

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Cabinet 28 July 2021
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Report title	Education Excellence Strategy (EES) 2021-2024	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre Education, Skills and Work	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's and Adult Services	
Originating service	Education Excellence	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Directorate Leadership Team	27 July 2020
	Strategic Executive Board	8 July 2021
	Scrutiny Board	14 July 2021

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Education Excellence Strategy (EES) 2021-2024 and endorse its use from September 2021.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report accompanies the Education Excellence Strategy 2021 - 2024. It summarises the current position of school and setting improvement, based upon available data, given that there was no formal reporting of statutory testing in summer 2020, nor will there be in 2021 as a result of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. The report makes formal recommendations to revise the previous version of the School Improvement Strategy 2018 – 2021, and with this to change the name to the 'Education Excellence Strategy' which now encompasses early years settings to ensure greater parity and equality.
- 1.2 The new Education Excellence Strategy makes provision for the Council to carry out its functions to monitor the performance of schools in the city and ensures that, where improvements are necessary, these are carried out effectively and expeditiously.
- 1.3 The development of the Strategy has been underpinned by the response to Covid-19 and the "Catch Up" programme for schools. The Strategy also supports the Council's priority to "generate more jobs and learning opportunities".

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The first School Improvement and Governance Strategy was first presented to the Council in 2014, at which time school performance in the city was below national averages in terms of academic outcomes as well as the proportion of schools judged to be good or outstanding by The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). That Strategy was subsequently reviewed annually with minor amendments being made and approved by the Executive. The current strategy (2018 – 2021) shows that, through its methodology and delivery, improvement has continued, although, for two out of three years, (2019 - 2020 and 2020 - 2021) there is no formal reporting of any national data sets.
- 2.2 Data for the City of Wolverhampton local authority shows that the current strategy has had a positive impact on pupil outcomes over time, with a 7% increase in schools judged good (G2) or better between 2018 and 2020, and from 2014 – 2020 a sustained improvement enabling Wolverhampton to align with national data sets from 70% in 2014 at G2 or above, compared with the national of 79% at G2 or above.
- 2.3 In addition, the % of schools judged to be inadequate in Wolverhampton has also fallen to 1 percentage point below national (3% compared to 4%).

Wolverhampton data:

Latest inspection at:	% of Providers				
	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate	% Good & Outstanding
31 Aug 2020	17	70	11	3	87
31 Aug 2019	16	68	13	3	84
31 Aug 2018	14	66	12	8	80
31 Aug 2017	13	66	14	7	79
31 Aug 2016	14	63	16	7	77
31 Aug 2015	13	62	17	7	75
31 Aug 2014	11	59	20	9	70
Source: Ofsted inspection data/Ofsted Data View					
1. Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.					
2. Data for each point in time has been revised and is now based on the new methodology, to include predecessor schools.					

National data:

England					
Latest inspection at:	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement	% Inadequate	
As at 31 Aug 2020	19	67	10	4	
As at 31 Aug 2019 (21,951)	20	66	10	4	
As at 31 Aug 2018 (21,763)	21	65	11	4	
As at 31 Aug 2017 (21,707)	21	66	10	4	
As at 31 Aug 2016 (21,664)	20	66	11	3	
As at 31 Aug 2015 (21,758)	20	62	15	3	
As at 31 Aug 2014 (21,750)	19	60	17	4	
As at 31 Aug 2012 (21,970)	20	48	28	3	
As at 31 Aug 2012 (21,970)	20	48	28	3	
As at 31 Aug 2011 (21,933)	20	50	29	2	
Source: Ofsted inspection data/Ofsted Data View					
1. Percentages in the chart are rounded and may not add to 100.					
2. Data for each point in time has been revised and is now based on the new methodology, to include predecessor schools.					

