

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **14 June 2011**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Accountability for School Improvement**

Purpose of report: **To outline the local authority's responsibility for holding settings, schools and colleges to account for their improvement**

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to consider proposals for discharging the role of the County Council for school improvement in the context of changes in government legislation and policy.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The proposals for the Standards and Learning Effectiveness (SLES) to discharge their school improvement function are fully costed in the service budget for 2011-12.

1.2 The SLES will provide additional school improvement activity through a traded service with schools in East Sussex and neighbouring Local Authorities (LAs). The estimated level of income from trading is modest but essential to the viability of the service.

1.3 Although the accountability for school standards sits with the SLES there is a significant level of activity that directly supports school improvement across the Children's Services Department (CSD). Many of these services are operating within new budget pressures and it is likely that this will impact on the contribution they can make to school improvement.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The report addresses key developments in policy and practice in relation to the role of the County Council in holding settings, schools and colleges to account.

3. Accountability for school improvement

3.1 The Education Bill introduced in the House of Commons in January 2011 was founded on the principles and proposals in the Department for Education (DfE) November 2010 White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" 2010. This proposed legislation and DfE policy provide increased autonomy for governing bodies and schools and recognise that the primary responsibility for school improvement sits with schools. It proposes that our best schools and leaders should take on greater responsibility for leading school improvement work and managing change across the system.

3.2 The LA will not have a statutory responsibility to appoint a School Improvement Partner (SIP) for each school and the government funding that supported the SIP ceased in April 2011. The SIP had provided a five day programme of support and challenge to each school. The programme included support for analysing performance, setting targets for learner outcomes, managing the performance of the headteacher and evaluating the effectiveness of the school. The SIP undertook, on behalf of the school, to broker support from SLES or external consultants to assist the school in taking forward their priorities for improvement.

3.3 Increased autonomy for schools is supported through proposals to re-focus Ofsted school inspection on what matters most: the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, backed by excellent leadership and management, and good discipline and behavior in schools.

3.4 The principle of proportionate inspection will be implemented and outstanding schools will no longer be subject to routine inspections unless concerns about their performance are identified. Ofsted will conduct more frequent inspections of underperforming schools and propose to differentiate within the broad 'satisfactory' category between schools which are improving and those which are stuck, which will receive additional monitoring.

3.5 The completion of a self-evaluation form (SEF) is no longer compulsory but it is likely that Ofsted will publish a simplified SEF and guidance on good evaluation for voluntary use.

3.6 The LA will retain a statutory duty to improve outcomes, in particular for the most vulnerable, and to secure full participation in high quality education and training opportunities for all children and young people to age 19 and for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) to 25. Accountability for this duty is discharged by the SLES.

3.7 The LA is free to determine their strategy for school improvement but it must be designed to ensure that their schools perform above the floor standards, maintain an upward trajectory of improvement in attainment and participation at all Key Stages and are not judged by Ofsted to be in an underperforming category.

4. Government changes to performance measures

4.1 National floor targets, now known as floor standards, have been raised and schools will be seen as under performing if:

- below 60% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieve Level 4 or above in English and mathematics or below average proportion of pupils make expected progress in English or in mathematics.
- below 35% of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C (or equivalents) including English and maths or below average proportion of pupils make expected progress in English or in mathematics.

4.2 Two new Key Stage 4 performance measures have been introduced:

- **The Basics** - % of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C including English, mathematics and science
- **The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)** - % of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C including English, mathematics, science, history or geography and a modern foreign language.

4.3 The new performance measures present challenges to a number of schools in East Sussex and a risk of underperformance in national league tables.

5. Developing school improvement in East Sussex

5.1 The government's agenda for school improvement, alongside the reduction in LA resources for this activity, presents challenges and opportunities for the LA and a responsibility to ensure that arrangements are effective both at the point when they are established and in the future. It is anticipated that it will take time to develop an effective, coherent but more diverse localised network of challenge and support for schools.

