

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

12 September 2018

School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022

Report by Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health & Education

Summary

West Sussex County Council is committed to giving all children and young people the best start in life and has undertaken a thorough review of current policy and practice relating to education. The new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 replaces the Strategy for School Improvement 2016-2019 and provides an update to the Policy Agreement for Education in West Sussex 2015-2019.

The implementation of new national arrangements for funding schools and centralised services (previously the responsibility of local authorities) has resulted in the need to significantly review how schools are organised and school improvement services are delivered. The new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 takes into account the diversity of schools in West Sussex and places the need of children and their learning at its heart.

To develop the new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 the council has conducted a widespread consultation to give all stakeholders an opportunity to actively participate in the development and refinement of the new strategy.

The aspiration is that by 2022, West Sussex will be one of the top 25% of local authorities nationally for the quality and provision of learning across all age groups and abilities. The School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 sets out a county wide vision for education;

In West Sussex we have a relentless drive to champion all our children and young people to ensure they have the best start in life. We organise all our schools to ensure they are sustainable, provide high quality learning opportunities, continually raise standards to improve educational outcomes and meet the needs of diverse rural communities

We aim to achieve a strong and sustainable provision for all types of schools and key stages in the way that schools are organised. Establishing a preferred model of primary provision bringing infant and junior schools together when opportunities arise, working with our smaller schools to minimise the impact of funding changes and develop collaborative solutions. This may mean looking at different and new options or harnessing the expertise and capacity of Multi Academy Trusts in order to deliver sustainable models.

Working with schools leaders, governors, and academy sponsors, the County Council has a statutory responsibility to promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling under performance. Our new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 enables the council to discharge its statutory responsibility; take rapid and decisive action to challenge underperforming schools; deliver robust school improvement; promote high standards by supporting effective school-to-school collaboration.

The focus for scrutiny

To update Children and Young People's Service Select Committee on the progress made since June 2018 to develop and agree the new School Effectiveness Strategy

2018-2022. This includes the public consultation feedback and the refinements that have been made as a result.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That the Committee endorses the Executive Decision to approve the new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022.
- (2) The Committee is asked to consider how it can actively support the Cabinet Member and officers in the strategy's implementation. For example a Task and Finish Group that meets each term and undertakes a strategic monitoring role of progress against strategy objectives.
- (3) That yearly updates are provided to the full Committee.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The County Council is responsible for promoting high standards to enable good educational progress and outcomes, strategically organising sufficient pupil places for West Sussex children and to make sure that schools work in the most sustainable and effective way.
- 1.2 The County Council is committed to addressing the impact of significant change in educational policy and practice and its affect in the local context in West Sussex. There are four clear drivers:
 - The implementation of the revised National Funding Formula (NFF) presents challenges to all schools, regardless of whether they have experienced small gains or a significant reduction in funding. Smaller schools are likely to be particularly vulnerable to these changes which have greater emphasis on funding per pupil and as the current funding protection is reduced over time.
 - The curriculum demands under the new inspection regime from Ofsted will increase the range of leadership responsibilities. These will affect all schools, but are especially demanding for smaller schools as it is combined with changes in funding, and they are faced with doing more with less.
 - School leadership is demanding. School leaders have to respond to challenges to recruit high quality staff and governors. This has been a challenge across the county and is intensified in smaller schools.
 - Locally, there is a need to improve attainment and progress for West Sussex primary phase pupils and reduce dips in attainment arising from multiple transition points, where children move from one phase of education to another, such as infant and junior school. It has been a national drive to create all-through primary schools and West Sussex still have a number of separate infant and junior schools, and will encourage the move to this model where the opportunity arises.
- 1.3 The current Strategy for School Improvement 2016-2019 was written to reflect changes in national policy and guidance in 2015 and 2016. With further changes being announced, particularly on funding, the County Council needs to reset its own priorities for education; the new School Effectiveness Strategy will assist in addressing this aim.

- 1.4 In May and June 2018 stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on a draft School Effectiveness Strategy that outlined the County Council's Vision, Principle and Values for education and the areas of focus for the County Council over the next four years.
- 1.5 The consultation feedback has been fully considered and discussions with stakeholders have informed the development of a new School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 for West Sussex.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 sets out Principles and Values to underpin the following county wide Vision for education;

In West Sussex we have a relentless drive to champion all our children and young people to ensure they have the best start in life. We organise all our schools to ensure they are sustainable, provide high quality learning opportunities, continually raise standards to improve educational outcomes and meet the needs of diverse rural communities

- 2.2 The aspiration is that by 2022, West Sussex will be one of the top 25% of local authorities nationally for the quality and provision of learning across all age groups and abilities.
- 2.3 The Strategy seeks to deliver the following outcomes:-
- Improved attainment and progress for West Sussex primary phase pupils.
 - Reduction in dips in attainment arising from multiple transition points when children change school phases.
 - A collective commitment to enable all children and young people to experience an inclusive education.
 - Standards raised for all pupils including those who are disadvantaged, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those in the care of the local authority.
 - Long-term financial sustainability for all schools, taking into account funding challenges and increasing pupil numbers.
 - Partnership working with all stakeholders, such as academy trusts, the Dioceses, parent and carer forums and community groups who play a role in education provision and standards across West Sussex.

