



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Type in Ward

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**CS&YP Scrutiny
Cabinet**

**11th January 2011
17th January 2011**

Raising Achievement Strategy

Report of the Divisional Director, Learning Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of progress to date on raising achievement and priorities for further improvement in educational outcomes in Leicester.
- 1.2 To seek agreement to the principles and key objectives of a new Raising Achievement Strategy, to sustain and build on recent improvements in outcomes.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To endorse the ambition of the strategy to raise achievement and attainment levels in Leicester to national averages and higher
- 2.2 To agree the five core principles of the Raising Achievement Strategy.
- 2.3 To support continued development of the strategy

3 Summary

- 3.1 In recent years education standards in Leicester have improved significantly at all key stages. In February 2010 the Secretary of State for Education lifted the Improvement Notice which was issued to the Council in Summer 2008, due to concerns about quality and standards in education. In lifting the notice the Secretary of State acknowledged, not just the improvements in standards, but the much strengthened capacity of the local authority to lead further improvement.

- 3.2 Continuing to improve education standards and sustain that improvement remains a key priority for the city. While the rapid rate of improvement must be recognized, this was from a very low base. Attainment against most measures remains below national averages and there are areas of the city where education outcomes remain very poor. Educational performance and skill levels are an important factor in enhancing the city's reputation and attracting inward investment. Higher educational achievement is also associated with better health and longer life expectancy. Quality and standards in education, and improving educational outcomes, must be a key element of any broader regeneration strategy for the city.
- 3.3 To sustain improvement and raise standards of education to national averages and beyond, we need to develop a new Raising Achievement Strategy that will build on what has been achieved through earlier plans, such as Transforming Leicester's Learning. The Raising Achievement Strategy will communicate our ambition for children and young people, and will commit to a range of improvement priorities to raise levels of achievement overall, as well as tackling inequalities in provision and outcomes across the city.
- 3.4 In addition to communicating our vision and ambition for education, it is proposed that the strategy is based on a set of core principles. The principles begin to define the approach we will take to raising achievement in Leicester. Essentially they express a commitment to raising achievement through partnership and collaboration; developing integrated and locality service models which contribute to raising achievement; and engaging families and communities to encourage aspiration, ownership and investment in education. The five principles proposed are set out in more detail in paragraph 4.7 below.

4 Report

- 4.1 In the past, educational performance in Leicester was poor and a cause of some concern. In June 2008 the Council was issued with an Improvement Notice by the Secretary of State, with education standards identified as being in urgent need of improvement. Work on Transforming Leicester's Learning (TLL), underpinned by a Raising Achievement Plan, contributed to improved outcomes against all of the Improvement Notice targets. Leicester is now a rapidly improving local authority with educational attainment improving at a rate faster than that seen nationally. In recognition of the rate of improvement and the local authority's strengthened capacity to sustain this, the Improvement Notice was revoked by the Secretary of State in February 2010.
- 4.2 Leicester's previous reputation of poor educational performance, low skill level and high ranking high on the deprivation index is perceived to have limited inward investment, making it less attractive for companies looking to relocate. Continuing to increase standards in Leicester schools, and communicating an ambition to achieve the top quartile of LAs nationally for educational attainment, will contribute to challenging negative perceptions of the city and improve its reputation. Improving attainment has a direct impact on skill levels and access to employment. It is also associated with improved health, quality of life, and life expectancy. Improving educational outcomes for young people is a fundamental element of achieving wider, sustainable regeneration.

- 4.3 In spite of the rapid improvements over recent years, attainment for children in the early years, primary and secondary remains below national averages and, on some measures, in or near the bottom quartile. To sustain and build on the improvement achieved through TLL and the Raising Achievement Plan we need to develop a longer term Raising Achievement Strategy. Our proposed Raising Achievement Strategy is set within the context of One Leicester, the Children and Young People's Plan and Strategy for Change.
- 4.4 The aim of the strategy is to improve children's lives by working in partnership to raise aspiration and build achievement. It is intended that the strategy will articulate a commitment to building on recent improvements in performance and an ambition for educational provision and outcomes in Leicester to match that of the best nationally.
- 4.5 Through our Raising Achievement Strategy we aim to close the gap between educational performance in Leicester and performance nationally by 2012, and for performance to be within the top quartile by 2015. To achieve this level of performance we will need to ensure no primary or secondary school is in an Ofsted category, or below floor target, by 2012, and that we increase the proportion of schools and settings that are judged good or better by Ofsted. While addressing improvement in provision and outcomes overall, we also need to target particular groups and areas of the city where levels of achievement are particularly low.
- 4.6 The Raising Achievement Strategy will commit to a number of specific objectives which are relevant to i) improving overall performance and ii) accelerating progress rates for vulnerable groups to narrow achievement and attainment gaps.

