

Meeting: Education Advisory Board

Subject: School Improvement summary

Date: 14th October 2020

Report from: Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education

Report by: Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out how we will prioritise support for LA maintained schools and the range and purpose of school improvement activities for 2020 -2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the school improvement prioritisation and support for 2020-21.**

3. Background

- 3.1 We currently have 19 primary schools, 1 secondary school and 1 all-through school that are LA maintained.
- 3.2 In terms of Ofsted judgement categories, 2 schools are judged to be outstanding, 1 requires improvement, 1 inadequate and the remainder are good.
- 3.3 Previously, the Portsmouth Education Partnership dashboard of performance information has been used in conjunction with local intelligence and requests from schools themselves to prioritise school improvement support. This has not always been well received by schools, even when designed as ‘a starting point for a conversation’. It is considered by many school leaders to be a crude tool, which does not take into account the context of their local situation and other factors. This viewpoint is acknowledged by the Local Authority but clearly, the data available has provided an initial indicator of school performance and whether support may be required.
- 3.4 Due to Covid-19, no statutory assessments were undertaken at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Although schools were invited to submit data to the Information Services team this is for the sole use of schools only and not for any external partner to judge school performance. As a result, there will be no PEP dashboards this year.

3.5 Therefore, the Boards of Portsmouth Education Partnership and Local Authority Head of School Improvement and Early Years are looking to establish an agreed, transparent and coherent set of criteria that will enable proportional use of available resources and a positive reception from school leaders, such as:

- Ofsted category & imminence of next inspection
- New Head teacher/Senior leadership in post
- Historic data/performance information / trends (2017-2019) & variation between subjects. Particular attention will be given to how progress for children compares with progress in schools across the country which have profiles similar to our schools, using established benchmarking tools.
- Schools plans to achieve aspirational targets
- Response to DfE guidance specifically remote learning and provision for blended and/or home learning, use of Catch-Up Premium

4. Rationale

4.1 With the conversion to academy status of approximately two-thirds of schools in the Local Authority, PCC is no longer able to have the luxury of an extensive school improvement team, with officers to undertake the range of work as listed below. Resources from central government have instead been devolved to other bodies, such as the Teaching School Council. The self-improving school-led system is at the heart of the government's vision for education in England. This means that schools are being empowered to make decisions about how to improve and to work collaboratively to support each other to do so and that local authority resources must be targeted efficiently and effectively.

- a) Ofsted - the role of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is to make sure that organisations providing education, training and care services in England do so to a high standard for children and students. Schools and appropriate bodies are accountable for the use of public money and the impact of Ofsted judgements are far ranging, from influencing parental choice to confirmation of the effectiveness of the standard of education and safeguarding practices provided.
- b) New leadership - a change of leadership in an educational organisation is a pivotal time and needs to be supported and managed so that it does not destabilise the progress of improvement.
- c) Performance over time is an indicator of the standards of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Particularly where there are trends or real inconsistencies, and/or significant divergence from levels of progress achieved in similar schools elsewhere in the country, then this becomes a focus for prompting questions about effectiveness.
- d) Schools have development and improvement plans, which set out priorities with measures, and actions to be taken to achieve the

success criteria along with monitoring and evaluation. However, it is the review and challenge of these plans and support that is crucial to ensuring they have the desired impact on outcomes and achievement.

- e) During the Covid-19 pandemic schools have had to become responsive to an ever-changing situation and learn to work in new and different ways that support the continuing education of children and young people. Their responses to remote learning and the efficient use of the Catch-Up Premium must be considered in relation to the determination that this crisis will not impinge upon the high quality education that is deserved throughout Portsmouth.

5. Range and purpose of support

5.1 The range and purpose of support is set out below:

- a) The Head of School Improvement and Early Years locally will:
 - i. Play a key role in the newly established School Leadership and Effectiveness Board, which replaces the previous School Improvement Board (as illustrated on the PEP structure diagram with in the Education Strategy).
 - ii. Support, challenge and develop our head teachers e.g. provide benchmark and target setting data (such as Fisher Family Trust), review school plans and the actions to achieve aspirational targets, facilitate induction procedures, pairing new head teachers to Portsmouth with an experienced peer colleague, devise a leadership development programme that ensures our school leaders have continuing professional development and support to undertake the complex job that they fulfil.
 - iii. Support Local Governing Boards in the recruitment of new school leaders. Unless, we have thorough and robust recruitment processes we will not be able to appoint head teachers with the necessary skills, qualities and resilience to meet the needs of our raised expectations.
 - iv. Ensure that chairs of governors are equipped to fulfil their accountability role of 'critical friend' to our school leaders, thus strengthening schools' leadership and management.
 - v. Provide support, before, during and after Ofsted inspections. Understanding of the Education Inspection Framework is vital to enable schools to demonstrate their effectiveness against the criteria in the evaluation schedule, as is empowering school leaders at all levels to confidently manage the process.
 - vi. Organise bespoke packages (conducting reviews, assigning school improvement partners, joining up services, commissioning external support, including in projects and initiatives).
- b) Vital and effective links will be sustained or established with the following partners, working through or beyond the Portsmouth Education Partnership:

- i. Local teaching school alliances i.e. Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance.
- ii. Local subject specialist hubs i.e. HISP Research School, Solent Maths Hub, Springhill English Hub.
- iii. Forthcoming developments, such as Behaviour Hubs and Teaching School Hubs.
- iv. The Regional School Commissioners.
- v. Ofsted.

6. Intended impact 2021

6.1 Intended impact is summarised as follows:

- LA maintained schools are clear about the necessity to utilise comparative benchmarking, such as FFT50. The new PEP education strategy sets an ambition that all schools should be supported to set a target where necessary to achieve a level of progress for children at least equivalent to the average for schools in a comparable groups of schools nationally. All LA schools will be supported to develop improvement plans with that aim where it is not already achieved.
- Support for LA maintained schools is proportional to their effectiveness, so that resources are targeted where they are needed most, ensuring value for money.
- Criteria for prioritisation are open and transparent, widely agreed upon and recognised as a proactive means to generate school improvement.
- Ofsted judgements will show that 100% of Portsmouth schools are judged to be Good or better for their Overall Effectiveness.
- School leaders are supported to be the drivers of their individual school's effectiveness, but also that aligned and collective school improvement across the Portsmouth Education Partnership impacts upon raising standards of achievement for all of our children and young people.

7. Overall summary

- 7.1 The rationale and criteria for the prioritisation of support for LA maintained schools are clear, considered and appropriate.
- 7.2 School improvement support for LA maintained schools is proportional, targeted and bespoke.
- 7.3 LA maintained schools receive support aligned to the LA Education Strategy and priorities agreed upon by the Portsmouth Education Partnership Strategic Board.
- 7.4 School improvement provides both high support and high challenge in driving up standards.