

Children & Education Select Committee
27 March 2014

Progress in Delivering the Education Achievement Plan

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services and Budgets

This report provides the Committee with details of how the Council works with schools and partners to deliver the Education Achievement Plan. The Education and Achievement Plan aims to ensure that all Surrey children and young people have access to a good education over the four year period 2013-2017.

Introduction:

1. The Education and Achievement Plan aims to ensure that all Surrey children and young people have access to a good education over the four year period 2013-2017.
2. The Plan focuses on four key areas: (1) increasing participation and engagement; (2) supporting collaboration and partnership; (3) raising achievement and realising potential; and (4) preventing exclusion. This report will describe overall progress on each of these areas in turn.

Increasing Participation and Engagement

3. Our first priority is to ensure that children and young people are able and willing to engage in education. There are several key areas in which work here is concentrated, including:-
 - expanding education services to children under 5 (compulsory school age); please refer to **Paragraph 4**
 - ensuring there are sufficient primary and secondary school places to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing Surrey population, and creating new school places when and where they are necessary; please refer to **Paragraph 5**
 - ensuring that children of statutory age attend school or receive education otherwise; please refer to **Paragraphs 6 & 7**
 - ensuring that participation in education continues to 18 (this requirement now replacing the old school leaving age of 16)

- ensuring good access to and take-up of further and higher education; please refer to **Paragraph 8**
 - ensuring that there is appropriate provision made available to those children with special educational needs who cannot benefit from mainstream provision. Please refer to **Paragraph 9**.
4. The County Council is currently funding 1,300 places for 2 years as part of the national drive to expand provision to this age group. Provision for 3 and 4 year olds is also expanding as the birth-rate increases. Despite pressure of resources, Surrey has maintained the existing network of 58 Children's Centres across the county.
 5. A School Organisation Plan ("SOP") is prepared and issued annually in draft and final versions setting out the demand for places arising for different age groups in different areas of the county and the provision actually being made. The draft is based on Office for National Statistics birth data and the known size of schools and age cohorts. Comments from other partners and agencies including health, schools and local boroughs and districts are received on the draft and the final version is used as the basis for planning and changes needed in provision. Using the SOP officers have estimated that a total of 16,000 new school places will be required across the county between 2013 and 2018. Financial provision to support this growth - £354,000,000 - has been identified in the Mid Term Financial Plan, making this the largest capital commitment of the County Council over the next five years. 2880 new primary places were provided at the start of academic year 2013/4 and a further 3000 will follow for 2014/5. We are now at the point where the increase in the birth-rate, which has been felt in primary schools for the last seven years, is now starting to impact on secondaries. The School Commissioning Team is now working with the Surrey secondary school to plan the necessary programme of expansions.
 6. The Education Welfare Service provides a statutory service to all schools to monitor and support the attendance of all registered pupils and to enforce attendance when necessary. Attendance rates are largely affected by environmental and health issues which are often beyond the schools' control, however, where absence is unauthorised and deemed to be avoidable, court enforcement action is carried out by the EWS in line with our legal duties. For pupils not registered at an educational provision and deemed to be 'children missing education' each quadrant holds a monthly pupil support meeting where each pupil is discussed and information shared in relation to actions required or being undertaken, which may involve applying to the courts for a school attendance order or referring the pupil to the in year fair access panel in the relevant quadrant to identify a school place.
 7. At the end of February 2014, 453 young people in Years 12-14 were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) - 515 fewer than 968 in February 2013 and 684 fewer than 1,137 in February 2012. In the same way as the Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI) has transformed our use of the youth justice system, the Leader's Ready for Work Programme has been designed by Services for Young People to

achieve a transformational increase in young people's participation. This is a key vehicle to meet the challenge of the raising of the participation age (RPA), fully integrated with the other commissioned services in the Services for Young People Division. It is already having an impact, with 415 young people who would otherwise be NEET engaged in the programme (snapshot on the 13th March 2014). It comprises a range of bespoke local activities that equip young people to re-engage with education, training and employment. Interim benchmarking data suggests that, at 1.8%, Surrey had the joint-lowest rate of NEET in the county for the November 2013 to January 2014 period, and was the only large authority with this level of NEET. This suggests we have already made a start on transforming young people's participation, in response to the raising of the participation age.

