

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report Title	Establishment of an Education Commission		
Key Decision	Yes	Item No.	
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Children and Young People		
Class	Part 1	Date: 9 December 2015	

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement to the establishment of an 'education commission' to report in April 2016 as part of the council's strategy for school improvement in the borough.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Mayor approve the establishment of an education commission to support the development of a future vision for education in Lewisham to report in April 2016 as set out in paragraph 8 of this report.

3. Policy context

- 3.1 The national policy context is such that since the 1980s, schools have had increasing levels of autonomy. This has largely shifted the local authority's role from one of control to influence. The local authority does however still have statutory roles and responsibilities in relation to all schools and wider responsibilities for children – and still has powers to intervene in maintained schools. The statutory role of the local authority in relation to education can be summarised under four headings:
- ✓ Ensuring education excellence,
 - ✓ Ensuring sufficient school places
 - ✓ Ensuring that children are kept safe
 - ✓ Championing the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people.
- 3.2 The general landscape for education is one of more diverse schools and settings, increasing a mixed economy of provision and a complex network of stakeholders, including the Regional Schools Commissioner, academy sponsors, free schools and independent providers. There is also an increasingly diverse marketplace for services to support school improvement and decreasing central local

authority funding and resources in this area – an issue for all local authorities. This means that local authorities need to forge a strong partnership with schools, settings and communities in order to work together to improve the educational outcomes of our children and young people.

- 3.3 There is currently an Education and Adoption Bill before parliament which gives the government new powers to intervene more rapidly in schools rated by [Ofsted](#) as "inadequate" or "coasting" and which speeds up the process of converting such schools into [academies](#). This is likely to receive Royal Assent in spring 2016. This reflects the government's strong commitment to academisation and is part of an approach to schools becoming multi-academy trusts. This has been further reemphasised in the recent CSR announcements.
- 3.4 Lewisham Council and its partner organisations have consulted during 2015 on the priorities for a new three year Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 2018 entitled "It's Everybody's Business". The plan starts with the vision statement "Together with families, we will improve the lives and life chances of the children and young people in Lewisham".
- 3.5 A key priority within the plan is "Raising the attainment of all Lewisham children and young people" and this has a number of specific outcome areas:
 - AA1:** Ensuring there are sufficient good quality school places for every Lewisham child
 - AA2:** Ensuring all our children are ready to participate fully in school
 - AA3:** Improving and maintaining attendance and engagement in school at all key stages, including at transition points
 - AA4:** Raising participation in education and training, reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) at 16-19
 - AA5:** Raising achievement and progress for all our children at Key Stages 1 – 4 and closing the gaps between under-achieving groups at primary and secondary school
 - AA6:** Raising achievement and progress for all our children and closing the gaps between under-achieving groups at Key Stage 5 and Post 16 so that all our young people are well prepared to access the best education and employment opportunities for them

AA7: Raising achievement and attainment for our Looked After Children at all key stages and Post 16

3.6 At the same time, the Council has also consulted with schools (headteachers and governors) and other stakeholders on a School Improvement Framework. This sets out clearly how the local authority will risk assess and then categorise schools so that our limited resources can be targeted to support and challenge those schools which need it most. It also outlines the circumstances, in line with legislation, under which the local authority may need to intervene formally in schools which are causing concern. The Framework sets out the 'rules of engagement' between schools and local authority and builds on the '3 Cs' which have been shared with headteachers, governors and other stakeholders. To deliver school improvement across Lewisham we need to have **clarity** about our roles, responsibilities and plans; we need to **collaborate** to ensure the best use of resources, knowledge, skills and experience; and have **courage** to do things differently to ensure a step-change in outcomes at KS4 and KS5.

