

Report to: Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

Date of meeting: 13 September 2021

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Excellence for All 2021 – 2023

Purpose: To seek Lead Member approval of the new Excellence for All strategy which underpins the work of the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service.

RECOMMENDATION

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the content and authorise the publication of the Excellence for All Strategy for 2021 – 2023.

1 Background

1.1 The first Excellence for All strategy was published in 2013 and each iteration has a two-year life span. It outlines the main strategic ambitions for schools, settings and colleges in East Sussex.

1.2 Reflecting the school led improvement system, Excellence for All is produced in partnership with key stakeholders including the Primary and Secondary (School) Boards whose Chairs are signatories to the document (Primary and Secondary Boards are county-wide strategic bodies which set the overall vision and priorities for improvement within the local education system).

1.3 Excellence for All drives the work of the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES).

1.4 The new strategy (attached at Appendix 1) takes account of the national context and SLES will continue to work with schools, settings and colleges to respond effectively to changes in educational policy.

2 Supporting information

Consultation

2.1 The consultation process began before any drafts of the document had been written. Partners were asked to attend strategic engagement sessions, which began in March 2021. They were asked to provide feedback in answer to the following questions:

- What do you think we already do well collectively in East Sussex for children and young people?
- Are there parts of our collective system that could work better together? How?
- What opportunities does a post COVID-19 world present to us?
- What would be your priorities for children and young people's education in East Sussex over the next 2 years?
- What would success look like?

2.2 Partners were also presented with data and analysis on: attainment outcomes from early years to key stage 4, attendance and exclusions, and access to learning and participation. This data allowed partners to reflect on the progress that has been made since the last strategy was implemented in 2019 and focus on the areas for improvement which the data highlighted.

2.3 The stakeholders who took part in these engagement sessions include key stakeholders and partners from early years to post-16 providers, and the Dioceses of Chichester and the Dioceses of Arundel & Brighton.

2.4 Partners provided thorough and detailed feedback to the key questions and this information was then crafted into the first new draft of Excellence for All. During the consultation it was clear that partners felt that it was essential that the strategy was more concise than previous versions with a focus on key priorities as identified through the data analysis rather than covering everything we collectively do for education in East Sussex. Partners collectively agreed with the three emerging priorities for the strategy.

2.5 Partners were also keen to emphasise that this strategy should capture the 'once in a lifetime' opportunity that we have, in the wake of the pandemic, to rethink what is important in education. Partners also felt that it was critical to retain the innovative approaches and projects developed during lockdowns.

Strategy

2.6 After the consultation period the following strategic ambitions were drawn from the feedback provided by partners:

- Support every setting and partnership to strengthen leadership at all levels, enabling leaders who promote excellence for all children and young people.
- Improve literacy and oracy, across all phases, to build on the gains that have been made in the county over recent years and address areas of historically lower achievement.
- Take the innovations in approaches to learning and participation, developed during the pandemic, into our post lockdown working to support the inclusion and wellbeing of children and young people.

2.7 The Chairs of the Primary and Secondary Boards also agreed to and signed off these ambitions. They noted that they align with the priorities of the boards themselves, which will serve to further strengthen the partnership infrastructure and to provide schools, settings, and colleges with consistent and coherent messaging about strategic education improvement in East Sussex.

2.8 The strategy explores two key areas of focus. The first area is 'leadership', which was a common theme throughout the consultation period. Partners felt that leadership was a vital tool within the strategy because it addresses both longer term education improvement goals, and the very immediate challenges posed by the pandemic and lockdowns. Education leaders have been under immense pressure through the past 18 months and the strategy acknowledges this and makes space for new leaders who are coming through the leadership development system.

2.9 The strategy also includes an emphasis on wellbeing in education. The pandemic created and exacerbated a host of challenges relating to mental health and wellbeing amongst children and young people and their educators. Partners agreed that it was critical to capture that in the strategy and demonstrate our commitment to delivering programmes and projects which will support the work being done to improve wellbeing in education across East Sussex.

2.10 Feedback from the consultation identified a need for a longer-term vision for education, that looks beyond the 2-year period of Excellence for All. SLES will start developing such a vision this year; the voice of young people will be a key part of informing this vision.

2.11 The published version of the strategy document will be branded and designed by the communications team and made accessible.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 This strategy represents the key ambitions that the local authority and our partners share for education in East Sussex. It has been developed through a thorough analysis of current educational performance and a consultation process that has secured the buy-in of our partners to its delivery. The renewed strategy will provide schools, settings and colleges with a clear and timely message about the ways in which we will support them and the local authority's role as champion for children and young people.

3.2 The Lead Member is recommended to approve the content and authorise the publication of the new Excellence for All Strategy for 2021 – 2023.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Excellence for All Strategy for 2021 – 2023.