

Learning and Children's Services

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Strategic Director of Learning and Children's Services

DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO SCHOOL GOVERNORS FOR THE SUMMER TERM 2008

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Kingston
Children & Young People's Trust
Making a Difference Together



1. BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE AND PRIMARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC VISION FOR KINGSTON SCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE

The Local Authority is progressing the work with all schools to develop our educational vision and strategy for the future, covering the next 5-10 years. This is a key piece of work to inform our strategy for the improvement of schools and will enable us to access significant government funding as part of the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programmes.

The main aims of this work are to ensure that we are able to:

- (i) submit a robust strategy to the DCSF by their June deadline to secure access to the Primary Capital Programme funding with effect from 2009-10, and
- (ii) evidence to the DCSF that we have a shared vision and a strategy and proven capacity to deliver it. We will then be well placed to evidence our 'readiness to deliver' and submit in October 2008 an expression of interest to enter the Building Schools for the Future programme earlier than currently planned.

All Primary Schools have been asked to prioritise their school needs against the agreed Strategy for Change Priorities by 2 June. This will help inform the Local Authority's strategic decisions about investment priorities in the first years of the Primary Capital Programme.

The LA will also shortly issue the PCP Strategy for consultation in advance of submission to the DCSF and it will be helpful if all schools comment on this to indicate their support for the proposals.

Similarly we have produced a draft Strategy for Change document for BSF, which Secondary Headteachers have been considering and contributing to, in order to consult more widely on a completed draft in June.

The DCSF has recently issued a consultation paper on changing the conditions by which local authorities can participate in the BSF programme, earlier than indicated. We are confident that we can meet the new 'readiness to deliver' criteria and aim to be in the BSF programme by 2010 onwards. This would help us to carry out 4 to 5 major school projects in the first phase.

All Building Schools for the Future building projects are expected to be procured and delivered through a Local Education Partnership. This is a joint venture company comprising the local authority, the Department for Children, Schools and Families procurement vehicle (BSFI) and a private sector partner. Once established in the area both Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programme projects are expected to be delivered via the Local Education Partnership.

The Local Authority is currently exploring the opportunity to link up with another LA to establish a BSF/PCP team and Local Education Partnership. This would achieve

efficiencies for both authorities by sharing costs and it would enable us to offer a more attractive phased package of work to the building sector.

A report covering the opportunities and issues for Kingston regarding Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programmes is expected to be considered by the Council's Executive on 24 June 2008. This will include the final PCP Strategy for submission to the DCSF, and an initial draft BSF Strategy for further consultation.

For further information on the above please contact either Donald Farquharson, BSF Consultant on 020 8547 5249, email donald.farquharson@rbk.kingston.gov.uk or Anne Redparth, Directorate Head of Resources & Commissioning on 020 8547 5276, or email anne.redparth@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

2. PARENTING STRATEGY

We are developing a Parenting Strategy to ensure we provide an effective and coordinated approach to supporting parents and carers in Kingston. This is a priority for the Children and Young People's Trust and is an objective in the Children and Young People's Plan and in our Strategy for Early Intervention and Prevention.

The emphasis on the importance of parenting is based on compelling evidence that parenting has a major impact on a child's life chances. There are a number of protective factors related to the role of parents. Strong and affectionate relationships with parents, recognition and praise, and parental interest and involvement in education are all linked with better outcomes for children. On the other hand, poor parental supervision, parental abuse or neglect of children, inconsistent and violent discipline, and children having poor or no relationship with one or both parents, are linked with higher chances of poor outcomes.

The Government is asking local authorities to:

- Develop a strategy and joined-up approach to the design and delivering of parenting support services, ideally through a parenting support strategy that takes account of parents' views.
- Provide support for parents as a continuum, from good universal services including information and advice, through to effective early intervention and preventative services and culminating in highly targeted support to those most in need.
- Identify a single commissioner of parenting support services, commission parenting programmes that are evidence based, drawing on relevant guidance and the Commissioner's toolkit (www.toolkit.parentinguk.org/)

Within this strategy we have identified clear outcomes so that we improve support, guidance and information for parents and carers. Schools play a central role in this work and governors are asked to ensure that each school has clear plans to improve parental engagement and support.

