny Committee on DATE (see Appendix n) in greater detail. The data was presented by Clare Kershaw, Head of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning; Alison Fiala, Lead Commissioner, Primary Education; and Huw Jones, Senior Analyst. Cllr McEwen stated the data shows that Essex is, by-and-large, in the third quartile on the key metrics. The response was given that the aim is to move the county into the top quartile. Historically at KS2 and KS4 Essex has only increased at the same pace as the national average; and this places the county in the lower end of second quartile or into the third quartile. However, if outcomes were increased for students in these two Key Stages at a rate higher than the national average this would place Essex firmly in the second quartile. The Task and Finish Group were informed that there are now more good or outstanding schools, based upon *Ofsted* frameworks, in the county than there have ever been.

There has been significant improvement in Early Years in Essex, which is at the top of the second quartile nationally. This should mean that there will be higher achieving young people coming through the system in future years. In primary schools the county is working to deliver interventions. One of these interventions is *Talk for Writing* and there is another which is directed at boys' writing. Boys have been a deliberate focus for interventions as there is a significant gap in the outcomes for boys and girls KS2 writing.

The County Council also commissions bespoke programmes for individual schools so that identified students can improve. There is also a shadowing programme which allows certain schools to learn from others that are performing well.

Key Stage 2 writing outcomes are not externally assessed, unlike Mathematics. However, the County Council moderates the teacher assessed elements of the primary curriculum as this is a statutory duty.

Two years ago, Essex, in line with what occurred nationally, had higher results in Mathematics than in English at KS4. Now, schools have focused so significantly on their English outcomes over the last two years that this has had an effect on Mathematics

attainment. Therefore, Mathematics continues to be a significant challenge. There is a scarcity of good Mathematics teachers and there has been recruitment from overseas to plug the gaps. And a new GCSE curriculum is about to be introduced, which will be harder than the present one. One positive intervention on Mathematics is at Tendring Technology College, which is developing a curriculum in partnership with local primary schools from KS1 all the way through schooling. This should help pupils cope with the Year 6 to Year 7 break, which had always proved challenging.

Every school in Essex is RAG rated and the data presented to the Task and Finish Group, and previously the full People and Families Scrutiny Committee, is a significant part of these ratings. It was suggested that future annual reports look at providing some more detailed information, to make it easier to see where improvements had been made.

### **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**

**Owner: Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

The data shows that despite Tendring, Basildon and Harlow being the lowest achieving districts the progress each is making exceeds that of more affluent districts. For example, Tendring has improved at KS2 by 12% over the last two years, comparing favourably against the 4% improvement across the county.

Essex is a large county and it requires a significant number of students or schools to improve outcomes to impact positively on data. Overall last year the results were good for Essex and the county is constantly striving to exceed national averages. To get into the second quartile Essex requires 450 primary school students and 550 secondary school students to improve their outcomes. Most of the Local Authorities in the top quartile are smaller unitary authorities or London/Metropolitan Boroughs which have a smaller number of schools and students. Following a question it was stated that 160 children would have to improve their KS2 writing outcomes for the county to improve by 1%.

Although the Council does assess vocational courses in schools; it does not have a remit to do this in Further Education Colleges (FECs), but it does monitor their outcomes. There is an uneven situation in Post-16 education, as there are a number of qualifications that do not earn the schools anything in respect of performance; also, not all qualifications are reported at the same time. There are a number of staff at the Council, however, who look at the quality of school sixth forms

A question was raised as to whether *Ofsted* help or hinder the improvement of attainment; and whether it looks at the right issues? In response it was stated that *Ofsted* provide external accountability and that this is crucial. *Ofsted* is in the midst of changing its frameworks; however. The quality of teaching is the most important thing with leadership fundamental in ensuring this. Where it does not go right is *Ofsted* depending upon the quality of its own staff and the inconsistencies in how the framework is interpreted. The County Council is able to feed back through the *Ofsted* regional body. A good or outstanding school should use *Ofsted* as a check and balance and not drive its

whole ethos through *Ofsted*, as it can cause a great deal of stress through continually trying to improve its *Ofsted* assessment.

### Thursday, 23 April 2015

The Task and Finish Group received contributions from Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Commissioning Healthy Lifestyles and Jane Richards, Head of Commissioning, Public Health; Councillor Giles Watling, Chairman, Education and Skills Committee and Keri Lawrence, Executive Projects Manager; Malcolm Morley, Chief Executive, Harlow District Council; and Mike Blant, Liaison Officer, Essex Primary Headteachers Association (EPHA).

#### Public Health

The key issues for Public Health in relation to education were identified as the evidence base for the links between attainment and wellbeing – there is a national and international evidence base around this; school readiness, to enable children to achieve throughout their educational lives; the commissioning of the 0-19 Healthy Child programme – this includes working with other Local Authorities, as well as the voluntary sector and other Public Sector bodies; and the Essex Healthy Schools Award.

The 5-19 service is the key service working with schools and school staff. School nurses work closely with individual schools and conduct needs assessments through discussion with Headteachers and other staff with interests in health and wellbeing. Schools often raise issues around physical activity, healthy living, bullying etc. The needs assessments are undertaken annually. When particular issues are identified individual children may also be seen by the school nurse. In relation to schools for children with special educational needs the school nurse sees every child within the school.

Where programmes exist there are positive effects on attainment and it has been identified that students with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically.

In order to achieve the Healthy Schools Award schools have to have an active programme of working with children, in an age appropriate way, to raise the awareness of bullying.

In relation to school readiness an assessment to test a Good Level of Development (GLD) is conducted by a teacher following the Reception year. There are 17 measurements making-up the GLD, including communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; and numeracy and literacy skills. In Essex 61% of children achieved GLD in 2014 – this is 1% higher than the national average. The lowest achieving district in the county was Braintree (57%) and the highest was Maldon (67%). For those in receipt of Free School Meals only 43% achieved a GLD, as opposed to 64% achieving a GLD not in receipt of Free School Meals. This measurement was based on a cohort of 16,000 young people – 14% of whom were in receipt of Free School Meals. There is a small contingent of parents who do not claim Free School Meals despite their entitlement to do so.



A school readiness map for Tendring District was provided and, subsequently, these were provided for all districts. These are available to view at Appendix n. It was explained that the school readiness maps do change year-on-year so there is an element of caution which comes attached to them. It was stated the key issue in relation to school readiness is during pre-school. There is a universal 15 hours free provision for all 3-4 year olds; and an additional free entitlement for 2-3 year olds.

The interventions Public Health is involved with are within three broad areas; namely Home Visiting, Parenting programmes and Pre-school. In terms of home visiting these are the Department of Health recommended Family Nurse Partnership and MESCH (Maternal Educational Social Care and Health), which aims to improve the transition to parenting by supporting mothers through pregnancy; improve maternal health and wellbeing by helping mothers to care for themselves; improve child health and development by helping parents to interact with their child in developmentally supportive ways; develop and promote parents' aspirations for themselves and their children; and helping parents to foster relationships within the family and with other families and services. MESCH is an intensive support programme. The Family Nurse Partnership has been rolled-out across Essex and is a programme working with young parents where the mother is under the age of 20. It is also an intensive programme which supports the family through the post-natal period and informs the family of the programmes and support they are entitled to and ensuring they access the right services by acting as a family advocate.

