

A strategy to raise standards at key stage 2

1. If Nottinghamshire is to secure improved outcomes at the end of key stage 2, all schools must continue to focus on high quality first teaching, using accurate tracking data to identify individuals and groups of pupils who would benefit from personalised high quality intervention. The effective use of the Pupil Premium Grant should also ensure that more vulnerable pupils access enriched provision which impacts positively on attainment and progress.
2. The Education Improvement Service reviews the impact of the service on a yearly basis and revises its improvement plan to ensure a focus on outcomes and impact. This plan is underpinned by key strategic actions to ensure whole school improvement and not just a focus on Year 6. However, given the outcomes at key stage 2 in 2014, additional actions were identified to focus the attention of all partners on improved outcomes for all primary aged pupils, and particularly those in year 6.
3. To this end, the group manager for the Support to Schools Service wrote to all headteachers in community primary schools and primary academies in February 2015, to share the key challenges following the publication of final 2014 key stage 2 data. A separate letter was also sent by the group manager to primary schools whose outcomes had fallen below the floor target. In addition, the service director wrote to all Teaching School Alliance headteachers to ensure their continued focus on improving the outcomes of pupils at key stage 2 in their alliance primary schools. In all three letters, specific advice was provided to ensure that pupils were identified and targeted with additional provision. Copies of these letters were sent to chairs of governors to ensure that they too were able to hold schools to account for the progress and outcomes of all pupils.
4. Following the analyses of the 2014 key stage 2 outcomes, NCC's School Improvement Strategy for 2014-2015 focussed on additional actions with specific concentration on the outcomes at the end of year 6 and the improvement of leadership and governance, as well as teaching and learning. The additional actions taken in 2014-2015 and outlined in below have been a significant factor in Nottinghamshire outcomes for Reading, Writing and Maths combined at L4+ increasing at a faster rate than national to 81% (1% above national)

Key actions taken to improve outcomes at key stage 2 in 2015

5. The revision of the School Improvement Strategy, to incorporate the advice to Local Authorities in relation to governing bodies effectively holding headteachers to account, has ensured a stronger focus on ensuring good and outstanding governance. Actions have included:
 - ensuring LA clerks are appropriately skilled to support their governing bodies. Clerks have received specific briefings from an education improvement service (EIS) team manager on the school improvement strategy and the role of clerks in supporting governors
 - providing workshops on Ofsted and Closing the Gap at the annual Governing Body Conference

- including articles in governors' newsletters on the School Improvement Strategy and on the key messages from the LA analysis of KS2 outcomes
- the appointment and deployment of Nottinghamshire support governors to increase the support available to governing bodies requiring improvement. The team manager for governor services convenes termly development meetings for the support governors. The meeting is also attended by National Leaders of governance (NLGs)
- provision of a Governance Review service to evaluate the performance of governing bodies in schools judged to require improvement by Ofsted. This has also been offered as a sold service to good schools where governing bodies or advisers have concerns. The reviews provide governing bodies with specific improvement targets and an action plan for improvement where required
- clarification around the use of Warning Notices and implementation of Interim Executive Boards (IEB). Where IEBs have been put in place, rapid improvements have been made in all aspects of the school's provision, including leadership at all levels, as well as in pupils' outcomes. The deployment of an experienced clerk has been essential to success.

6. The review and further development of elements of the County's governing body services to ensure that LA governors are effectively monitored in relation to their impact on school improvement (i.e. holding the headteacher to account for pupil outcomes, impact of the pupil premium). Actions have included:

- training session for LA clerks at the mid-term briefing on their role in supporting the School Improvement Strategy, including their role in alerting governing body services, via a concerns form, to any issues with a governing body that might impact on their ability to hold schools to account, such as no discussions by the governing body on the performance of disadvantaged pupils or lack of due regard to safeguarding
- clerks' briefings to ensure governors complete their annual self-evaluation with examples of impact and evidence sources listed – again alerting governing body services if schools are unable to comply
- increased monitoring of governing bodies in relation to governor turnover and recruitment difficulties. A recruitment and retention group meets termly and receives reports on membership statistics and studies trends in membership of different stakeholder groups
- the use of the 'one stop shop', a charity supported by the DFE, to recruit new governors. An effective working relationship has been built up with this group which is improving the LA's ability to support governing bodies to recruit to vacancies
- a sold offer to governors that has been refocused on governors' role in securing and maintaining school improvement (i.e. ensuring that LA governors in particular

have a clear understanding of what 'good' and 'outstanding' governance is and their essential role in monitoring 'impact' rather than actions completed)

- a specific CPD provision for governors is now part of the EIS sold service offer and includes elements to enable governors to hold schools to account effectively including:
 - Understanding data and assessment without levels (the new assessment being implemented in 2015-16)
 - Moving governance to good and outstanding
 - Monitoring effectively
 - Roles and responsibilities
- improved induction for new clerks.