This would include a focus on:

- Good access for parents to the school
- Regular sampling of parents' views and satisfaction
- Good quality information and advice for parents on all key aspects of children's education, health and well being
- Regular reporting to parents on children's progress and attainment
- Good opportunities for parents to visit and to discuss their child's progress with teachers
- Clear procedures for addressing parents' complaints and concerns
- A parents forum to give parents and carers a voice in influencing the work of the school or children's centre
- A pro-active approach to providing parents with the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to support their child's learning and development
- Effective strategies to improve the engagement of hard to reach parents
- Targeted support, with the involvement of other agencies, for children and parents with additional needs
- Provision of family learning activities
- Access for parents and carers to adult learning opportunities
- Through extended services, access for parents to advice and support, eg about housing, benefits, health care and health promotion
- Provision of childcare to age 11
- A good range of after school activity and good access to youth support services, information, advice and guidance for older pupils

Parents Charter

It is recognised that parents' needs vary from family to family, and from location to location. To reflect this a Parents' Charter will be developed, which will clearly set out what parents are entitled to at each stage of their children's lives. It will:

- outline the minimum level of support all parents can expect, and make clear what support they can get where additional need is identified;
- set out parents' rights to support from key services, explaining for each service what the support should entail;
- set out parents' responsibilities – in improving children's outcomes, for example, their responsibility to help children reach their full potential at school, and their responsibility to seek additional support when needed;
- articulate the responsibility of service providers to seek to be as accessible and responsive as possible to parent's needs – including reaching out to hard to reach, vulnerable or excluded groups;
- set out the information to be provided to parents so they know what services are available locally to them and their families; and
- use consultation with parents as a vehicle to engage, evaluate and improve the development of new services.

The Parenting Strategy will be a success if:

Parents have the information, advice and support that is relevant and timely to their needs as parents, so they can ensure their children are safe, secure and succeeding in their lives. We aim to ensure:

1. Information services are easily accessible to all parents and are effective in providing advice and signposting for all parents.
2. All multi-agency partners of the Children's Trust have effective programmes for engaging and supporting parents, especially those with most need.
3. Support for parents provided by a variety of agencies and organisations are available and accessible by parents across the borough;
 - Parents of 0-5 years access the multi-agency services via Children's Centres in their own community;
 - Parents of 6-13 years via school clusters, extended schools in their own community;
 - Parents of 14-19 years via secondary schools and the targeted integrated youth support provision; and
 - There is a multi-agency support package for those families with higher levels of need including the identification of a Lead Professional to work with the family.

Our strategy will be successful if parents feel well supported by schools and other agencies; they are positive and satisfied about their child's education and access to play and recreational activities; they have a choice of a good school; they have the information and advice they need to promote their children's development and safety; more children are well cared for and fewer children are at risk; more parents contribute actively to the work of schools and support their children to learn; and more families are helped to be resilient in the face of the difficulties presented by disadvantage and deprivation, domestic violence, poor mental health and substance misuse.

When the Parenting Strategy is circulated shortly, in June 2008, governors and schools are asked to consider it in the light of existing policies and strategies to support and engage parents and identify any necessary improvements. Caroline Beazley is the Commissioner of parenting support services, and she and her team will be happy to advise and support the school to improve its support for parents.

For further information on the above please contact: Caroline Beazley, Strategic Manager for School Cluster Services 020 8547 6676, or email caroline.beazley@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

3. SCHOOL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Developing the School Workforce

In December 2007, 'The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures' (Dec 2007) set out the Government's 10 year plan to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. In April 2008, 'Building Brighter Futures: next steps for the Children's Workforce' set out how workforce development will turn policy into practice.

Five principles underpin the children's plan and inform workforce development:

- Government does not bring up children – parents do – so Government needs to do more to back parents and families;
- All children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them;
- Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life;
- Services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries
- It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.

What Do Children and Young People Want from the Workforce?

Workers are defined as everyone (including volunteers) who work with children and young people and their families, or who are responsible for improving their outcomes. The workforce plan sets out what children and young people want from the workers who support them.

- They want workers who have been through the same experiences they are going through
- They want workers who treat them well, with respect and consideration and don't take their frustrations out on them
- They think workers should have time and anger management training, listening skills and disability awareness training
- They think the workforce should involve young people in recruitment and in training workers and foster carers
- They want more positive images of young people
- They want to be involved and asked what they think

The top things they want are that all people who work with children should have an understanding of equal opportunities, children's rights, child protection, disability awareness and confidentiality.

