

Report to Cabinet

Title:	Education and Skills Strategy
Date:	9 July 2018
Date can be implemented:	17 July 2018
Author:	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Contact officer:	Sarah Callaghan
Local members affected:	All [list member name and electoral division]
Portfolio areas affected:	Education and Skills

For media enquires concerning this report, please contact the press office on 01296 382444.

Summary

This is a time of unprecedented local and national change impacting the educational landscape. Nationally, budget reductions as a result of a decrease in central government grants have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on the centrally retained funding for school support services. The government drive for academisation and increasing selection has resulted in a diversity of school provision which includes maintained schools, academies, free schools, faith schools, independent schools and other educational providers. The increasing rigour of Ofsted frameworks and inspections underpins the overall ambition to raise achievement and attainment, with the current focus being on the development of a school to school, system led model of improvement. The role and responsibilities of local authorities have been reframed to account for this change in approach, with the emphasis on developing a wide range of collaborative working relationships with a variety of external partners such as the Regional Schools Commissioner, as well as with settings and schools. The role of the local authority is changing regarding school improvement to being that of a facilitator and broker in a school-led system of improvement.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Locally, in Buckinghamshire 94% of its schools are either good or outstanding, key issues such as the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, the recruitment and retention of teachers, rising exclusions and increased demand on services for vulnerable children and those with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) have persisted. The proposed Education and Skills Strategy offers a coherent and coordinated response to these local and national issues, and sets out the vision, principles, priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people in Buckinghamshire (see Appendix A).

Recommendation

That the Education and Skills strategy be ratified by Cabinet.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

The purpose of the Education and Skills strategy is to develop and sustain an ongoing dialogue with all schools, regardless of their status, across the County so that we realise our vision for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire to fulfil their potential. It is critical that we continue to work with schools and early years settings to drive forward improvements to the benefit of all children and young people. The development of the strategy is in keeping with the national agenda and supports the development of a school led system of school improvement.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

In light of the aforementioned key changes that are impacting the educational landscape and the challenges that these bring, the Council, together with all educational partners, has developed an Education and Skills strategy to ensure that we have the appropriate educational provision for our children and young people. The strategy proposes a 'collective responsibility model' where all educational partners in Buckinghamshire work together and make best use of their collective experience and expertise. The "Side by Side" approach is our new way of working, and is built on the premise that a wide variety of institutions committed to sharing expertise and collaborative working within an environment of mutual trust will thrive and flourish. Rapid and sustainable improvement can be achieved by fostering a system led leadership approach dependent on the essential elements of accountability, challenge and support.

C Resource implications

The removal of the Education Services Grant funding and reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) has further reinforced the need to change the way that school improvement is delivered. The Side by Side mechanism that is currently being developed in order to embed a school to school led system of improvement is founded on the premise that harnessing expertise in the school or early years' settings system does lead to improved outcomes for children and young people. The School Improvement Monitoring and Brokerage Grant is the transition funding that is in place for a period of two years. This will be used to support the "Side by Side" approach which will support schools, promote inclusion, support SEND provision and improve the transition process between early years and primary schools.

D. Value For Money (VFM) Self- Assessment

BCC will ensure that the statutory duties that were commissioned to the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust will continue to be delivered (please refer to the cabinet report regarding the variation in contract with the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust at the following link) <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=124&MId=9518&Ver=4>).

E. Legal implications

The Council's statutory duties are set out in Appendix C to this document.

The strategy is designed to support all children and young people and should not disadvantage any groups. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed in line with best practice. With the transfer of statutory services from the BLT to BCC, the local authority will be able to provide a range of statutory services to support children and young people. The BLT will be left with non-statutory/discretionary services to offer schools and settings and will therefore become completely traded. The BLT will provide a range of traded services from which schools can choose to purchase whilst BCC as the local authority will be in the position to deliver a wide range of services that will help to realise the aims and objectives of the strategy.

F. Property implications

Services will be delivered as per their current locations.

G. Other implications/issues

The loss of the Education Services Grant alongside significant policy changes with regard to education has contributed to the development of different potential models for service delivery.

The transfer of services from the BLT to BCC will not impact current service delivery to schools, settings, children and young people and provides the opportunity to realign services in a coordinated way to better meet need and address key priorities set out in the strategy.

H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

A consultation process was carried out over a period of 9 months between July 2017 and March 2018.

- There were dedicated consultation events held during July 2017. Over 200 stakeholders signed up to attend one of the three events that were held between 9 and 12 July; 82% attended and out of those attending 62% were from schools – the remainder were from early years settings or agencies that work with schools and their pupils. Stakeholders were asked to comment on current provision i.e. key strengths and areas for improvement, a proposed vision for and guiding principles and the priorities (pillars) of the Education and Skills strategy.

