



**TUESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>UPDATE ON WIRRAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2021-2024</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Wirral School Improvement Strategy 2021-2024 as agreed by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in September 2021.

The Strategy sets out the local authority's ambition to *raise aspirations and improve outcomes for all children and young people in Wirral*. It sets out key proposals to strengthen the local authority's school improvement offer and develop a robust self-improving school system.

The report highlights where progress has been made across five thematic areas including: leadership and governance; high support, high challenge; self-improving school system; learning and innovation; and school improvement.

The School Improvement Strategy is aligned to the Children's Services Business Plan and vision to "*make Wirral great for children, young people and their families*" and to the Wirral Plan priority, Brighter Futures.

The report is not a key decision.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. endorse the progress made to date on delivering the School Improvement Strategy 2021-24; and,
2. approve the outlined plans to progress the Strategy over the next two years.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To evidence that the Committee has reviewed progress of the School Improvement Strategy priorities and is assured that enough progress has been made.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do nothing: this option has been considered and discounted in order to evidence the progress being made to support school improvement.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In September 2021, members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee agreed the Wirral School Improvement Strategy 2021-2024. This Strategy set out a vision for the borough to: *raise aspirations and improve outcomes for all children and young people in Wirral*. It sets out key proposals to strengthen the local authority's school improvement offer and develop a robust self-improving school system.

- 3.2 This report provides an update on the progress of activity outlined within the Strategy around five themes, as detailed below:

#### 3.3 Theme 1: Leadership and Governance

- 3.4 Progress made in this area includes:

- A co-designed leadership programme, '*Leading with Strength*' has been implemented for Headteachers and Governors and offered to all schools. This is a two-year programme which includes 8 sessions led by national speakers and experts, which provide opportunities for leaders to engage in a session and then discuss their school implications at a follow-up networking session. A full overview of the programme is attached at appendix A.
- Specialist leaders have been recruited in early years, English and Mathematics via a robust interview process which included school observations. They are middle leaders in primary education who have been recommended by their Headteachers. Their role will be to provide a range of specialist subject specific support activities in primary schools.
- A recruitment campaign for school governors was launched in October, both internally and externally with organisations such as NHS and Chamber of Commerce. An interactive video was used as part of the campaign to outline the role of school governors.
- The Governors Forum has been re-launched and there continues to be positive partnership working with Edsential (commissioned service) to facilitate network meetings with a conference being held in the summer.

- Chairs of Governors are also involved in support and challenge sessions which ensures that governors are fully engaged and knowledgeable around the school improvement system.

3.5 Governor recruitment remains an ongoing area for development and elected members and senior leaders are requested to support a borough-wide campaign to promote the role of school governors.

### **3.6 Theme 2: High Support, High Challenge**

3.7 A new banding system for school improvement was launched in September 2022. A copy of the banding criteria is attached at appendix B. This banding system uses intelligence and information to develop an evidence-based understanding of the current position of schools. Analysis uses information which includes:

- Standards data and inspection outcomes
- Attendance and exclusions
- Safeguarding concerns
- Financial/budgetary information
- Human Resources (HR) issues
- Information from school assurance professional reports
- Knowledge and understanding from senior school advisors

3.8 The banding system categorises schools into four different bands and the offer of local authority support is based on each banding. The school improvement team use a 'best fit' approach to banding. Schools do not necessarily fit within all bullet points within each band.

3.9 Schools categorised in bands 3 and 4 are invited to a support and challenge (SAC) meeting involving headteacher, chair of governors, relevant school advisor and Head of School Effectiveness or Assistant Director for Education. The Director for Children, Families and Education has also been involved in meetings for band 4 schools.

3.10 For September 2022, 9 schools have been categorised into band 4 and 42 schools into band 3. All of the schools will be part of 'support and challenge' meetings before the end of Christmas term.