Parenting programmes and pre-school programmes are also targeted interventions. The parenting programmes are Triple-P which uses a range of material for a universal or targeted approach and is used from the age of 2 onwards. This is delivered in two-hours sessions for up to ten weeks and reinforces positive relationships and behaviour. There are a range of trials using meta-analysis and evaluations which support improved behaviour, lowering stress of parents and improving parenting skills. The other parenting programme is Incredible Years which intervenes with 3-4 year olds over 12 weekly two-hour sessions and reinforces positive behaviour. The aim is to lower parenting stress, provide better parenting skills and improve behaviour – these outcomes have been tested in trial evidence.

The pre-school programme is based on evidence from a longitudinal study of pre-school education involving 3,000 children, of which 300 did not attend pre-school which showed those who attended pre-school achieved higher attainment levels at GCSE.

Public Health is working with Education and Lifelong Learning on a proposed model to reduce educational inequalities in the county. The model proposed is to produce a targeted offer for all families to have high quality pre-school provision.

The Healthy Child programme is a universal public health programme for children and families from pregnancy up to the age of 19. The vision is to develop an integrated offer to enable families to identify the services and key professionals who can assist them. Jane stated that we need to ensure an equitable offer across the county that is right for the families in different localities; as the needs in one part of the county will be very different from the needs in another. The programme is national with safeguarding at its very heart. The programme ensures that where families need support the critical agencies are aware of this; it also ensures there is no duplication of services. The key

relationships for different families will also be different – for some, for example, it might be the Health Visitors for others that person will be someone in the Children’s Centre.

The Healthy Schools programme will support schools throughout Essex to raise attainment and achievement by improving health and wellbeing for students, staff, parents and carers and the wider school community. There are 95% of schools in the county actively engaged on the programme

#### Harlow District Council

The underperformance in Harlow in terms of educational attainment was highlighted by Malcolm Morley/ He referred to the written submission provided to the Task and Finish Group in advance of the meeting (see Appendix n). It was stated the contribution by Public Health absolutely chimed with what is being found in the district. The ambition, however, is for Harlow to be in the top quartile in terms of attainment. Unless this becomes an aspiration the district and the county will continue to underperform. The view of the District Council is that there are no excuses to accepting that underperformance is down to areas of deprivation, and this should be challenged. For example, Burnt Mill High School is an outstanding school in a significant area of deprivation.

Harlow District Council undertook its own scrutiny review of educational attainment, and following this it created a partnership of people working together to understand the issues and work together to tackle these, Essex County Council is part of this partnership. It is clear from the exercise that flexibility is needed to respond to individual needs. The District Council recognises that there are people who do not have aspirations for their children. However, the District Council has identified interventions which will enable families in this situation to move forward. Tackling hard-to-reach parents is resource intensive and the public sector needs to work together to address the issues, and provide a pick-and-mix rather than a generic offer.

#### **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**

**Owner: Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

It was stated that underperformance in Harlow has been tolerated for too long. The schools which are not performing should be challenged and supported to enable them to improve; and *Ofsted* can be used to assist in driving that change. The role of governors, parents and the school community is critical in engaging and supporting to give the opportunity to tackle underperformance.

Harlow does have issues related to school readiness; and this then has an on-going effect when moving from primary to secondary school. There are secondary schools in the locality working hard to address this.

One of the biggest challenges in Harlow is the issue of teacher recruitment and retention. Harlow District Council is asking questions as to how schools tackle this issue. It was stated that specialists in curriculum areas should share expertise across several schools.

It was stated that business has a role to play and Local Authorities need to work together to see how business can be supported to fulfil the needs of the local and national economy.

#### Tendring District Council

Councillor Watling stated Tendring District Council wishes to raise the aspirations of people living in the coastal areas of the district. He had recently visited both the Clacton Coastal Academy and Tendring Technology College and was impressed by the two Headteachers. They are inspiring, and teachers want to work with them. Cllr Watling referred to the paper provided to the Task and Finish Group in advance of the meeting (see Appendix n).

Keri Lawrence stated Tendring Education Improvement Group had gone a long way to bridging the gap between schools and the District Council with an effective partnership focused on key work streams including School Readiness, Teacher Recruitment and Governor Recruitment. There has been a big drive in Tendring on school governor recruitment and there are a large number of Tendring District Council officers who are school governors. The District Council also supported the recent launch of the Governor kitemark to give to school governors as a badge of recognition.

Much work is ongoing at Tendring Education Centre with a particular concentration on interventions in Jaywick. Tendring District Council supports the County on school intervention. There is a clustering of primary schools in Clacton which is being done in conjunction with the County and is actively creating partnerships, with schools being encouraged through difficult times. This model is being rolled-out across Tendring.

There are areas of Tendring that have significant deprivation. However, there is a problem with an itinerant population which compounds issues in relation to educational attainment; but, overall, things are improving in the district, it was stated.

There are localities in Tendring which are difficult to access for Children's centres; in particular with regard to transport and infrastructure. However, this is being tackled presently by the Tendring Locality Board. The Family Solutions programme in Tendring has seen some real progress in terms of the development of children.

Perception was highlighted as an issue with regard to an institution gaining a bad name which has a tendency to stick. One of the key challenges is to contest such perceptions.

#### Essex Primary Headteachers Association (EPHA)

Mike Blant, EPHA Liaison Officer was in attendance to contribute to the review. Mike stated that Essex County Council and the EPHA meet on a regular basis. The EPHA wants to be part of the thinking and the solutions to raising attainment in the county. There is now a much stronger, positive partnership with the County Council to move things ahead together.

It was stated that there had been lost opportunities in the past which led to some schools being in need of improvement. The County Council did lose a lot of its liaison with primary schools because of the loss of School Development Advisers. However, intelligence about all schools is now better which allows the Council to gauge if schools

are about to get into difficulty. However, there are, sometimes, mitigating circumstances for some schools which are failing. Schools are complex places and Headteachers are pulled from pillow-to-post on a daily basis, which can affect their capacity to deal with the strategic overview of the school.

Most schools in the primary sector in Essex would be described as small schools. With this in mind the sharing of expertise is critical. School-Led Improvement System is being implemented at present and this is about creating capacity between schools. Most schools are willing to be part of partnerships, with many in several partnerships already. The Local Authority is encouraging schools to consider their natural alignments with other schools to form new clusters and partnerships.

Partnerships such as the Basildon Education Services Trust (BEST), which has been working in Basildon for nearly five years, and the National Education Trust which is working in Harlow have been excellent initiatives in going forward to make improvements for these localities. There is much that can be learned from these partnerships, which have included people from the business sector working with children in Basildon.

The School-Led Improvement Programme is also a good move. The intention is to create cross-phase partnership, allowing the sharing of expertise across schools, benefiting both the primary and secondary sector and easing the transition from Year 6 to 7. Sometimes there is a suspicion from primary schools that secondary schools will overpower them; but this has not been the case.

In terms of recruitment and retention those schools which are seen to be failing are the most difficult to recruit to; yet these are the very schools which require excellent qualified staff. The fluidity of staff within clusters or partnerships allows schools to share resources also. Excellent Headteachers create and motivate staff to stay. However, external support is often needed in supporting schools with a high turnover of staff. The EPHA recognise where weak leadership is apparent within a school.

Initial Teacher Training is now complex and not as straightforward as it used to be. The number of routes into teaching means the quality of teaching does vary. The rigour is sometimes compromised by the calibre of new teachers. There needs to be intervention when a teacher is not achieving as they should and might even be informed that teaching is not the job for them.

