

Schools Forum – 4 October 2016

School quality assurance and intervention – school categorisation

Recommendations

1. That the Schools Forum notes the content of this report.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities:

PART A

Why is it coming here – what decision is required?

2. To inform Schools Forum of the process for school categorisation and to note the contents of the report.

Reasons for recommendations

3. Following the meeting of the forum in July, a request was made to inform Schools Forum of the revised process for school categorisation in regard to the approach set out within the report.

PART B

Background

4. Staffordshire County Council is committed to improving educational outcomes for all pupils in Staffordshire. At present, we retain the duty (under the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998) to ensure that all pupils in our area have the opportunity to attend schools that are good or better, and the local authority has powers to intervene where we have concerns about standards in maintained schools (and liaise with the regional schools commissioner (RSC) where we have concerns about an academy school).
5. Staffordshire's schools continue to improve, this is reflected in the positive direction of travel in terms of the percentage of schools judged as good or outstanding. At the end of August 2016 86% of schools were judged to be good or outstanding, this is an increase of 5 percentage points since September 2015 and 21 percentage points since September 2012.
6. The proportion of Staffordshire schools that have become academies, therefore no longer accountable to the local authority for performance and standards, is increasing. As at 1 August 2016, 29% of schools were academies compared with 27% nationally. In Staffordshire this has increased to 31% of schools in September 2016.
7. In communication with schools in May 2016, the local authority set out the future policy direction for the organisation. This includes the movement away from the direct involvement in the governance and accountability of schools. There is a commitment to maintaining an appropriate infrastructure for remaining local authority maintained schools, however the local authority is fully supportive of proposals for all schools to become academies.

8. Following changes to the service, the local authority is developing strategies with the joint venture company Entrust to utilise available funding within the current service delivery agreement (SDA) to continue to support, challenge and intervene in schools through our categorisation process.
9. The categorisation process sets out how, working together with all mainstream schools, we aim to identify, support and challenge schools about which we have concerns.
10. In order to maintain the integrity of the categorisation we will maintain current school categories until the unvalidated RAISEonline reports containing the 2016 KS2 and KS4 results have been released due to the changes to end of key stage assessments and associated national comparisons..
11. The details of the support and challenge for the different categories are being confirmed with Entrust and will include school reviews, access to bespoke support. Local authority commissioning managers will undertake quality assurance activity to evaluate the impact on outcomes for learners and where necessary escalate or deescalate levels of concern and associated intervention.
12. The categorisation process was communicated with all mainstream schools in July 2016 and a copy of this is contained in appendix 1

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