

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 9<sup>th</sup> June 2011

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### **PART I** **FOR INFORMATION, SCRUTINY AND CHALLENGE**

#### **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND RAISING STANDARDS, INCLUDING SCHOOLS IN SPECIAL MEASURES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

Members have scrutinised two reports on School Improvement and Standards across primary and secondary education in Slough over the last seven months since October 2011.

These two reports were presented to Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Agenda item 6: Report on Primary Education in Slough (Attached) and at Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011: Agenda item 4: Secondary Schools in Slough and GCSE results: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011 (Attached)

This current report to Members is at the request of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny. It is to bring Members up to date about this high priority agenda for the Directorate of Education and Children's Services, with a request to explore the matter in more detail, particularly looking at the achievement and progress of vulnerable groups, and consider what is being done to achieve rapid and sustainable progress leading to stronger schools and higher educational standards.

The primary purpose of this report is to provide information about developments to support school improvement, including schools in special measures, and raise standards, with particular reference to vulnerable groups such as the achievement of children with special educational needs (SEN) and the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils without special educational needs.

The report is also to update Members on the current status of Schools Causing Concern within the Borough and the steps being taken to improve them.

##### **2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel is requested to endorse the School Improvement Strategy and the specific actions to support schools in special measures, including the work taking place to improve standards generally for Slough pupils, as well as improve the achievement of vulnerable pupils, such as those with SEN and the narrowing of the gap between those with SEN and those without SEN.

Members should continue to monitor the progress of Slough's schools causing concern. Given that this is a high priority agenda for the Directorate of Education and Children's Services, it is targeting its funding with financial support from Slough schools on school improvement and standards. This is to address the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities around early support, monitoring, challenge and intervention. It is important that Members are aware and in support of securing and maintaining sufficient resources to fulfil these responsibilities and bring about the necessary improvements.

### **3 Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Celebrating diversity, Enabling inclusion**

#### **How are we going to get there?**

- By identifying vulnerable groups and targeting support, having rigorous challenge and any necessary intervention to raise their levels of achievement.
- By including vulnerable groups with their mainstream peers.

- **Adding years to Life and Life to years**

#### **How are we going to get there?**

- By improving standards for all young people with recognition that higher achievement is one of the strongest routes out of the generational cycle of poverty.
- By pursuing the Every Child Matters outcome of 'Enjoy and Achieve' recognising that enjoyment in learning is critical for success and engagement, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.
- By supporting each stage of transition, especially the step into successful and productive adult life
- By maintaining high levels of Education, Employment and Training (EET) for those beyond 16 years of age.
- By promoting young people's social and emotional development alongside advances in educational achievement

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**

#### **How are we going to get there?**

- By ensuring that schools and other providers provide safe and secure learning environments for children and young people, addressing all health and safety requirements.

- **Prosperity for All**

#### **How are we going to get there?**

- By promoting educational achievement which gives young people increased opportunities for success in adult life, employment and reducing the likelihood of poverty.

## 4 Other Implications

### (a) Financial

The substantive Raising Achievement Team was dissolved in March 2011 due to the termination of funding from central government, changes in national guidance related to school improvement and standards and advice from schools about ways of addressing their needs associated with this agenda. The small residual team and current commissioned School Improvement and Standards Team, appointed from April 2011 has the capacity to fulfil the statutory requirements around early support, audit, monitoring, challenge and intervention to schools, along with some leadership and management support and school organisation development. This is an interim arrangement as the department looks to re-shape this service area, particularly influenced by the current Education Bill going through Parliament. The Team has sufficient funds to fulfil statutory functions based on core funding from the Local Authority supplemented by additional funding from schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Schools recognise the importance of addressing improvement and standards and they have allocated funding accordingly. This is being used to commission additional expert support related to key issues around driving schools improvement: leadership and management, teaching and learning, assessment and data analysis to inform teaching, governance and attendance. Funding is focused on fulfilling statutory responsibilities, driving improvement in those schools in Ofsted categories (special measures and notice to improve) and those at risk of going into serious difficulties. There is an expectation from central government that schools are responsible for their self improvement and that schools need to work together to secure strong schools with high standards. Consequently, the emphasis is on schools being aware that they need to allocate their resources to these high priority areas and need to work together on those areas which they can't readily address themselves, using funding collectively with due regard to value for money to provide any specialist input necessary.

