

CABINET – 17 JULY 2012

EDUCATION STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT

Outcomes of the Discussion held at the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on 12 July 2012

On Thursday, the 12th of July 2012, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the latest version of 'A Strategy for Change – Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire', dated 28 June 2012 v1.0.

The Committee welcomed Oxford City Councillor, Steve Curran, to the meeting and were very pleased to hear of the City Council's commitment to joint working with OCC on the reading campaign in relevant Oxford primary schools.

As a result, the committee would like the Cabinet to consider the outcomes of that discussion as part of its agenda item on this topic in their meeting on Tuesday the 17th of July. This includes the following:

- **Communication Strategy** – The communication component of the strategy was seen to be of the utmost importance. Especially as it relates to the following:
 - Building effective 'buy-in' from schools for campaigns and other initiatives. Schools need to be fully engaged as active partners and not the recipients of mandates.
 - Campaigns need to be communicated in a timely way, giving all stakeholders as much information as possible in advance so as to best coordinate support and take-up, and build into their school development plans.
 - Great care needs to be taken to ensure that a data led exercise does not lead to presumptions about particular schools current policies, practices, and interventions with regard to reading.
 - Further dialogue and engagement needs to take place around developing a better understanding of the national academy agenda and Oxfordshire's 'support' for it. This is particularly true for headteachers and school governors but extends to other stakeholders such as parents.
 - It is important that the Local Authority maintains a clear view of its role in leadership of, and support for the county-wide' family of schools'.
- **Academies** – As it relates to new academies, the local authority needs to take an active role in examining the capacity, suitability and track record of potential sponsors and partners.

- **Education Transformation Board** – The committee raised questions about some aspects of the Education Transformation Board which were unspecified in the strategy, particularly around influence and implementation. Specifically, it was unclear how the board would be empowered to intervene and challenge on poor attainment or other issues, and their capacity to deliver. It was also thought that an annual report was insufficient to address emerging issues in a timely way.
- **Targeted Campaigns** – Where the local authority is offering campaigns or other programmes to schools, it needs to ensure that those vulnerable schools under financial pressure are supported to participate.
- **The Change Agenda** – An assurance was sought that the local authority, has available to it, officers with the appropriate ‘skills set’ to meet the needs of the change agenda.

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