

Children and Young People Select Committee		
Report Title	Lewisham School Improvement Partnership	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 5
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Director for Children and Young People	
Class	Part 1	Date: 13th September 2017

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper outlines the general direction of travel for Lewisham Learning, a new school improvement partnership in Lewisham, particularly in response to questions raised by CYP Select Committee in July 2017.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the CYP Select Committee note the report and comment on the next steps.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 As set out in Lewisham Council's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020, there is a Borough-wide commitment to "make Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn". To support this priority the Council is committed to working with partners to:

- Inspire young people to achieve their full potential by removing the barriers to learning.
- Encourage and facilitate access to education, training and employment opportunities for all our citizens.
- Celebrate local achievements so people feel proud of their area and eager to be a part of its success.

- 3.2 A key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 2018 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 underachieving 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.

4. Background

4.1 In December 2015, the Mayor agreed to the establishment of the Lewisham Education Commission to support the development of a vision for education in Lewisham.

4.2 The Lewisham Education Commission considered the following key questions:

- Given the national and regional context, what is the best form of organisation for Lewisham's schools going forward?
- Is there a school-led model of school improvement which would put Lewisham's work on a more sustainable footing, given the council's financial constraints?
- Lewisham needs additional secondary and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places. What are the best means to achieve this, alongside ensuring all our existing schools are schools of choice?
- Given Lewisham's strong commitment to improving outcomes at KS4 and KS5, are any more radical or leading edge models or approaches that Lewisham could adopt at borough level?
- Underpinning all these questions is the central theme of how Lewisham's system serves the most vulnerable.

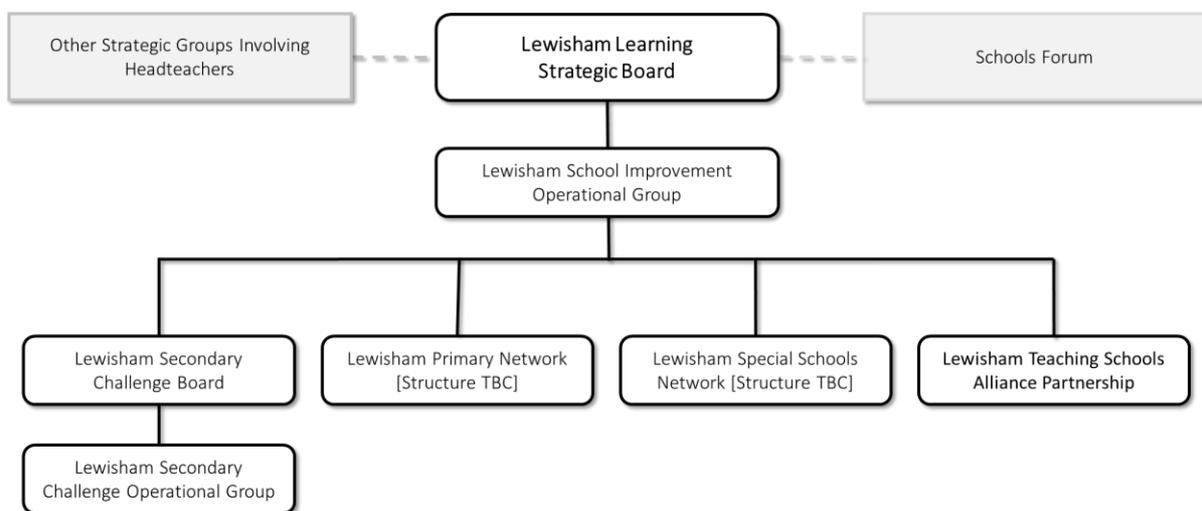
4.3 The Commission recommended that there should be an agreement between the local authority, headteachers and governors to set up a partnership to establish a school-led system of school improvement. In September 2016, a Partnership Steering Group, with an independent chair, was established to produce and consult on a detailed set of proposals.

4.4 The Education Commission Steering Group produced a draft vision and values, roles and details of governance and funding arrangements for the partnership. These draft proposals were consulted on with Headteachers, Governors and other stakeholders in June 2017 and the findings were reported to CYP Select Committee in July 2017. Of the 23 respondents representing maintained schools, 100% agreed with the principle of establishing Lewisham Learning. Officers ascribe the low response rate to the extensive discussion which has happened among heads and governors at conferences, forums and LA meetings and the acceptance that a local school partnership is the next logical step.

5. Partnership Approach

5.1 To date, officers have been supporting the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group. The end of the last school year saw the recruitment of an interim director for the Lewisham Learning Partnership. The secondment is being funded from the School Improvement Budget and a headteacher from an ‘Outstanding’ Lewisham primary school is performing this role as a secondee to the School Improvement Team.

5.2 Following the consultation process, the proposed way forward is that a ‘soft partnership’ is established with a strategic board appointed including representation from headteachers, governors and the local authority. The Lewisham Learning partnership will bring together existing strategic school improvement groups as outlined in the below governance structure:



5.3 Under this partnership arrangements, staff supporting the partnership will either be council employees, via the School Improvement Team or employees of a Lewisham school.