### (b) Risk Management

The main risk in the area relate to additional schools going into 'special measures' or 'notice to improve' Ofsted categories. Alongside this is the risk of standards declining.

To mitigate the risk of further schools falling into category and to ensure that all schools causing concern improve, it is essential to continue to commission experienced professionals to work on behalf of the Borough. This also ensures that statutory obligations are fulfilled and that schools are driven to strengthen their self improvement and mutual support.

### (c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or other legal implications.

### (d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this information report.

### (e) Workforce

There are no significant workforce implications related to this information report.

However, the financial and legislative uncertainties at present, alongside the likelihood of more schools going over to Academy status, necessitate a flexible workforce to address the changing requirements in this area of work connected with its nature and volume. Consequently, there are strong arguments for continuing with commissioned support.

Appropriate professional development for the school workforce at all levels is an important component of any effective school improvement model, especially related to the pace of change and having a workforce that is fully aware of the school agendas and challenges such that the Team can provide robust early support, monitoring, challenge and intervention.

## 5 Supporting Information

### 5.1 Context

This report is presented in the context of having significant numbers of Slough schools which are good or outstanding and some of the highest levels of achievement nationally. At the same time this is not a position of complacency, but a driver for bringing up all schools to those of the best and further raising the standards of the most vulnerable groups across the community. There is now a strong drive to bring the Primary phase into a better place by addressing intensively the 22% of inadequacy and the 33% which are satisfactory.

### 5.2 School Improvement:

The two tables below show the gradings given by Ofsted to Slough schools. Clearly results which are very positive, yet some key issues which need to be focused on intensively to raise the floor of robust schools across the community.

Ofsted Inspection Findings for Slough Schools				
Rating	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Specials
Inadequate	0	6	0	0
Satisfactory	0	8	1	1
Good	3	9	5	1
Outstanding	2	4	5	1
Total	5	27	11	3



## Ofsted Inspection Findings for Slough Schools (%)

Rating	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Specials
Inadequate	0%	22%	0%	0%
Satisfactory	0%	30%	9%	33%
Good	60%	33%	45%	33%
Outstanding	40%	15%	45%	33%
Total	5	27	11	3



### 5.3 Primary educational achievement:

The most recent Key Stage performance data indicates that Key Stage One attainment was broadly in line with the national average, with the numbers of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in reading exceeding the national average. Particularly notable were the gains in writing and mathematics at the higher Level 2B or above, and the number of pupils achieving the top grade of Level 3 in reading and writing. These results suggest that those pupils will do very well as they proceed to the next stage of their primary schooling.

- 5.4 At Key Stage 2 figures show an improvement in Slough's Key Stage 2 performance for the first time in a number of years. English at Level 4 improved by 2% and by 7% at Level 5. Maths at Level 4 improved by 4% and English and Maths at Level 4 improved by 4%. Taking the above improvements into account Slough results remain below the national 2010 results across all subjects. In terms of statistical neighbours, Slough compares more favourably at Level 5, but finds itself nearer to the bottom at Level 4+.

### 5.5 External accreditation at 16 years of age and beyond:

Young people in Slough schools have had a very successful year with their examination results. There has been a 3.8% improvement from last year in gaining 5 or more GCSEs at A\* to C, including maths and English. Out of 154 local authorities, this places Slough pupils overall in 12<sup>th</sup> place nationally. When compared with 10 other similar authorities, Slough is in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Similar results were achieved for other GCSE grades. Beechwood School is of special note based on the progress of pupils over the period of their secondary education and this places it in the top 5% of schools and colleges nationally. Alongside this, Langley Grammar School is ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> nationally for the performance of its pupils. With well over 3000 secondary schools in the UK, Herschel Grammar, Slough Grammar and St Bernard's were ranked 135<sup>th</sup>, 149<sup>th</sup> and 157<sup>th</sup> respectively based on the examination results.

