

# Gate 1 Business Case

Date: 09/09/10

**Project Title:** Primary School Attainment Stimulus Package

**Directorate:** CEF

**Project Manager:**

Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills

**Business Owner:**

Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes

**Budget Holder:**

Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills

## Resource Requirements

Revenue funding in **existing** budget  £0  
Revenue funding required – **new**  £200,000

Phasing of expenditure 2011/12  £200,000  
Full Year  £200,000

Other resources required   
(please specify)

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## Baseline/Context

The role of Local Authorities in relation to School Improvement is under review by the new Government, pending the publication of a White Paper after the 3-Year Spending Review. The general direction of travel started by the previous Government seems unlikely to change however, which is that this activity should largely be “By schools, for schools”. As a result, significant grant funding streams, such as the National Strategies, are already disappearing. The growth of Academies reinforces this trend, particularly in the secondary sector, where school budgets can generally wear the cost of commissioning packages of improvement work and in which management teams themselves have capacity. In the primary sector, this is more difficult and risky and schools need to be encouraged and supported to work together. This residual role, of facilitating, brokering and torchbearing and that of targeted intervention in failing schools, seems likely to be the continuing function of the Council which continues to hold a statutory responsibility for the quality of maintained schools in its area.

As a result, some Local Authorities are gearing their School Improvement functions up to become traded services. Thurrock does not have the economies of scale or staff covering the wider curriculum to do this effectively and needs to grow the capacity to respond flexibly to needs.

Within the savings proposals for 11-12, the Council set out its intention to reduce the funding for a centralised advisory service to reflect the shift in national and local priorities. However that saving proposal also recognises that there is still much to be done in Thurrock to raise standards in primary schools in particular. Therefore the stimulus package will shift the funding focus from centrally retained posts offering traditional advisory support to schools to funding programmes to

provide targeted interventions in specific schools and to pump-prime collaborative school improvement working led by schools with both capacity and experience in successfully raising standards and accelerating pupil progress

### **Growth Justification and Evidence**

Although the CAA regime has now been removed, Thurrock had been given red flags for educational achievement and aspiration and therefore this is a high priority issue for both the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council. The former has agreed to make one-off resource available from LAA Reward Grant funding, which of course itself has been cut. This can be seen as the additional funding needed to continue into Key Stage 2 and primary schools the turnaround in attainment that has been evidenced in secondary through the recent GCSE results and to remove our Pupil Referral Unit from special measures. Thurrock's KS2 results, whilst not falling back against the national average in 2010, have remained firmly in the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile and still need step change improvement.

In the context of shifting policy priorities towards increased direct funding to schools and the underpinning principle of schools supporting schools for 2011/12 and beyond, the Council will need to shift its focus from "delivering" a labour-intensive School Improvement service to a reduced core resource for commissioning complementary packages of support and intervention to fulfil the Council's responsibilities for the quality of schools. Thurrock still has very few "outstanding" primary schools and far too many which are only "satisfactory". This growth resource is needed to stimulate the development and implementation of that new model of School Improvement in Thurrock.

### **Risks**

Without this resource, the Council would face the significant risk that it would be unable to fulfil its wider statutory duty to improve the quality of schools in its area or complete the various regulatory tasks still required by Government, such as moderating teachers' assessments at Key Stage 1 or monitoring the taking of Key Stage 2 tests.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Officers of the Council meet regularly with school heads in groups and individually and with the Thurrock Association of Secondary Schools, the Thurrock Primary Headteachers Association, the Thurrock Association of Governors and at Schools Forum. The deployment of this resource would be discussed, alongside the consultation about to be launched by the Council on "Achieving and Sustaining Excellence".