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|  | <p><b>Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee</b></p> <p><b>15<sup>th</sup> September 2014</b></p>                                   |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title</b></p>                   | <p><b>School Improvement in Barnet – an update and a new approach</b></p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Report of</b></p>               | <p>Education and Skills Director<br/>Lead Commissioner, Schools, Skills and Learning</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Wards</b></p>                   | <p>All</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Status</b></p>                  | <p>Public</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Enclosures</b></p>              | <p>Appendix A: Update on school standards and the attainment and progress of pupils<br/>Appendix B: A new approach to school improvement in Barnet</p> |
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| <h2>Summary</h2>   |
| <p>Barnet is well known for the excellent quality of our schools and the diversity of our educational offer. The quality of education plays a crucial part in making the borough a popular and desirable place to live, with many families attracted to the area by the good reputation of Barnet’s schools. Barnet’s Education Strategy sets out a framework for partnership working between the Council and all state-funded schools.</p> <p>This report provides an update on the performance of schools and the attainment and progress of pupils. It draws some conclusions from this update about the key priorities that the Education and Skills Delivery Unit should be commissioned to focus on over the next 12 months. It also reports on a review of school improvement and proposes a new approach to school improvement as the best way of sustaining high performing schools for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>Attached to the report are two appendices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appendix A provides detailed information on the performance of schools and the attainment and progress of pupils in 2013 as well as the provisional results of examinations and assessments in 2014.</li> <li>• Appendix B – ‘A new approach to school improvement in Barnet’ - sets out the conclusions of the review of school improvement and the proposed new approach,</li> </ul> |

for consultation with schools during the Autumn term.

## **Recommendations**

### **That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee**

- 1. Note the information on the performance of schools and the attainment and progress of pupils.**
- 2. Approve the commissioning priorities set out in section 1.2.5**
- 3. Approve the new approach to school improvement, in particular the commitment to move towards a schools-led model of school improvement, as a basis for consultation with schools.**

## **1 School Improvement in Barnet – an update and a new approach**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This report provides an update on the performance of schools and the attainment and progress of pupils. It draws some conclusions from this update about the key priorities that the Education and Skills Delivery Unit should be commissioned to focus on over the next 12 months. It also reports on a review of school improvement and proposes a new approach to school improvement as the best way of sustaining high performing schools for the foreseeable future.

1.1.1 Appendix A provides detailed information on the performance of schools and the attainment and progress of pupils in 2013 as well as the provisional results of examinations and assessments in 2014.

1.1.2 Appendix B sets out the conclusions of the review of school improvement and the proposed new approach. It is proposed to consult schools on the proposed approach during the Autumn term.

### **1.2 School standards and the attainment and progress of pupils**

1.2.1 For some years, Barnet has been one of the top performing local authority areas in the country in relation to the achievement of children and young people and the quality of our schools. However, Barnet's good performance cannot be taken for granted. Our aspiration is to be among the top 10% of local authorities in relation to the quality of provision in our schools, but on a number of measures Barnet is either below this level or at risk of falling below it.

1.2.2 Appendix A provides an analysis of school performance issues in Barnet based on the assessment and examination results in 2013, developments