- 5.6 Similarly, for post 16 students there were also very positive results. These place Slough students overall in 10<sup>th</sup> position nationally and in first place when compared with similar authorities. Beechwood and Slough and Eton students made substantial progress overall which places them in the top 5% of schools and colleges nationally. Wexham and Baylis secondary schools also deserve mention for the progress made by their students which is in line with the top 25% of schools and colleges nationally.

## **5.7 Schools in Ofsted Category**

Currently, Slough has six schools in Ofsted category – 22% in the Primary phase, and 13% of all maintained schools. Although there are outstanding and good schools in all phases, the percentage of schools in Ofsted category is high compared with national figures. An additional cause for concern is that three schools are below the floor standard for attainment at Key Stage 2, Level 4 including English and mathematics, and one secondary school is below floor standard at Key Stage 4, 5 GCSE A\*-C, including English and maths.

5.8 Other Schools Causing Concern (SCC) are those which are below the median floor standard in English and/or mathematics, and schools that are judged satisfactory by Ofsted. A full list of schools in OfSTED category and milestones for improvement is attached at Appendix B.

## **5.9 School Improvement Strategy**

Immediate action taken at the start of the Summer Term has been the creation of a new School Improvement Strategy (draft 3 forms Appendix A), to guide the work of the School Improvement and Standards Team. The purpose is to establish robust practices and systems to support school improvement. The new Strategy includes a school categorisation model, which sets out the core Local Authority support for schools in each category. Alongside the Strategy is an Action Plan, requested of all local authorities by the Department for Education in relation to underperforming schools, which provides an outline of the work that is required in the coming weeks and beyond. The top priority has to be to support schools in Ofsted category so that they are removed from category in the shortest possible time, and to ensure that their upward trajectory can be sustained. The Local Authority must also ensure that other schools of concern (SCC) are supported to avoid being judged by Ofsted as ‘inadequate’.

5.10 An experienced local authority School Improvement officer has been assigned to work with each SCC. Audit visits are taking place to ensure that there is valid baseline data and intelligence relating to each school and a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) will be created for each school of concern as a result of these findings. The school’s leaders will be held to account through review meetings with the Interim Head of School Improvement and Standards and the newly formed School Improvement Panel (see reference to the Panel in the School Improvement Strategy).

5.11 The Team is working with schools, as expected by the DfE, to explore other support solutions, including interim headship appointments, Federation and Academy status.

## **5.12 Early Years Provision**

The Quality Care and Learning Team which is closely aligned to the School Improvement and Standards Team uses a preventative model providing challenge, monitoring and intervention to childcare providers to improve the quality and standards of provision and outcomes for children. Settings are categorised so that those at risk of falling standards and receiving an inadequate Ofsted outcome receive greater challenge and intervention.

5.13 The current position is that no maintained schools, private, voluntary and independent settings or childminders are less than adequate for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

5.14 The Early Years Foundation Stage data shows a steady increase since 2008. In 2010 all targets were exceeded by 3.1%. There has been a narrowing of the gap

compared with children elsewhere. During this year there was an influx of children into Slough schools and a number of bulge classes. Many of these children had no pre-school experience which had a negative impact on data and outcomes for children. There was an increase in numbers of 5 year old children by 159 children

- 5.15 To drive up standards, termly monitoring and tracking of Early Years Foundation Stage data was introduced in 2010-11. Schools are required to use the data as a formative tool to track and monitor progress and to inform planning. There has been a focus on the lowest performing 20% to implement appropriate intervention programmes. Tracking 6 children across a range of ability has supported specific actions for particular groups. Termly tracking, monitoring and intervention has been successful in challenging schools to improve outcomes for children in the EYFS. All indications appear to show an improving picture for 2011, however on-going support and challenge will be required during the Summer Term.
- 5.16 Currently programmes are focused on communication, language and literacy and the indicators show that providers are on target to achieve significant improvements.