Cllr Barker asked whether there is any peer review of infant and primary schools who, the Task and Finish Group have heard, are saying they are receiving children who are not school ready? Cllr Barker continued by stating junior schools are also saying something similar about infant schools; and this is then passed on to secondary schools with regard to primary/junior schools. In response, it was stated that it is difficult to make such an assessment but a level 3 achieved in Year 3 will be somewhat different from a level 3 at KS1, particularly in the way the assessment is carried out.

It was stated that the pre-school years are vital in terms of school readiness. Cllr Barker mentioned that Councillor Sue Lissimore, Cabinet Member Deputy, Education and Lifelong Learning, is currently doing some work on Children's Centres. It was agreed to invite Cllr Lissimore to a future meeting of the Task and Finish Group to make a contribution to the review once that work is complete.

Cllr Barker asked whether any evidence exists to show that primary schools achieve higher standards than schools with an infant and junior school split? In response it was stated primary schools are in a position to control the levels children are assessed more evenly over time. Therefore, in a way, they can be seen to be achieving better. The view stated was that, on the whole, that primary schools are a better way to set-up 4-11 education, but that there is no way this can be forced upon schools, only encouraged.

## **Written Submissions**

### **A. Early Years**

Essex County Council Commissioning Strategy - Outcome 1: Children in Essex get the Best Start in Life, details the Council's strategic approach.

#### **Children in Essex get the best start in life:**

Indicators

- Percentage of children ready for school
- Percentage of children achieving a good level of development by the age of five

#### **People in Essex enjoy good health and wellbeing:**

Indicators

- Percentage of children achieving at school

#### **People in Essex have aspirations and achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong learning:**

Indicators

- Percentage of children attending a good school
- Percentage of children achieving at school (measured at Foundation, KS2 and KS4)

### **Introduction**

Outcomes for pupils aged 5 are determined at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (end of Reception year) using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). These profiles summarise and describe a child's attainment at the end of the EYFS and are based on ongoing observation and assessment. The attainment measure used is the percentage of pupils who achieve a 'Good Level of Development'.

In 2013 a new Framework was introduced with pupils being assessed as being emerging (1), expected (2) or exceeding (3) against seventeen Early Learning Goals. A Good Level of Development requires pupils to be at least at the expected level in the three prime areas of learning: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development and the early learning goals within the specific areas of learning: literacy and mathematics areas of learning.

Historically Essex has performed below the National average with a national ranking as low as 135<sup>th</sup> (out of 152 LAs) in 2011. 2012 saw the gap reduce through targeted interventions along with all pupils starting their Reception year in the Autumn term for the first time. Whilst 2013 was not directly comparable with previous years, it was the first time that Essex exceeded the Eastern Region and England averages and achieved its highest ever national ranking of 51<sup>st</sup>.

### **2013/ 2014**

Essex is still above national in 2014 and the same as the Eastern region but 2 % below statistical neighbours.

Essex County Council Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results have moved from the bottom Quartile in 2011 / 2012 to second quartile in 2013 / 2014 based on the national profile of results.

### **DfE Statistic First Release, November 2014: Pupils achieving a Good Level of Development**

Pupils achieving a Good Level of Development									
		2013				2014			
		Girls	Boys	All	Gap	Girls	Boys	All	Gap
Essex		62	44	53	18	70	53	61	16
Attainment	Statistical Neighbours	62	46	53	16	72	55	63	17
	Eastern Region	60	44	52	16	69	53	61	16
	England	60	44	52	16	69	52	60	16
Essex Rankings	Statistical Neighbours	5	5	5	8	6	6	6	4
	Eastern Region	3	2	2	10	4	3	4	4
	England	47	57	51	116	49	57	57	53

- 61% of Essex pupils achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2014 – an eight percentage points rise (15% improvement) on 2013 performance. Nationally performance increased from 52% to 60%
- Having seen performance significantly below England averages every year up to and including 2012, for the second consecutive year, Essex pupils achieving a GLD were one percentage point higher than nationally
- Rankings against SN, ER and England comparator groups are broadly similar to 2013. These see Essex maintain its position in the second quartile for boys, girls and all pupils
- Whilst the EYFS framework was very different prior to 2013 meaning actual performance cannot be compared on a like for like basis, national rankings show that as recently as 2011, Essex was ranked 135<sup>th</sup> and in the bottom quartile
- The gender gap in 2013 exceeded all comparator groups by two percentage points meaning that Essex was ranked 116<sup>th</sup> nationally. The gap reduced to 16% in 2014 and is now in line with comparators meaning a much improved ranking of 53<sup>rd</sup>

A detailed analysis has been undertaken in relation to Good Level of Development (GLD) results in Essex. This document creates a detailed narrative for EYFSP results for academic year 2013/2014 that will form an effective baseline for future reference and future comparison. The document considers performance by school, district and quadrant, considers each early learning goal and looks at attainment by pupil characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, EAL, as well as the impact of month of birth on attainment

Summer 2015 will see the last year of the current national GLD, EYFSP results

### **New Baseline Assessment from September 2015**

Changes are now under way for assessment within the EYFS which will start to be implemented from September 2015

The Government are introducing a baseline assessment in reception year, the 'reception baseline', to improve how primary schools' progress is measured

Government-funded schools that wish to use the reception baseline assessment from September 2015 will need to sign up by the end of April 2015, and make decisions about which of the six Government approved providers they will select their baseline assessment from. In 2022 the Government will then use whichever measure shows the most progress: the reception baseline to key stage 2 results OR the key stage 1 results to key stage 2 results.

From September 2016 schools will only be able to use their reception baseline to key stage 2 results to measure progress. If schools choose not to use the reception baseline, from 2023 they will only be held to account by their pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2.

The baseline will score each pupil against the knowledge and understanding typical for children at the start of Reception year. This score will then be used as a basis for accountability throughout primary school. The majority of the content will be linked to the learning and development requirements of communication and language, and the literacy and mathematics areas of learning from the EYFS. The content will be age-appropriate and suitable for the range of children's attainment at the start of Reception. All suppliers are required to undertake in-depth trialling and development to ensure this is the case.

The assessment will be delivered in English and must be administered within the first half term of the child starting either full time or part time in Reception.

The administration will vary, depending on which assessment a school chooses, however the assessment could be tablet, computer or paper-based. Most assessments will be administered by the Reception teaching staff.

### **Early Education and Childcare provision in Essex**

In Essex early years and childcare provision for children 2 – 4 years of age is varied and offered by a mix of maintained, public, private and voluntary providers.

**Ofsted Inspection Outcomes for PVI provision.**

In Essex 80% of providers of childcare on non-domestic premises were judged to be good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection, for Childminders 82% of premises were judged to be good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection.

**The table below shows a breakdown of PVI settings across Essex and the most recent Ofsted inspection results in each area. (Figures are accurate as at 12January.2015)**

District	Outstanding	Good	RI	Satisfactory	Inadequate	Not inspected	Grand Total	% of Essex
Basildon	11	47	7	7	0	5	77	12%
Braintree	10	42	6	5	2	3	68	11%
Brentwood	7	31	2	3	0	1	44	7%
Castle Point	5	17	3	1	1	3	30	5%
Chelmsford	12	50	7	4	0	4	77	12%
Colchester	21	43	4	5	1	3	77	12%
Epping Forest	4	44	3	10	0	7	68	11%
Harlow	4	25	1	4	1	0	35	5%
Maldon	3	24	0	2	0	2	31	5%
Rochford	3	22	1	3	1	1	31	5%
Tendring	11	31	2	3	1	2	50	8%
Uttlesford	12	30	5	1	0	1	49	8%
Grand Total	103	408	41	48	7	33	640	

**Stav Yiannou, Head of Education and Lifelong Learning (EYCC), People Commissioning, Essex County Council**

**B. Maldon District Council**

Reported levels of educational attainment in the Maldon District are of concern to Members of the Maldon District Council. The relatively poor attainment levels (when compared to other parts of Essex) may affect outcomes of young people living within the district. This matter is now being reviewed by the Maldon Locality Board and representatives from Essex County Council and the main two secondary education providers within the district will meet to discuss performance at a future meeting of the Board

Richard Holmes, Director of Customers and Community, Maldon District Council

**C. Chelmsford City Council**

From the current performance levels of educational attainment reported for the Chelmsford Borough, the City Council currently has no specific concerns it wishes to submit to the Task and Finish Group. However it would welcome appropriate



representatives attending a future meeting of the One Chelmsford Board to discuss performance in more detail and to consider further ways the City Council could be engaged in such matters moving forward.