5.2 The SLES has identified seven key objectives through which actions will be prioritised to discharge the accountability for school improvement. (Appendix 1)

5.3 The core elements of the SLES activity are:

- **Knowing all our settings, schools and colleges sufficiently well** through a process of centralised desk top analysis of standards and the collection of other data, to identify risk of underperformance for a school or group of pupils, and to inform categorisation of schools for the purposes of support and intervention. (Appendix 2)

- **Identifying priorities** sufficiently accurately to be able to target support for schools below, or at risk of falling below, the floor standards or at risk of an Ofsted category of concern. Also to identify and address countywide performance issues and to support schools to move from satisfactory to good and from good to outstanding.
- **Building capacity for partnership** to ensure a sufficient and locally well-informed group of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) that will provide sufficient capacity to support school to school improvement and complement the support provided by the SLES. Also, to provide traded school improvement services that are quality assured and meet the priorities and improvement needs of settings, schools and colleges. (Appendix 3)

5.4 Good or outstanding schools and strongly improving satisfactory schools will purchase their own support and challenge for school improvement from the SLES or from other schools and external consultants. Underperforming schools, that require additional support to secure improvement, will receive a tailored programme of support and challenge negotiated by the SLES: the school and SLES will share the cost of funding the support and intervention programme. (Appendix 2)

5.5 We are working with headteachers, governors and schools to develop a new strategy for school improvement. The strategy outlines the role of the SLES in supporting school improvement by creating conditions for change including promoting effective partnerships with and between settings, schools and colleges.

6. The role of the Local Authority Clerking Service

6.1 The Clerking Service will play a key role in supporting school improvement through promoting and developing strong governance in schools. (Appendix 4)

7. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

7.1 Members are asked to note the revised legislative and policy context for school improvement and proposals from the SLES for their work in this context including the development and implementation of a new School Improvement Strategy.

7.2 Members are asked to note that government policy and budget reductions create risks for the LA and SLES in their school improvement work in particular, the operation of a robust system for monitoring to provide an early warning of a decline in school performance which would trigger the need for a school to receive additional support.

MATT DUNKLEY
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Fiona Wright, Head of School Standards and Learning Effectiveness

Local Members: All

Background Documents

None

SLES objectives 2011 - 13

1. To ensure that the Local Authority (LA) has an accurate view of all its settings and schools and of the performance of all children and young people.
2. To improve standards and outcomes for all children and young people to age 19 and LLDD to 25.
3. To secure high quality education and training opportunities for children and young people to age 19 and up to the age of 25 for LLDD.
4. To intervene in schools causing concern identified through: being below the floor standard; Ofsted judgement; standards and outcomes data; or concerns raised by pupils, parents or other agencies.
5. To provide strategic support for the development, management and maintenance of improvement capacity at all levels including LA; partnerships; settings, schools and colleges; leadership and governance.
6. To support schools and colleges, parents and pupils to secure full participation in education, employment and training to 18 and LLDD to 25.
7. To provide high quality traded services for settings, schools and colleges, which meet their needs and priorities.

Categorisation of schools

SLES will undertake an annual desk top analysis of quantitative data that leads to an initial view on a school's performance.

There are three broad performance categories 'Green', 'Amber' and 'Red'. Categories 'Green' and 'Red' have sub-divisions that provide a narrower grading of performance:

- *Green*: outstanding (1), good (2) and strongly improving satisfactory schools (3);
- *Amber*: stuck satisfactory schools(3s), schools at risk of falling below the floor standard (3s);
- *Red*: schools below the floor standard in two out of three indicators and / or at risk of being categorised as a concern by Ofsted (4); in an Ofsted category (5).

The SLES will advise governing bodies and headteachers on the outcome of the desk top analysis and seek their views on the proposed category for their school. Priority will be given to meet with schools categorised as 'Amber' (3s) to review the school's self-evaluation, assess their capacity to identify and address antecedents of underperformance and reach a view on the level of risk with regard to future performance. Schools are expected to improve at a good pace within a specified timescale so that pupil outcomes improve rapidly.

