



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Havering's
School Improvement Strategy

CMT Lead:

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Policy context:

SUMMARY

The 2011 Education Act, which takes forward the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching (November 2010)*, charges all Local Authorities with a 'strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence'. Our School Improvement Strategy sets out how Havering Local Authority is already ensuring rapid improvements for maintained schools performing below the floor standard, in an Ofsted category, or of some concern. It also sets out how we will support all schools that wish to collaborate to improve educational performance for all our pupils.

The ever-rising bar of school performance, as enshrined within government floor standards, Ofsted inspection frameworks and the proliferation of changes to funding, curriculum and qualifications, requires a robust strategy for school improvement.

Havering's School Improvement Strategy details explicitly and transparently how schools and academies in Havering are assessed, categorised, challenged to improve and supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the committee notes the rigorous process by which the Local Authority monitors, challenges and supports its schools and academies, in order to champion educational excellence for all its children and young people.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Working With Schools

1.1 In Havering we are committed to high achievement through partnership with the whole school community because we believe it to be the most efficient and effective route to securing continued improvement. The focus of the LA is to move all schools to good and good schools to outstanding. This is now the only acceptable standard of education nationally and locally.

1.2 We are collectively committed to open, transparent communication and honest and frank debate. The LA regularly reviews its practice in relation to its key activities with representative groups of schools and governors, particularly in relation to the nature of the monitoring, challenge, intervention and any core elements of the support provided.

1.3 We have the full agreement of schools to:

- *partnership working*
- *support their ongoing development of effective school self evaluation and school improvement planning*
- *offer appropriate challenge and intervention, this being based on rigorous analysis of all available data*
- *monitor and evaluate effectively to identify potential weaknesses at an early stage so as to enable early intervention*
- *apply the criteria used to determine the need for intervention.*

2. Identification of School Support Levels

2.1 The LA has identified three categories of school support with particular regard to 'A good education for all' (HMCI February 2012). Where appropriate, there is a discussion between the LA and the school prior to the placing of the school in a category, unless it is an automatic category change such as a school going into an Ofsted category, performing below floor standards or the issuing of an LA formal warning notice. The key criteria for categorisation are:

- *Standards and progress achieved since the last Ofsted*
- *Capacity for improvement.*

These are considered and reviewed annually. In addition, the Schools' Monitoring Group (SMG) meets once every half-term to consider issues arising from across Children's Services, which may cause additional criteria to be considered as part of the categorisation process.

2.2 Membership of the SMG includes:

- *Head of Learning and Achievement*
- *Principal Educational Psychologist*
- *Principal Finance Officer*
- *Manager for Additional Education Needs Services*
- *Behavioural Support*
- *Health and Safety Officer*
- *Safeguarding Officer*
- *Education Officer (SENNS)*
- *A senior member of the LA school improvement team (Hsis)*
- *Schools' HR Manager*
- *Educational Welfare Service Manager*
- *Governing Body Support Service Manager*

2.3 The Chair and convener of the group is a senior member of the LA school improvement team. Other officers attend as appropriate. The LA school improvement team reviews all support categories twice yearly. For those schools designated as a school causing concern, Progress Review or Monitoring Board meetings are held to evidence progress against Key Issues or an Action Plan. The Chair of Governors or nominated governors will be invited to attend and be required to take responsibility for reporting to the full governing body.

3. Systems and Processes

3.1 Schools and the LA review performance in line with key areas covered by the Ofsted Framework. Regular review and completion of a self-evaluation process by the school is strongly encouraged as the foundation of that process. The key areas currently include:

- *current performance in terms of achievement and attainment*
- *trends over time*
- *teaching and learning*
- *leadership and management including governance*
- *quality of provision*
- *behaviour and safety*
- *personal development and well being*
- *effective safeguarding procedures*
- *effectiveness of community cohesion, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination*
- *capacity for improvement; stability; and attitudes.*

3.2 Evidence is drawn from the following sources:

- *analysis of the most recent test data linked to the longer-term trend of each school's performance;*
- *Fischer Family Trust data, RAISEonline, LA data and school data*
- *school self-review*
- *the most recent Ofsted report with specific reference to improvement issues and the impact of actions taken; LA databases on finance, staffing, SEND, attendance, exclusions and pupil numbers; LA and any external school visit reports*
- *any external review that may have been completed; available data on staff turnover, relationships, quality of leadership and management, quality of teaching, school curriculum and school ethos; and Governing Body minutes (where available)*
- *the latest information available from the Schools' Monitoring Group.*

4. Support Levels

Category 1: Schools on track to remain good or outstanding at their next Ofsted

Schools in which there are no concerns, where there are some outstanding or good elements, where pupils make good or better progress in terms of value added and where their attainment is normally above or at national average.