5.4 When the headteachers and governors on the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group were discussing the development of a formalised partnership, it was agreed that partnership’s main raison d’etre was the development of school to school improvement. Other activities such as joint

procurement or trading with schools to provide services currently run by the LA were very much second order considerations. Once more established, Lewisham Learning may decide to establish a formalised legal entity. This will be up to the board of the organization.

- 5.5 When the formation of a company was discussed by the heads and governors exploring future options for Lewisham learning, it was identified that this development would allow for the vision and values of Lewisham Learning to be formally enshrined, with legal character and responsibilities. Lewisham Learning would formally act as a unifying body. A legal entity offers longevity and stability as the range of legally defined responsibilities cannot rely on one or two keen individuals who could move on.
- 5.6 Should Lewisham Learning be established as a legal entity, as opposed to a formalised but 'soft' partnership (without legal status), it would have the ability to employ its own staff and enter into its own contracts. School partnerships in other boroughs have found this valuable as a vehicle for bringing together and maximizing different sources of funding: from schools (individually or collectively through DSG), from the LA and from other partners/sources.
- 5.7 Such an entity can access funding streams which the local authority is unable to or unlikely to be successful in obtaining: for example, the DfE's Strategic School Improvement Fund, the Education Endowment Foundation or from private companies or charitable bodies.
- 5.8 The Steering Group has consulted schools and other stakeholders on the legal status of the partnership; 62.5% of respondents thought that the partnership should be established as a legal entity, and the remainder responded that they did not know. It will be a matter for the Partnership whether to establish a legal entity. If the legal entity is established, the decision for the council will be what form the relationship should take, for example, to contract with the legal entity.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 An interim director of Lewisham Learning has been seconded from a school and will now work to drive forward the development of the partnership.
- 6.2 The paper which outlined proposals for Lewisham Learning for the consultation will be developed with headteacher and governor representatives into a finalised proposal paper; this will detail the structure, process for nomination to the strategic board and terms of reference for Lewisham Learning. The proposal paper will be a basis on which schools individually can decide to become part of the partnership.
- 6.3 At the Mayor and Cabinet meeting on 25th October 2017, details of the partnership will be presented and it will be recommended that Lewisham Council formally joins Lewisham Learning. At this point, the Mayor will be asked to agree that the partnership is used as the main vehicle for school improvement. Any expenditure will continue to require approval through the council's processes, through schools or teaching school alliances, depending on where the funding sits.

- 6.4 Following this, a formal launch of the partnership will take place and the strategic board will be appointed.
- 6.5 The Executive Director for CYP will keep CYP Select Committee informed on the development of the partnership, including the legal status and associated benefits, and provide update reports as required.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.
- 7.2 The Schools Forum has already agreed annual funding of £300k from the Dedicated Schools Grant to support school-led school improvement which was decided in anticipation of the establishment of the partnership. This funding represents investment in the partnership on the part of all maintained schools.
- 7.3 The council's school improvement budget and DSG funding to support schools causing concern will need to be spent in a way that complements this funding. Discussing the best use of the all the school improvement resources, financial and in kind, in the borough will be a key function of the partnership but the council is not being asked to commit funding to a new legal entity at this point.
- 7.4 The council's current school improvement budget (within General Fund) totals £475k and reflects the council's statutory duties and the challenges which Lewisham in particular faces, especially the need to improve attainment at KS4 and KS5. Given the council's overall position, this funding is under pressure/threat given the many other calls on the council's increasingly scarce finances and the Lewisham Learning Partnership is potentially a vehicle for a more self-sustaining approach which can reduce reliance on council school improvement budgets.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 This report sets out the intended next steps in relation to the School Improvement Partnership and the pros and cons of setting up a partnership arrangement or a legal entity. Should the Partnership determine that it wishes to establish a legal entity, the Board would need to seek independent legal advice regarding the form of the legal entity (e.g. company limited by shares) and also source support in setting up the company. For its part, the council would need to establish what relationship it would have with any such entity, whether contractual or otherwise.
- 8.2 The proposals and next steps set out in this report, developed as a result of the work of the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group, the recent consultation exercise and responses, will assist the Council in complying with its general statutory responsibilities in relation to school improvement and the promotion of high standards.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 Education is the principal driver of equalities in an area of high deprivation such as Lewisham. Our schools have a large majority of pupils of BME origin and high proportions with special educational needs and disabilities. It is very important therefore that inclusiveness and equalities are at the core of the schools partnership for Lewisham and that the moral purpose of such a partnership is very clearly articulated and constantly re-emphasised.

10. Environmental Implications

- 10.1 No specific environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report.

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 11.1 No specific crime and disorder implications have been identified as arising from this report.

Report Author

If you require further information about this report please contact Sara Williams (sara.williams@lewisham.gov.uk).