Next Steps for the Children's Workforce

The Government recognises that the best way to achieve world class standards is a system in which all children receive teaching tailored to their needs and which is based on their 'stage not age'. There are commitments to:

- Make Governing Bodies more effective and strategic, beginning by consulting on reducing their size
- Fund supply cover so Early Years workers can take part in Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Boost the Graduate Leader Fund so that every full day childcare setting will be led by a graduate
- Make teaching a Masters level profession
- Ensure new GTP recruits spend a minimum time training
- Establish a Transition to Teaching programme to attract those with science, technology and engineering backgrounds
- Develop the School Business Manager role
- Establish a new vocational qualification; revised National Occupational

Standards for supporting teaching and learning; and the higher level teaching assistant in subjects e.g. mathematics and science

- Ensuring those supporting developments in 14 -19 education have the knowledge and skills required to exercise their role

Kingston's 2008-2009 commitment to workforce development includes:

- Providing high quality CPD on teaching, learning and leadership
- Reflecting multi-disciplinary work in Kingston's CPD offer
- The CPD offer reflects our audit of needs, including for 14-19 education
- Supporting leaders to meet new challenges – for example in Children's Centres, Extended Schools, Integrated Working, Headship, Middle Leadership
- Supporting all NQTs to achieve Masters accreditation
- Succession planning: for Deputies to become Headteachers
- Providing CPD for teaching assistants
- Improving workers literacy and numeracy skills (SWIS)
- Supporting further accredited training for leaders of SEN specialist resource bases and unqualified Early Years staff
- Supporting training in the common assessment framework (CAF)
- Improving school workforce data collection and analysis
- Developing school CPD leaders' understanding of their role
- Working with LA training schools to support CPD
- Developing the use of Advanced Skills Teachers

Implications for Governors and School Leadership Teams:

- Consider the whole workforce in relation to all policy development
- Monitor the quality of the relationship between the school priorities, CPD and Performance Management
- Ensure interview procedures allow for the opportunity to explore candidates' attitudes, experience and skills in the wider ECM arena
- Involve children and young people in the recruitment of staff
- Support NQTs to gain Masters' accreditation
- Ensure that appraisal and CPD are an entitlement for all staff
- Recruit, develop and nurture leaders at all levels
- Plan for succession and retention at all levels

For more information, please visit:

Children's plan web link:

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The_Childrens_Plan.pdf

Building Brighter Futures: next steps for the Children's Workforce web link:

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00292-2008.pdf>

For further information on the above please contact: Tina Herring, Principal Inspector for School Effectiveness on 0208 547 5288, or email

tina.herring@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

4. NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP AND FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Children from lower income families are more likely to have poorer educational outcomes than children from higher income families. Nationally and locally, children and young people who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) reach significantly lower standards of attainment than those who are not eligible for FSM. In Kingston the gap narrowed in 2007 but it is still too wide.

In 2007, the gap between the two groups at age 5 was 12%. At age 7 the gaps were 15% in reading, 18% in writing and 6% in mathematics. At age 11 the gaps were 18% in English, 20% in mathematics and 9% in science and at age 14 the gaps were 29% in English; 23% in mathematics and 31% in science.

By age 16, at GCSE, the gap was 28% between those achieving 5 A-C grades, both with and without English and mathematics. The pattern of gaps differs between and within schools and demonstrates that schools can influence these outcomes.

School leaders, including governors should monitor the pattern of attainment for those entitled to FSM and consider how well this group is doing compared to those who are not entitled to FSM. Some of the group who are entitled to FSM will overlap with other groups with additional learning needs. For example those who are new to speaking English and pupils with SEN; these additional factors may help to explain why attainment is low. The national database, RAISEonline calculates the achievement of pupils who are entitled to FSM compared to the whole school and other groups of pupils. This provides school leaders with useful indicators to aid their discussions about how to narrow these attainment gaps.

Individual schools will want to use their knowledge of children and RAISEonline data to consider what factors contribute to the relationship between FSM and low attainment. Where necessary schools are expected to plan how to improve provision, redirect resources and provide additional support, both within and beyond the school day. There is already some excellent work of this kind in Kingston schools. Narrowing these gaps is a key part of Kingston's Prevention Strategy, which aims to ensure we intervene earlier and more effectively to ensure less advantaged children do better, and are targeted for additional support. Attainment gaps vary from school to school, and in some parts of the borough the pupils on FSM are doing as well as pupils not on FSM in other parts of Kingston. In other words there is great variability in outcomes, the individual school makes a difference and the quality of additional support in and out of school also makes a significant difference in achieving better outcomes.

Good and outstanding schools will be highly effective in narrowing attainment gaps and targeting additional support to under-performing groups of pupils. Governors are asked to ensure the school has clear targets to narrow attainment gaps, there is effective monitoring of the progress of pupils on FSM and other vulnerable groups, there is personalised additional support for individual pupils, and that the school is making more effort to engage and support the parents of these children.

For further information on the above please contact: Tina Herring, Principal Inspector for School Effectiveness on 0208 547 5288, or email tina.herring@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

5. GOVERNOR UPDATES

Ministerial Review of School Governance

A major review to strengthen school governing bodies and make them more effective has been launched on 15th May 2008 by Schools Minister Jim Knight.

