

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2010

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT WORKING GROUP

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 29 JUNE 2010, OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction

The Children's Scrutiny Educational Attainment working group concluded this year's work on specifically primary educational attainment with a Select Committee on the 29th June 2010. Based on the findings from the working group's 16 schools visits, three areas were covered on the day: Children's Centres; Improving the School Environment; and Collaborative working. The outcomes and recommendations from the Select Committee's discussions are outlined below.

Moving beyond "Satisfactory"

The Select Committee clarified that a key area for developing educational attainment in primary education in Oxfordshire is to improve the many "satisfactory" schools and through this the quality of teachers' work. The select committee found that it would not be advisable to limit the focus to the few poorly performing schools and teachers, as these reflect a relatively small proportion of the overall picture. To improve educational attainment in primary education the focus should instead be on lifting and improving the many "satisfactory" schools to reach "good" and "outstanding" levels. It is recommended this improvement is pursued by three strands:

Best practise sharing and collaborative working

Better links between Oxfordshire County Council, Children's Centres, schools and parents are essential. Specifically, it is recommended that:

- The use of federations is developed further
- New technology, in particular the Oxfordshire Learning Platform, should be further developed. This could include:
 - o Interactive conversations via media such as Twitter, blogs, podcasts and an interactive helpline with a colleague supported Q&A feature
 - o A case study library for new ideas and inspiration
- The new County Council Customer Service Centre be used to avoid confusion when contacting the Council
- Children's Centres are already beginning to have an impact on attainment and parents should be encouraged to use the Centres
- Links between Children's Centres and the Health Service are improved further

- Children's Centres are linked with other partners in a more creative way. Schools and Children's Centres should consider joint management arrangements. Closer links to the community and local schools should continue to be developed to for example include shared outdoors facilities.
- Children's Centres should develop links to the community to make the most of local expertise, such as on housing, benefits etc.
- Children's Centre staff should actively participate in and support the transition to school of vulnerable children known to the local Centre.
- A timescale should be developed for the Children, Young People and Families directorate to analyse the impact of Children's Centre attendance on Key Stage 1 pupils

Staff development of "Satisfactory teachers" to "Outstanding teachers"

For schools to move beyond "Satisfactory", teachers must be supported in developing 'outstanding' skills. It is recommended that:

- A personal development scheme is designed specifically to boost "Satisfactory" teachers.
- Teachers who are considering becoming head teachers should be supported through an emerging leaders programme.
- Very good and average teachers are paired and work shadowing is encouraged
- Support for federation building continues and includes specific actions to address teacher development

Governors are playing a key role in driving improvements in "Satisfactory" schools

Governors have a key responsibility to support the school in driving its performance forward. It is therefore recommended that:

- Governors challenge the perception that "Satisfactory" is good enough
- Governors ensure the aim is to have a dynamic not a "cosy" school atmosphere
- Governors use the new technology available to learn and share best practise

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