7. All school improvement advisers allocated to schools in 2014-2015 consistently provided support and challenge to schools to ensure a focus by leaders, teachers and governing bodies on securing improvements in the 2015 outcomes at key stage 2. This included:

- monitoring of year 6 pupils on track to achieve level 4 in 2 of reading, writing, mathematics but not all 3
- incorporating a focus on year 6 into partnership support plans, if not already identified
- ensuring that the development and action plans in all schools causing concern, clearly identified the monitoring of pupil outcomes in relation to being on track to achieve Level 4 in all 3 strands at the end of year 6
- Virtual School data was reviewed and monitored to ensure that any looked after children (LAC) in year 6 with the potential to achieve Level 4 in all 3 strands had access to one-to-one tuition
- Achievement and Equality consultants worked directly with schools causing concern to identify year 6 pupils who had English as an additional language (EAL) and who were on track to achieve 2 of the 3 strands. One-to-one support was mediated.

8. Actions focusing on the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, as outlined in the County Council's Closing the educational attainment Gap Strategy, included:

- the identification of FSM6 pupils in year 6 who were on track to achieve Level 4 in 2 of reading, writing, mathematics but not all 3
- advice was given to schools on the effective use of the pupil premium to secure good outcomes for FSM pupils in all 3 areas of the curriculum
- pupil premium reviews were carried out in a number of schools in which the performance of pupils, eligible for free school meals at any time in the last 6 years (FSM6), was too low. Reports were provided for governing bodies to summarise strengths and weaknesses in provision. Recommendations for improvement were also reported.

9. Headteacher briefings, conferences and meetings included a sharp focus on raising attainment and securing good progress through effective leadership. Specific actions included:
- advice on effective strategies to close the attainment gap at the Spring 2015 headteacher and senior leader briefings
 - further analysis of the outcomes of 2014 key stage 2 outcomes was used to inform the planning of workshops with key challenges threaded through all sessions. Effective use of data to identify individual pupils for targeted learning was a particularly effective strategy threaded through these sessions. It was employed by all schools attending
 - the effective use of LA Leadership and Management reviews in schools where impact of improvement was not evidenced after one term of partnership support
 - the appropriate use of support plans within the appraisal process for headteachers has been mediated in a timely manner and after one term if leadership was not impacting positively on school improvement
 - Use of clear, objective criteria has led to a significant increase in the number of Leadership and Management reviews. There have been three times as many reviews in 2014-2015, compared with the previous year. (7 compared with 2 in 2013-2014)
 - Reviews have enabled the EIS to identify and effectively support governors to challenge weak leadership when present through robust use of school's appraisal policies.
 - Significant and rapid changes in leadership have taken place in all schools reviewed
 - the impact of partnership support and any emerging leadership concerns have been shared with the chairs of governors
 - all adviser reports have been copied to the Chair of Governors as well as being sent to the headteacher
 - governors have been invited to termly review meetings as a matter of course
 - the effective use of an on-site Partnership Focus Group (PFG) has been used in several schools to bring together LA officers from a range of support services. Meetings have involved the headteacher and the chair of governors in ensuring that all agencies focus on the impact of their shared and separate action plans, thus avoiding duplication or fragmentation of support.
10. Medium term strategies have been incorporated within the revised School Improvement Strategy and focussed on the further strengthening of partnership working across the authority. Specific actions included:
- termly reviews of known partnerships with TSAs, NLEs, LLEs, PLs and other stakeholders in each supported school ensured a continued focus on the 'impact' of support on improving attainment and progress across the County
 - joint TSA and Support to Schools Service meetings have been held each term to share field knowledge about Schools Causing Concern (SCC) to improve the capacity of TSAs to respond speedily to requests for specific support

11. There has been a key focus on consolidating the role of the LA in securing accurate data as a result of the centralisation of data within Corporate Services. This has ensured that:
- required data sets have been agreed and commissioned
 - termly data strategy group meetings have been established and have ensured that data to support and challenge schools to improve has been readily available for all stakeholders
 - the Fischer Family Trust Aspire contract has been renewed and all schools have been advised to buy into FFT Aspire at the spring term headteacher briefings in 2015, again in the autumn term briefings and at a number of familiarisation networks held to inform schools of the benefits of the data supplied by FFT. As a result many schools have bought into this data set which provides:
 - support for setting appropriate, challenging, evidenced based end of Key Stage targets for individual pupils, which can be aggregated up to cohort and whole school targets
 - detailed evaluative reports on the attainment and progress of cohorts and groups of pupils to inform planning for improvement
 - school partnerships including TSAs have been encouraged through senior leader briefings and FFT workshops to set up 'FFT Collaborate' which enables them to identify strong and weak schools in their collaborations and set up appropriate support strategies. At least 1 TSA and 1 partnership, each working with between 30 and 50 schools are now using FFT Collaborate
 - the LA has also commissioned from FFT, data for specific groups of schools to enable more effective analysis of school outcomes. (e.g. small schools). This has enabled school improvement advisers to provide more bespoke support and challenge to these schools.