4. The role of the local authority in School Improvement

- 4.1 Attached to this report as Appendix A is the final version of the Lewisham School Improvement Framework. This sets out, in Section 2, the relevant legislation and guidance which determines the role of the local authority in school improvement. These can be summarised as follows: A successful local authority will:
- 4.1.1 Have a good understanding of the performance of schools in its local area using data to identify those schools that require improvement and intervention
 - 4.1.2 Take swift and effective action when failure occurs in a maintained school, using Warning Notices and Interim Executive Boards (IEBs) and any other actions necessary to ensure leadership quickly becomes good and standards improve.
 - 4.1.3 Intervene early where performance of a maintained school is declining, ensuring that schools secure the support needed to improve to be judged at least good
 - 4.1.4 Encourage good and outstanding schools to take responsibility for their own improvement and to support other schools
 - 4.1.5 Build strong working relationships with education leaders in their areas and encourage high calibre leaders to support and challenge others
 - 4.1.6 Delegate funding to frontline so that as much as possible reaches pupils

- 4.1.7 Enable maintained schools to purchase from a diverse market of excellent providers
- 4.1.8 Signpost where schools can access appropriate support
- 4.1.9 Secure strong and effective leadership and governance for maintained schools that are not providing a good enough education, by identifying and supporting successful sponsors and
- 4.1.10 Seek to work constructively with academies and alert the Regional Schools Commissioner when they have concerns about standards or leadership in an academy.

5. Lewisham Context for School Improvement

- 5.1 Lewisham has a rapidly growing population. There are currently two nursery schools, 65 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, seven all through schools, five special schools and one secondary age pupil referral unit which also has a sixth form. Additionally a number of schools have sixth forms, there is a stand-alone sixth form college and an FE college. The pressure on school places is acute especially in the primary age range, with many primary schools expanding temporarily or permanently to accommodate additional children. Pressure on secondary school places is projected in the near future and Lewisham, together with neighbouring local authorities, and our schools are planning to ensure sufficient places in the coming years. The population in Lewisham has increased by 16,000 since the 2011 census. Over the next 20 years, the population of Lewisham is forecast to be amongst the fastest growing in the London boroughs.
- 5.2 In terms of the population profile, children and young people aged 0 – 19 comprise 73,000, about 25% of the borough's overall population. The borough's ethnic profile shows that 54% are white and 46% are from Black and ethnic minority groups. By contrast Lewisham's school population is 76% black and ethnic minority. When considering children's health, obesity (year 6 pupils) and under 18 conceptions are two areas where outcomes for Lewisham are significantly worse than the England average.
- 5.3 In September 2015, no publicly maintained school in Lewisham, regardless of their governance arrangements, is judged to be inadequate by Ofsted, with the overwhelming majority judged to be good or outstanding. Only 8 are judged to require improvement (3 primary and 5 secondary / all through schools; both Nursery school are judged to be outstanding and 4 special schools are judged to be good, with one judged to be outstanding).
- 5.4 Achievement in the Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has been above the national and regional averages for the last few years, and provisional 2015 results suggest this will continue to be the case.

At Key Stages 4 and 5, young people's achievement overall is well below the regional and national averages. This is a key focus for Lewisham, as set out in the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and also in the work of the CYP Directorate.

- 5.5 Like other councils, Lewisham has had to find considerable savings year on year (since 2010) as a result of national funding changes and therefore the number of school improvement professionals employed by the council has been significantly reduced over the last few years. Lewisham, in common with other LAs, has moved from employing a team of School Improvement Officers directly, to engaging external experienced educational professionals for a number of days each to carry out the majority of the support and challenge work of the local authority.
- 5.6 Where formal intervention is required in a school, including sixth forms, to rapidly improve outcomes for pupils, the small core team of local authority officers co-ordinates and leads this intervention process.
- 5.7 The local authority, together with headteachers and governors, has promoted a range of organisational models to strengthen leadership in some schools and raise achievement. In the primary phase there have been a number of federations and partnerships established over the last five years. The local authority has formally intervened in a number of schools using its powers to change governance arrangements, and requiring partnership arrangements between schools. Overall this policy has had a positive outcome on the effectiveness of a number of primary schools resulting in improvement in levels of pupil achievement. Some of the soft federations have now ended but others have proceeded to a hard federation arrangement. The local authority has also established several all through schools, with some existing secondary schools opening a primary phase, or partnership working between schools led by an executive headteacher role, but the success of these new models has yet to be demonstrated in improving examination results at the end of Key Stage 4. Overall the brokering of school to school support has been successful in addressing particular areas of concern in primary schools but there is much more to be done within the secondary phase.
- 5.8 There are 4 Teaching School Alliances in the borough: STEEP, Endeavour, ETAL, ATLAS who between them cover Nursery, Primary and Secondary phases of education. Teaching Schools have 6 key roles:
 - 5.8.1 School-led initial teacher training
 - 5.8.2 Continuing professional development
 - 5.8.3 Supporting other schools