Category 2: Schools on track for good at their next inspection

Schools in this category may meet one of the following criteria:

- schools removed from category 3 which remain Category 2 for a minimum of one year
- schools that have identified that they need to broker in some additional support to build capacity
- schools amalgamating or federating
- no substantive Headteacher, but still with the capability to improve
- new Headteacher (for first year only)
- schools facing difficulties at a particular point (eg high number of temporary staff, budget).

Category 3A: Schools at risk of requiring improvement at their next inspection

This will normally include significant identified weaknesses in one or more of the following:

- standards/achievement
- leadership and management including governance
- teaching and learning
- behaviour and safety
- home-school relationships
- budgetary control.

Schools removed from category 3B remain in category 3A for one year. Schools in this category are identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' in which Statutory Intervention may be needed. Movement from this category up to category two is expected within one academic year.

Category 3B: LA Formal Warning Schools and schools at risk of failure

- schools issued with a formal warning notice from the LA
- schools identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement
- schools at risk of serious weaknesses at their next inspection
- schools at risk of special measures at their next inspection.

Schools in this category are identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' in which significant Statutory Interventions are needed. Movement from this category up to category 3A is expected within twelve to eighteen months.

Category 3C: LA Formal Warning Schools and schools that have failed

- schools issued with a formal warning notice from the LA regardless of Ofsted status
- schools performing below the floor standards
- schools identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures or serious weaknesses.

Schools in this category are subject to a formal warning where there is evidence that:

- the standards of performance and/or progress of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so, unless the LA exercises its Statutory Power; and/or
- there has been a serious breakdown in the way that the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, pupils' standards or performance (e.g. serious financial difficulties); and/or
- the safety of pupils or staff is threatened (whether by breakdown of discipline or otherwise).

Schools in this category are identified by the LA as a 'School Causing Concern' where a formal warning and/or Statutory Interventions are in place. Movement from this category up to 3A is expected within two academic years.

5. Levels and Nature of Support

The focus and level of support will at all times be designed to encourage independence and to build capacity rather than to foster a culture of dependence.

Schools in Category 1 and 2

There is a core entitlement of one or more 'keeping in touch' meetings.

Schools in Category 3A

There is a core entitlement of keeping in touch and monitoring meetings including progress review meetings at least termly with Chair of Governors or nominated governors, HT and senior inspector. Schools in this category are likely to have a variety of statutory interventions in place.

Schools in Category 3B

There is a core entitlement of keeping in touch and monitoring meetings including progress review meetings at least half-termly with Chair of Governors or nominated governors, HT and senior inspector. Schools in this category will have a variety of statutory interventions in place (eg formal whole school partnerships, federations, additional LA governors).

Schools in Category 3C

There is a core entitlement of keeping in touch and monitoring meetings including monthly monitoring board meetings with representative governors, HT and a senior member of the LA school improvement team. Schools in this category will have a variety of statutory interventions in place. For all schools categorised at 3B and 3C, a senior member of the LA school improvement team will ensure that there is a Statement of Action drawn up in negotiation with the school. Time-scales for improvement will be dependent on the nature of the support needed. However significant improvements will be expected quickly. In addition, there will be a formal half-termly meeting or monthly monitoring board meetings with a senior member of the LA school improvement team, representative governors and the Headteacher to review progress against the Action Plan. All visit report forms will be copied to the Chair of Governors or nominated governors who are required to take responsibility for reporting progress to the full governing body.

Support and monitoring will be drawn from across the full range of LA services where appropriate or brokered in to the school to meet the identified needs, and will be focused on those key areas for improvement identified in the school's priorities or Action Plan. The nature of the support will depend upon the identified key areas for improvement but creative ways of supporting school improvement will be encouraged. The LA will make effective use of existing LA and national initiatives and programmes to support schools. Where appropriate, consultants from outside the LA will be used to provide support. Full use will be made of National Leaders of Education, Local Leaders of Education, National Leaders of Governance and other schools including academies, both within and outside the LA, where this is appropriate. The LA may provide finance to enable schools to organise their own training or release for members of staff as necessary within budgetary constraints.