- In September 2017, the draft strategy and the feedback received from the July events were shared at all of the 19 School Liaison groups and also at the Area Headteacher meetings in November 2017. Further feedback was received and incorporated into the further development of the strategy.
- There was an online consultation launched on 6 September and ran until 24 October 2017. There were 571 respondents to the consultation. The overall profile of respondents were female, white, in work/self-employed and aged between 35- 54 years. 82% of the online respondents were parents/carers (463 out of 571)
- An Education Strategy Reference Group was set up in June 2017 with an initial purpose of advising BCC on the consultation process for the Education and Skills strategy, and to promote participation in the consultation process amongst Headteachers and other educational settings in Buckinghamshire. The group represents Early Years settings, primary and secondary schools, special schools, the University Technical College and Further Education provision within Buckinghamshire. Since the consultation process, the Reference Group has been instrumental as a steering group in developing the Side by Side methodology as a means of realising some of the key ambitions set out in the strategy.
- The views of children and young people were also included in developing the strategy. In December 2017 various year groups within a sample of the schools from the Education and Skills strategy completed a short online survey outlining their thoughts on what they wanted from education and what their priorities would be. Youth Services were also able to share the vision, principles and priorities of the strategy with members of the Youth Council in November 2017, and secure further feedback. As a result, a young person's version of the strategy has been developed (see Appendix B).
- The ambitions of the strategy and the issues that it is designed to address were also shared and presented at the "Breaking Barriers, Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential" event that was held in March 2018. Over 150 professionals attended this event and provided further feedback which concurred and supported the general themes and views generated through the earlier part of the consultation process.

Consultation Outcomes

The general feedback from the consultation events, the school liaison groups and the online survey included the following:

- The consultation events held in July 2017 identified key strengths of current provision including collaboration, support services, Early Years support, support for governance, achievement of pupils, experienced staff. 65% of respondents from the online consultation believed educational provision in Buckinghamshire was good.
- There was recognition that current provision could be improved in SEND, recruitment and retention of teachers, and inclusion.
- There were many comments that the proposed vision was too long; this was summarised now to "ambitious, inclusive and collaborative".
- The principles and priorities were endorsed by the events, Liaison Groups and the online consultation. Schools were concerned how collaboration will be fully effective without adequate resource.

- There was general agreement by schools on the vision, principles and priorities stated in the strategy, but schools want to see action to address issues which they feel have been discussed previously.
- Schools suggested we focus/prioritise certain pillars rather than try to address all six at once e.g. inclusion and SEND.

There were also recurrent themes that emerged from the consultation process which included the following:

- **Early Help** – this was seen as vital to the success of the strategy through preventive work.
- **Parenting** was identified as a key cross cutting theme that is applicable to many of the priority areas, in particular inclusion and Early Years.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality teachers
- Whilst SEND was raised as a major issue, there was also recognition that all agencies need to work together in a timely and effective way (e.g. Health)
- **Inclusion** as a core principle was seen by some respondents as being undermined by the existence of a selective system
- Focus needs to be on improving the performance, particularly of secondary (non-selective) schools through a collaborative model of school improvement
- The overall needs of the individual child must be the driver of all our work: the mental health and general well-being was cited by many as being paramount, as well as meeting the needs of individual groups such as the vulnerable and gifted and talented.
- **Transition** between phases in a child's journey through education was highlighted as an area of focus; better communication and sharing of information in a consistent way was seen as vital to supporting children to help them realise their potential
- **Funding and adequate resource/support** for schools and nurseries was raised by a significant number of participants
- The development of skills for life and readiness for the world of work was recognised as being as important as the acquisition of academic credentials

Following the feedback through the consultation process that took place between July and December 2017, the strategy was further updated.

I. Progress Monitoring

The effectiveness of the strategy will need to be carefully monitored throughout its duration. Appropriate governance structures will need to be in place in order to evaluate the strategy; these will include internal monitoring and reporting which will continue through the current governance structure within Children's Services i.e. Senior Leadership Team as well as through the Team around the School meetings, which rely on the sharing of local intelligence from service areas within the Council in order to proactively support schools, settings and their pupils/students. The Education Strategy Reference Group will also provide a forum where the strategy can be evaluated; this body will eventually have the responsibility to monitor and review the impact of various initiatives within the "Side by Side" delivery model. This Board will utilise data and local intelligence to determine key commissioning priorities within the local consortia and will be the driver to implement the

activities needed to secure educational excellence and overall improved outcomes for all children and young people.

Key Milestone	Key Activity
May/June 2018	New offer for services (statutory) discussed with schools at key network meetings
June 2018	School offer summary document issued to schools
June/July 2018	Current Side by Side Secondary project deployments continue during the Summer term with Quality Assurance and review Further Side by Side projects planned and developed, with potential deployments for September onwards identified
July 2018	Strategy to Cabinet for ratification
August 2018	All statutory functions will be transferred to BCC from the BLT by 1 August 2018
September 2018	Side by Side projects in operation with second term of deployments in place for secondary schools Statutory and core school Improvement activities undertaken by BCC

J. Review

The strategy has been developed to address key priorities to cover the time period between 2018 and 2022. Evaluation of the Side by Side project will take place through a rigorous quality assurance process.

Background Papers

Appendix A Buckinghamshire Education and Skills Strategy 2018-2022

Appendix B Full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for Education and Skills strategy

Appendix C Statutory Duties highlighted from in pages 45-68 in the Funding Agreement with the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 6 July 2018. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or by e-mailing democracy@buckscc.gov.uk