5.8.4 Identifying and developing leadership potential

5.8.5 Specialist leaders of education

5.8.6 Research and development

The LA has recently worked closely in partnership with the STEEP Teaching School to ensure a more school-led approach to the delivery of training for Early Years providers and officers are working to ensure a more strategic approach to the valuable contribution that Teaching School Alliances can make to school improvement and raising achievement in the borough. Teaching School Alliances are the new route for government funding of school improvement and will therefore be a source of funding for such work in the borough going forward. .

5.9 Partnership working beyond schools and settings is critically important to ensure schools can provide the early intervention and support that children, young people and families need and to ensure that we meet our safeguarding obligations. Schools are a key component of early help and therefore good partnership structures, relationships, systems and support regarding SEND, safeguarding are essential. Schools are also key players in ensuring that we protect children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation or radicalisation as well as those who may trigger social care thresholds. Schools cannot work effectively in isolation and there is still huge value to having a 'family of schools' in Lewisham.

6. Lewisham School Improvement Principles

6.1 To secure school improvement and school effectiveness, the School Improvement Framework establishes the following principles:

6.1.1. Taking a holistic and evidence based approach to school improvement

6.1.2. Demonstrating equity and a targeted approach – meaning that we target the limited school improvement resources to meet need

6.1.3. Being inclusive through championing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people including: looked after children (LAC); young carers; those with special educational needs and disability (SEND); those who are underperforming; those at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE); those at risk of becoming a young offender, those at risk of witnessing or being a victim of domestic violence or radicalisation, children missing education (CME), those at risk of exclusion and those at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET)

6.1.4. Being accountable and transparent by focusing on school leadership, management and governance

- 6.1.5. Collaborating and working towards a school-led system of self-improvement which is based on peer to peer support, partnership working and school autonomy

7. Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness

- 7.1 Our Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness (see Appendix B) describes how we will deliver the priorities which relate to raising attainment and achievement of children and young people as identified within Lewisham's Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 2018
- 7.2 The Strategy is based on the 5 principles as outlined in section 6 above, and is organised into the following 4 key areas:
 - 7.2.1 To clarify roles and responsibilities
 - 7.2.2 To review provision to ensure we can meet need
 - 7.2.3 To improve school leadership, management and governance
 - 7.2.4 To provide targeted support to individual schools
- 7.3. Each area of the Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness has a number of key workstreams which have been identified. Additional workstreams have also been identified to address the poor outcomes in KS3, KS4 and KS5. These are outlined in some detail in sections 8 - 12 which follow.

