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Title of meeting:	Education Advisory Board
Subject:	Support and Challenge for LA Maintained Schools
Date of meeting:	1 st December 2022
Report by:	Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director - Education

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This report sets out how LA Maintained schools have been provided with support and challenge by the council's school improvement service since the previous report to the Education Advisory Board for July 2022. This therefore covers the period that has seen our LA Maintained schools' journey out of the most challenging period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the return to formal education assessments in the summer term 2022.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken to support and challenge LA Maintained schools since the last report.

4. Summary of the support and challenge to LA maintained schools

- 4.1 Support and challenge for LA Maintained schools has built upon previous reports delivered by the Head of School Improvement and Early Years since appointment in September 2020. The service has provided ongoing support and challenge through a range of systematic approaches.
- 4.2 A key focus of our work has continued to be the **development of relationships with our LA Maintained schools**. This is enacted through:
- a) **Our Education SLT termly school visits**. Either the Deputy Director - Education, or the Head of Inclusion, or Head of School Improvement and Early Years, or Head of Sufficiency and Resources meets with the

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headteachers of each LA Maintained school at their school with opportunity to discuss current issues in any of these above areas and signpost support. This meeting also enables us to ensure that we fulfil our duty of care to these school leaders, as workload and wellbeing can be covered.

- b) **Regular half-termly meetings** with LA Maintained schools' headteachers. On Friday 16th September 2022 a very useful co-production workshop was held with the Education SLT officers and LA maintained schools' headteachers, hosted at Copnor Primary School. During this day, collaboratively headteachers and school officers worked to agree in principle what each party can, and should, realistically expect from each other e.g. model policies like Attendance which incorporates the new regulations that will be in place from September 2023 and regular meetings for other LA Maintained schools' staff members, such as School Business Managers /Finance Officers.
- c) This way of working with our LA Maintained schools to offer support and challenge in a more consistent way, is part of a direction of travel that tends towards '**acting like a MAT**', yet without being a multi academy trust, which currently is not the choice of these school leaders. There is a strength to working more as a cohesive collective in these challenging economic and political times that school leaders in strong multi academy trusts receive and we believe morally should also be available to our LA Maintained schools.

4.3 Support and challenge delivered through **training and development** is an ongoing aspect of our work with LA Maintained schools.

- a) An **Ofsted update** was provided in September 2022 to ensure that LA Maintained schools understand how the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework is now published in two updated School Inspection Handbooks and that inspections are now known as Graded and Ungraded. Other subtle updates, for example, reference to an age-appropriate understanding of protected characteristics, the position of 'Early stages of learning to read' bullet points and the removal of transition statements in the quality of education section were highlighted.

Our LA Maintained schools benefit from working with a PCC officer who also works for Ofsted as an inspector, meaning that knowledge and practice is up to date and based on real inspection experience. LA Maintained schools are supported through updates, but also **CPD requests** e.g. this year already Wimborne Primary have benefited from training around Ofsted and Early Years, and Southsea Infant focused on the part of the subject/curriculum leaders have to play during an Ofsted inspection.

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- b) Through **coaching** provided by an independent professionally qualified consultant, our LA Maintained schools' headteachers can be supported to have open, honest and frank conversations which will aid them in making complex educational decisions. So far, this service has been offered to, and taken up by, at least 5 of our 18 LA Maintained school's headteachers. Feedback is extremely positive, such that the range of sessions have been extended to those who have found it the most useful.

