

REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEE REPORT

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| NAME OF COMMITTEE: | Schools Forum |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 14 January 2015 |
| SUBJECT: | Sector-Led School Improvement Model Update |
| REPORT BY: | Andrew McLean (Children's Services Manager - Commissioning) |
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| IS THE REPORT EXEMPT? | No |
| IS REPORT CONFIDENTIAL? | No |

SUMMARY

Lincolnshire County Council's contract with the CfBT Education Trust to provide monitoring, challenge and intervention services ends on 31 January 2017 so there is a need for the Council to start to engage with schools to ascertain the nature and required capacity for any new school improvement model for Lincolnshire.

This report highlights the radical change in the education landscape since the contract was signed and the need to develop, in partnership with schools a future model which aligns itself to best practice, which fits the Council's spending powers and which meets the needs of schools whilst ensuring capacity and expertise to enable the Council to meet its statutory duties.

This report summarises the progress that is being made to co-construct with headteachers an alternative model for monitoring, challenging and intervening with schools and academies. It provides an initial opportunity for members to consider the direction of travel which Schools' Forum have agreed in principle to financially support through pump priming the new model. However, it is envisaged that it will form only the first of several updates spanning January 2016 to March 2017 as the task and design group need to consult with Head teachers and Governors before a final business plan can be submitted.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

- 1.1. The Lincolnshire School Improvement Service was outsourced to CfBT Education Trust in 2002 following an inspection by Ofsted. The Audit Commission in 2000 found an unacceptably high proportion of schools with identified weaknesses and a high level of underachievement.
- 1.2. The “Core Contract” between Lincolnshire County Council and CfBT Education Trust is the vehicle through which the Local Authority exercises its statutory duties in relation to the monitoring of and challenge to all Lincolnshire state-funded schools. It provides a mechanism for the limited monitoring of the performance of Academies and the reporting of inadequacies to the Department for Education. It also provides targeted support and intervention with maintained schools facing the greatest difficulties. CfBT co-ordinates its support for schools at risk with that from other state-funded agencies such as Teaching Schools and National and Local Leaders of Education (NLE and LLE).
- 1.3. CfBT’s core contract with Lincolnshire County Council comes to an end in January 2017.
- 1.4. However, besides its contracted work, CfBT provides a traded service to schools and academies and increasingly to school partnerships so that any school can buy the additional support it may need. This is independent of the core contract and there are no plans to curtail it. CfBT also provides initial teacher training as well as support for Newly Qualified Teachers to sustain the flow of high quality new teachers into Lincolnshire schools.
- 1.5. As of 30 November 2014, 84% of pupils in Lincolnshire were being educated in a school graded Good or better. This represents 86% of our schools, some 5% above the national proportion. Based on this statistic, Lincolnshire is among the top third of all local authorities.
- 1.6. Nevertheless, there are signs that Lincolnshire has squeezed as much out of the traditional model of school improvement as it can. While outcomes in Key Stage 1 and 2 continue to rise on the whole, the national rate of improvement is now slightly greater and we have slipped just behind the national attainment figures. Outcomes at Key Stage 4 plateaued in the last couple of years. This year they have dropped both locally and nationally, largely because of central government ‘reforms’. Within the county there are pockets of underperformance, particularly in some of our coastal areas and rural South Holland.
- 1.7. As we and our regional partners scan the horizon we find that those areas achieving transformational change have sector-led approaches as a major component of their arsenal. The London Challenge had huge investment and buy-in at every tier of leadership, both professional and political, but schools helping other schools to improve is at its heart.
- 1.8. In Lincolnshire, we have had real success with our Primary Collaborative Partnerships involving about 135 small rural primary schools. Outcomes for schools in these partnerships are starting to look better than for those not working collaboratively.
- 1.9. So much is changing in the field of educational support and, simultaneously, negotiations are currently underway to determine a new model of monitoring, challenge and intervention. A Headteacher Design and Task group was established in September 2014 chaired by Heather Sandy, the Headteacher of Louth Lacey Gardens Junior School. She is supported by a contracted project officer, both funded by Children’s Services. This group of around twenty headteachers is consulting regularly with other headteachers and with governors through scheduled briefings and dedicated workshops. The prime goal of the Design and Task group is to agree a preferred and costed model for monitoring, challenge and intervention in conjunction with officers of the County Council. The period leading up to the end of the contract with CfBT provides an opportunity for phased transition.

- 1.10. 84% of Lincolnshire's 55 secondary schools and 24% of its 285 primary schools are academies. This has resulted in a very significant reduction in resource available to run central services because each academy takes with it a share of the local authority's Education Services budget. When linked to swinging reductions in local authority funds independent of the Dedicated Schools' Budget (DSB) available to support educational activity generally from April 2015, Lincolnshire County Council is unable to continue to invest in monitoring, challenge and intervention at anything like the level it has invested in the past.
- 1.11. The contract with CfBT covers a number of functions that sit outside the monitoring, challenge and intervention remit described above. The extra functions include:
- Headteacher appointments in LA Maintained schools
 - c. 24 days annually
 - Moderation of KS1 assessment and KS2 assessment in primary maintained schools and primary academies
 - Minimum 400 days annually
 - Monitoring of the outcomes for vulnerable groups including SEND
 - c. 360 days annually
 - Meetings and reporting at the behest of Lincolnshire County Council including Headteacher briefings, Schools' Forum, CYPSC, etc.
 - c. 550 days annually
 - Governor Support

The Governor Support Service is staffed by LCC employees but managed strategically by CfBT.