8. Proposal for an Education Commission

- 8.1 A key workstream of the Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness is to clarify roles and responsibilities, making sure all our structures and partnership bodies are fit for purpose. National policy announcements on the role of local authorities in schools makes this increasingly important. This report therefore proposes setting up an Education Commission, learning from exercises carried out in other boroughs (including Haringey, Camden, Westminster) to make recommendations regarding a longer term vision for education in Lewisham by April 2016.
- 8.2 Through the council's procurement process, a small team of education experts will be appointed who will undertake in-depth desktop analysis of data, Ofsted reports and other available information. These will be independent experts with a national reputation and experience of education in London and beyond.
- 8.3 This small expert group will build upon the data analysis workstream through an extensive stakeholder engagement programme, mainly using a programme of visits and attendance at existing forum. Key stakeholders who the Commission would meet with would include:

- ✓ Councillors
- ✓ Headteachers
- ✓ School staff
- ✓ Governors
- ✓ Young people, including the Young Mayor and Advisors
- ✓ Parents
- ✓ Other key partners including trades unions, the voluntary sector and employers

8.4 The commission will look to answer the following questions:

- 8.4.1 Given the national and regional context, what is the best form of organisation for our schools going forward?
- 8.4.2 Is there a school-led model of school improvement which would put our work on a more sustainable footing, given the council's financial constraints?
- 8.4.3 We need additional secondary and SEND places. What is the best means to achieve this, alongside ensuring all our existing schools are schools of choice?
- 8.4.4 Given our strong commitment to improving outcomes at KS4 and KS5, are there any more radical or leading edge models or approaches we could adopt at borough or school level?

Underpinning all these questions is the central theme of how our system serves the most vulnerable.

8.5 We will aim to appoint experts to the Education Commission swiftly in accordance with procurement processes in order for them to be able to commence their inquiry in January with a view to reporting in April 2016. As part of the process, the provisional findings would be shared with stakeholders to refine and finalise the recommendations..

9. Conclusion

9.1 Improving educational outcomes is a top priority for Lewisham and therefore is a major focus of the council's work. An extensive work programme is already underway encompassing both support and challenge of individual schools and cross borough initiatives. The proposed Education Commission complements this by providing external expertise, support and challenge and taking a longer term view of the opportunities for the required improvement of outcomes to be delivered as quickly as possible in the current national context.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 The cost of carrying out this exercise has been estimated at £40,000. This can be contained within the Children and Young People Directorate's budget for 2015/16.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1 Additional to those set out elsewhere in the report local authorities are required to provide primary, secondary and further education for 16 to 18 year and for people aged 19 or over who have an Education Health and Care Plan.(EHCPlan)
- 11.2 Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 specifically requires local authorities to exercise their education and training functions in relation to those young people for whom that have assumed responsibility so as to promote high standards, fulfilment of potential and fair access to opportunity for education and training. It applies in relation to persons aged 20 or over for whom an EHC Plan is maintained.
- 11.3 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to secure the provision of 'sufficient' schools (as amplified in sub-ss (2), (3) and (4)) for their areas. This function must be exercised with a view to securing diversity and parental choice. Local authorities must have regard to the need to secure primary and secondary education in separate schools, provision for children with special educational needs and boarding provision for those for whom it is desirable. The local authority is not itself obliged to provide all the schools required, but to secure that they are available. Section 18 enables an LEA to make arrangements for the provision of education at non-maintained schools.
- 11.4 The establishment of an education commission with specific term of references will assist the local authority in complying with its general statutory responsibilities especially so in the light of the changes to school improvement and education provision proposed in the Education and Adoptions Bill.

12. Crime and disorder implications

- 12.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

13. Equalities implications

- 13.1 Equalities is at the centre of the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-18 and also the Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness 2015 – 2017. Both documents have a strong focus on tackling the underachievement of disadvantaged groups. High quality education which recognises and values diversity is generally acknowledged as the intervention most likely to deliver social mobility.

14. Environmental implications

- 14.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

15. Background documents and originator

- 15.1 Report to Children and Young People's Select Committee in September 2015.
<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s38206/05Allschoolsresults.pdf>

Appendix A: Strategy for School Improvement and Effectiveness 2015 – 2017

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s39737/05AppendixAupdateonSchoolImprovementStrategy181115.pdf>

Appendix B: School Improvement Framework November 2015

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s39729/05UpdateonSchoolImprovementAppendixB181115.pdf>

If there are any queries on this report please contact Kate Bond, Head of Standards and Achievement