Averil Price, Director of Community Services, Chelmsford City Council

#### **D. Essex Chambers of Commerce**

David Burch, Director of Policy, Essex Chambers of Commerce provided a policy paper produced by the British Chambers of Commerce which he would have referred to at a meeting of the Task and Finish Group he was invited to attend but had to cancel. This policy paper is produced at Appendix n. The policy paper sets out a range of policies on skills development.

### **Cabinet Member Remarks**

TO BE INCLUDED FOR THE FINAL SEPTEMBER 2015 REPORT

### **Acknowledgements**

The Task and Finish Group would wish to thank the following for providing oral and written evidence across NUMBER meetings, as well as those who had expressed a willingness to attend sessions but were unable to do so due to other commitments: The Group would also wish to thank the school's they visited as part of the review for their hospitality and willingness to take an active part in this vital scrutiny exercise.

THE LIST OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO BE COMPLETED FOR THE SEPTEMBER FINAL REPORT

THERE WILL BE AN APPENDIX OF THE YEA RESPONSE

**Essex County Council  
People and Families Scrutiny Committee  
Review Scoping Document**

*This form is a tool that should be compiled at the start of each inquiry to set out clearly the aims and objectives of the committee's involvement in a particular matter, and will be completed at the end of the inquiry to confirm what has been achieved. The form also provides an audit trail for a review.*

<b>Review Topic</b> (Name of review)	<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN ESSEX</b>
<b>Committee</b>	People & Families Scrutiny Committee
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify the levels and trends in educational attainment in schools in Essex at each Key Stage.</li> <li>2. To evaluate how the levels of attainment compare nationally.</li> <li>3. Where underperformance exists, to identify the causes.</li> <li>4. To identify and evaluate all options to address the causes of underperformance.</li> <li>5. To understand the barriers to improving school performance.</li> <li>6. To understand the reduced funding regime including the role of The Schools Forum.</li> <li>7. To identify how School Governors can influence improving performance.</li> <li>8. To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to support improvement in educational attainment across the county</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Member, and membership of Task and Finish Group</b>	<p>Cllr Maggie McEwen (Chairman)</p> <p>Cllr Susan Barker</p> <p>Cllr Keith Bobbin</p> <p>Richard Carson (Independent Member)</p> <p>Cllr Ian Grundy (ex-officio)</p>

<b>Key Officers / Departments</b>	<p>Chris Kiernan, Interim Director of Commissioning Education &amp; Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Clare Kershaw, Head of Commissioning Education &amp; Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Graham Ranby, Head of Commissioning Education &amp; Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Stavroulla Yiannou,, Head of Commissioning Education &amp; Lifelong Learning</p>
<b>Lead Scrutiny Officer</b>	Robert Fox
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)</b>	Cllr Ray Gooding, Education and Lifelong Learning
<b>Relevant Corporate Links</b>	To be discussed with key officers of the County Council.
<b>Type of Review</b>	In depth review
<b>Timescales</b>	An update on school performance will be brought to the People & Families Scrutiny Committee in March 2014 and this will be the precursor for the Committee to undertake an in-depth review of educational performance in the county throughout the civic year 2014/15.
<b>Rationale for the Review</b>	Priority 1 in the current ECC Corporate Plan is: <i>Enabling every individual to achieve their ambition by supporting a world-class education and skills offer in the county.</i> There are areas in Essex where school performance at both primary and secondary performance is significantly below standard. The Committee should scrutinise performance in Essex schools; but wider, in the new school world of Academies what is the role of the Local Authority and how can it plan strategically if it has little or no control.

<b>Scope of the Topic</b>	<p>Specify what is to be included/excluded from the review</p> <p><u>Include</u></p> <p>The following is included in the scope of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and historic performance data for all schools in Essex (both primary and secondary)</li> <li>• Educational performance in neighbouring authorities and in statistical neighbour authorities</li> <li>• School estates</li> <li>• Special Educational Needs in relation to the effect on educational attainment</li> <li>• Academies as their own admission authority</li> <li>• Admission requirements for FE/VI Forms</li> <li>• Early Years</li> </ul> <p><u>Excluded</u></p> <p>The following falls outside the scope of the review:</p>
<b>Key Lines of Enquiry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance data on all schools in Essex</li> <li>• An understanding of past and present arrangements for managing the whole school estate, and the influence of new buildings and facilities on educational attainment</li> <li>• An understanding of any influence the County Council can bring to bear on Academies/Free Schools. How does the Council fund the continuing services?</li> <li>• The role and influence of LA School Governors with regard to school improvement</li> <li>• An understanding of the reduced funding regime</li> <li>• An understanding of statutory requirements</li> <li>• An understanding of partnership working in local education with District/Borough/City Councils</li> <li>• An understanding of the Ofsted inspection regime</li> <li>• How do schools spend the Pupil Premium they receive?</li> </ul>
<b>Other Work Being Undertaken</b>	<p>ECC Policy Paper for Education Estates Strategy.</p>

<b>What primary / new evidence is needed for the scrutiny?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School attainment data to be received at the March 2014 meeting of the People &amp; Families Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• Performance plans that seek to bridge the gap in educational attainment</li> <li>• Oral evidence from the Cabinet Member and senior officers</li> <li>• Support plans for schools in special measures</li> <li>• Details of staff vacancies across schools in the county, particularly in respect of the locations of the vacancies</li> <li>• Information on the capital programme</li> <li>• Plans for schools to increase/reduce admission numbers</li> </ul>
<b>What secondary / existing information will be needed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School performance and attainment data</li> <li>• Ofsted reports</li> <li>• Information on the Pupil Premium</li> <li>• Existing legislation and Government reports</li> </ul>
<b>What briefings and site visits will be relevant to the review?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request specific briefings and reports from the Cabinet Member and senior officers of the County Council including current strategies, performance data, Ofsted reports etc.</li> <li>• Invite oral and written evidence from others identified in the section below</li> <li>• Commission specific research and consider the findings</li> <li>• Undertake site visits to relevant institutions</li> <li>• Committee meetings held in public session</li> </ul>
<b>Who are the witnesses who should be invited to provide evidence for the review?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Senior officers from Essex County Council</li> <li>• Headteachers</li> <li>• The Schools Forum</li> <li>• School Governors</li> <li>• Faith and Denominational representatives</li> <li>• Young people through School Councils</li> <li>• Young Essex Assembly</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• District/Borough/City Councils</li> <li>• Experts on teaching and learning strategies (Anglia Ruskin University)</li> <li>• Youth Service</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>

