

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds CBE
Cabinet Portfolio	Deputy Leader of the Council / Education & Children's Services
Officer Contact	Dan Kennedy, Residents Services
Papers with report	Appendix 1 - Draft Hillingdon School Improvement Strategy

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	<p>This report presents to Cabinet Hillingdon's draft school improvement strategy which has been developed by a working group of head teachers and the Local Authority. The implementation of the strategy will deliver targeted school-to-school support to raise educational standards. The strategy has been developed to be schools-led and sets out areas for improvement.</p> <p>Schools are developing a Borough-wide implementation plan and they plan to consult with all schools on the draft strategy in September 2015. The proposed role of the Local Authority within school improvement is set out in this report, which includes challenging schools to raise standards where this is required.</p>
Contribution to our plans and strategies	<p>Putting our Residents First: <i>Our People</i></p> <p>This includes ensuring that every child in Hillingdon deserves to have access to a 'good' or better school in the Borough.</p>
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial implications relating to this report.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Children, Young People and Learning
Ward(s) affected	All Wards

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet:

1. Note the action being taken by the Council to work with Hillingdon schools to develop a schools-led improvement strategy and targeted improvement plan;
2. Agrees the proposed role of the Local Authority in school improvement, noting that the final strategy will be reported back to Cabinet later in the year, following further feedback from schools.

3. INFORMATION

School Improvement – Duty Placed on Local Government

1. The general duty for local government to promote high standards of education is set out within the Education Act 1996. The Local Authority has a role in promoting high standards and championing excellence, ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training and promoting fulfilment of learning potential. For maintained schools the local authority has powers to issue warning notices to schools which are a cause for concern. If a local authority becomes aware of concerns about an academy school, the Department for Education expects the local authority to notify the Regional Schools Commissioner. The general aim is that children should be attending a school which is graded at least 'good' or a school which is improving rapidly.
2. The role of the Local Authority in raising academic standards is changing. Recent announcements from the Department of Education (DfE) has made clear the expectation that standards of education need to rise rapidly in under-performing schools. Schools which fail to improve or where there is evidence of 'coasting' performance may be subject to intervention by the Local Authority or the Regional Schools Commissioner, which could include sponsorship by a higher performing academy school. Further details from the DfE are expected on the changing landscape in due course.

The Local Picture - Summary

3. At the present time (June 2015) the current published Ofsted ratings for the 97 schools in Hillingdon are: 18.5% (18) 'outstanding', 53.5% (52) 'good', 20.5% (20) 'requires improvement' and no schools in the 'inadequate' category. There are 7 schools awaiting inspections (7.5%).
4. For community schools, the Local Authority is undertaking school improvement reviews to identify areas of strength and the need for further improvement to continue to raise standards. These assessments have been positively received by schools and are helping senior school leaders to target their efforts to improve. In addition a number of schools in the Borough are also working closely together to share expertise in 'cluster groups'; individual schools are providing support to other schools on a case by case basis; and teaching schools in the Borough are securing additional funding for schools judged as 'requires improvement'. Since September, three community schools have been subject to intervention action from the Local Authority, which is leading to improvements in these three schools.
5. There is a need to build on existing arrangements for school improvement across the Borough to establish a resilient and stronger collaborative approach to school improvement which ultimately is led by schools, for schools. This direction of travel is consistent with national policy which seeks to establish a self-determining, self-governing education community in each local authority area.
6. Recent announcements from central Government indicate strongly that local authorities need to be taking expeditious action when there are concerns about the performance of a school, including schools which are deemed to be 'coasting' – where progress or attainment is consistently not achieving a set performance threshold.

School Improvement Strategy for Hillingdon

7. To provide a platform for a stronger collaborative approach to school improvement, officers of the Council have been working closely with school leaders to develop a new school improvement strategy, led by and owned by schools in Hillingdon (appendix 1).
8. To this end, officers of the council have worked with leading head teachers from both the primary and secondary sector, and representatives from all teaching schools in the Borough to review the current arrangements for school improvement; discuss the changing role of the Local Authority in school improvement; and delivered a schools-led event in early July 2015 for all Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors to bring schools together to refine the school improvement priorities for Hillingdon.