Patrick Leeson, Director of Learning and Children's Services, is representing the national Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) on the Ministerial Working Group for this review.

The review, announced by the Secretary of State Ed Balls in the Children's Plan last December, will develop firm proposals to give every school a highly skilled, smaller and better trained governing body to deliver the best service they can for the children and parents in their communities. Mr Knight will chair a working group to advise ministers on equipping governing bodies to give schools clear, strategic direction and ethos; listen to parents and local communities; and be at the heart of turning around underperforming schools. It will report by the autumn 2008.

The group will also make recommendations on how governing bodies can support the wider vision for schools set out in the Children's Plan - with extended facilities for young people and adults and linking up with neighbouring schools, other children's services and outside organisations, including colleges, employers and health and social services.

It is recognised that effective school governance depends on clarity of purpose, which is to be the strategic body to oversee the school's improvement and effectiveness. Specific skills are required for this role, to be able to scrutinise, challenge and improve the effectiveness of the organisation and to judge how well it meets the needs of children, young people, parents and the wider community.

Increasingly governing bodies are required to operate within the context of partnerships, community engagement and multi agency working, and to take more responsibility for ensuring community cohesion, early intervention and narrowing the gap.

Parents are of particular importance and need to be considered as special stakeholders in the school, and governing bodies need to consider other more effective ways of improving parental representation, than simply having parents on governing bodies.

The national Children's Plan highlights the importance of schools collaborating and collaboration should also be reflected in the purpose of governing bodies. The review will consider the skills needed for the 21st century school governing body as part of its recommendations for change.

Research Evidence about Good Governance

To support the working group, the DCSF has published a summary of what some of the research evidence tells us about school governance. Findings relevant to the review include: latest figures suggest that there are approximately between 235,000-350,000 school governors in England with 11 per cent of posts vacant. Vacancies are particularly evident in inner city areas. Some research has found that particular groups are under-represented as governors, including black and minority groups, disabled people, young people, lone parents, those with low incomes, those who are unemployed and business people.

Some governors have said that they find it difficult to challenge the headteacher and preferred to work collaboratively with them. In 2006/07 the majority of schools carried out their governing duties at a satisfactory level (judged by Ofsted inspections to be satisfactory or better). However in 2001/2002, 53% of primary school governing bodies were judged to be 'good' or better, compared to 34% of secondary school governing bodies.

A recent survey of headteachers revealed much variation in the perceived effectiveness of governing bodies - approximately one in five were described as 'very effective' but a similar proportion as 'ineffective'. In schools which are judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate', governing bodies failed to hold leaders to account for its overall effectiveness and did not adequately monitor the school to know its strengths and weaknesses. A recent study of governing bodies that had joined together in a federation demonstrated significantly higher proportion of pupils gaining five A* to Gs GCSEs and a higher contextual value added score.

For more information, please visit www.dcsf.gov.uk

National Child Measurement Programme Workshops

Tackling obesity is a key local and national objective. More than 15% of children aged 11 in Kingston are judged to be obese, and the objective in the Children's Plan is to halt this rise in children becoming overweight and obese. This is essential for children's longer term health and well being, and to reduce the impact that obesity can have on children's learning and development.

One aspect of our strategy is to participate in the national child measuring programme which takes place on an annual basis in Primary schools.

These workshops aim is to learn from the experience of last year's measurement programme, promote good practice especially in encouraging full participation among schools, and to help plan improvements for 2008/09. Everyone involved in the NCMP is welcome, particularly LAs that have identified the child obesity indicators for their local area agreements and school staff, including school governors.

For more information and to reserve a place at one of the workshops visit the [Department of Health's website](#).

For further information on the above please contact: Hatija Bhatia, Principal Admissions & Governance Officer on 0208 547 5284, or email hatija.bhatia@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

6. GOVERNOR TRAINING FOR THE SUMMER TERM 2008

Please find listed below the Governor training courses that are available during the Summer Terms 2008. Please contact the Headteacher and CPD coordinator to discuss before any bookings are made through KIMS. The venue for all training is the King Charles Centre unless otherwise stated.

Induction Training: The New Governor

G07/009B

4th June 2008, 11th June 2008, 18th June 2008, (run over 3 sessions), 7.00pm

Monitoring the School's Budget

G07/013

24th June 2008, 7.00pm

Child Protection Training for School Governors: Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

G07/003C

2nd July 2008, 7.00pm

For further information on the above please contact: Hatija Bhatia, Principal Admissions & Governance Officer on 0208 547 5284, or email

hatija.bhatia@rbk.kingston.gov.uk