8. At the end of February 2014, 98.3% of young people in school years 12-14 were participating in education, training or employment. 84.7% were participating in further or higher education, 2.7% were in training, 6.4% were in employment with training and 4.5% were in employment without training. Early indications from DfE progression data suggest that progression from Surrey's schools to Higher Education may not be as strong as might be expected given schools' above average results. More detailed local analysis is being undertaken to gain a full understanding of progression to Higher Education for young people in Surrey. In partnership with leading universities, Surrey's 11-19 learning networks organise a variety of 'widening participation' activities aimed at increasing pupils' awareness of Higher Education.
9. The County Council maintains 22 special schools (and the county also contains one special academy) which support children with particular types of special educational needs and disabilities in particular age ranges. These contain about 1,800 Surrey pupils. Another 600 + Surrey pupils are supported by the county in various non-maintained and independent special schools and educational institutions, and another 2,500 children are educated in mainstream schools with specific additional support resourced by the County Council. There is a current concern that the County may encounter greater challenges in providing for some children – especially those with autism and similar disorders – necessitating more use of independent schools at high cost than in the long term is absolutely required. The Council constantly tries to ensure a reasonable match between the provision it maintains and the needs arising in Surrey to make sure that pupils can be educated locally and at reasonable value.

Supporting Collaboration and Partnership

10. Our second priority concerns the development of effective working relationships between the various agencies involved directly with education or, more widely, supporting the well-being of children and young people. This includes:
 - working closely with the schools and nursery providers we maintain and building wider partnerships with education

providers in the state sector in Surrey, including academies, free schools, sixth-form and further education colleges, and various organisation that use public funds to support child care and early years education; please refer to **Paragraph 11**

- working with our partners in children's social care and in the National Health Service; please refer to **Paragraph 12**
- working with other individuals and agencies involved with the provision of public sector education in the county. Please refer to **Paragraph 13**

11. In general, the County Council has succeeded in maintaining strong links with all public sector educational institutions in the county, irrespective of whether we are or are not the "maintaining authority". Relationships have long been built more on common purpose than on our ability to issue instructions, and the consequences of academisation have emphasised that the local authority can exert more influence through effective partnership arrangements than by seeking to rule by direction. We have led a very substantial under 5s expansion programme over the last decade and our leadership in this area is not seriously disputed. The current (population driven) school expansion programme gives us considerable weight in deal with schools and we have shown both that we can move effectively where there are issues of school quality, and constructively in building relationships with academies and academy chains. The Council holds regular termly meetings with governors of Surrey schools and representatives regularly attend governing bodies to discuss key issues. While we have good relationships with colleges there is probably scope to develop this further as population expansion pushes upwards and as issues of the relative advantages of school sixth forms, sixth-form colleges and FE colleges again become live questions.

12. The relationship with children's social care has sometimes presented challenges, despite both agencies being located in the same organisation. Recently links have become closer, partly through the organisation of both services into local area teams which have been required to work closely together and which are now developing a shared esprit de corps. This is being supported by work on joint commissioning of places and by greater efforts to offer joint leadership on challenging projects. The reorganisation of the National Health Service following the 2012 legislation initially created a difficult context for joint working, though the emerging leadership of the new NHS in Surrey is clearly keen to build better links and there is now a shared sense of progress. The quality of joint work will be tested over the next period, especially around the implementation of the Children and Families Act.

13. Surrey maintains links with many other parties in providing education for children and young people. We have effective links with the Department for Education and Ofsted, and these relationships are perhaps showing signs of greater warmth at the moment than in some recent times. We work closely with the academy chains operating in Surrey, especially with those that have a Surrey origin. We maintain links with neighbouring authorities, principally through the Association

of Directors of Children's Services. We also have extensive links with Surrey employers, trade unions and the local voluntary sector.

Raising Achievement and Excellence and Realising Potential

14. Our third priority is to ensure that children and young people who attend Surrey nurseries, schools and colleges learn well and make sound educational progress while they are there. This includes:
- making sure Surrey schools and educational institutions turn out young people with good skills, knowledge and qualifications that will equip them to make good progress in the wider world; please refer to **Paragraph 15**
 - making sure these same institutions add educational value so that all their students make good progress over their time in attendance, whatever their starting points and whatever disadvantage exists in their backgrounds; please refer to **Paragraph 16**
 - ensuring children and young people enjoy good access to a wide range of educational programmes suitable to their individual aptitudes and abilities. Please refer to **Paragraph 17**
15. Pupils in Surrey leave schools with good qualifications. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including English and mathematics increased in 2013 to 67.5%. Surrey remains well above south east and national comparators. Surrey is ranked 15th out of 152 local authorities (an improvement from 2012) and 4th out of 11 statistical neighbours for the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Of those local authorities above Surrey in the rankings, none is comparable in size - all have fewer than 5,600 pupils compared with Surrey's 10,660. The proportion of pupils entered for English Baccalaureate has rapidly risen: nearly half of pupils (45.6%) were entered in 2012/13, compared with one third of pupils in the previous year. Of those who were entered, 30.0% achieved this measure. Across England 35.6% pupils were entered for English Baccalaureate, while 22.9% achieved this grade.
16. The proportion of Surrey secondary, special and short stay schools that are judged to be good or better are notably higher than both nationally and in the south east as a whole. In particular, 87% of all secondary schools are judged to be good or outstanding compared with 72% nationally. There are only two secondary schools now where leadership is not judged to be at least good. There are no Surrey secondary schools in a category of concern. The proportion of primary schools judged to be good or outstanding remains an area of concern and is lower than that found nationally, although higher than in the south east as a whole (76%). The issue is particularly around those schools that are borderline Grade 2 (good) to 3 (requires improvement, RI). However, all that are judged to RI by Ofsted have been identified as Focussed Support Schools and are being intensively supported.