Vision for School Improvement

9. The school-led vision is for every child in the Borough to be successful and fulfilled learners, reaching their potential and thriving within inspirational and 'outstanding' educational settings.
10. The central aim of the strategy is to ensure that all children, no matter where they live in the Borough and which school or setting they attend are judged by Ofsted to be at least 'good' and which are constantly aspiring to improve to become, and remain, outstanding.
11. The strategy sets out that all schools in Hillingdon will be judged by Ofsted to be at least 'good' by July 2017.

Themes for School Improvement

12. From discussion with schools and from an analysis of Hillingdon's pupil attainment and progress data, the following describes the outline areas for school improvement in Hillingdon:
 - Aspects of leadership, management and governance – including middle management,
 - Targeted interventions for children from disadvantaged groups to raise attainment and narrow the attainment gap, including children looked after,
 - Improving outcomes and practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – including narrowing the gap compared to London,
 - Narrowing the gap at key stage 4 compared to London,
 - The new curriculum,
 - Assessment without levels,
 - Pupil independence in learning,
 - Challenge in lessons,
 - Feedback and marking,
 - Monitoring and evaluating actions, especially in relation to the school development plan and self-evaluations,
 - Implementing recent changes to special education needs and the curriculum,
 - Building capacity in school leaders (e.g. training and shadowing Head Teachers to review other schools),
 - Mentoring new Head Teachers.

Delivering Improvement – Five Improvement Strands

13. The school improvement strategy will achieve these areas for improvement focusing on five improvement strands:
1. Intelligence and overview
 2. Communication and navigation
 3. Building capacity
 4. Monitoring progress, driving improvement
 5. Challenging underperformance
14. The five strands for improvement are:
- Intelligence and overview - maintaining accurate and meaningful information on all schools in Hillingdon about their school improvement plans and the difference they are making. This will assist to identify schools at risk of falling standards to ensure appropriate support and intervention action is taken in a timely way.
 - Communication and navigation – delivering a clear and consistent source of information for schools to signpost and secure the support they need themselves, direct from providers. The development of the Teaching Schools in Hillingdon will complement this through their dedicated website for school improvement.
 - Building capacity - establishing school improvement networks based on local school improvement priorities and building capacity within good and outstanding schools to be school improvement partners with other Hillingdon schools. This also includes developing the role and capacity of the teaching schools in Hillingdon to underpin improvement.
 - Monitoring progress, driving improvement - all schools are expected to undertake performance monitoring of their improvement, including accurate self-assessments and set clear priorities for improvement each year. For maintained schools, the Local Authority has commissioned school improvement reviews to inform school improvement planning.
 - Challenging underperformance - for those schools which are identified to be a cause for concern, the local authority will intervene. For maintained schools this could include a warning notice. For academy or Free Schools, this could include a notification to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Hillingdon School Improvement: The Leadership Role of the Local Authority

15. Hillingdon Council recognises that schools are self-managing and autonomous and are, therefore responsible for their own performance improvement. The Local Authority has a key leadership role to play working in partnership with Hillingdon Schools and one which moves away from the traditional role of direct provider of school improvement support. The following summarises the newly defined leadership role the Local Authority will take to raise standards, which includes challenging any school in Hillingdon which is under-performing.
- Intelligence – working in partnership with all schools in Hillingdon to maintain up-to-date information about pupil progress and attainment to identify which schools are at risk of under-performance as well as evaluating what difference intervention programmes are

making. The Local Authority will maintain a register of schools at risk of underperformance, based on the intelligence received, and will use this intelligence to broker support, working with other schools. Information about schools which are a cause for concern and action being taken will be reported to Elected Members.

