

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 22nd January 2016

School Improvement and Attainment in Staffordshire

Recommendation

1. That the Select Committee scrutinise the progress of Educational Achievement in Staffordshire for the period September 2014- August 2015
2. That the Select Committee provides comment and recommendations in regard to the approach set out in the report,

Report of Cllr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Summary

3. Staffordshire's schools are improving. The educational achievement and attainment reported for 2014/15 demonstrates progress in a number of key areas, notably the proportion of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted and the trend of improvement across many aspects of key stage attainment.
4. Staffordshire shows a positive direction of travel in terms of the percentage of schools judged as Good or Outstanding (and the percentage of all pupils that attend these schools). The target of 80% of schools to be judged Good or Outstanding by September 2015 has been met with 81% of Staffordshire schools now judged as good or outstanding
5. The number of pupils receiving a good education has also increased with 76% of pupils attending a good or outstanding school, an increase of 13 percentage points since 2012, meaning that over 14,000 pupils are now receiving a better standard of education in Staffordshire schools.
6. Levels of attainment and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are excellent and continue to outperform national levels of performance.
7. Our focus going forward in 2015/16 will be at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 where our schools need to accelerate improvements to gain ground in the rates of progress achieved by our statistical neighbours and nationally. Staffordshire schools also need to do more to tackle variations in attainment between districts and for different pupil groups, such as those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) or Pupil Premium (PP). Further focus is also required in post 16 where results at A level and equivalent need to improve in order to close a widening gap with national average.

Report

Background

8. Over the past few years, the way education works in Staffordshire (and across the country) has changed. Schools are becoming more independent from local authorities and as a result, there are new roles and responsibilities around school improvement.
9. Staffordshire's Head teachers and school governors are responsible for the performance of their schools and have access to a network of support and positive challenge to ensure that their school's strengths are maximised and that any areas for development are addressed.
10. Support for school improvement comes from the school governing body and from the formal partnerships that schools are part of, be that trust, federation, diocesan group or through an academy sponsor – but schools can also expect the county council to monitor school performance and for the council to encourage them to accelerate their efforts to improve and to promote strong collaborations and the sharing of good practice. The county council can use legal powers to intervene in any case where we find failure.
11. During the academic year 2014/15 the key developments in regard to school improvement in Staffordshire were further embedded. The strategy "Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills" and our "Framework for School Improvement" continued to be implemented to provide challenge, support and intervention to maintained schools and to engage appropriately in the accountabilities applicable to academies, through the Regional School Commissioner.
12. The Learning and Skills function continues to respond to four interdependent commissioning questions:
 - a. Have we got the right provision in the right place to meet local needs and statutory obligations? (Access to Learning)
 - b. Is the provision the best that it can be, including quality, impact and outcomes for learners? (Education Excellence)
 - c. Does each individual get their fair chance to achieve and thrive? (Inclusion and Wellbeing)
 - d. Does this lead to jobs, growth, prosperity and independent adult life? (Skills and Employability)
13. Through these functions the council undertakes a range of statutory responsibilities including the "duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential" (Education Act 1996 s13A). Working with our school improvement delivery partner, Entrust, the county council has continued to deliver actions to promote improved standards and performance in all Staffordshire schools – both maintained and academies.
14. The county council has continued to review and evaluate the impact of Staffordshire's school improvement approach, which is captured through a Self-Evaluation Form (SEF).

15. Priorities and progress on school improvement, including the SEF and related action plans, have been managed and monitored through the council's Education Standards and Performance Board. This board has the remit and membership to enable effective management and monitoring of educational achievement across all ages and stages of learning. In addition the board provides the mechanism to connect wider aspects of education standards and performance, including a focus on attendance, exclusion and participation, closing the gap for vulnerable pupils including those in the care of the Local Authority, and to inform strategic developments such county's approach to school governance.
16. This report is an overview of school performance and standards in Staffordshire. It shows how Staffordshire's schools have performed in the 2014/15 academic year and outlines county council action to develop and accelerate school improvement as part of the "Excellent Schools and Settings" pillar of the Learning and Skills Strategy.