6. Statutory Powers of Intervention

6.1 Schools designated as Category 3C, 3B and 3A have been identified as 'Schools Causing Concern' and are schools in which the LA has statutory powers of intervention. Statutory Guidance for LAs SCC; February 2012, DfE 'Statutory Guidance on SCC'; September 2008 and the 2006 Act, set out significant powers of intervention. Some examples of these powers are outlined below:

- *the appointment of additional, experienced governors where the school requires special measures or improvement in discussion with LA and Governing Body*
- *the appointment of an Interim Executive Board where the school requires special measures or improvement in discussion with LA and Governing Body*
- *The Secretary of State's direction for closure of a school or conversion to an 'Academy' (LA maintained schools) or conversion to a sponsored academy (convertor academies) where there is no prospect of the school making sufficient improvement*
- *a requirement on the LA to reconsider radical action when the case becomes urgent*
- *The LA issuing of formal warning notices (LA maintained schools) and the secretary of state direction to issue formal warning notices (LA maintained schools, academies, free schools and University Technical Colleges) where there is no prospect of the school making sufficient improvement*
- *financial notice of concern which could lead to suspension of delegated budget*
- *LA request for an Ofsted inspection where there are concerns about the performance of any school; maintained, foundation, academies and free schools*
- *The LA will raise concerns with the DfE where there are significant concerns about academies and free schools*
- *The LA actively pursuing formal arrangements with another school and requirement for governing bodies to enter into such arrangements (e.g. hard and soft federations and sponsored academies).*

6.2 All statutory powers of intervention are reviewed regularly by the LA through its Schools' Monitoring Group to ensure that improvements are rapid and sustainable. If this does not occur, further powers of intervention will be taken to ensure rapid progress in the school. The decision to invoke the LA statutory powers of intervention will be taken by the Group Director of Children's Services, following a full assessment of the school's position by senior school improvement staff, Strategic Finance Lead, Governing Body Support Unit and the Head of Learning and Achievement.

7. Next Steps and Future Developments

- 7.1 In the constantly changing world of education it is always necessary to keep policies and procedures under review. With this in mind, we will shortly be reviewing our strategy to provide additional clarity about the Local Authority's role as an 'education champion' for all children and young people, irrespective of the governance arrangements (ie LA-maintained, Academy, Free School, etc).
- 7.2 The development of a more autonomous schools system, whether through academies and free schools, means that providers will now be taking on much more responsibility for themselves. All schools have a duty to safeguard their pupils and to co-operate with the Local Authority and other public agencies in keeping children safe and promoting their health, emotional and educational wellbeing. Traditionally, schools have been supported in this duty through their relationship with the Local Authority. This responsibility is enshrined in legislation and means that we continue to have a role irrespective of the education provider.

- 7.3 Related to this, we will be actively working with stakeholders such as ESP and other partnership groups to clarify how we can strengthen our partnership working in a world of increasing diversity and changing accountabilities. We are pleased that schools and academies have already shown interest in this work.
- 7.4 In the light of these developments and the evolution of our experience, Council Members will be considering whether they need to review their education scrutiny role and how they may wish to provide additional support and challenge to education providers through some possible changes to the role of their “Overview and Scrutiny” statutory functions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report which is for information purposes only. The activities outlined are funded by Learning and Achievement budgets.

It should be noted that from April 2014 a new Education Services Grant was introduced and there were changes to the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG). There is also the need to make MTFs savings from Council funded services. This means that statutory functions need to be provided against a backdrop of reducing budgets.

Caroline May – Strategic Finance Business Partner

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications in noting the contents of this report.

Stephen Doye – Legal Services

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no direct HR implications or risks arising from the recommendations made in this report.

Eve Anderson – Strategic HR Business Partner, Social Care & Learning

Equalities implications and risks:

The 2011 Education Act requires all Local Authorities to play a 'strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence' by putting in place a robust strategy for school improvement.

Havering's School Improvement Strategy details how maintained schools and academies in Havering are assessed, categorised, challenged to improve and supported. It also outlines the measures that the Council has put in place to ensure rapid improvements for maintained schools performing below the floor standard, in an Ofsted category, or of some concern.

The performance review process is set out in line with the *Ofsted Framework* and monitors key areas such as equality of opportunity, discrimination and community cohesion; children's safeguarding; pupils' behaviour and safety, etc. Regular review and completion of a self-evaluation process by the school is strongly encouraged as the foundation of the school's performance improvement process.

While it is believed that Havering's School Improvement Strategy is fairly robust, it is recognised that it could be further improved to optimise positive outcomes for pupils, particularly the most vulnerable children and young people, to ensure early identification of gaps and weaknesses in schools' provision and enable the Council's early intervention and rapid response to improve schools' performance. The strategy will therefore be reviewed shortly and will also be supported by a full Equality Analysis.

Andreyana Ivanova - Diversity Advisor, Corporate Policy & Community

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. *School Improvement Strategy: Supporting Schools to Succeed & Preventing School Failure (Havering)*
2. *White Paper The Importance of Teaching (November 2010)*
3. *Ofsted Inspection Framework (September 2012)*