- Support capacity building – working in partnership with schools, including the teaching schools, the Local Authority will promote a collaborative school improvement model in Hillingdon, to identify common themes for improvement and supporting the development of a school improvement development and training programme, led by schools. The Local Authority will also support the development of shared learning through school networks to create a resilient community of schools in Hillingdon who have the capacity to partner with schools at risk of underperformance.
 - Brokerage – responding rapidly to schools which are at risk of underperformance to broker effective support to address problems as quickly as possible. This includes academy schools where concerns are identified. The Local Authority will not be a direct provider of school improvement support.
 - Challenge and intervention – using the intelligence available to the Local Authority, taking swift action to challenge under-performing schools. If a school is judged as ‘requires improvement’ the Local Authority will act rapidly to review any concerns, discuss the action the school will take in response and request a clear plan for implementation. For community schools, the response from the Local Authority could include issuing a warning notice, and for academy schools this could result in any concerns being escalated to the Regional Schools Commissioner for action.
16. Improving schools most at risk is a priority. There is a need to bring rapid improvement in education for those children attending a school which is judged as requires improvement or at risk of this judgement. At the same time, the Local Authority will work closely with schools to create capacity, collaboration and resilience within the schools network to ensure effective support is in place to prevent future failure in schools. This will help to avoid the Local Authority being asked to take a ‘reactive’ approach to address concerns of school improvement.

Looked After Children

17. There is a need to raise the educational attainment of Hillingdon’s looked after children and narrow the attainment gap between these children and their peers. The Pupil Premium Plus funding which the Council receives for looked after children is targeted to deliver support packages to schools on a case by case basis. A key requirement is to ensure children looked after are supported to remain in a school placement and to deliver support which promotes and realises higher aspirations and achievement. The success of educational support for Hillingdon’s looked after children will be closely monitored through reviews of Personal Education Plans. In some Local Authority areas, the funding for educational support to looked after children is routinely transferred to schools.

Next Steps

18. The draft schools-led improvement strategy is scheduled to be made widely available to schools for their review and comment at the start of the new academic year in September 2015. Head teachers are also working on a structured improvement plan to implement the strategy, which will set out specific targets for improvement (e.g. narrowing the attainment

gap for children from disadvantaged backgrounds) and details of how these targets will be met. The final strategy and improvement plan will be reported back to Cabinet in the Autumn, following comments from schools.

19. Cabinet is asked to agree to the proposed leadership role of the Local Authority within school improvement, summarised above in this paper, and for this to be communicated to schools. This will help to make clear what schools can and cannot expect from the Local Authority, and is consistent with delivering the statutory requirements for school improvement.
20. The role of the Local Authority within school improvement will be kept under review. As issues of performance are addressed in schools, the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner develops and capacity for schools-led improvement in Hillingdon grows, there may be a reduced school improvement role for the Council in the future.
21. Hillingdon schools are developing a targeted improvement plan for the start of the new academic year which will set out what action will be taken and how success will be measured to address the priorities in the draft school improvement strategy.

Financial Implications

22. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as the proposed role for Hillingdon Council set out above can be met from within existing resources. The development of the schools-led improvement plan will consider what resources are available from both the Council's base budget and the Dedicated Schools Grant to support schools in being or becoming at least 'good'.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

23. High standards of education across Hillingdon schools will enhance the opportunities available to our residents throughout their lives and enable our residents to make a bigger contribution to the economy and society.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

24. The development of a draft school improvement strategy has been undertaken in partnership with a group of head teachers in Hillingdon.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

25. Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and the recommendation contained therein to develop a school improvement plan in the Borough and concurs with the financial implications above. Corporate Finance further notes that the use of Pupil Premium Plus grant to raise the educational progress and attainment of Hillingdon's looked after children is targeted to deliver support on a needs basis, with recommendations contained within existing resources.

Legal

26. Under the Education Act 1996 (sections 13,13A and 14) the Council has statutory obligations to: ensure that efficient primary, secondary and further education is available to meet the needs of the local population; ensure that its education functions are discharged with a view to promoting high standards; ensure fair access to opportunity for education and learning, and promote the fulfilment of learning potential; and secure that sufficient schools, for providing primary and secondary education, are available for its area.
27. The report sets out steps being taken to develop a school improvement plan for schools in Hillingdon.
28. Under the Council's Constitution, Cabinet has the appropriate powers to agree the recommendation proposed at the outset of this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

29. NIL.