<b>Implications</b>	<p>In terms of topic, have the following matters been taken into consideration in the planning of this review:</p> <p>Legal implications ..... <b>Yes/ no</b></p> <p>Financial implications ..... <b>Yes/ no</b></p> <p>Equality and diversity issues..... <b>Yes/ no</b></p> <p>Other critical implications.....</p>
<b>What resources are required for this review?</b>	<p>In planning the review it is necessary to identify what resources are required to undertake the review, and any costs associated with the committee's activity. Given that the resource available is finite, it is necessary to consider carefully the timing of the review within the Committee's overall work programme.</p>
<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<p>The recommendation of service improvements to improve educational attainment in Essex to assist ECC in meeting Priority 1 of the ECC Corporate Plan .</p> <p>An ongoing role for Members in monitoring and reviewing educational attainment in the county.</p>
<b>Notes</b>	<p>Potentially co-opt representative from the Young Essex Assembly onto the Committee for this review.</p> <p>Hold at least one of the Scrutiny sessions within an educational establishment.</p>
<b>Provisional Timetable</b>	<p>The Task and Finish Group will undertake the in-depth review throughout the civic year 2014/15 with the aim of producing an interim report at the March 2015 meeting of the People &amp; Families Scrutiny Committee. Progress reports will be verbally presented at each Committee meeting.</p>





<b>Audit Trail</b>	
<b>Date review formally proposed</b>	Thursday, 16 January 2014 (Minute no. 7; pages 5 and 6)
<b>Date of Committee's approval of original scoping document</b>	Identify minute number and date of meeting
<b>Date of Committee's approval of Scrutiny Report</b>	Identify minute number and date of meeting
<b>What was the outcome of the review?</b>	Summarise outcome of review and identify if any recommendations have been agreed.
<b>Date proposals arising from review are formally forwarded to the Executive</b>	
<b>How will the outcomes of the review be monitored?</b>	
<b>Date outcomes of review monitored formally by the Committee</b>	Identify minute number and date of meeting

## Report to the ECC People & Families Scrutiny Committee, Educational Attainment Task and Finish Group.

### Braintree District Educational Attainment Presented by Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council

#### Introduction

In the Braintree District there are approximately 21,000 school age children making up around 14% of the overall population. Education has increasingly become an area where the Braintree District is underperforming compared to our neighbours across Essex. This report sets out the key areas where improvement is needed and highlights some of the possible longer term impacts that poor educational attainment could have on the Braintree District and wider community.

#### Schools

There are 63 state funded schools in the Braintree District including; 2 Special Schools, 12 Infants & Junior Schools, 41 Primary Schools and 8 Secondary Schools. There are also 3 independent schools offering private primary, secondary and special education provision (*These have been excluded from comparisons due to a lack of comparable data*).

As of February 2015 Ofsted ratings for schools in the Braintree District were as follows:

Primary (incl. Infant & Junior)	Secondary	Special Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 rated as "Outstanding"</li> <li>35 rated as "Good"</li> <li>10 rated as "Requires Improvement"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 rated as "Good"</li> <li>1 rated as "Requires improvement"</li> <li>2 rated as "Inadequate"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 rated as "Good"</li> </ul>

#### GCSE Attainment

Compared to other Districts and Boroughs, the Braintree District has the lowest GCSE attainment rate in Essex, a trend which has been ongoing for several years.

- In 2014 50.3% of students achieved 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics. (*This includes results for those students who attend school in another local authority area but live in the Braintree District*).
- 2014 results were 6.5% below the average for England, 6.2% below the average for Essex, and 16.2% below the best performing Districts and Boroughs in Essex.

For the eight secondary schools within the District:

- The combined average GCSE attainment rate (for students achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics) was 47.4%. *This 2.9% lower than the District total including all students who live in the District.*
- One school scored above the average for England and Essex, whilst all others scored below. The highest achieving school scored 63% whilst the lowest scored 38%.
- Two schools increased their GCSE attainment rates compared to the previous year, whilst all others had reductions of between 2% and 15%.

## Early Years foundation Stage Profile

The EYFS Profile assesses children's development at age 5 based on prime and specific areas of learning, with assessments undertaken through classroom and playground observation. In 2014 the Braintree District had the lowest levels of children achieving a "Good Level of Development" (GLD) in the Essex County Council area. In more detail:

- 57.1% of students achieved GLD. This was:
  - 2.9% less than the England average of 60%
  - 3.1% less than ECC average of 61%.
  - 9.9% less than the highest achieving District (Maldon)
- 23 out of the 47 infant and primary schools in the District (49%) achieved less than the England average of 60%

*Both data from student observation scores and feedback from Link-Head Teachers for the District highlighted that children's language and communication skills were an area requiring improvement and potential barrier for children's learning later in school.*

## Key Stage 2

At key stage 2 students are assessed for progress on Reading, Writing and Maths, with performance benchmarked against the number of students achieving Level 4 or above in all three areas. The average for the Braintree District is line with the national and county average of 79% however:

- 20 of 47 schools scored below the average for Essex
- The District was ranked joint 6<sup>th</sup> out of 12 Districts and Boroughs for Essex.

## Issues Affecting the Braintree District

### 1. Education

Despite the majority of schools receiving positive Ofsted reports, those schools with poor Ofsted ratings significantly underperform, delivering results far below what would be expected for an area with otherwise low levels of deprivation and unemployment. More is needed to help improve standards and performance at all key stages.

### 2. Growth

As well as the impact on the life chances of individuals, low levels of educational attainment could have long term impacts on the development of the local area. In particular; Braintree District Council is currently working on a new Local Plan which will set out future sustainable development including an anticipated 14,000 new homes and 20,000 jobs required in the District. Poor educational attainment could impact on this process in the following ways:

- *Preventing Inward Investment*  
Future inward investment is likely to be in higher skilled industries and is particularly important in District's like Braintree where proximity to Stansted Airport, Cambridge etc. is a potential asset. Potential investors could be put off by low educational attainment and the overall skill level of the economically active population.
- *Restricting Growth of Existing Businesses*  
The Braintree District is also reliant upon the growth of our existing businesses to deliver the majority of jobs growth for the future. Employers will need to access a labour market that has

the skills to perform the jobs that they are creating. Employers may struggle to attract new skilled workers into the District if the education available to their children is not at a decent standard.

- *Impact on new schools and teacher recruitment*

If the District has a reputation for poor education, we may not attract the necessary teachers to be employed within the new schools being built. This could lead to overcrowding of existing school facilities, thus creating greater pressure for teachers and driving down standards. *In order to help address recruitment issues Braintree District Council would also like to know to what extent teacher recruitment is affected by affordable housing and to whether we should be considering including key worker housing for teachers in the new local plan?*

### 3. *Health*

According to the 2014 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment “The general level of educational attainment within a population is closely associated with the overall health of that population. The long-term demographic and health problems for a child born into a family with traditionally low standards of educational attainment may be severe, affecting health choice behaviour and service provision uptake into adulthood.”

## Briefing Paper: Educational Attainment in Harlow

### Introduction

In 2013 Harlow Council undertook a Scrutiny Review of educational attainment. The review included analysis of performance information and data; analysis of current arrangements for supporting schools; interviews with a wide range of professionals and an analysis of academic research into the causes of poor aspirations and low attainment. The review was led by Professor David Hawker who subsequently made a number of recommendations in relation to early years, school age and post school education. Professor Hawker proposed a new educational achievement partnership led by Harlow Council and the introduction of a 'Harlow Pledge' aimed at systematically improving the quality of education across the district so that Harlow could become one of the best places in Britain for children to grow up in.

