

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 16 January 2023

SUBJECT: Slough School Effectiveness Strategy 2022-25

CHIEF OFFICER: Andrew Fraser - Executive Director of People (Children)

CONTACT OFFICER: Johnny Kyriacou – Associate Director, Education & Inclusion

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor Hulme – Lead Member Children’s Services

KEY DECISION: YES

EXEMPT: NO

DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN: YES

APPENDICES: Appendix A – Slough School Effectiveness Strategy 2022-25

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1. This report requests that Cabinet approve the Slough School Effectiveness Strategy.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to

- Approve the Slough School Effectiveness Strategy

Reason:

- To ensure that the Council can carry out its statutory functions with regards to school improvement
- To provide a transparent approach to school effectiveness and partnership between the council and schools in the LA

Commissioner Review

“Commissioners have noted the report.”

2 Summary

- 2.1. The Council has a statutory duty to promote high standards to support child and young people to fulfil their potential and benefit from a good education. State funded schools are separated into academies, which are directly funded by central Government and maintained schools, which are funded via the dedicated schools grant through the Council. The Council has specific duties and powers in relation to maintained schools, including the power to intervene to drive up school improvement. The Council also works closely with the Regional Director at the DfE, where there are concerns regarding academy schools.
- 2.2. Local overarching priorities for the school system (Appendix A, Section 3) are:
 1. Developing a sustainable school led improvement system
 2. Supporting all schools to be graded at least 'Good' by Ofsted with a higher proportion than national average rated as 'Outstanding'
 3. Closing achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at all key stages
 4. Ensuring children with SEND can thrive and have a fulfilled and inclusive experience
- 2.3. The strategy laid out in Appendix A draws on good practice research conducted by the LGA that emphasises:
 - strong relationships and engagements across schools, academies, the LA, and other local and regional partners, with the LA engaging both maintained schools and academies;
 - focussed on context and place, and taking account of these contextual factors in developing an effective local vision;
 - clear local priorities and clarity about roles and responsibilities
 - high-quality school improvement capacity, utilising school, and other capacity, and effectively marshalling limited resources;
 - evidence of impact in improving outcomes, developing school leadership and capacity, and strengthening partnership working; and
 - supporting all children in the local area, including the more vulnerable.

Further information on this research can be found here [Enabling school improvement \(local.gov.uk\)](https://www.local.gov.uk). The Slough School Effectiveness Strategy aims to build on and strengthen existing positive partnerships.

- 2.4. 35/51 (69%) of schools in Slough are academies. This is one of the highest proportions of academies to maintained schools in the country. Whilst the Council does not have the same duties or powers in relation to school improvement for academies, partnerships have been strong and built up over recent years. 100% of schools including academies in the last three to four years have engaged with the local authority when it comes to Autumn Term Visits and self-evaluations.
- 2.5. The Slough Education Partnership Board (SEPB) has been an effective vehicle for positive communication and partnership work over the last 4 to 5 years. It meets monthly and comprises a range of school representatives and Council officers. It is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. This group also considers local

priorities for the local area e.g., a focus on closing the gap between the disadvantaged and their peers or on SEND children linking to the priorities in the SEND Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and the Inclusion Strategy. During the pandemic, this group became the key organiser and supporter of schools in partnership with the DfE to work together and oversee support for each other and for vulnerable children and families.

2.6. In addition to SEPB the Council has various other models of communication and events with schools that aid parentship work such as:

- Monthly communication meetings with all schools (via Teams) chaired by the AD, Education & Inclusion
- The Council chairs SENCO networks through the SEND Standards and Effectiveness Officer, which is a role funded by the High Needs Block for all schools.
- The Council chairs safeguarding networks
- Termly Leaders Seminars focused on an area of school improvement, in collaboration with Headteachers

2.7. The Slough School Effectiveness Strategy sets out the council's approach to school improvement and effectiveness. The emphasis has been on schools identifying their own strengths and areas for development to contribute to the school system. The new format of school visits based on school's self-evaluation has been well received by the school community. This refreshed strategy aims to build on the success of the previous strategy. It aims to mitigate the challenges of current educational funding faced by both schools and local authorities.

2.8. The national context and policy direction is for schools to be increasingly autonomous, responsible for their own improvement and free to make the decisions that they believe will enable them to secure the best outcomes for children and young people. The Council welcomes this autonomy, challenging schools to achieve high standards and working with schools in partnership, facilitating and brokering activity that supports school improvement. The Council does not offer direct school improvement services but offers support via visits from local school effectiveness consultants and the facilitation of collaborative projects and networks.

2.9. Governance arrangements in Slough schools are diverse. The table below shows the number of schools and nurseries along with their governance arrangements:

Table 2.9

Type of school	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	All through	Special	Pupil Referral Unit	Total
Maintained Community	5	3	1	0	0	0	9
Maintained Voluntary-Aided	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Voluntary Controlled	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Maintained Foundation	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Academy	0	19	12	1	2	1	35
Total	5	28	14	1	2	1	51

2.10. The School Effectiveness team consists of a small core group which includes permanent staff and a team of consultants.