Strategic Overview of Educational Achievement Staffordshire 2015

17. This report summarises high-level performance and trends for educational attainment and progress across Staffordshire which is reported fully in Education Annual Report 2015 (Appendix A)
18. This analysis shows that pupils start well, with high levels of attainment recorded at Early Years and Key Stage One. Staffordshire is showing further improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at a higher rate than that recorded nationally. The gap between those eligible for FSM and their peers, in terms of the proportion achieving a 'Good Level of Development', has closed by almost four percentage points from 21.2pp in 2014 to 17.4pp in 2015. Differences remain in district level performance; however all districts reported improvements since 2014 and the gap in district performance has narrowed to 7.2pp from 11.9pp in 2014.
19. Staffordshire performs above the national average in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage One and the gap between free school meal (FSM) eligible pupils and their peers is reducing. The gap between those eligible for FSM and their peers at Level 2B+ in Reading, Writing and Maths, has closed by 4.4, 5.8 and 2.8 percentage points respectively over the period 2014 to 2015, Staffordshire has moved into the first quartile for writing but remains in the second quartile of national performance in 2015 for reading and mathematics despite these improvements. .
20. Once pupils reach Key Stage Two performance across Staffordshire in external assessments is less consistent. Results have seen positive increases again in 2015 continuing the trend since 2013. Staffordshire is now in the third quartile for reading, and mathematics compared to the bottom quartile in 2014. In 2015 attainment at level 4 and above is in-line with those similar authorities and the national average apart from reading which is now 1pp below similar authorities. Progress between Key Stage One and Key Stage Two improved at a faster rate in 2015, although Staffordshire's results remain below that of similar local authorities and all pupils nationally. The gap between those eligible for FSM and their peers in terms of Level 4+ in Reading, Maths and the combined Reading, Writing and Maths measure closed by 1.0, 1.2 and 1.8 percentage points respectively over the period 2014-2015, however the gap increased in writing.

21. Staffordshire's Key Stage Four (GCSE) results are positive when compared with the national average and the county moved up the national rankings between 2014 and 2015 for the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grade A* to C (including English and maths) and progress from KS2 to KS4. However, continued improvement at a faster pace is needed as progression between Key Stage 2 and 4 in Staffordshire remains below similar authorities and the England average with gaps in performance only narrowing slightly. The gap between those eligible for FSM and their peers, in terms of 5+ A*-C including English and maths closed by 0.1 of a percentage point between 2014 and 2015. The Staffordshire gap is still larger than the national gap. Despite Staffordshire reporting an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grade A* to C (including English and maths), five of the eight districts reported declines in this measure. Only Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands and Tamworth districts reported improvements.
22. Performance at post-16 (A level & equivalent) remains below the national average and declined in 2015, whereas results for those similar local authorities and England improved. Staffordshire performs particularly well in vocational qualifications, which are above the national average and show an increase between 2014 and 2015. However, district variations suggest that there is still scope for improvement.

Attainment Summaries

23. The following section provides an overview of performance within Staffordshire at each key stage in 2015. 'Quartile' relates to Staffordshire's position nationally (with the 1st, or top, quartile being the best position) and 'trend' indicates direction of travel since 2013.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Subject/Level	Staffs Trend	2015 Results			National Quartile (1st = top)	National Rank (out of 152)
		Staffordshire	Statistical Neighbours	England		
Good Level of Development	↑	70%	67%	66%	1st	27

24. Staffordshire is ranked within the top quartile nationally for the percentage of pupils achieving a Good Level of Development; an improvement on 2014 when results ranked Staffordshire in the second quartile. Staffordshire also had the highest proportion of pupils achieving a Good Level of Development out of all of its statistical neighbours. In 2015, Staffordshire's results improved and rankings against statistical neighbours and all authorities nationally also increased.

KEY STAGE ONE: TEACHER ASSESSMENTS

Subject/Level	Staffs Trend	2015 Results			National Quartile (1st = top)	National Rank (out of 149)
		Staffordshire	Statistical Neighbours	England		
L2+ Reading	↑	92%	91%	90%	2nd	16
L2+ Writing	↑	90%	88%	88%	1st	8
L2+ Maths	↑	94%	93%	93%	2nd	18

25. Staffordshire results improved in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage One in 2015.
26. Staffordshire results were equal highest of all of its statistically similar local authorities with Staffordshire's position in national rankings also improving. Writing results also place Staffordshire in the top quartile compared to all authorities nationally, compared to the second quartile in 2014.