3.11 This system has ensured better understanding and hands on support for the schools than has been in place for several years. There is already some impact of this through recent Ofsted inspections which are reflecting where targeted support has been offered.

3.12 Whilst standards outcomes remain an issue, the support and continued professional development offer is better focussed, targeting the areas of need. It is anticipated that the impact of this work will start to become clear over time.

### **3.13 Theme 3 Self-improving school system**

3.14 Identification and investment in Wirral schools staff has positively build system leadership capacity to drive improvements in quality of education across Wirral schools.

3.15 A summary of progress includes:

- An Education Challenge Board has been established consisting of leaders from local authority, primary, secondary and with representation from Multi-Academy Trusts. The Board will facilitate effective relationships across the sector.
- System leadership teams have been established in early, years, English and Mathematics. They consist of specialist leader (as referenced above) and two current headteachers with established links to the English and Maths Hubs. The specialist leaders are embarking on specialist training to ensure consistency in expertise and quality engagement with other professionals.
- A more robust moderation framework has been developed which has improved consistency and frequency of moderation. This has been particularly important following COVID-19 pandemic as schools have not moderated for two years. Schools are now moderating children's work together and have established a set of agreed common standards.

### **3.16 Theme 4: learning and innovation**

3.17 A summary of progress relating to this theme includes:

- A continued professional development (CPD) programme on curriculum knowledge and teaching expertise has been put in place, informed by observations in classrooms, Ofsted findings and support and challenge sessions.
- A full programme of pedagogy for English and Mathematics has been offered to all schools. This is free to maintained schools and at a cost to academies. Early years training has been provided from Ruth Swailes, a national speaker and author.

### **3.18 Theme 5: School Improvement Wirral**

3.19 The School Improvement Team is now fully staffed with three Senior School Advisors, all having been primary headteachers, one a Head of Behaviour support in a neighbouring local authority, one a recent Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and one a newly qualified Ofsted inspector.

3.20 All schools now have a named Advisor who are a point of contact, understand the schools strengths and challenges, and who are broker support as and when required.

3.21 School assurance professionals have been commissioned to quality assure teaching and learning in schools. They are specialist advisors in education, many are previous

Her Majesty Inspectors. They spend time in schools to assess and review the quality of teaching and learning and produce a report and recommendations on findings.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The purpose of implementing a self-improving school system is to identify and grow leaders from within Wirral who can work with Wirral schools. The only cost for the local authority is temporary backfill for their time allocated to school improvement. This is a cost-effective and sustainable system supporting schools.
- 4.2 The Monitoring and Brokerage Grant is used to fund the School Improvement Service, including training and development. This Grant equates to £330,000 and is due to be stopped by Government, this will now be recouped from maintained schools as per the DFE guidance within the consultation feedback on this grant.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to “promote high standards so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential” as set out within the Education Act 1996. Statutory guidance which relates to school improvement includes: ‘*Schools Causing Concern: Statutory Guidance*’, ‘*Schools: Statutory Guidance*’.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 The recruitment of Senior School Advisors has provided much need resource into school improvement team which has allowed delivery of the Strategy.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 Delivering the School Improvement Strategy is intended to improve system leadership across education to improve the quality of education across the borough. Failure to continue to invest and progress may result in further impact on education standards and outcomes.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 No relevant engagement or consultation has been required for this report.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment is provided here:  
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

#### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no significant environment and climate implications. The School Improvement Team will play a role in supporting schools with curriculum development, where this is needed and appropriate. A rich curriculum respects and

acknowledges the need to promote and understand the impact of climate change and promote positive attitudes to protecting the environment.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising from the report.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Overview of Leading with Strength programme  
Appendix 2 Banding criteria

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Education Act 1996  
Statutory Guidance on School Improvement  
Schools Causing Concern: Statutory Guidance for schools and local authorities

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People & Education Committee in accordance with Section B of its Terms of Reference, the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Wirral School Improvement Strategy 2021- 2024</b>	<b>September 2021</b>