The inaugural meeting of the Harlow Strategic Partnership for Educational Attainment (HSPEA) took place on 8 July 2013 and, in recognition of Professor Hawker's recommendations, it was agreed that there would be a partnership approach to address key identified issues under three main work streams:

- Early Years and School Readiness
- Schools Improvement
- Post-school Opportunities

The Chief Executive of Harlow Council is the Chair of the HSPEA which meets approximately every six weeks. Partners receive regular update reports on all three work streams to evidence partnership working, project delivery and positive outcomes for Harlow children, young people and families.

### The context of Harlow

Provided below are some statistics to provide the context for educational attainment and progression in Harlow:

### Schools

In September 2014 Ofsted ratings for Harlow Schools was as follows:

Primary (Infant and Junior)	Secondary	Special and Private
1 Outstanding 13 Good 8 Requires Improvement 4 Inadequate 1 Awaiting inspection	1 Outstanding 3 Good 0 Requires Improvement 1 Inadequate	- Outstanding 1 Good - Requires Improvement - Inadequate

There are currently 35 schools in Harlow (March 2015) – one special school, one free school (Aspire Academy), one private school, five secondary schools/academies and 27 primary schools/academies.

### Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)

The EYFSP assesses children's development at age five based on prime and specific areas of learning, with assessments undertaken through classroom and playground observation.

In 2013 only 38% of Harlow children were assessed as having a Good Level of Development (GLD). This increased by 21% in 2014 to 59% but remained 1% below National and 2% below the Essex average. See comparison chart below:

GLD	National	Essex	West	Harlow
2013	51%	52%	49%	38%
2014	60%	61%	62%	59%

Harlow has seen the largest percentage increase of all District Council areas in Essex since 2013 and has moved up two places in the District Council area ranking from 12<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> place.

In 2013, when compared with other District Council areas in the West Quadrant, Harlow was 18.8% behind Uttlesford and 16.3% behind Epping Forest. However, in 2014 Harlow closed the gap within the quadrant considerably and is now 6.6% behind Uttlesford and 3.4% behind Epping Forest.

The issue of children not being fully 'ready' to start school at age five was highlighted very early on in Professor Hawker's review in 2013. As a result Harlow primary schools were having a harder job ensuring that children still met the expected standard by the time they were ready to transfer to secondary school at age 11. Four key weaknesses were identified during the review:

1. A weakening in the scope and effectiveness of the children's centres because of budget reductions.
2. A weakening of the multi-agency work at neighbourhood level.
3. Variable and often poor quality early years provision with little opportunity for working across providers to improve quality.
4. Variable and often poor liaison between pre-school providers and schools, leading to loss of continuity in children's and families experiences.

'School Readiness' was therefore identified as a priority work stream for the HSPEA and both Harlow Council and Essex County Council agreed to contribute £50,000 a year for two years (2013/14 and 2014/15) to move this important area of work forward. **Harlow Council has committed a further £50,000 per year for a further three years and hopes that Essex County Council will do so as well.**

### Key Stage 2

At Key Stage 2, the key measures now are:

1. The percentage of children achieving level 4 or above in both English and Maths.
2. The percentage of children who make expected progress (defined as two national curriculum levels) since age 7.

According to floor standards, a primary school will be said to be underperforming if:

- Fewer than 65% of pupils at the end of key stage 2 (KS2) achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, and
- The school has a below median score (94%) for the percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 who made expected progress in reading, and
- The school has a below median score (96%) for the percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 who made expected progress in Writing, and
- The school has a below median score (93%) for the percentage of pupils at the end of KS2 who made expected progress in maths.

The comparative performance in Harlow is provided below:

	% of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths				% of pupils making expected progress in 2014		
	2014	2013	2012		Reading	Writing	Maths
England – All Schools	78%	75%	75%		97%	93%	89%
Local Authority – Essex	79%	75%	74%		91%	92%	89%
Harlow – All Schools	78%	75%	75%		91%	93%	89%

% of pupils achieving reading, writing and maths (2014)				
	Level 3 or below (Below expectations)	Level 4 or above (At level expected)	Level 5 or above (Above expectations)	Average point score
England – All Schools	6%	78%	24%	28.7
Local Authority – Essex	6%	79%	24%	28.2
Harlow – All Schools	6%	78%	24%	28.7

## **Harlow comparisons**

Harlow KS2 results increased in 2014 compared to the previous two years. There are now 78% (+3% more) pupils achieving Level 4 or above (i.e. meeting expectations) in reading, writing and maths. This is also a similar percentage with the county and national averages. 24% of pupils achieved level 5 and above (i.e. exceeded expectations) in reading, writing and maths.

## **GCSE**

At GCSE, the key measures are:

1. The percentage of students who achieve good grades (C or above) in at least 5 subjects, including English and Maths.
2. The percentage that has made the expected progress in English and Maths.
3. The percentage who achieve the newly defined 'English Baccalaureate' (Grade C or above in English, Maths, a Science, a foreign language and a humanities subject).

The majority of pupils are expected to achieve grade C or above in at least 5 subjects, including English and Maths. The comparative performance for Harlow is provided below:

	2012	2013	2014	English	Maths	
England – All Schools	59.4%	59.2%	53.4%	NA	NA	22.9%
England – State funded Schools	58.8%	60.6%	56.6%	71.6%	65.5%	24.2%
Local Authority – Essex	59.0%	60.5%	56.5%	72.8%	65.5%	19.9%
District Council – Harlow	59.4%	59.2%	53.4%	NA	NA	24.2%

According to floor standards, a secondary school will be said to be underperforming if:

- Fewer than 40% of pupils achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A\*-C or equivalent, including GCSEs (or iGCSEs) in both English and mathematics.



- The school has a below median score (74% in 2014) for the percentage of pupils making expected progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4 in English.
- The school has a below median score (67% in 2014) for the percentage of pupils making expected progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4 in mathematics.

### **Local issues affecting Harlow**

**Schools that are inadequate requiring improvement** - in September 2014 Ofsted judged eight Harlow primary schools as requiring improvement and four as inadequate. More must be done to support schools to improve and to develop the leadership, skills, governance and approach to performance necessary. Establishing a new Harlow Education Improvement Partnership (see Schools Improvement below) is a good step in the right direction in responding to these challenges. HSPEA and the Council are keen to see the impact that the Partnership will have on supporting schools on their improvement journey.

*More work is required to illustrate to the community more effectively:*

1. *How these schools are being challenged, changed and improved.*
2. *The effectiveness of plans to address the causes of the inadequacy/need for improvement within defined timescales and how the learning from improvements achieved is being used to create sustainable and on-going improvement.*
3. *How the progress that these schools are making to address the causes and outcomes of their inadequacy/need for improvement are being communicated to all stakeholders in the community that they serve.*
4. *How the needs of students from these schools are being addressed to prevent the inadequacies of their school experience providing them with a legacy of under-achievement.*

**Teacher recruitment** – there have been concerns expressed about the ability of some Harlow schools to recruit and retain teaching staff of the quality and experience required. Delays in recruitment or the inability to recruit the staff required increases pressure on existing staff in schools that are already struggling. It is also the case that frequent changes of teaching staff in the form of temporary staff to cover vacancies can lead to instability for children and families. This can affect learning outcomes.

*More work is required to understand:*

5. *The nature, level, location and causes of teacher recruitment and retention issues.*
6. *The approaches necessary to address their causes with particular reference to experience in other areas of the country.*

7. *The action that is being taken to develop action plans for schools to address their specific teacher recruitment and retention issues and how they are planning for the future.*

**Intergenerational issues** – there continue to be issues regarding children growing up in families where education has not been a priority and parental encouragement and aspiration is low. Parental approaches to education and lifestyle can create barriers to the development of aspiration in children. Children growing up in families where parenting skills are poor and parents themselves lack basic skills can lead to poor levels of school readiness and subsequent inadequate academic progression.