3.0 Key revisions to the Education Excellence Strategy

- 3.1 The Council's vision for education continues to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring all young people, from those accessing early years education to young adults completing Key Stage 5 provision, have outstanding opportunities at every stage of their education. The journey of improvement for schools and settings in the city continues to require a balance of challenge, support and intervention that reflects the changing role and responsibility of local authorities in today's education system, and acknowledges the change in curriculum expectations beyond published data, as shown in the Education Inspection Framework (EIF).
- 3.2 The revised Education Excellence Strategy has been written in partnership with school and setting leaders, and denotes a new chapter in their relationship with the local authority. Data shows significant improvement in outcomes over time, and our approach should acknowledge a shift towards greater collaboration and a shared responsibility. In addition, the strategy also shows how implementation of the Education Excellence Strategy involves regional and local partners and stakeholders including the Regional Schools Commissioner, Diocesan Authorities, Multi-Academy Trust Boards, Teaching school Hubs and Ofsted.

- 3.3 The revised strategy continues to develop governance, which is essential to continued school improvement and makes explicit the role of the governing body, the role of the local authority and clear expectations.

The strategy will:

- assist the local authority to fulfil its statutory requirements in respect of governance
- support the development and maintenance of high-quality school governance
- support individual governors to develop and maintain the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to fulfil their statutory duties and drive school improvement, and
- contribute towards a good or better judgement of the Local Authority's support for governors in all quality audits.

Challenge, support and evaluation of governance is woven through the strategy in order to develop all aspects of leadership and management in maintained schools.

In addition, the local authority supports early years settings through 'annual conversation' activity which provides opportunity for nursery owners and managers to explore standards, expectations and agree how key activity and support from the local authority early years team can ensure the youngest children are provided with firm foundations for learning.

- 3.4 Training and development of the school workforce is central to the continuing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and in developing leadership and management in schools and settings. Continued professional development is at the heart of the strategy, and a comprehensive offer ensures training and support across subjects, phases and career stages from Early Career Teachers (ECTs) to headteachers.
- 3.5 The new strategy also includes specific reference to induction for those who are new to headship through layers of input ranging from 'welcome to the city' and introductions to more comprehensive input covering aspects such as Human Resources (HR), health and safety and finance. This input specifically focuses on developing business knowledge and will compliment more traditional training routes through National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) for example. A Headteacher Induction Consultation group has shaped input and the offer will provide support for leaders who, in their new roles, are negotiating unfamiliar business pathways, so are in need of support.
- 3.6 The revised strategy also makes reference to the importance of collaboration between schools, including targeted peer to peer reviews, which are pivotal to strengthening school improvement in the city; this aspect of school improvement, facilitated by experienced LA school improvement advisors, enables leaders to focus on specific areas of school practice that have been identified for improvement either at a school or cluster level, or as a city-wide priority.

- 3.7 Local Authority maintained schools continue to be categorised according to the risk of not achieving a 'Good' judgement at their next Ofsted inspection, with a focus on allocating support. The range of criteria to determine the categorisation has been updated to encompass a wider reference beyond outcome data, to reflect changes in inspection and the importance of a high-quality curriculum offer for example. In addition, the criteria make explicit how early years settings will be categorised and supported, so showing greater parity and equality with schools. As part of the Education Excellence Strategy, an additional category has been included to provide extra days of support to ensure those newly 'good' schools and settings have additional time to embed and consolidate the good practice recognised. In this revised strategy, academies will continue to have a day of support, with the input being negotiated by the school and allocated School improvement Advisor, so time and impact can be used to full effect.
- 3.8 School Improvement Boards (SIBs) have been replaced with Team Around the Setting (TAS) meetings (Annex 4 to the Strategy) to make explicit increased collaboration and partnership between the local authority and settings. Such an approach enables key information to be shared (from wider council teams where and when appropriate e.g. HR, finance), including reference to the Compliance Dashboard (Annex 5 to the Strategy), so providing a context to help identify wider challenges which can impact upon school improvement and the pace of change. The sharing of relevant information will help procure support and build upon the professional foundations laid during 'Autumn / Annual Conversation' activity (Annex 3 to the Strategy, and previously known as 'Challenge and Support') which provides opportunity to review the previous academic year, highlight key activity and the impact of that activity to improve outcomes, as well as mapping support for the coming year with clear expectations.
- 3.9 The allocation of support from Education Excellence remains closely aligned to each school / settings' categorisation, with schools / settings in most need of support receiving the highest allocation of days. Allocated days for nursery settings and schools is comparable, so ensuring equality and parity. The detail of allocations can be found in Annex 1 and Annex 2 to the Strategy.
- 3.10 The new strategy is scheduled for an annual review, however, this strategy is designed to be implemented over a three-year period and would therefore not require formal review until September 2024.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 The option to proceed without the new Education Excellence Strategy could lead to a reduction in standards of performance and Ofsted judgements in schools which may:
- Limit the Council's opportunity to work in collaboration and influence partners and stakeholders in the city and in the region
 - Restrict the flexibility and effectiveness of the council's school improvement offer to all LA maintained schools in the city