since then and the provisional results of the 2014 assessments and examinations

1.2.3 There are several positive aspects of school standards in Barnet, in particular:

- **Good and outstanding schools** - Over 90 percent of Barnet schools are good or outstanding, which places Barnet in the top 10 percent of local authorities in England.
- **Early Years** - Initial, unvalidated, provisional results for 2014 indicate that 65.3% of children in Barnet schools and settings reached an overall good level of development in the EYFS, compared to 60.4% of children nationally. This is a 5.7% increase on 2013.
- **Key Stage 1** - Initial, unvalidated, provisional results for 2014 indicate:
  - 75.9% of children at the end of *Year 1* were working at the expected level in phonics, above the indicative national average of 74.2%. This is a 3.7% increase from 2013 (72.2%).
  - The proportion of children working at the expected level in Phonics in *Year 2* increased by 3.7% between 2013 and 2014, from 67.7% to 71.4%, whilst the national average is expected to fall by 1.7%.
  - The proportions of pupils achieving a level 2 or above in Key Stage 1 assessment increased on the 2013 figure for Speaking and Listening (to 90.3%), Reading (90%), Mathematics (92.3%) and Science (91.4%), and all were above the indicative national average.
- **Key Stage 2** - Initial, unvalidated, provisional results for 2014 indicate:
  - The proportions of pupils achieving a Level 4+ increased on last year for all measures, which include: Reading (to 91.1%), Writing (86.2%), Mathematics (88.8%), Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (to 82.3%) and Reading, Writing and Mathematics (to 81.7%).
  - The largest change was an increase of 3.6% in the proportion of pupils achieving a level 4+ in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, followed by a 3.2% increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4+ in KS2 Writing.
- **Key Stage 4** - In 2013 attainment for pupils at Key Stage 4 continued to place Barnet in the top 10 percent of local authorities. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*- C, including English and Mathematics, rose in 2013 by 0.9% on 2012. Barnet's results were 6<sup>th</sup> in England and 5<sup>th</sup> in London. Barnet secondary schools also performed very well on the progress of pupils in English and mathematics from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4, ranking in the top 10%. Provisional GCSE results for 2014 indicate Barnet's high standards have been maintained, but this is based on unvalidated data from a sample of Barnet secondary schools.

- **Key Stage 5** - Pupils in Barnet schools performed well by all the key measures of performance at Key Stage 5 in 2013, except with respect to vocational subjects where performance was below the national benchmarks. Initial indications from schools that have shared their 2014 A Level results with the local authority (14 out of 19 schools) show the following:
  - Whilst 2014 national A-Level results are expected to see a small drop in the proportion of A\*-E grades awarded, provisional results from Barnet's local schools indicate the borough's high standards have been maintained with 98% A\*-E grades (in line with last year's outstanding results).
  - The proportion of A-Level exams awarded an A\*, A\*/A and A\*-B grade remains significantly above the national average: indicative data suggests at least 12% of A-Levels received an A\* (above the national average of 8.3%); at least 34% of A-Levels were awarded an A\*/A grade (above the national average of 26%) and 58% of A-Levels were awarded an A\*-B grade (above the national average of 52.4%).
  
- **SEN** - In 2013, Barnet's secondary school pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs achieved well in comparison with their peers in London and in England. 15.7% of pupils with a statement achieved 5 or more GCSE passes including English and maths at grades A\*-C compared to 12% in London and 9.5% in England.

1.2.4 However, the following are areas of concern, which require a strategic response by the local authority and schools:

- **Good and outstanding schools under the new OfSTED framework** - Whilst Barnet remains in the top 10 percent of local authorities for schools that have been judged by OfSTED as good or outstanding, Barnet ranks much lower (close to the national average) in relation to inspections carried out under the new inspection framework introduced in 2012.
- **Primary Writing** - In relation to pupil achievement and progression, there are significant concerns with Primary school results, particularly in relation to Writing, though the provisional 2014 results indicate an improvement on 2013.
- **The FSM gap** - At both Primary and Secondary level, the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for Free Schools Meals and their peers last year was well outside the top 10% of local authorities in England and well above the average gap for London. There has been an improvement in the Key Stage 2 figure in 2014 but it is not yet known whether this is also the case for Key Stage 4.
- **Looked after children** - In 2013 just 14% of looked after children in the Year 11 cohort achieved 5 A\*-C GCSEs including English and

Maths and the percentage making the expected level of progress in English and Maths between Key Stages 2 and 4 was just 12%.

- **Primary attendance** - Pupil attendance at primary schools in 2012/13 (the last available figures for a full school year) was below the national average and well below the London average.

1.2.5 Given this analysis, it is proposed that the main commissioning priorities for school improvement for the academic year 2014 to 2015 should be:

- Increasing the number of good and outstanding schools and reducing the number of schools 'Requiring Improvement' or that are 'inadequate'.
- Improving attainment and progression at the end of primary so it is in line with the top ten per cent in the country.
- Improving Primary Writing.
- Raising the achievement of FSM pupils and closing the FSM gap (especially at Primary).
- Improving progression of Looked After Children (especially at Secondary)
- Improving pupil attendance in Primary Schools.