Progress to deliver these outcomes will be evaluated using the measures set out in the [West Sussex Plan 2018-2022](#).

- 2.4 The focus of the Strategy is on two key County Council responsibilities that provide the framework for the education system locally. These are developing a strong model of education in West Sussex and a refreshed School Improvement Policy to enable the County Council to challenge and support schools to raise standards. The changes will allow us to prepare for and mitigate against forthcoming challenges and the local impact set out in paragraph 1.2.

School Organisation

- 2.5 The aim for School Organisation is that by 2022 West Sussex will have a *model of strong and sustainable education for all types of schools and key stages*. This will be achieved through the following five objectives
- i. Establishing a preferred model of all-through primary provision for children from 4-11 years old, thereby limiting the number of transitions between schools a pupil would be required to undertake during their primary education.
 - ii. Securing sufficient places for children in all phases and types of school.
 - iii. Maximising the proportion of children being offered a place at one of their three school preferences.
 - iv. Ensuring that primary schools will be of a sufficient size to be viable in the future, offer a high quality and broad curriculum, and attract pupils from the local community and provide strong outcomes for children.
 - v. Ensuring that primary schools will be readily accessible¹ to pupils; for the majority of children within walking distance in urban areas with transport to school in rural areas. . For the majority of children within walking distance in urban areas with transport to school in rural areas, where applicable and in accordance with the County Council's [Home to School and College Transport Policy](#).
- 2.6 The objectives will be delivered by ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of suitable school places in our rural and urban areas for early years, primary, secondary and sixth form education provision. Places should be located appropriately to meet the current and projected demand in the future. This will maximise the opportunity for parental preference across the whole county whether in urban or rural areas.
- 2.7 In recognition of the number of rural villages in our county, and that we are in the South Downs National Park, the Strategy commits to developing an area-based plan with schools. These will be developed in collaboration with the Church of England Dioceses and the local community to provide the best supply of school places and to sustain the community benefits a school can offer some of our villages. Through the work on planning primary school places and budget forecasting a school may be identified as being at risk in terms of its viability. The future viability of a school is a judgement based on a number of factors including the projected number of pupils, the funding settlement under the NFF, the standard of the school and the rate of progress and attainment among its pupils. Where risks are identified; schools will need to start considering options to improve their viability, which could include consulting to merge schools, expanding the age range, federating two or more schools and finally consulting on closure. There are 55 schools in the county with 100 pupils or less, and there are 40 separate infant and junior schools. The Council's guiding principles for school organisation is given in the [2018 Planning Schools Places Document](#).

¹ Pupils under eight may receive transport if they live more than 2 miles away from their catchment school, or nearest suitable school and 3 miles for children over eight

School Improvement

- 2.8 The aim for 'School Improvement' is to create an effective process to '*challenge and support all schools to increase the quality and standards of education*'; this will be driven by the implementation of five objectives.
- i. Monitoring all schools and categorising local authority maintained schools annually to ensure the council resources are targeted where they are most needed to make the biggest difference.
 - ii. Enhancing the support provided to schools that are deemed not yet 'good' by Ofsted or the County Council.
 - iii. Making additional services available to all schools and settings through a comprehensive traded portfolio of services.
 - iv. Working in partnership with Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner where schools are judged 'inadequate' to support them to improve.
 - v. Brokering and commissioning strong leadership in West Sussex and beyond to provide school-to-school support.
- 2.9 A number of proposed changes to existing practice will be implemented to deliver the objectives. Local Authority maintained schools will be categorised annually. This will allow the team to focus their time on working with schools that are most in need of improvement but will mean those schools in less need would receive fewer officer visits. Greater school-to-school support will be encouraged and initially facilitated through the existing Area Inclusion and Improvement Boards (AIIB), moving to a model of external peer review and support model during the life of the strategy.
- 2.10 The number of services that are available for schools to purchase will grow with a view to generating income to sustain provision of an effective School Improvement Service. This and facilitating peer-to-peer support will enable the County Council to continue to deliver the statutory expectations and provide leadership and consistency across the education system in West Sussex despite reducing budgets.