- Reduce opportunities for school workforce development through CPD that is linked specifically to identified city-wide school improvement priorities
- Lose the potential benefits and strengthening of the system gained through facilitated school to school peer reviews and other targeted projects and school improvement interventions
- Limit the LA's ability to identify soon enough schools that are under-performing and not providing a good level of education
- Slow down the rate of LA schools judged to be Good or Outstanding
- Increase the risk of reputational damage to the council, and the city as a whole, if schools are judged to be requiring improvement or inadequate
- Impact negatively on the Council's strong relationships that have been re-established over the last few years with current school leaders.

5.0 Reasons for decision

- 5.1 The decision to adopt the new Education Excellence Strategy reinforces the Council's vision for education. It would demonstrate the Council's commitment to continue to invest in education, specifically in school improvement as part of the regeneration and re-lighting of the city.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 The cost of implementation and monitoring of the Council's actions to challenge and support schools to improve school / setting performance and increase the number of positive Ofsted inspections has been included in the approved revenue budget for the school improvement service. Ongoing monitoring and review of budgets is taking place in line with the council's policies.
- 6.2 The cost of educational failure is however significant for individual children, for schools, for the community and for the city in economic terms. It is therefore evident that the role of the LA in supporting raising standards in schools will result in economic benefits for the Council and for the city.
[TS/05072021/L]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 Under Sections 13 & 13A of the Education Act 1996 the Council has a duty to contribute to the development of the community by securing efficient primary and secondary education and promoting high standards in the city. In addition, there is a commitment to ensure the youngest children in the city receive quality provision, and the new Education Excellence Strategy elevates the importance of early years education further.

7.2 Recent improvements in attainment and in the performance of schools / settings in Wolverhampton show that the Council's duties are being currently discharged to a high standard and this now needs to be maintained.

7.3 Changes in accountability for schools are noted in the Education Excellence Strategy document.
[SZ/06072021/P]

8.0 Equalities implications

8.1 Some pupils, some schools and settings face greater challenges in achieving educational success; there are therefore profound equalities implications to the Council and to schools in ensuring that every child and young person achieves their full potential and every school / setting secures good educational outcomes.

8.2 Analysis of performance data, as part of the School Improvement Advisors' allocation of time for schools, enables a thorough review of outcomes for pupils across the range of vulnerable groups including gender, disadvantage, ethnicity and prior attainment. This also informs the bespoke and targeted offer of support and development to schools.

9.0 All other implications

9.1 Information in Section 2 of this report demonstrates that the quality of education offered to children in the city is improving through the implementation of an improvement strategy (in this case Education Excellence). Furthermore, evidence indicates that education contributes to the social and economic factors which are the strongest determinants, accounting for approximately 40%, of health outcomes. The strategy aims to further improve academic outcomes for all children and young people at both pre key stage and each key stage of their experience of education, through a high quality curriculum offer, so preparing them to be ready for success at the next phase of their education, training or future employment.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 Education Excellence Strategy 2018 – 2021.

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – Education Excellence Strategy 2021 – 2024

11.2 Appendix 2 – Presentation slides

11.3 Appendix 3 – Consultation Schedule – January 2021