

19 November 2009		ITEM 5
Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
UPDATE ON REVISED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY		
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sue MacPherson, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Head of Service: Christine Tinkler, Head of Schools' Provision		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Corporate Director Children Education and Families		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the revision to the school improvement strategy in Thurrock		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the actions already taken and planned to support and challenge school improvement in the light of the lack of progress particularly at Key Stage 2 and the revised Ofsted framework for school inspections

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 That Overview and Scrutiny note the changes being proposed

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1 Local Authorities have the responsibility to monitor and challenge school improvement across all its maintained schools. This function is carried out in a number of ways and must include support for school which need to improve.

2.2 The LA has regularly considered schools against a number of indicators in order to ensure that limited resources for support and challenge are directed to those in most need.

- 2.3 Three years ago, the Government introduced a new initiative to support and challenge school improvement by introducing School Improvement Partners (SIPs). These people, (LA officers or serving or recently retired headteachers), were specifically trained and are employed on a part time basis with 5 days a year allocated per school.
- 2.4 SIPs have operated in secondary schools for 3 years and two years in primary schools.
- 2.5 The purpose of school improvement is to raise standards and improve the overall provision as identified through Ofsted judgements.
- 2.6 Whilst standards have increased at Key Stage 4, they has not at Key Stage 2 so that Thurrock's position against all other authorities has fallen. This is not a situation which can be allowed to continue and therefore a different more robust approach is required.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 3.1 Consideration of the KS2 results in July clearly showed a concern and work on how to better challenge and support schools has been speeded up.
- 3.2 A new Ofsted Framework came into force on September 1st 2009. This gives clear criteria for what levels of attainment and progress Ofsted will regard as a cause for concern.
- 3.3 The combination of both of these factors has led to the process which is now being put in place to support and challenge schools.
- 3.4 The first stage was to produce a document which outlined the strategy for schools which are causing concern. This document divides schools into categories determined by the Ofsted criteria for concern and therefore are being viewed by the LA for support and challenge. A meeting was held in September for all primary heads to give the clear message about why the changes were necessary and what the implications would be for them.
- 3.5 All primary schools have been placed in one of 5 categories. These are:
 - Category 5, schools in Ofsted categories
 - Category 4 those schools below the floor target of 55% of pupils gaining level 4 in English and in maths or with a three year year on year decline,
 - Category 3 those schools where results have fluctuated significantly,
 - Category 2 those schools which are neither improving or declining (static),
 - Category 1 those schools where results are able the national average and have a three year year on year improvement.
- 3.6 The immediate priority was to address the issues in those schools in category 5 and 4 so that no time was lost for the current year 6. The headteacher and chair of Governor of all schools in category 5 and 4 have been called to a meeting with the Head of Schools Provision to discuss the results in July,

what the school has done about the progress pupils are making since then and how the LA can support the school to make accelerated progress. A Pupil Attainment Intervention Plan (PAIP) has been produced for each of these schools outlining the level of support from the LA will provide to enable the school to deliver its own challenging school improvement plan.

- 3.7 Category 3 schools, where results have fluctuated significantly year on year will also have an LA plan of support and will receive an LA review of the quality of teaching and learning so that the support can be targeted at specific teachers or subject areas depending on need.
- 3.8 The longer term plan to sustain raised standards and increase the number of schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding is now nearing completion by the Head of Schools Provision with a small group of heads. This is to ensure that the activities planned over time are tightly focussed, have measurable outcomes which will deliver the ambitious targets we have for Thurrock's children and have an effective monitoring and evaluation process to ensure we are on track for meeting those targets.
- 3.9 An essential part of the mechanism for accelerating progress has been to align responsibilities of the Principal Officer Pupil Achievement (POPA) team more closely with the targeted support needed.
- 3.10 Angela Fraser will be accountable for all schools in categories 5 and 4. Ruth Brock will be accountable for all schools in category 3. Gillian Thumpston will be accountable for schools in categories 2 and 1. Richard Epps will be accountable for all inclusion issues except SEN which remains the responsibility of Malcolm Taylor. Kate Sheraton (part time) remains accountable for workforce development.
- 3.11 A robust monitoring and evaluation process is being put in place to ensure we are on track to reach targets for increased attainment and improved Ofsted judgements.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 Not applicable

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 5.1 Thurrock Council has a priority ensuring high quality education of all children and young people so that they achieve good results

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Yannick Stupples-Whyley**
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There are no direct financial implications within the report.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Colville**
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The new OFSTED Framework entitled “The framework for school inspection”, which came into force from September 2009 sets out what levels of attainment and progress would be regarded as a cause for concern. The appended report highlights the LA’s plan for accelerating progress in pupil attainment in Thurrock’s primary schools and has regard to the recent OFSTED Framework.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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The Council has a statutory duty under the Race Relations Act 2000 (Amendment), the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendment) to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment. This means that due regard should be given by the Council to the equality implications of any strategy, policy or function of the Council to ensure they promote the inclusion of all groups and equality of opportunity. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) should be conducted on the School’s Strategy. This will ensure that any negative impact is identified and revised as appropriate. This is a statutory requirement and obligation placed on the Council.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Improvements at Key Stage 2 in particular must improve at an accelerated rate. In order to support this, the way in which the LA works with schools has been changed to that all work is much more tightly focussed on raising standards.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- None

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

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