17. The percentage of Surrey pupils making expected progress by the end of secondary schools in both English and mathematics increased significantly in 2013 and Surrey is ranked 3rd and 4th respectively out of 11 statistical neighbours. Although some improvements have been seen this year in the percentage of pupils making expected progress by the end of primary school, Surrey's national rankings in the progress measures remain considerably lower than those for attainment. Nationally, junior and primary schools achieve similar levels of overall attainment but primary schools perform better than junior schools in the progress measures.
18. Improving the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority at key stages 2 and 4. Whilst there have been improvements in the performance of disadvantaged pupils in Surrey in all measures at key stage 2, overall this has not been as fast as nationally. However, within these overall statistics there is a wide variation between schools. At key stage 4, the gap between disadvantaged pupils in Surrey and disadvantaged nationally has reduced significantly and this year this group performed in line with similar pupils nationally. However they still perform below the cohort as a whole. The No Child Left Behind- Everyone's Responsibility strategy is in place to raise the attainment and progress of Surrey's disadvantaged pupils.

Preventing Exclusion

19. Our fourth priority is to ensure that children and young people continue to receive education throughout and beyond the period when it is statutorily required. This includes:
- reducing formal and informal exclusions to the absolute minimum consistent with the good functioning of institutions; please refer to **Paragraph 20**
 - ensuring effective alternative education is available to children who are unable to attend school by reason of exclusion or the inability to find places; please refer to **Paragraph 21**
 - developing a culture in which children and young people value education and want to attend and participate. Please refer to **Paragraph 22**
20. In general, the areas work closely with head teachers to reduce the need to exclude pupils from school, but practice can vary from school to school. Exclusion is a last resort and our specialist teaching team are proactive in supporting schools with pupils to manage their behaviour in order to keep them positively engaged in school. However, there are some clear behaviours for which exclusion is unavoidable.
21. All pupils who have been permanently excluded receive provision at a Short Stay School or with our Access to Education service within the statutory timeframe and -- where possible and appropriate -- are

reintegrated back in to mainstream schools within their community. All pupils who do not have an identified school place are provided with education provision via our Access to education service and referred to the quadrant In Year Fair Access panels. An exciting development area is around our Virtual Learning Environment (“VLE”) which is being increasingly used to provide additional online education to pupils unable to access school. We have some excellent examples of how pupils have benefitted from this type of provision and the subsequent outcomes on their ongoing learning journey.

22. We work closely with our educational partners to try and ensure that schools and offer curriculum choices that are attractive and engaging, and lead to qualifications that are of lasting value. Generally, secondary schools are under more pressure than in the past to push children to undertake academic qualifications and Surrey pupils are doing better than ever before in obtaining these qualifications. We are keen to explore whether alternative curriculum offers either in schools or through other educators providing for school-age pupils (e.g. FE colleges, University Technology Colleges) can offer something more attractive to another section of the pupil population.

Key Priorities

23. It may be useful to distil a short list of key priorities from this wide range of tasks. Five tasks stand out.
- a) To deliver the school expansion programme thus ensuring that every Surrey child is able to attend a high-quality school place.
 - b) To improve school performance, especially in the primary phase.
 - c) To close the gap between disadvantaged children and the majority of Surrey children by raising the performance standards of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including looked after children.
 - d) Through the implementation of the Children and Families Act to deliver an improved system of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities that emphasises a coherent and holistic approach to children and families from all contributing services and which actively involves families in determining the support they receive.
 - e) To maintain the role of Surrey as an education authority working at the heart of the Surrey family of schools and other educators.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to consider the report and make recommendations as it deems appropriate.

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