Key Stage Two: Teacher Assessments and Tests

Subject/Level	Staffs Trend	2015 Results			National Quartile (1st = top)	National Rank (out of 150)
		Staffordshire	Statistical Neighbours	England		
L4+ Reading	↑	89%	90%	89%	3rd	73
L4+ Writing	↑	87%	87%	87%	3rd	53
L4+ Maths	↑	87%	87%	87%	3rd	74
L4+ Reading, Writing & Maths	↑	80%	80%	80%	3rd	68
Expected Progress Reading	↑	90%	91%	91%	4th	104
Expected Progress Writing	↑	93%	94%	94%	4th	103
Expected Progress Maths	↑	89%	89%	90%	3rd	96

27. In 2015, in Key Stage Two, local authority unvalidated results indicate that Staffordshire's reading, writing and maths results at the expected level have increased.
28. Outcomes at L4+ shows that Staffordshire results are now in-line with national, whereas in 2014 reading, maths and results in the combined reading, writing and maths measure were below national.
29. Staffordshire's rank against its statistical neighbours and all authorities nationally also improved in 2015.
30. Staffordshire's expected progress results have improved in 2015 but are still below its statistical neighbour average and the national result. The improvements also led to an improvement in rank against statistical neighbours and all authorities nationally.

Key Stage Four: GCSEs and Equivalent

Subject/Level	Staffs Trend	2015 Results			National Quartile (1st = top)	National Rank (out of 151)
		Staffordshire	Statistical Neighbours	England		
5+ A*-C including English & Maths	↑	55.3%	56.7%	52.8%	3rd	86
5+ A*-C	↑	64.9%	66.0%	64.2%	3rd	86
Expected Progress English	↓	67.7%	69.2%	70.0%	3rd	102
Expected Progress Maths	↑	64.4%	67.2%	66.6%	3rd	101

31. Staffordshire's 5+ A*-C including English and maths and 5+ A*-C results were both above the national average. The gap between Staffordshire and the national average positively increased in the 5+ A*-C including English and maths measure. Staffordshire's ranking in both measures, against all authorities nationally, improved but both still placed Staffordshire in the third quartile.
32. Staffordshire's results in the English and maths expected progress measures placed Staffordshire in the third quartile, compared to all authorities nationally. This is an improvement on 2014 results where Staffordshire's results fell into the fourth quartile. Results in both measures were below the national and statistical neighbour averages, with English progress results representing a decline on 2014 results. Staffordshire's ranking against all authorities nationally and statistical neighbours increased in both measures.

Key Stage Five: A Level and Equivalent

Subject/Level	Staffs Trend	2015 Results			National Quartile (1st = top)	National Rank (out of 149)
		Staffordshire	Statistical Neighbours	England		
APS per Entry	↓	210.3	210.1	214.8	3rd	104

33. In 2015, Staffordshire's result declined marginally on 2014 results in the APS per entry measure (0.5 of a point). Staffordshire's results were below the national average and represent a widening of the gap with the national average; increasing the gap to 4.5 points.
34. Staffordshire's rank against statistical neighbours and all authorities also declined in 2015.
35. Staffordshire's results remain in the third quartile nationally compared to all local authorities.

Emerging Priorities for 2016/17 Business Planning Year

36. The priority that Staffordshire has placed on Key Stage 2 performance has seen schools delivering improvements in attainment and this focus needs to continue, particularly in relation to expected rates of progress in reading, writing and maths. This is echoed in Key Stage 4 where progress in maths and English continue to be a priority for improvement.
37. Closing the gaps by tackling variations in achievement between localities and

different pupil groups is a further priority highlighted through this report.

38. The improvements made in the number of schools graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted is a positive achievement in 2014/15 but Staffordshire's aspiration to reach 90% of schools at this level by August 2016 means that further action is needed for schools currently judged as "requiring improvement" or identified by the authority as being at risk of declining outcomes.
39. Further focus is needed on accelerating improvement at A Level as Key Stage 5 is the only phase not to show improvement in 2015, with a slight increase in the gap with national average.
40. These priorities carry forward our current approach, reinforcing and enhancing the focus of the council's school improvement priorities in 2013/14 and 2014/15.
41. In addition to this, and in line with the council's strategic vision for excellent schools and settings, there are five strategic features that we are discussing and promoting with schools. These are:
 - a. All schools/settings are good or outstanding
 - b. All schools/settings are sound and sustainable
 - c. All schools/settings are in effective support and challenge networks
 - d. All schools/settings support fair access and share local accountability
 - e. All schools/settings contribute to community cohesion and resilience
42. A draft outcomes plan is being shaped to inform the Learning and Skills team's strategic and business planning for 2015/16. Select Committee are invited to provide comment and feedback to further shape our way forward.

Link to Strategic Plan – Ready for Life

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity –

Pupil Premium Report – December 2015

Improving Attendance and Participation – September 2015

Educational Achievement in Staffordshire – January 2015

Focused Inspection in Staffordshire – September 2014

Appendices:

Appendix A - Education Annual Report, 2015

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