- Group Manager – School Effectiveness
- Education Safeguarding Officer
- Standards and Effectiveness Officer (SEND)
- External consultant team

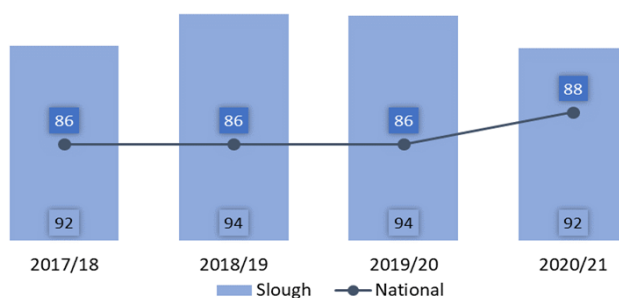
Currently the Group Manager role is vacant, and the Autumn Term Visits have been taking place through external consultants.

2.11. An annual report on school standards is presented to the People Scrutiny Committee. This is a detailed report that shows a range of data such as performance outcomes between groups of pupils at different key stages. There is an opportunity here for members to be able to feed into and understand, local priorities.

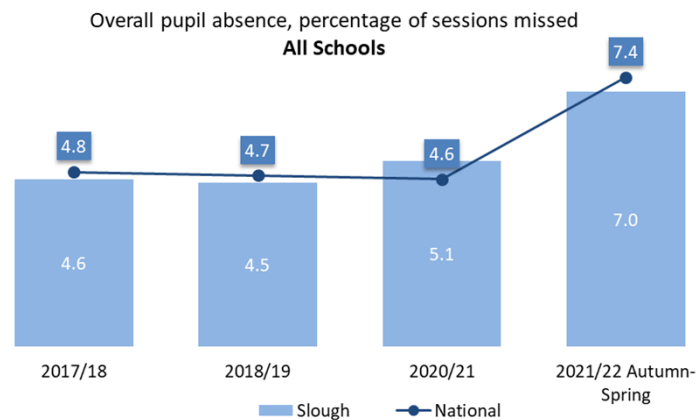
2.12. The table below shows that Ofsted outcomes in schools as of August 2022 are higher than the national average.

Table 2.12

Percentage of state-funded schools judged overall as good or outstanding



2.13. The table below shows that absence in Slough schools is lower than the national average for 2021-22.



2.14. Conclusion and Next Steps

This strategy aims to set out the relationship between schools and the LA in a complex and fragmented system. With a proactive approach as outlined in this strategy and close partnership work, the Council aims to have a proactive approach to school improvement and be able to facilitate support for schools before any issues or major concerns arise. Therefore, the maintaining of positive relationships and partnership work is central to this strategy.

A School Standards Report will be presented to Scrutiny in April 2023. This will give a breakdown of performance and results between schools and other factors such as gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.2. Financial implications

3.1.1 The Slough School Effectiveness Strategy is funded through the School Improvement Service.

3.1.2 A financial summary for the School Improvement Service for 2022-23 is as follows:

	£
Budget	226,960
Forecast	195,400
Variance (Surplus)	31,560

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 Under the Education Act 1996, the Council must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards. The Council has powers of intervention in relation to maintained schools, however these are used rarely. The statutory guidance on Schools Causing Concern emphasises that local authorities should function as champions of high standards of education across maintained schools in their area, and in doing so should:

- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any maintained school that is underperforming, whilst working with them to explore ways to support progress;
- Work closely with the relevant Regional Director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure maintained schools receive the support they need to improve;
- Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant Regional Director, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices, and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and
- Encourage Good and Outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other maintained schools; and enable other maintained schools to access the support they need to improve.

3.2.2 The Council has specific duties in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes keeping their educational and training provision under review. If, when undertaking its duties relating to SEND, the Council identifies concerns over standards, management or governance or safety of a maintained school or academy, they should raise this within the Council, with the local authority that maintains the school or with the Regional Director.

3.2.2 The Council also has duties to provide education for pupils who are unable to attend school. This is via alternative provision. Alternative provision providers should be monitored and managed in a similar way to schools and action can be taken by either the Council or the Regional Director.

3.2.3 The Council has specific duties in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. This requires effective partnership working between the Council, Slough Children First, schools and further education providers. Concerns about academies or independent schools can be raised directly with the Department for Education.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 The council needs to carry out statutory functions in line with the duties described in this paper. In particular around maintained schools. Failure to do so could lead to poor outcomes for children and young people.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 There are no procurement implications

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 This will be reviewed as part of an overall restructure of the People (Children) Directorate which will be considered by the incoming Director of Children's Services.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 There are no property implications from this report.

4. Background Papers

None