**5.17 Childminders**

The Quality Improvement Support Programme (QUISP) programme has been implemented with all active childminders. It is a system for categorising providers to ensure better targeted support for those with greatest need. In 2010 there were 2 childminders judged inadequate. The childminders received support and intervention, and when re inspected received a satisfactory grading.

- 5.18 Currently childminder provision is all adequate or better with 36% satisfactory, 54% good and 10% outstanding. This is similar to national data, apart from national figures showing 2% of provision as inadequate, less satisfactory than Slough and slightly more in the good category compared with Slough. The capacity to maintain continuous improvement and leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in embedding ambition and driving improvement is reasonably close to that for national data.

**5.19 Improving the attainment of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and narrowing the SEN/non-SEN Gap**

In Slough work has been undertaken linked to the SEN Regional Hub and National Strategies to support schools to improve the progress made by children with SEN. This work has been led by the Service for Children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) but delivered in partnership with staff from the School Improvement and Inclusion Team. This has comprised:

- roll out and training on the Inclusion Development Programme with strands of activity related to speech, language and communication, dyslexia, autism and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties;
- training and support to implement aspects of 'Achievement for All', including the structured conversation;
- piloting with a small group of schools and training offered to all schools to implement the Value for Money Resource pack;
- dissemination of the Progression Guidance materials to support aspirational target setting for children with SEN and allowing schools and others to identify what constitutes good progress;
- bespoke training for individual schools as requested;
- establishment of a sharing good practice group related to including children with Down's Syndrome in mainstream schools;

- good quality assessments of children who are not considered to be making adequate progress and recommendation of appropriate strategies for schools to implement;
- moderation of children's work assessed to be at the P levels;
- participation in the accredited training for new Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) working with Reading University;
- running the SENCO cluster meetings to disseminate information and share good practice in relation to including children with SEN and supporting improved outcomes;
- involvement in the training provided for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs);
- training for SENCOs and Teaching Assistants;
- providing specific support to new Head teachers, new SENCOs or schools that are in some difficulties.

5.20 These interventions have contributed to Key Stage 4 attainment for children with SEN being above the national average but as the attainment of all children in Slough at Key Stage 4 is above the national average, the SEN/non-SEN gap is also above the national average.

5.21 At Key Stage 2, attainment for children with SEN is slightly below the national average as are the attainments of all children at Key Stage 2 in Slough. The SEN/no-SEN gap is marginally above the national average, but is reducing. The breakdown of this data is attached.

5.22 The Ofsted Children's Services Assessment in December 2010 stated that the Local Authority must focus on driving improved attainment for children with SEN and to narrow the SEN/non-SEN gap.

5.23 The data set for schools will continue to be provided and there will be a requirement to support some schools to make use of this data to target the children who are failing to make at least adequate progress even when they have SEN. The school breakdown of SEN/non-SEN gaps should be shared with all schools and those schools demonstrating good practice should be encouraged to provide advice and guidance to schools where the gap is above expected levels. The use of the Value for Money Resource pack should continue to be promoted and support provided in order to assist schools with identifying their income and expenditure related to children with SEN/AEN, map the provision that is made in the school, capture information about the children who access the interventions, the expected targets to be met and actual outcomes. This then supports schools to make judgements about the value for money of the interventions they provide/commission but the Slough pilot also found that it encouraged the schools to evaluate provision more effectively and in some cases change the programmes used or method of delivery to bring about improved outcomes. Schools should be encouraged to share information about their interventions that have led to good outcomes and provided good value for money. The Local Authority will also seek to have access to the summary information generated by this tool to fulfil audit requirements related to delegated budgets.