3. Resources

- 3.1 Implementation of the Strategy proposals for organisational changes to schools is over and above the operational business of the Education & Skills Directorate. At the meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee (CYPSSC) on 20 June 2018. The Select Committee recommended that sufficient resources are made available for the Education and Skills directorate to achieve the outcomes as proposed by the draft Strategy. However, decisions concerning the financial position of the local authority mean reconsideration as to where the funding comes from.
- 3.2 To progress work in two school planning areas in parallel plus the changes in the School Improvement Team, the resource cost is initially accommodated within present staffing budgets. This covers any additional HR, financial and legal support, and staff to embed business and behavioural change. Officers will endeavour to offset resource costs by developing services that are available to buy to schools making changes, so that the cost is shared.
- 3.3 The School Effectiveness Service is fully funded in 2018/19 through the Dedicated Schools Grant (£0.85m), the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant (£0.75m) and an annual £9 charge per pupil to all West Sussex maintained schools

(£0.6m). The School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant is a discretionary grant and confirmation of its continuation will not be known until the winter 2018. Similarly the £9 charge per pupil will need to be agreed by Schools Forum in December 2018 for 2019/2020. Any increased costs will be off-set by some of the planned savings within the school effectiveness service and the development of a greater traded offer to schools.

- 3.4 Capital investment is also required for building costs as schools begin to organise themselves in to new groups and partnerships. This is expected to be required progressively from 2020/21, in order to allow sufficient time for feasibility design and planning consent beforehand. However, funding constraints would only allow for capital projects to go ahead if projects involved release of capital funds, such as the sale of a site. It would be a condition to projects that no additional funds are available beyond that already planned and are generated by the projects.
- 3.5 It is estimated that 80% of the capital investment would be required for building work to create all-through primaries², and is associated with;
- Adapting schools on existing sites e.g. toilet facilities, playgrounds
 - Merging infant and junior schools where they are adjacent e.g. single access and joined up reception areas
 - New schools or expansions on existing sites where current school buildings would not meet building requirement for an all through primary to cater for children aged 4 to 11 years.
- 3.6 In the first instance, costs from schools own combined resources would be sought to cover the process of federation with a view to long term savings. If this was not available, only capital funds generated from savings through other projects within this strategy would be considered. The remaining 20% capital building costs would be required for small schools who are looking to work together more collaboratively. For example, an option for small schools is to federate, and this may require capital investment to set up a joined back office environment which facilities staff to work across sites.
- 3.7 The overall capital funding requirement is not yet known, but will required to be developed over 4 to 8 years starting from 2020/21, depending on the number of school projects that are progressed. No provision for these costs are yet included within the current Capital Programme.
- 3.8 The Corporate Transformation Board has been made aware of the funding requirement to deliver the strategy. Officers will follow the corporate decision making process to release funding through appropriate and full Business Cases.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 The consultation results provide members of the CYPSSC insight into the views of stakeholders. Scrutiny of the subsequent changes to strategy provide reassurance that officers are listening and acting upon feedback and working in collaboration with

² [DfE advice on Standards for School Premises](#) and [Building Bulletin 103: area guidelines for mainstream schools](#)

all those that play part in education across the county. The Committee is asked to consider the recommendations as listed above.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The consultation invited comments on a four page draft strategy document that outlined the County Council's Vision, Principles and Values for Education in West Sussex. The consultation was primarily targeted at schools, educational settings and academy trusts; however as this was a public consultation response were received from a wide range of stakeholders and their contribution has been welcomed.
- 5.2 The public consultation was undertaken via an online survey on the County Council's 'Have your Say' Consultation Portal. This opened on Friday 18th May and closed on Monday 25th June 2018.
- 5.3 To enable direct engagement with interested partners, discussions were held at over a dozen stakeholder forums including the Youth Cabinet, Parent and Carer Forum and the Primary, Secondary and Special Schools Briefings. School leaders and governors were also invited to one of three sessions to discuss the proposed strategy with officers. In addition, letters or emails expressing views were accepted and have been taken into account.
- 5.4 413 responses were received to the online survey, plus 50 letters or emails of representation.
- 5.5 The underpinning Vision, Principles and Values were broadly supported, as were the aims and objectives on 'School Improvement'. There were some concerns about the number of visits reducing for those schools who were performing well and the move to a model that solely relied on school-to-school support. As a consequence, the minimum number of visits has been increased from one to two in the final strategy, and there is a fuller account of how a school-to-school support system will work over time.
- 5.6 The aims and objectives relating to 'School Organisation' caused significant concern; people felt there was an implication that all small schools were under threat. This was due to a reference to Department of Education guidance of 210 places being a typical size for a small school. Many consultation responses focused on this point with requests for great clarity. There is no nationally agreed definition of what is classed as a small school, in practice the County Council perceives that schools with less than 100 pupils are potentially at risk to the changes (outlined above) and therefore require additional efforts by the council to work with them. This was not clear enough in the consultation document.
- 5.7 As a consequence the new Strategy provides greater clarity and the criteria (including the size threshold) that the Council will use to work with schools to identify those that are at risk of becoming vulnerable to future funding regime. The steps that the Council will take to work with schools, especially those in rural parts of the county are set out. It is hoped that this will ensure that education provision is

sustained in those communities through the options that are available to them. A final draft of the full Strategy document was shared with schools for final comments in advance of the Cabinet Member's approval.