*More work is required to:*

8. *Learn from the success of the Harlow approach, to extend the approach to all parts of Harlow and to learn from other areas in tackling school readiness.*
9. *Develop further a cross-cutting approach to improving the health and wellbeing of families using school readiness as a key proxy.*
10. *Ensure that the partnership working outside of schools, as well as within them, addresses the aspiration of parents for their children, their parenting skills and supports family learning.*
11. *Identify how 'hard to reach' parents can be engaged and motivated to address the needs of their children.*
12. *Engage with students to learn more about their views on aspiration and their perceptions of the barriers to educational attainment/progression.*
13. *Identify how the issues in (12) above can be addressed and the channel of communication to students be improved.*

**Meeting the needs of businesses** - employers require people with the education and skills to meet their business needs and aspirations. Frequently local people do not have the higher level educational attainment, skills and experience to take the opportunities that exist in Harlow currently. It is also the case that through the Enterprise Zone and other regeneration initiatives high level, high reward jobs are being created through inward investment that local people will require higher levels of educational attainment to access.

Whilst significant progress has been made through the provision of a university centre, a university technical college and the improvements achieved by Harlow College and some schools much more is required.

*Investment is required to:*

14. *Extend the portfolio of courses offered by the university centre in Harlow relevant to current and future businesses and its recruitment of local and other students.*

15. *Develop further the relationships between the university, the university technical college, Harlow College and the schools in Harlow to provide clearly defined and effective pathways for local students.*
16. *Change perceptions about the educational attainment and opportunities in Harlow to attract students from outside of Harlow and to reduce the 'leakage' of Harlow students to other areas.*
17. *Change perceptions about the educational attainment and opportunities in Harlow to remove barriers to employers and employees moving to Harlow.*
18. *Further improve the engagement of Harlow businesses in improving educational attainment and ensure that the business 'assets' of Harlow are pooled as far as practically possible to create a network of learning and development opportunities for local students.*
19. *Encourage more students to consider STEM subjects.*

## **Other activities**

The Council has created the Harlow Young People's Fund to:

1. Support Harlow's young people identify and fulfil their own potential.
2. Help young people gain the education and skills necessary to share in the success of the town.
3. Develop to be focussed citizens contributing to the town.

The Young People's Fund was started with a contribution from the Council's Chief Executive to fund and to deliver the Harlow Educational Progression Awards. The Awards evening held in November 2014 saw students of varying abilities nominated by their schools receive awards in recognition of their commitment and attitude to learning and their academic progress between Key Stages. The Council has now committed £50,000 per year for three years to continue with the School Readiness Project and is approaching local businesses and partners for contributions.

## **What next?**

Below are the actions (taken from the paper above) that the Council believes need to be carried out specifically in Harlow. The Council recognises that the socioeconomic context and challenges in different communities in Essex may require different approaches but the Council hopes that the learning from Harlow can inform the approaches to the contexts and challenges in other communities.

Harlow related actions:

### ***Schools that are inadequate or requiring improvement***

*More work is required to illustrate to the community more effectively:*

1. *How these schools are being challenged, changed and improved.*

2. *The effectiveness of plans to address the causes of the inadequacy/need for improvement within defined timescales and how the learning from improvements achieved is being used to create sustainable and on-going improvement.*
3. *How the progress that these schools are making to address the causes and outcomes of their inadequacy/need for improvement are being communicated to all stakeholders in the community that they serve.*
4. *How the needs of students from these schools are being addressed to prevent the inadequacies of their school experience providing them with a legacy of under-achievement.*

### **Teacher recruitment**

*More work is required to understand:*

5. *The nature, level, location and causes of teacher recruitment and retention issues.*
6. *The approaches necessary to address their causes with particular reference to experience in other areas of the country.*
7. *The action that is being taken to develop action plans for schools to address their specific teacher recruitment and retention issues and how they are planning for the future.*

### **Inter-generational issues**

*More work is required to:*

8. *Learn from the success of the Harlow approach, to extend the approach to all parts of Harlow and to learn from other areas in tackling school readiness.*
9. *Develop further a cross-cutting approach to improving the health and wellbeing of families using school readiness as a key proxy.*
10. *Ensure that the partnership working outside of schools, as well as within them, addresses the aspiration of parents for their children, their parenting skills and supports family learning.*
11. *Identify how 'hard to reach' parents can be engaged and motivated to address the needs of their children.*
12. *Engage with students to learn more about their views on aspiration and their perceptions of the barriers to educational attainment/progression.*
13. *Identify how the issues in (12) above can be addressed and the channel of communication to students be improved.*

### **Meeting the needs of business**

*Investment is required to:*

14. *Extend the portfolio of courses offered by the university centre in Harlow relevant to current and future businesses and its recruitment of local and other students.*
15. *Develop further the relationships between the university, the university technical college, Harlow College and the schools in Harlow to provide clearly defined and effective pathways for local students to support aspiration and educational attainment.*
16. *Change perceptions about the educational attainment and opportunities in Harlow to attract students from outside of Harlow and to reduce the 'leakage' of Harlow students to other areas.*
17. *Change perceptions about the educational attainment and opportunities in Harlow to remove barriers to employers and employees moving to Harlow.*
18. *Further improve the engagement of Harlow businesses in improving educational attainment and ensure that the business 'assets' of Harlow are pooled as far as practically possible to create a network of learning and development opportunities for local students.*
19. *Encourage more students to consider STEM subjects.*

In addition to the above the following actions are suggested for consideration to tackle and improve educational attainment in both Harlow and the other communities in Essex.

20. *Improve the identification and dissemination of best practice, wherever it is to be found, to all schools and support/encourage its use consistently to inform and develop actions to improve educational attainment.*
21. *Encourage and support school governing bodies, as custodians of the education of the students attending their schools, to develop, where it currently does not exist, the willingness and ability to hold to account the leadership of their schools for the educational attainment of the students.*
22. *Encourage all schools to commit to being held to account by the representatives of the communities that they serve (Essex County and the District Councils) for the educational attainment of their students.*
23. *Increase the pooling of expertise and experience amongst the teachers for the benefit of all schools.*
24. *Ensure that the educational progression of students is identified, evaluated and communicated more effectively as part of the definition of success in improving the educational attainment in schools.*

## **Conclusion**

Educational attainment and progression are crucial for the success of individuals and communities. The Council is fully committed, as community leader, to supporting all educational institutions, individuals and families in improving aspiration, educational progression and educational attainment. Whilst recognising that there is still much to do to get to the position that the Council would like all educational institutions to be at

in terms of the educational attainment and progression of students in Harlow, it believes that the progress made to date should not be overlooked. Success, as well as challenges still to be faced, needs to be acknowledged. Many schools and teachers do a tremendous job and illustrate their commitment and professionalism every day for the benefit of their students.

The Council's strap line: Working together for Harlow, represents its approach and its commitment to support tackling the challenges and barriers to improving educational attainment and progression in Harlow.

**Malcolm Morley**  
**2015**  
**Chief Executive**

**15 April**



**REPORT TO THE ECC PEOPLES &  
FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT TASK AND  
FINISH GROUP  
23 APRIL 2015**

**1. Background**

Tendring experiences a number of challenges which impact on educational performance, including inward migration and difficulty recruiting and retaining teaching staff. The area has high levels of unemployment, with an often transient population reliant on seasonal employment. There is a need to raise aspirations amongst local young people and within families in order to improve educational performance, including the removal of barriers to higher education for students.