5.24 The Additional Needs Strategy is now being implemented to ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate provision for children with the most complex needs in Slough schools. Alongside this there is a review of the SEN finance models applied to mainstream, resource bases and special schools to ensure that the level of funding is sufficient to enable children to make good progress and narrow the attainment gaps. The emphasis on intervening early to avoid high level intervention is reflected in an Early Intervention Strategy which focuses on the use of integrated working practices which improves outcomes for children.

5.25 Whilst work continues to address SEN attainment there will continue to be a risk that the SEN/non-SEN gap does not narrow as all children are being supported to make progress and despite good attainments the gap can remain at above national average levels as demonstrated by the current Key Stage 4 data.

#### **5.26 Attendance**

There are close links between school attendance and achievement. A detailed report on school attendance was provided for the Scrutiny Panel on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and this included evidence produced by Ofsted that supported the link. Schools and the Local Authority have an important role improving attendance because for schools in special measures, attendance is often identified as one of the key issues. Slough's Attendance Service monitors attendance at all schools, providing support when necessary, especially for schools in special measures. The level of support provided for individual schools is reviewed regularly to ensure it is always targeted where it is required.

5.27 All children of statutory school age (5 to 16) must receive education. If a child is on roll at a school, it is the parents who have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. The Local Authority has a duty to enforce this. If a child is not attending regularly the first step for the Attendance Service is to work with the school and family to establish whether there is an explanation for the poor attendance that could be resolved by providing advice and support. This could for example involve providing advice for the family about the importance of establishing routines in the morning so that the children leave on time. In many cases this type of advice results in an improvement in attendance and no further action is necessary. In some cases parents do not take any action and the Local Authority may have to issue a penalty notice or prosecute the parents. In many cases a warning that a penalty is about to be issued results in an improvement in attendance. This has proved to be very effective in Slough and during the 2009/10 year 135 notices were issued. More generally the Local Authority has developed policies with schools on extended leave and religious observance and the consistent application of these policies by schools and Attendance Improvement Officers has had an impact in controlling absence.

#### **5.28 Governance**

Effective governance of schools is important in promoting school improvement. Governors both challenge and support head teachers and they should have access to training and advice that will assist them in carrying out this role. The type of advice, support and training available is currently being reviewed and will be included in a new governor support plan which is about to be ratified. The plan will include details of the type of training available and the cost, the budget available for providing the support and a detailed timetable of development and training events in the 2011/12 school year.

5.29 One of the most important priorities in improving governance is to ensure that governor vacancies are filled as soon as possible. The Local Authority is running adverts for governors in the press and also in Slough Citizen in June and it is hoped that this will reduce the number of vacancies. Chairs of Governors have a vital role in strengthening governance and must be confident to act as a critical friend when working with head teachers. They must also have the ability to drive improvement and ensure schools meet their statutory duties because this is part of the Ofsted inspection process. For this reason the training for Chairs of Governors is being reviewed to include more emphasis on challenge and performance management. There are training sessions arranged for Chairs of Governors this term and also during Autumn 2011 and Spring 2012. The content of the training will be reviewed

according to feedback from participants and evidence of any emerging needs across Slough.

**6. Conclusion**

The Panel is invited to endorse the School Improvement Strategy and related work to support schools in special measures to make quick and sustainable improvements and the work designed to improve SEN attainment and narrow the SEN/non-SEN gap.

**7 Appendices Attached**

- 'A' School Improvement Strategy: Draft 3
- 'B' Ofsted Special Measures (SM) for Scrutiny
- 'C' Paper for June 2011 Scrutiny: SEN achievement and the SEN/non-SEN Gap
- 'D' Data for June 2011 Scrutiny: SEN achievement and the SEN/non-SEN Gap

**8 Background Papers**

- '1' Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2010: Agenda item 6: Report on Primary Education in Slough
- '2' Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011: Agenda item 4: Secondary Schools in Slough and GCSE results: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011
- '3' Education and Children's Services Scrutiny on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2010: Agenda item 5: School Attendance