

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 November 2014
Subject:	School Improvement Offer - Tackling School Performance & Closing the Gap

Summary:

This report sets out the Lincolnshire School Improvement Offer for 2014-2015 and details the roles of both Lincolnshire County Council and CfBT in the delivery of that offer.

Actions Required:

That the School Improvement Offer, and the respective roles of Lincolnshire County Council and CfBT within the delivery of the offer, are agreed.

1. Background

At the heart of the Lincolnshire Strategy for School Improvement is a commitment to work with autonomous schools and other partners, such as multi-academy trusts and teaching school alliances, to secure:

- the best possible levels of attainment and progress;
- outstanding leadership including effective governance;
- safety, fairness and equity for all pupils and staff;
- value for money;
- the capacity for continuous improvement within a self improving system.

Much is changing in the world of education and in line with the philosophy outlined above, negotiations are currently underway to determine a model of sector led improvement for Lincolnshire. CfBT is extremely supportive of those changes. In the short term and while these long term changes are being negotiated, CfBT, through its core contract with Lincolnshire County Council, continues to be the key strategic partner for the delivery of School Improvement in Lincolnshire. In essence this means that CfBT carries out the statutory responsibilities of monitoring, challenging, supporting, and intervening where necessary in maintained schools. In addition to this is monitoring the performance of Academies and carrying out the statutory duty to monitor and moderate Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assessments on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council.

The core contract for School Improvement Services between Lincolnshire County Council and CfBT Education Trust is the vehicle through which these duties are agreed. As indicated the key focus of the core contract is the monitoring of and challenge to all Lincolnshire state-funded schools. It also provides a mechanism for the limited monitoring of the performance of Academies and the reporting of concerns to the Department for Education.

CfBT ensures that all maintained schools have either an Education Adviser (EA) or an Associate Education Adviser (AEA) who works in partnership with them. EAs act as a critical professional friend, helping a school leadership team evaluate its performance, identify priorities for improvement and plan effective change. The role is to support the school in setting ambitious targets, building a school's capacity to improve the achievement of children and young people, and to meet other key outcomes.¹

The contract also makes specific provision for the targeted support and intervention with maintained schools facing the greatest difficulties. Where EAs or Ofsted judge that a school needs additional support CfBT co-ordinates support from other state-funded agencies such as Teaching Schools and National and Local Leaders of Education. Typically, EAs will work with governing bodies and leadership teams to make improvements without recourse to statutory powers. Where there are positive appropriate working relationships with Governors and senior leadership teams, it is usually possible to secure the necessary changes in schools through discussion and negotiation. There are comprehensive systems which underpin the decision making process regarding schools causing concern, or schools likely to cause concern. Such concerns are discussed at regular intervals, both internally at CfBT team meetings and at formal meetings with the Local Authority and DfE. Should it not be possible to reach agreement and there is no evidence of improvement, formal warning notices will be issued to schools and governing bodies replaced with interim executive boards.

The statutory duty to moderate Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assessments, and monitor statutory tests at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council is carried out by teaching and learning consultants who are 'contracted' from the traded team for this purpose and EAs.

Support for schools and academies, deemed not to be at risk, have access to support through a range of agencies, including CfBT, on a traded basis. CfBT's traded offer to Lincolnshire maintained schools complements the core school improvement offer and is provided at a reduced rate for maintained Lincolnshire schools. The offer is extensive and includes a range of courses and support for the development of teaching and learning, leadership and management, including peer review and it also focuses support on identified local priorities as well as responding to key national initiatives.

¹ An AEA is an accredited serving Headteacher in Lincolnshire who carries out the role of the EA. Academies can also purchase the services of an EA from CfBT.

In addition to working with individual schools CfBT also works on a number of cross cutting themes that have been identified as key priorities. These priorities have been agreed between LCC and CfBT under the terms of the core contract for school improvement services. The 'Strategy for School Improvement' from which these priorities are derived opens with a joint commitment between LCC and CfBT to aim for 'all children and young people to go to a school that is at least good', and that 'no school, or child within it, should be left behind'. This is also the vision that drives the work of the Headteacher focus group to establish a school led system for school improvement ('No Lincolnshire school left behind: All schools good or outstanding'). The key priorities include issues such as 'Closing the Gap' in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. This is because in Lincolnshire disadvantaged pupils perform less well overall. The Directorate Management Team have tasked CfBT, through the Core Contract, to challenge schools and to identify and share good practice. A 'Closing the Gap' action plan has been developed. This includes activities such as:

- a ' Closing the Gap' Conference taking place in January
- pupil premium reviews for selected schools
- surveys of best practice in literacy and numeracy interventions
- development of a Senior Leader network to share best practice
- introduction of 'Switch- on', a specific training programme focussed on reading and writing
- a student conference with a focus on English for those on the C/D borderline

Other key priorities that will be pursued in 2014/15 in order to meet the aspirations in the 'Strategy for School Improvement' are:

- ensuring that the percentage of pupils making expected progress in English and in Maths exceeds the national median for each, especially in secondary schools and academies, including selective schools;
- improving the quality of teaching and learning, assessment and curriculum planning in Secondary;
- challenging schools with high rates of exclusion and absence.

Each of the above themes has a detailed Action Plan indicating key actions and expected outcomes.

As part of the core contract, CfBT also works to address the challenge of recruiting and developing high quality staff by running a SCITT programme and providing a comprehensive package of support for Newly Qualified Teachers. As the sector led model develops in Lincolnshire, CfBT will explore the potential for working with new partners to maintain the current incentives for starting and maintaining a career in Lincolnshire schools.

Other services to schools provided by CfBT on behalf of LCC include the Educational Visits Approval and Advice Service, the Freiston Centre for Environmental Education, Governor Services and the Interim Head team. The Governor Support Service is staffed by LCC staff but is managed strategically by CfBT. The service organises its own programme for schools that is advertised as part of LCC's offer. However, the following activities are organised by the Governor

Support Service but delivery is supported by CfBT advisers as part of the CfBT core offer:

- the foundation training programme for newly appointed governors
- delivery at a total of 12 Governor Partnership meetings per year (four per term)
- the successful GEL training, free of charge for all maintained schools

The Freiston Centre for Environmental Education provides significant targeted provision for vulnerable children and young people, and accessible residential visits for children across Lincolnshire. Activities delivered at Freiston include EHE residential and day visits; residential and Duke of Edinburgh's award programmes for LAC, family sessions and weekly visits (term time) by a local special school and Teaching and Learning Centre.

Implementation of the core contract is subject to regular monitoring by LCC to ensure that the provision meets the needs of schools and is cost effective.

Monitoring of the Core Contract:

The performance of CfBT in relation to the delivery of the Core Contract is regularly monitored by the contract board, the partnership board, Children's Services Directorate Management Team and monthly meetings with the Executive Member and the Director of Children's Services.

2. Conclusion

That the arrangements outlined in the report are noted.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

N/A

4. Background Papers:

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Keith Batty who can be contacted on 01522 55 3288 or kbatty@cfbt.com.