 - c. 20 days per year of strategic management
 - Support and Accreditation of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT)
 - c. 2.5FTE
 - Management and subsidising of the Freiston Centre for Environmental Education
 - 6.7FTE + trading subsidy
 - Educational Visits Approval and Advice Service
 - 0.6FTE
 - Support for LA Inspections/ Accountability
 - Anticipated requirement: 50- 100 days per year.
 - Associated administrative support
 - 2.3FTE
- 1.12. In view of the significant number of state-funded schools that are now academies, and in view of the economies that Lincolnshire County Council must make (£90m per annum reduction in spend to be secured by 2020), it has been agreed that the CfBT core contract value should be reduced by £0.5m in April 2015 and by a further £0.5m pro rata (£0.416m) in April 2016.
- 1.13. There is considerable consensus among the consulted headteachers that placing them, or their representatives, at the heart of decision making in the new system is fundamental. Once information sharing protocols are agreed and terms of reference established, it is anticipated that a Headteacher Board will be able to start operating to help identify Schools and Academies Causing Concern. It is hoped that the Board will be able to take over the role of the Schools Causing Concern officers' meetings by September 2016.
- 1.14. Peer-review has emerged as an essential component of the new model. In time, this will replace the assignment of education advisers to gather information about individual schools with a revised focus on information gathering and quality assuring at partnership level. In the transition phase Lincolnshire County Council wishes to retain some capacity for monitoring individual schools through its contract with CfBT.

- 1.15. Although still very much under discussion, the principal changes that are being considered are:
- a. Schools and academies will be asked to form peer review partnerships of, perhaps, six schools.
 - b. The appraisal of the overall performance of schools and academies will be carried out by headteachers, perhaps in pairs, visiting other schools in the partnership.
 - c. Training in peer review will be secured from local authority approved providers using a one off grant available over a two-year period only. This is proposed to be through a procurement process with funding from the DSB underspend and use of the CFBT / LCC gain-share agreement to pump prime this model – agreement in principle was given at the last School Forum meeting with a full business plan expected to be presented at the next Forum meeting.
 - d. The quality of peer review will need to be assured and communicated to a decision making body. It is envisaged that a limited number of ‘Challenge Advisers’ may be needed to perform this function.
 - e. The decision making body will be a board comprising nominated headteachers and a senior local authority officer.
 - f. The headteacher board will determine which schools and academies need to be designated ‘causing concern’ and recommend how they may be helped. In most cases this will be through the deployment of NLE, LLE and Specialist Leaders in Education (SLE) deployed by the Teaching Schools.
 - g. In a limited number of cases, the extra support may need to be commissioned by the local authority on the recommendation of the headteacher board.
 - h. The local authority will retain ultimate responsibility for monitoring, challenge and intervention but it will be guided, very much, by the headteacher board.
 - i. The local authority is seeking to appoint a senior officer to oversee the arrangement.
 - j. Schools and academies will also be encouraged to continue to participate in mutually supportive school improvement partnerships that may be different to their peer-review partnerships.
- 1.16. The specifics of the model are expected to emerge from workshops involving several hundred headteachers planned for 20 and 21 January 2015 that have been organised by the Headteacher Design and Task group. Even when a model has been determined, considerable work will be needed before appropriate protocols (for sharing information and data, for example) can be finalised. It is hoped that the new model can be trialled with early adopters throughout 2016.

2. Conclusion

2.1. Schools Forum members may wish to consider:

- how best to participate in the consultation process with headteachers and governors.
- the extent to which Dedicated Schools Budget should be used to support the sector led models for monitoring, challenge and intervention.
- the extent to which Dedicated Schools Budget should be used to support the sector led models for school improvement.
- how the Schools Forum can exercise an accountability function if DSB monies are to be deployed to support monitoring, challenge intervention or school improvement.

2.2 Schools Forum may wish to be mindful that primary maintained schools currently de-delegate £380k per annum to support additional preventative and intervention strategies for vulnerable schools. The scope for a more holistic intervention fund servicing all types of school should be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools Forum receives the report
2. Schools Forum members consider the suggested queries under 'Conclusion'.
3. Schools Forum considers what further reports it will require to conclude its deliberations about financial support for a sector led model for monitoring, challenge and intervention.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following reports were relied upon in the writing of this report.

| PAPER TYPE | TITLE | DATE | ACCESSIBILITY |
|------------|-------|------|---------------|
| None | | | |

APPENDICES

None