Specific priorities will include:

- (i) Improving quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the proportion of five year olds deemed ready for school increases rapidly
- (ii) Ensuring that targeted support in the early years reaches the children most at risk of underachievement so that the gap between the lowest achievers and other children is narrowed.
- (iii) Closing the performance gap between local and national performance by 2012, and reaching the top quartile nationally by 2015;
- (iv) Increasing the proportion of young people who achieve Level 2 and level 3 qualifications by age 19
- (v) Reducing the gap between overall levels of performance in the city and that of vulnerable groups e.g. children with SEN; in receipt of free school meals; looked after
- (vi) Addressing boys' underachievement and Improving attainment amongst ethnic groups where there is a trend of underperformance e.g. white British; Roma, black Caribbean

- (vii) Ensuring that the number of primary schools below floor target reduces by half in 2011, and that no primary school is below the 55% floor target from 2012 onwards
- (viii) Ensuring that no secondary school is below the 30% GCSE floor target from 2011 onwards
- (ix) Ensuring that , by 2012, no school is in an Ofsted category;
- (x) Increasing the proportion of schools that are good or better to the top quartile nationally by 2015.

4.7 **Five Core Principles**

4.7.1 It is proposed that our Raising Achievement Strategy is based upon five core principles. In addition to reflecting our vision and ambition for children in Leicester, a key message within the principles is that raising achievement is a shared responsibility. Effective partnerships, integrated working, and engagement with local communities are fundamental to achieving excellence in this area. The following principles will form part of a framework against which we will plan and commission activities to raise achievement:

- i) **Ambition for our all children and young people** – we will benchmark our performance against the best to create a culture that is aspirational and optimistic for all our children and young people.
- (ii) **Partnerships and Collaboration** – we will develop partnerships across education settings both within and beyond Leicester, so that leadership and management; quality of provision and overall effectiveness are judged good or better in every school and education setting.
- (iii) **Great teams around schools and families** – we will ensure that the services that children, families and schools need to access to overcome barriers to high achievement are integrated and co-ordinated effectively, so that those barriers are tackled swiftly and effectively.
- (iv) **Engaging families and communities** - we will support families in engaging actively in their children’s education, and work with communities to develop aspiration, ownership and investment in education and schools.
- (v) **Investment in our workforce** – we are committed to ensuring that there are clear career pathways for our staff, and that they are equipped to work within integrated and multidisciplinary services to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

4.8 **Developing and implementing the strategy**

Our Raising Achievement Strategy is set within the context of One Leicester, the Children and Young People’s Plan and Strategy for Change. As well as shaping the

quality of education it will support us in building effective partnerships between schools; with communities and across services for children and families. Our strategy will be led by the Investing in Children Priority Board and supported by a local strategic commissioning framework that is designed to ensure identifiable links between commissioning plans and better outcomes for children, families, schools and communities.

- 4.9 It is anticipated that the role of the local authority in school improvement will change in the coming months, with the L.A moving from being a direct provider of school improvement, to a commissioner of services and projects which support school improvement and raising achievement. To sustain a strong LA role in raising achievement we will need to develop the capacity to apply a commissioning model to school improvement and other raising achievement activities. This will help both schools and the local authority to deploy all resources effectively and improve value for money.
- 4.10 Schools will be key partners in implementing and delivering the strategy. In addition to delivering core provision, schools will have a role in commissioning improvement services for their own and partner institutions, and providing such services through school to school support arrangements. Most of the resource for improving schools and raising achievement is likely to sit within funding allocated directly to schools.
- 4.11 While schools, settings and their governing bodies will hold the main responsibility and resource for delivering universal and targeted education provision, a range of local authority and partner services will need to contribute to raising achievement and narrowing the gap through targeted services for vulnerable children and families. Ownership of raising achievement priorities and a strong integrated services model will be of fundamental importance in addressing the current level of inequality in educational outcomes within the city.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The report notes that the role of the Council is moving towards commissioning school improvement services and that funding is increasingly expected to sit with schools rather than the Council. The funding restrictions and changes arising from the National Spending Review and subsequent DfE announcements will add further complexity and challenges, particularly as much of the improvement activity to date has been funded from additional / one-off resources, rather than mainstream / on-going funds as will need to be the case in the future. Any further significant central / city-wide investment would need to be agreed through appropriate Council commissioning and budget setting processes, and through the Schools' Forum for activities funded through "top-slicing" the Dedicated Schools Grant or from any excess school balances.
- 5.1.2 Where funding would come from schools directly, schools will need to see the value of such investment compared to other priorities, although the activity could be linked to new targeted funding such as the Local Pupil Premium.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, Ext 7750

5.2 Legal Implications

5.21 There are currently no direct legal implications contained within this paper.

Kamal Adata, Head of Community Services Law, Ext 7044

5.3 Climate Change Implications

This report does not contain any significant climate change implications and therefore should not have a detrimental effect on the Council's climate change targets.

Helen Lansdown, Senior Environmental Consultant - Sustainable Procurement Ext 296770

6. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Throughout the report, particularly 4.6
Policy	Yes	Throughout the report
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	
Corporate Parenting	Yes	Throughout the report
Health Inequalities Impact	No	

7. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

No background papers have been produced on this subject.

8. Consultations

No specific consultations are required for this paper at this point.

9. Report Author

Margaret Libreri
Divisional Director, Learning Services
Ext 7701

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)