- 5.8 The full report responding to the consultation and presenting the results is attached as Appendix B. This is publically available on the '[Have your Say](#)' Consultation Hub.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The School Effectiveness Strategy provides the framework for discussions with schools potentially at risk to consider long term sustainable solutions in communities. If the strategy is not approved there is the risk of solutions being delayed and less support for schools looking at their options. This could place some schools at greater risk when the full impact of the NFF and the new curriculum come into force.
- 6.2 If the new School Effectiveness Strategy is not approved, the County Council will be in a position where it continues operating under the current School Improvement Policy which is no longer considered fit for purpose. In the face of funding pressures the current way of working will not continue to be affordable. The service needs to reset its focus to create a sustainable service that supports educational outcomes.
- 6.3 There is a risk that that capital or revenue funding is not generated from each project, unavailable in the future or is diverted for other council priorities. To mitigate this the full implementation of the strategy could be slowed down or reduced e.g. the creation of all through primaries by merging infant and junior could be less ambitious or removed to allow other elements of the strategy to progress at a lower cost.
- 6.4 The Strategy sets out a clear direction, however some difficult decisions are required which could present a reputational risk to the council. To minimise this efforts will be made to collaborate with partners at all opportunities to ensure that they are listened to and concerns heard.
- 6.5 All of the proposals will be implemented using a project management approach that includes appropriate risk management tools and escalation.

7. Other Options Considered

- 7.1 There was an alternative option to wait until the current Strategy for School Improvement ends in 2019. This option was rejected to allow the maximum amount of time to make sufficient impact. Replacing the strategy in 2018 ensures its alignment with the West Sussex Plan from 2018–2022. Embedding a new approach within the Directorate from September 2018 will ensure sufficient time to prepare for forthcoming changes and allow benefits in school improvement and educational outcomes to emerge as soon as possible.
- 7.2 The consultation feedback demonstrated the passion held by stakeholders for West Sussex schools. Given the strong disagreement on the School Organisation

objectives an alternative option could have been to proceed only with the School Improvement Policy. However, the County Council has a responsibility to organise education provision across the whole county and a framework needs to be in place to support schools to implement changes in advance of the full effect of the NFF being felt. As cited elsewhere some of the county's small schools could be at risk of facing particular challenges and the Strategy enables the council to instigate and facilitate the necessary work with schools to mitigate the risks. In response to the feedback the Council's approach will now focus on area based solutions, with schools forming groups either by clusters or federations to ensure their sustainability.

8. Equality Duty

- 8.1 The School Effectiveness Strategy promotes sustainable education provision that successfully works for all children and young people in West Sussex. It recognises that progress for disadvantaged pupils is below the national average and in some areas there is a lack of appropriate provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Strategy complements the County Council's existing SEND Strategy and reflects the County Council's responsibility to be a corporate parent. As the Strategy is implemented officers will always ask *"would this be good enough for my child?"*
- 8.2 The values include the creation of inclusive culture in West Sussex Schools, which is underpinned with a principle to promote the interest of all children. This will be monitored through pupil performance data, to track the progress and attainment of disadvantaged groups and so interventions can be instigated to improve outcomes.
- 8.3 Any change being made as a result of the strategy will have regard to groups with protected characteristics and seek to mitigate any detriment to those groups through the use of Impact Assessments. This will include consulting with all affected groups when needed, to fulfil the public sector equality duty to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 8.4 The consultation demographics reflected a good representation of parent and professional groups, and included representation from people sharing a protected characteristic. 55% of participants were of the working age and between 35-54 years, with a smaller percentage (23%) from the dominant age-group in West Sussex of between 55 and 74 years. 56% of respondents were female resulting in a slightly higher ratio of female to male than in the county's population. The majority were from a white ethnic group, and identified as Christian but some responses were received from minority ethnic groups and other religious backgrounds.

9. Social Value

- 9.1 None

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 None

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 None

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Appendices (documents which are critical to the decision)

Appendix A- School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022, to follow

Appendix B –Summary of Consultation Views and Feedback

Background papers (documents which are referred to in the report)

[Draft School Effectiveness Strategy 2018-2022 Consultation Response paper](#)

[SEND Strategy 2016-2019](#)

[Policy Agreement for Education in West Sussex 2015-2019](#)

[West Sussex Strategy for School Improvement 2015-2019](#)