 - c) **Performance information** - Whilst we completely acknowledge that primary KS1 and KS2 2022 results cannot be used for accountability purposes, it is vital that school leaders understand and use data to prioritise their actions and resources. The Education Information Services team attended the afternoon session of our meeting with LA Maintained schools on 16th September 2022 and were able to provide a bespoke session looking at FFT Aspire and the many functions now available that aid school leaders to support and challenge their own staff, right down to an individual pupil level. We are working to build increased ambition for our Portsmouth pupils who have similar characteristics and attainment to those elsewhere in the country.
- 4.4 All LA Maintained schools have now been offered a **funded annual school improvement partner visit**, with a menu of school improvement activities so the focus of the visit can be agreed between the headteacher and the named link school improvement partner. This will enable schools to have an external objective professional view and quality assurance plus ongoing support which they can commission for themselves whilst the Head of School Improvement and Early Years, and PCC School Improvement Adviser can focus on the more challenging and accountability aspects such as reviewing standards and target-setting. External and internal local authority support and challenge is crucial to promote validity of judgements and outward-facing practice in Portsmouth.
- 4.5 Where the most intervention is required, more targeted support and challenge are utilised, such as building on the outcomes and recommendations of Ofsted reports, when significant and rapid improvement is needed. Working with the new headteacher at Mayfield, a thorough **School Review** was undertaken in October 2022. This involved the Head of School Improvement and Early Years and a team of LA officers (e.g. those from Early Years, and Assessment and Moderation) and external consultants, so that many aspects of the school's work could be audited. This ranged from practice in the Early Years, the quality of education, reading, mathematics, curriculum progression, and behaviour and attitudes, from Year R to 11. Findings will support school leaders to make accurate judgements in self-evaluation, ensure plans identify the right priorities and actions and implement change.
- 4.6 Our **LA Maintained schools' peer review process 'Reflective Improvement'** is now into its second year. 17 of our 18 LA Maintained schools have signed up

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to participate and lead reviewers and team members have been assigned to each peer review throughout the year. The process has been slightly updated in line with feedback from participants last year and training again amended. A session specifically for lead reviewers has been offered in November 2022. Crucially, we are tightening up and offering more challenge on the aspect of the process that follows the peer review, the 'so what' part, as it is what happens as a result of the peer review that will move our schools forward rather than the day of the review itself. The annual evaluation report is attached at Appendix 1.

- 4.7 In ensuring the local authority's accountability aspect of working with LA Maintained schools, our business support team, biannually as a minimum, audit LA Maintained school's **websites** to check that they meet DfE and statutory requirements. This includes feedback on ease of access to information (how many clicks to find it) and whether information is current or out of date. This monitoring should be undertaken by school leaders and governors, but the local authority adds another layer of support and challenge by undertaking this activity for our LA Maintained schools.
- 4.8 Safeguarding continues to be a vital area of work for all schools. **Safeguarding sampling** visits which examine some of these practices in our LA Maintained schools have been carried out this term at St George's Beneficial C of E Primary and Manor Infant and Nursery schools. This enables challenge to ensure that safeguarding aspects of identify, help, and manage are detailed, timely, and leaders have good oversight, which are some of the most common failings identified in Ofsted reports across the country. Discussion and scrutiny lead to suggested improvements which enhance or further secure current practice, rather than major changes. School leaders have welcomed this activity *"we have already acted upon the suggestions you made at the time. This report fleshes it out further which is very helpful."*
- 4.9 Whilst across Portsmouth we are pleased that our **Key Stage 2 2022 results in Reading** attainment rose faster than the national average and we did narrow the gap from 2019, we can in no way afford to be complacent. The Destination Reader network will continue to ensure that this programme and pedagogy is embedded in all of the schools, including LA Maintained, that have adopted it. Those that use it where 2022 results may not have been as high as expected will be challenged and support offered to drive improved outcomes.

LA Maintained schools have been specifically contacted about the additional DfE 'Accelerator Fund' for **Phonics** books and resources in primary schools and the opportunity for support around implementation. It is not enough to have a validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme, it has to be robustly implemented to that it does impact upon standards and pupils' reading as they progress through their education.

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Equally, support for **struggling and weaker readers in secondary schools** must improve and our two LA Maintained schools that have secondary pupils are being assisted by signposting to resources and best practice.

This challenge and support very much aligns with the literacy priority of our local needs analysis and development plans for Portsmouth as Priority Education Investment Area and work of the Portsmouth Education Partnership already underway.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1: Annual Evaluation report

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Annual update report on LA Maintained schools' peer review process 'Reflective Improvement'	