In 2012, Tendring District Council (TDC) expressed concern to Essex County Council (ECC) as to the quality of primary education in the area. By the end of 2011/12 academic year, a number of primary schools were in special measures. Educational performance in Tendring was significantly below the average for the rest of Essex. As a result, Tendring District Council has taken a partnership approach to addressing educational attainment and related issues for schools in the area. The three key drivers in this respect are:

- Tendring Locality Board
- Tendring Education Improvement Group (TEIG)
- Tendring Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**2. Tendring Locality Board**

Membership of the Board comprises all ECC Members for Tendring, TDC Cabinet Members and the Cabinet Member from ECC allocated to Tendring. Recently, representation from the Tendring District Association of Local Councils was also included within the membership; thereby bring together all three tiers of local government. The Board meets approximately every two months and is chaired by Cllr Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader of ECC. The Locality Board provides a high level steer to shape the future of the locality and delivers a co-ordinated public service approach across a number of key County and District services and projects. This enables joined up delivery of key services within a wide range of partners.

Joint locality boards have been set up across Essex. In Tendring, Harlow and Basildon the boards have focused on educational improvement as a work stream. Through this focus by the Locality Board the Tendring Education Improvement Group (TEIG) was established in October 2013 with the responsibility for supporting improvement in the quality of education for children and young people across the Tendring District.

**3. Tendring Education Improvement Group**

Members of the strategic group include Essex County Council and Tendring District Council, Primary and Secondary Head Teachers and Tendring Education Trust (the local collaborative trust established by schools in the district). The group has had a positive impact on the working relationship between Essex County Council, local schools and Tendring District Council. The partners within the TEIG work together to bring their collective effort, energy and experience to address challenges faced by schools, including early year's provision and governance arrangements. It was accepted that the greatest impact would be secured by focusing on jointly agreed aspects as opposed to tackling the wider agenda as a whole

### **3.1 The aims of the TEIG are:-**

- For every primary school in Tendring to be judged at least securely good by Ofsted by 2017
- For all schools and their communities to hold the highest aspirations for Tendring children and to ensure that outcomes for children across Tendring increase year on year towards being in line with the top 25% national outcomes
- To narrow the performance gaps for “disadvantaged” children in Tendring so that they are at least in line with national expectations

### **3.2 The key responsibilities of the TEIG are:**

- To champion educational improvement and raising aspirations for all pupils across the Tendring District.
- To capture and disseminate best practice across the area groups within Tendring.
- To work with schools to tackle areas of difficulty faced including:
  - educational achievement
  - school leadership
  - teacher recruitment
  - issues brought by a transient population
- To pool resources and coordinate support for maximum impact.
- To learn from best practice across the country.

The Tendring Locality Board oversees the work of the TEIG, and receives regular updates on progress made against targets.

## **4. Tendring Education and Skills Committee**

Tendring District Council (TDC) established the Education and Skills Committee in 2014 to support the Council's community leadership role in respect of improving the aspiration and attainment of young people in the District.



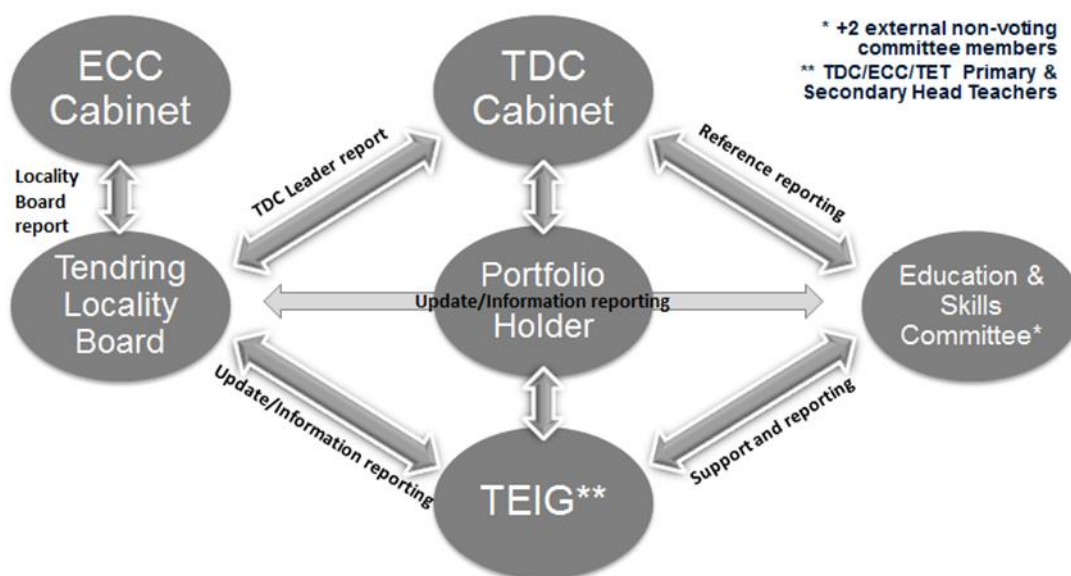
#### **4.1 The Terms of Reference of the Committee**

- Reviewing the key drivers that impact the educational attainment and aspirations in Tendring, including:
  - School performance in its wider remit (including how to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in Tendring schools);
  - School readiness of young people (including reviewing support that can be given to families);
  - The impact of migration into the District and contributory Council policies;
  - The roles of partners, including the business sector, in supporting schools;
  - Supporting the recruitment and training of school governors; and
  - The way partners work together to provide improved access to careers information to young people.
- Reviewing the work undertaken by the Council, including within its partnership activities to develop the skills of those that live and work in the District.

#### **4.2 The Committee's Work Programme for 2015**

Meeting date	Topic
22 June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting recruitment and retention of teachers in Tendring.</li> <li>Review of Secondary Schools.</li> <li>Review of how partners work together to provide access to careers information to young people.</li> </ul>
21 September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of work undertaken to address entrenched worklessness and improve skills of those living in the District.</li> <li>Review of recruitment and training of school governors.</li> <li>Review of Colleges.</li> <li>Review of Tendring Children and Young People's Strategy.</li> </ul>
30 November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of support given to families in Tendring to ensure School Readiness of children.</li> <li>Review of attainment figures.</li> <li>School attendance, the impact on attainment and what partners can do to support schools.</li> </ul>

## 5. Reporting flow chart of the functions



## 6. Success of the Partnership Approach

Significant progress has been made since the TEIG partnership was formed. Since 2012, results at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved by 12%. Although results are still below the county average, the model has supported schools in becoming more self-sufficient in respect of their improvement programmes. Some schools had initially been reluctant to join the partnership, although confidence and momentum has built over the past year as the benefits of partnership working have become clear. Confidence in ECC and local schools to deliver an effective improvement programme has also increased. Essex County Council and Tendring District Council have jointly congratulated local schools on their improvement. Moreover, since the partnership had been formed, media coverage of local education provision has improved which is crucial in developing confidence in local education provision.

The partnership arrangements between Tendring District Council and Essex County Council provide the opportunity to share local knowledge, examples of good practice and for TDC to inform future education plans for the District. TDC has supported ECC in its interventionist activities in failing schools and a number of successful joint initiatives to improve governance arrangements in schools and early year's provision in the area have also been developed through the partnership.

OTHER APPENDICES TO FOLLOW.....

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