



Haringey Council

Report for:	CYPS Scrutiny Panel 21.1.2013	Item Number:	
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Title:	School Improvement
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions:
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1. Background

- 1.1 A report was presented to Cabinet in October 2012 setting out the current statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority for school improvement, and proposals for the development of the future relationship with schools.
- 1.2 The national context is one of increasing autonomy of schools and responsibility for their own improvement, separation from the Local Authority and changes to the way that schools are established, leading to a greater number of academies and free schools.
- 1.3 The LA has a clear role as the 'champion of children and families' and retains specific responsibilities for strategic planning, vulnerable children and the identification of schools that are underperforming.
- 1.4 The Schools White Paper (2010) set out expectations about the future role of the Local Authority (LA) and its relationship with schools, with particular reference to school improvement:
 - ending the requirement for every school to have a LA School Improvement Partner (SIP);



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- clarifying that the responsibility for school improvement is located with schools – governors, headteachers and teachers;
 - confirming that schools are key sources of support for each other; and
 - enabling LAs to develop their own arrangements for supporting schools.
- 1.5 The Education Act 2011 and the Academies Act 2010 have increased the direct powers of the Secretary of State, allowing for more direct intervention in individual schools and the system overall.
- 1.6 Councils must comply with a range of statutory duties and guidance. The full list of 207 duties is available on the DfE website and the main duties in relation to schools can be summarised as:
- working with headteachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, local authorities should promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance;
 - taking rapid and decisive action in relation to poorly performing schools, including using their intervention powers with regards to maintained schools and considering alternative structural and operational solutions;
 - developing robust school improvement strategies, including choosing whether to offer such services in a competitive and open school improvement market, working beyond local authority boundaries;
 - promoting high standards in education by supporting effective school to school collaboration and providing local leadership for tackling issues needing attention which cut across more than one school, such as poor performance in a particular subject area across a cluster of schools;
 - supporting maintained schools in delivering an appropriate National Curriculum and early years providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (as outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework);
 - establishing a schools forum for their area, maintain a scheme for financing maintained schools and provide financial information; and
 - undertaking specified responsibilities in relation to staffing and governance of maintained schools.
- 1.7 Beyond these statutory obligations, LAs have to determine for themselves what they want their relationship with schools to be. The residual role retained by the LA directly for school improvement is minimal – quality assurance, commissioning and intervention in failing schools.



1.8 Statutorily, LAs have retained the fundamental role as the champion of children and families with a responsibility to ensure that the school system works for every family and to use their democratic mandate to challenge every school to do their best for the population (The Importance of Teaching, DFE November 2010). The key roles within this are to:

- Support families through promoting a good supply of strong schools, including the development of academies and free schools that reflect the local community;
- Ensure fair access to all schools for every child;
- Support vulnerable children including looked after children, children with special and additional needs and those outside the mainstream school system;
- Support maintained schools that are performing below the national floor standards or have had poor Ofsted reports to improve quickly or to become a sponsored academy and encourage stronger schools to collaborate with them to improve educational performance;
- Develop local school improvement strategies that enable the LA to discharge its statutory responsibility to tackle under performance and secure high standards.

1.9 The expectation is that schools are autonomous and self-improving, but that they will work in collaboration with other parts of the system.

2. Supporting School Improvement

2.1 An effective LA has the intelligence to know its schools well, to intervene in the right way at the right time and to offer staff of sufficient calibre who can both challenge and support schools to improve further.

2.2 The Local Authority retains statutory powers to intervene in schools causing concern. However these will only effectively secure school improvement when they are used promptly and wisely and based on a sound assessment of where the school is and what needs to happen to bring about effective change.

2.3 The LA retains a direct improvement responsibility only with schools causing concern and may deliver or commission support for them. The credibility of the staff delivering LA school improvement services is critical to the effective discharge of these responsibilities.

2.4 In Haringey, the current central School Standards Service is being restructured so that it accurately matches the demands of the new relationship with schools. This means ensuring that there is strong leadership of a team of credible professionals who can challenge and support on behalf of the local authority and ensure that our statutory duties are properly discharged. In September 2012, the Haringey School to School Support (S2SS) model was launched and will promote collaboration across our family of schools with the strong supporting the weaker. The model



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builds much greater resilience into the system as a whole, through an exchange of staff, knowledge, skills and expertise. Schools are engaged and a steering group of some of our good and outstanding headteachers, supported by officers is driving this forward.

- 2.5 In the early stages, S2SS will be dependent on the knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual schools centrally and the LA will have a brokerage role in identifying the school to school support arrangements as well as quality assuring arrangements so that they are measured against impact.
- 2.6 We recognise that strong leadership, including governance is at the heart of good school performance and will ensure that these are high priorities, nurturing school leadership and build capacity for the future. Every school should have outstanding governance that is able to challenge, support and champion the school.
- 2.7 We are reviewing our support services to governors so that they are offered high quality opportunities that reflects their development needs at different stages from induction to more individualised support. We will work with schools to make sure that they recruit the governors that they need and the governors that they have are well supported and developed. This includes seeking strategic partnerships with business and other partners who can strengthen the quality and supply of governors.
- 2.8 Some Local Authorities have continued to offer other services to schools on a traded basis such as human resources, finance, payroll and catering. The challenge for the Local Authority is to offer these services not only at a competitive rate but also to maintain a quality of service that supports schools in their journey to excellence. We intend to work with schools to develop criteria for measuring quality and only services that meet these criteria will be offered. We propose that the LA broker other arrangements through a framework of quality assured providers that schools can use if they wish to directly purchase support that meets their own identified needs.