1.2.6 The areas of concern raise a broader issue of whether the arrangements for school improvement in Barnet are appropriate to the challenges we face. Because of this concern, officers and headteachers have been reviewing our school improvement arrangements. The context and a summary of the findings of the review are set out below. More detailed analysis is shown in Appendix B.

### 1.3 Context

1.3.1 In July 2013, the Council published its 'Education Strategy for Barnet', which developed collaboratively by council officers and head-teachers and agreed after consultation with all schools. The Education Strategy set out a framework for partnership working between the Council and all state-funded schools in Barnet with the shared ambition to:

- strive for excellence and challenge underperformance
- champion the attainment of children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk of underachievement
- secure sufficient high quality school provision and widen local opportunities for young people
- monitor, challenge and support all schools

1.3.2 The Education Strategy sets out how the education landscape is changing nationally and how this is reflected within the local partnership of Barnet schools:

- Over 70 percent of Barnet secondary schools are now Academies and 10 per cent of primary schools, with more primary schools actively considering coming together to develop new models of governance, such as Multi-Academy Trusts.

- This reflects the national policy drive for schools to become more autonomous and for the funding and responsibilities previously held by local authorities to be further delegated to schools. In particular, the majority of funding for school improvement is now held by individual schools, with schools more accountable for their own improvement and increasingly, for the performance of other schools.
- To support this drive, the government has developed a range of initiatives to develop headteachers to become local and nationally recognised leaders of education and for schools to be given the opportunity to lead local improvement networks through the establishment of Teaching Schools.

#### **1.4 Proposal for a new approach to school improvement**

- 1.4.1 Given the current landscape of the increasing autonomy of schools together with the shift of school improvement resources from the local authority to schools, it is necessary to consider a more flexible approach to how the school improvement system in Barnet operates. Whilst there are examples of valuable partnership working between schools in Barnet, system leadership and school to school support are not yet sufficiently systematised or central to an agreed borough-wide school improvement strategy. There is also a lot more that can be done to make the most of the resources and expertise available through outstanding headteachers (such as, National Leaders of Education and Local Leaders of Education) and Teaching Schools.
- 1.4.2 There are significant potential benefits to be gained by establishing a more strategic longer-term approach to school improvement, based on systematic school-to-school support and drawing on the system leadership capability of many of the best headteachers and schools, including Academies. Barnet schools and the Education and Skills service are in a strong position to make a successful, timely transition to school-led improvement, building on the existing strengths of schools and central services and drawing on the experience and expertise of good and outstanding Barnet headteachers.
- 1.4.3 A new approach to school improvement is set out in Appendix B. It is proposed to establish:
- a series of school improvement partnerships by April 2015 so that every school in Barnet is able to benefit from or contribute to system leadership and a self-improving school system.
  - a range of types of partnerships, enabling schools to develop the most appropriate partnership for their circumstances.
  - partnerships that ensure that weaker schools are supported by good or outstanding schools and that all schools have the opportunity to participate in a partnership.

## **1.5 Links to consultation on an Alternative Delivery Model**

- 1.5.1 The draft Outline Business Case for developing an alternative delivery model for the Council's Education and Skills service (Agenda item 8) emphasises the need for a delivery model for education services that is 'owned' by schools in one sense or another (shares or a strong commissioning role). It is expected that a new delivery model would commission and deliver services to schools as well as undertaking a range of local authority statutory functions. It is essential that there is a strong framework for school improvement to underpin a new delivery model.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Through reviewing the local arrangements, educational standards and the national policy drivers for school improvement with a representative group of headteachers, it was concluded that a new model for school improvement in Barnet was required to:
- reflect the increasing responsibility for schools to support and challenge each other, given the concentration of school improvement resources within schools.
  - address the continuing tendency of some schools to look first to the local authority for support, when the funding for support largely rests with schools.
  - develop a culture of schools supporting each other.
  - ensure a comprehensive coverage of school improvement support, particularly in the context of a diverse range of types of school and the range of new education providers entering the education market.
  - make better use of the resources available locally, including the Teaching Schools and National and Local Leaders of Education.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

The alternative option of continuing existing arrangements and allowing school improvement partnerships to emerge gradually over time without the direct support and leadership of the local authority was considered and discounted due to the need to respond to the changing education landscape and to address the attainment issues set out above.