Schools that have 'Amber' or 'Red' categories (3s, 4 and 5) agreed will receive additional support to secure improvement. A tailored programme of support will be negotiated with SLES. The programme will identify the intervention that will be provided by a partner school and / or SLES alongside the school's own improvement activity. The school and SLES will share the cost of funding the support and intervention package.

'Green' schools (categories 1, 2, 3) will purchase their own support and challenge for school improvement from the SLES or from other schools or external consultants. The 'Green' schools will provide the capacity for school to school support. The SLES will maintain an up to date knowledge of their strengths and capacity to support improvement.

Standards and Learning Effectiveness Traded Services

SLES traded offer is structured under four headings:

- Pupil Achievement
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Behaviour and Safety
- Leadership and Management

These reflect the key areas that will be inspected under the new Ofsted framework which will come into force from January 2012.

The East Sussex SLES Traded service can be purchased by all schools in East Sussex and in other Local Authorities. East Sussex Traded Services are available as a Service Level Agreement for schools /colleges and the SLES is accountable to the school / college for work delivered as part of the agreement.

Traded services are quality assured by the LA and the SLES has a good reputation for making a very significant impact in their work. Services include both bespoke offer and improvement packages available to schools individually and central training.

Services are designed to build capacity in our schools for sustained improvement. In creating the menu of services on offer there has been ongoing consultation with school leaders and middle level managers in schools. The menu reflects not only local but national priorities.

Services are very competitively priced for schools that have purchased the SLES SLA.

To date (May 2011) approximately two thirds of all East Sussex schools have purchased the SLES SLA.

SLES service level agreement by schools at 25 May 2011			
Phase	Total	Potential	% of potential
Primary	109	155	70%
Secondary	18	26	69%
Special	10	11	91%
All Schools	137	192	71%
Total Income up to 24 May 2011			-£130,775.71

Clerking Service Update

Introduction

In May 2009 the East Sussex Scrutiny Review Board published its report 'Scrutiny Review of Governing Body Clerks'. The Review Board recognised that an efficient and effective clerk is a key component of a good governing body. The board stated that it believed the best way to bring about improvements to clerking in East Sussex was to develop a Clerking Service. Following publication of the Scrutiny Board's report, a proposal was submitted to Schools Forum to designate headroom money to develop a Clerking Service. This was approved and headroom money was allocated.

In December 2009 Governor Services presented an initial report to County Forum on the development of a Clerking Service. A working group consisting of three members of the East Sussex Governors' Representative Group (ESGRG) and the Governor Services Manager was established. At County Forum in March 2010, it was agreed that an implementation group would work on establishing a suitable model for the Clerking Service in East Sussex. The Implementation Group consists of members of ESGRG, Governor Services Manager, representative from Personnel and an East Sussex BTEC qualified clerk.

The implementation group recognised that schools, and individual clerks, could not be instructed to transfer their Clerking arrangements to be part of the East Sussex Clerking service; therefore, schools were invited to "transfer" to the East Sussex protocol.

The Clerking Service started in September 2010 and since that time has been well managed to encourage clerks to transfer onto an agreed quality assured performance management protocol. The following data outlines numbers of clerks transferring to the protocol:

Clerks transferring to East Sussex Protocol at 31st March 2011

Transfer Status	Clerks	Schools	Primaries	Secondary	Special
Confirmed transferred or transferring	104 (66%)	127 (68%)	110	15	2
Confirmed not transferring	24 (15%)	24 (13%)	17	5	2
No response	29 (19%)	36 (19%)	25	6	5
Total	157	187	152	26	9

Accreditation scheme for Clerks

East Sussex has gained approval as an Open College Network (OCN) Centre and so far 104 clerks are already accredited (23) or committed to accreditation (81).

Pro-active targeting of schools

The Clerking Service Manager is identifying priority schools to visit to support the transfer to the East Sussex Clerking Service. We will continue to monitor the performance of clerks and the indicators set for measuring impact but at this stage we are confident that the service will have a positive impact on the governance of schools in East Sussex.