3. The new School Improvement Team in Haringey

- 3.1 Members will already be aware of the overall context of funding to the Council and the continued requirement to manage with reduced resources and to achieve greater efficiencies.
- 3.2 The School Improvement Service is currently being restructured in order to refocus on the core statutory duties of the LA. This will reduce expenditure on this part of the structure by c£238k. The new cost of the team will be approximately £690k. In the revised structure there will be 7 posts – senior professionals with the expertise and credibility to hold schools to account and to challenge for improved performance. This is a reduction in number from the existing establishment as the



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responsibility for improvement now rests directly with schools and existing posts held centrally are no longer required.

3.3 The new agenda that the LA must address comprises:

- Sharply focused and data driven intervention at the earliest juncture in schools that show signs of provision dipping below acceptable standards
- Fielding a team of experienced professionals, who have the experience, credibility and skills to work alongside headteachers and other school leaders, for example, ensuring that school-school support is optimised to make up for the services no longer provided by the LA itself.

3.4 It is clear that headteachers and Chairs of Governors welcome informed and credible challenge. The personnel to provide schools the needed support and challenge will likely to be senior school leaders; in the Primary phase at headship level. Additional relevant experience such as being an OfSTED inspector, a School Improvement Partner (SIP) or senior LA adviser will also strengthen the credibility of personnel in the team. At times it may be appropriate to make use of associate school improvement professionals who are serving or recently retired headteachers, school improvement professionals from other LAs or senior leaders in schools. This model has been used by OfSTED and other Local Authorities with success, ensuring that inspection teams draw on the experience of people who are currently are or recently have been “doing the job”.

3.5 The team’s work will focus on schools where data suggests that the school is not enabling children to achieve well or there are particular issues with leadership, management or governance in the school. When necessary, “School to School” support will be brokered to rapidly improve outcomes for children. From September 2012, OfSTED has introduced a new inspection framework and has revised the overall judgement categories of schools following inspection, so that there will be no satisfactory grade. This will be replaced with the judgement ‘requires improvement’. Work with these schools to rapidly improve their work will also need to be a central part of the team’s work. Additionally, if the team is credible and seen to be effective, then it is possible that schools, which are not maintained by the LA (Academies and Free Schools), may be interested in buying support from the school improvement service, so enabling the LA to keep in contact with all schools in its area.



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3.6 The new team will be led by an Assistant Director (started on 7th January 2013) who is a member of CYPS SLT and who will we ensure that resources are clearly targeted and focused on the highest areas of risk and priority. . This means schools that are:

- at significant risk of not being able to evidence that they are at least a good schools as judged by OfSTED;
- not able to demonstrate that results achieved by children are on an upward trajectory and are not above the floor standard as set by government: and
- likely to benefit from working together with another school to support each other to make any needed improvements.

3.7 The new Service will ensure that resources are configured in a way to achieve these aims.

4. The Use of a Warning Notice - Schools Causing Concern

4.1 Since September 2012, 4 schools have been issued with Formal Warning Notices in accordance with our statutory responsibilities towards schools causing concern.

4.2 Section 72 of the 2006 Education and Standards Act places a statutory duty on all Local Authorities in England, in exercising their functions in respect to schools causing concern.

4.3 Performance standards and safety notices should be used as an early form of intervention, particularly where standards are unacceptably low and other tools and strategies have not secured improvement.

4.4 When used effectively, many LAs have found that giving warning notices has had a positive impact on schools causing concern, often providing a catalyst for more focused and appropriate action from both the leadership team and the governing body. It is expected that local authorities will use these powers on a more frequent basis prior to more formal intervention being required.

4.5 A school will be “eligible for intervention” under the 2006 Act if it has not complied with a warning notice and the local authority have also given the school written notice of their intention to exercise their intervention powers under Part 4 of the 2006 Act or where it has been judged by Ofsted to require significant improvement (a “serious weaknesses” judgment under the September 2012 Ofsted framework or “special measures”).



- 4.6 Where schools are eligible for intervention, local authorities may exercise their powers to: require the governing body to enter into specified arrangements with a view to improving the performance of the school; appoint additional governors; suspend the delegated budget of the school; appoint an Interim Executive Board.
- 4.7 Where schools are eligible for intervention the Secretary of State has the power to appoint additional governors; appoint an Interim Executive Board, or direct the local authority to close a school. The Secretary of State also has the power under the Academies Act 2010 to make an academy order, subject in certain cases to consultation.
- 4.8 “Schools causing concern” are not just those schools “eligible for intervention” within the meaning of Part 4 of the 2006 Act (see definition above), but are also those about which the local authority and/or the Secretary of State have other serious concerns which need tackling, such as those consistently below the floor standards, those where there has been a serious drop in performance or where the performance is not meeting the expected standards of comparable schools. These are the types of situations where the local authority may want to consider giving those schools a warning notice, and then a further notice that they propose to use their intervention powers under the 2006 Act, making the school eligible for intervention and subject to the intervention powers of the local authority and/or the Secretary of State.

For further detail ref:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/ABOUTDFE/STATUTORY/g00192418/scc>