Securing sustained improvements in 2015-2016

12. In 2015 to 2016, the successful elements of this additional key stage 2 strategy have been incorporated into the Support to Schools Service plans to further raise standards of attainment and progress and close the educational attainment gaps. The solid offer continues to focus primarily on national developments such as the new primary curriculum and changes within statutory assessment (assessing without levels).
- A highly focused CPD offer has been constructed to meet the most significant needs of schools. These have been identified through deep analysis of Nottinghamshire school outcomes both by the LA and by Ofsted analysis of data on the outcomes for three disadvantaged groups – pupils eligible for free school meals at any time in the last 6 years (FSM6); looked after children (LAC) and those with English as an additional language (EAL). The focus on improving outcomes for these 3 groups is known as the East Midlands Challenge
 - A comprehensive pupil premium toolkit has been developed as part of the Closing the Gap Strategy. This is being rolled out to all schools through focussed training

opportunities within the sold offer to schools. The toolkit will be promoted to all schools at the spring term headteacher briefings 2016

- Team managers within the Support to Schools Service have worked closely with TSAs and have agreed a coherent, cohesive continuing professional development (CPD) offer for schools. All relevant advertising materials for the TSAs' CPD, linked to the cohesive offer, is distributed through the LA to all primary schools. The cohesive offer covers training to improve provision in English (including grammar, punctuation and spelling), mathematics and leadership development
- The cohesive offer has been further strengthened in the spring term 2016 through the addition of a readiness for learning element, which brings together key features required to support schools with Closing the educational attainment Gap
- The Education Improvement Service and 2 TSAs are developing an English Hub to work alongside the 2 existing TSA led maths Hubs, using funding from the sold service to seed the development of the Hub into a self-sustaining offer
 - TSAs are now delivering much of the specific subject knowledge required by the new National Curriculum. In particular the Maths Hubs have provided highly effective CDP and support for schools to understand the changes to the maths curriculum, especially in how to deepen pupil understanding.
- EIAs are more pro-active in directing schools to seek support from TSAs
 - EIS will actively promote the TSAs and the use of subject specialist leaders of education (SLEs) to provide coaching for teachers in 2015-2016
- data has been used to identify good practice in relation to the teaching of early phonics at Foundation and key stage 1 and grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - the CPD offer has been further enhanced to include a sharp focus on underpinning subject knowledge such as basic numeracy, the teaching of early phonics and the effective teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling, particularly at key stage 2 and the teaching of inference when reading
 - There is now an additional offer around Early years which is being developed between TSAs and the LA Early Years' Service based on an analysis of data
 - HMI has provided training for schools with Early Years provision that requires improvement on 'Getting to Good in the Early years'
- A considerable amount of EIS time has been devoted to the development of effective practice across all Nottinghamshire primary schools in 2015-2016 to ensure that 'assessing without levels' is embedded across the county in preparation for September 2016 when 'assessment using national curriculum levels of attainment' ends.
 - The LA has undertaken a substantial lead in preparing schools for 'assessment without levels' (AWL). There have been briefing sessions in the termly headteacher briefings, from spring 2015 to date
 - 5 Senior Leader Conferences have been held to date, bringing leading national experts to update headteachers and senior leaders on the latest developments in AWL
 - A headteacher consultation group is in place to identify, develop and share best practice
 - AWL networks are running every term in 2015-2016 across the county to develop best practice and share this with schools

- A series of 'Hot Topic' briefings for governors on the implications of the new curriculum and AWL is running in the spring term 2016 and will continue next term
- The acting group manager for the Support to Schools Service is actively working with team managers in the service, with senior leaders in the other 8 LAs comprising the East Midlands and TSAs to develop a co-ordinated response to the East Midlands Challenge. This will include the identification of high performing statistical neighbours and the organisation of good practice visits to early years' settings, schools, TSAs, FE providers and universities to research effective strategies to raise the attainment and improve the progress of FSM6, EAL and LAC children in all key stages. These visits will take place in the summer term 2016 and will inform the improvement plans for 2016- 2017.