## **4. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 There will be a period of consultation with schools with the aim to get as many schools as possible into operational school improvement partnerships by April 2015, so the partnerships can plan their activities and resources in advance of the new school year.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

- 5.1 **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

The reputation and quality of Barnet's schools makes Barnet an attractive place to live and is key to the satisfaction of many residents in the borough. The Education Strategy for Barnet sets out how the Barnet partnership of schools, settings and other education providers, together, support the delivery of the Council's priority outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan 2013–16:

- Support families and individuals that need it through promoting independence, learning and well-being: through high quality early years provision to give children the best start in life, ensuring support for children with additional needs and identifying and meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- Improve the satisfaction of residents and businesses with the London Borough of Barnet as a place to live, work and study: through ensuring that Barnet's schools are high performing and that every child can access a school that good or outstanding.
- Create the right environment to promote responsible growth, development and success across the borough: through ensuring that young people are equipped with the learning and skills to progress into adulthood and that schools work in partnership to identify and meet the needs of Barnet's current and future economy.

## **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The work to consult with schools and support the development of partnerships will be led from within existing resources of the Education and Skills Service.

## **5.3 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.3.1 Under the Council's Constitution, functions within the Terms of Reference for the Children's Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee responsibility include:

- investment in educational infrastructure to meet the needs of the Borough's learners
- to be responsible for those powers, duties and functions of the Council in relation to Children's Services (including schools)
- to be responsible for those powers, duties and functions of the Council in relation to Children's Services (including schools).

5.3.2 Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 place a duty on local authorities to secure efficient primary, secondary and further education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area. Section 13A requires local authorities to ensure that their functions are exercised with a view of promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training and promoting fulfilment of learning potential for children and young people in its area. Section 14 requires local authorities to secure sufficient schools and sufficient is defined by reference to number, character and equipment to provide appropriate education based on age, ability and aptitude, as well as ensuring diversity of provision. These duties are



overarching duties and apply regardless of whether schools are maintained by the local authority or independent of local authority support.

5.3.3 Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 contains powers and duties in relation to schools causing concern. The powers of intervention apply in relation to maintained schools only. For Academy schools, local authorities should raise any concerns with the Department for Education. Section 72 of this Act requires local authorities to have regard to Government guidance when exercising its functions under Part 4. The latest guidance, Schools Causing Concern – May 2014, confirms that school improvement should be led by schools. The local authority role should be to champion excellent education, including monitoring performance, taking swift and effective action in maintained schools, intervening early, encouraging good and outstanding schools to support others and securing strong leadership and governance.

5.3.4 Local authorities can meet their overarching education functions in relation to school improvement by encouraging schools to support each other in both informal and more formal ways. The local authority will still retain its statutory responsibilities, including the need to challenge performance and take formal action as appropriate. Local authorities can contract out their functions if there is a specific order permitting this. However, even where a function cannot be contracted out, a local authority can arrange for the delivery of their services by external contractors. In such cases, the responsibility for the function would remain with the local authority.

#### **5.4 Risk Management**

There is a risk that schools will be reluctant to form formal partnerships and prefer to enter into loose arrangements. Support and guidance will be available from the local authority and schools will be encouraged to seek evidence of best practice from elsewhere.

#### **5.5 Equalities and Diversity**

The proposed new arrangements for school improvement are being recommended to ensure that the quality of education in Barnet is maintained and improved. Outcomes for all groups of children and young people are monitored including children with special educational needs, children eligible for free school meals and children looked after. The proposals in this paper support the aims of Barnet's Children and Young People Plan and Barnet's Education Strategy, both of which have a strong focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged groups of children and young people.

#### **5.6 Consultation and Engagement**

Schools have been engaged in the development of the proposals so far and this engagement will continue through the Autumn Term.

## 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Cabinet, 18 June 2013 - An Education Strategy for Barnet 2013/14 – 2015/16**  
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=7462&Ver=4>