

**24 February 2016**

**ITEM: 16**

**Council**

**Cabinet Member Report - Education**

**Report of:** Councillor John Kent

This report is Public.

## **Background**

I am pleased to present my portfolio holder report for education in a year which has seen Thurrock schools continue to perform well in comparison to statistical neighbours and national averages. Over the last year I have continued to visit our schools and academies in Thurrock and aim to get to all of them in the next term. I have been impressed by our head teachers, staff, governors and children. Many heads have spoken to me about a step change in the aspirations for our children and young people and the shared vision which has been developed. Heads have spoken very positively about the quality of relationships with the local authority and the shared priorities which we have developed through the “**Plan on a Page**” (*appendix*) where we have identified the 5 key priorities to move the education service forward. We have been working for some time in supporting and challenging schools and academies to help each other in line with the national drive towards sector-led improvement.

## **Executive Summary**

All councils have been asked to consider the persistent variation that exists across our school system and the role the local authority should play in raising educational standards for all children and young people.

As an education service we continue to place high value on:

- knowing our schools and academies well;
- investing in our school leaders and creating opportunities for new leaders to emerge;
- challenging leaders about rates of pupil progress;
- supporting our governors to recruit the best leaders;
- developing the skills of governors in holding school leaders to account;
- creating opportunities for schools/academies to provide support and challenge to each other;
- identifying risks early so that we can work with schools and academies to address issues quickly;
- ensuring that all schools and academies are using data smartly to drive focused initiatives and promoting the highest expectations within communities for children’s well-being and educational aspirations.

Thurrock Local Authority will continue to play a central role in driving ambition at individual school level and across the borough to sustain the recent improvements in school provision, reducing variation across schools and matching the pupil progress outcomes within the Eastern Region.

### **Thurrock Education Alliance (TEA)**

Excellent progress has been made in developing the strong partnership work between schools, academies and the local authority. Over the last year, schools, academies and early year's providers have worked closely with the local authority to create a strong and shared vision to reach excellence in every area.

Following a review of the current arrangements, the Alliance has agreed to take over the role previously fulfilled by the Excellence Network so that in future the approval and monitoring processes will rest with the single committee – TEA.

Underpinning the approach to ensure improvement, the principle that there is a wealth of expertise across our schools and settings that can be used to support others in their improvement. Following the conference last year led by Professor Bill Lucas, schools and academies have put in place plans to share their expertise in groups of three or four, sharing areas of expertise and collaborating on areas for development. HMI have praised the council for supporting their schools in developing sector-led improvement and reiterated the importance of a shared vision such as that developed in Thurrock.

### **Thurrock Education Awards**

One of the strong recommendations coming out of the Education Commission was the need to celebrate success and publicise our educational achievements in Thurrock. I was delighted – and I know many of my fellow councillors were too - to attend the second Thurrock Education Awards at High House Production Park, an excellent event again with more than 300 guests attending. The event celebrates the achievements of our head teachers, teachers, support staff and governing bodies who work tirelessly to transform our children's lives. I particularly wanted to recognise the substantial support from our local businesses that sponsored the event, gave financial support and proudly presented awards. After the success of this second year we have already even more sponsors confirmed for the 2016 Education Awards, as this is now an eagerly anticipated event.

### **Educational attainment and OFSTED outcomes**

#### **Overall Performance of Thurrock Primary schools**

##### **Early Years**

- The validated data for Thurrock shows a further rise in pupils achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD). Performance was already 6% higher than the national average in 2014 and this has increased to 7% in 2015 based on data collected from all 152 Local Authorities. Thirty of our 39 primary schools in Thurrock are at or above the national average for 2015 at the end of the Reception year.

- The Inequality gap, which measures the percentage gap in achievement between the lowest 20% of children achieving the median score for all children, continues to reduce. In Thurrock the gap has decreased by 0.9% from 28.8% in 2014 to 27.9% in 2015. The gap to national was -5.1% in 2014 so it is likely that Thurrock is better than national.
- 5 out of the 6 children looked after by Thurrock Council and educated by Thurrock schools achieved a good level of development in 2015 (83%). This is an improvement on the previous 2 years of 57% in 2014 (7 LAC children) and 17% in 2013 (6 LAC children).
- The GLD Free School Meal attainment gap remains unchanged from last year at 16 percentage points. This is 3 percentage points lower than the national gap in 2014. The Pupil Premium gap has increased very slightly to 13 percentage points from 12 percentage points in 2014. There is no national comparative data available.
- The percentage of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard for phonic decoding remains at 76% in 2015 which places Thurrock just 1 percentage point below the national average.

#### **Key Stage 1 performance – (7 year olds)**

- Thurrock was at or above national in all Key Stage 1 subjects in 2014. In 2015 performance dropped very slightly and the advantage over the national average last year has been reduced in all subjects at Level 2+ with writing now 1.4% below the national average.
- Performance at Level 2B+ remains in-line or above national but it's at Level 3+ where the gap to national has been closed. Thurrock is now 1% below national for reading (5% below in 2013) and 3% below for speaking and listening (11% below in 2013).
- Overall, Thurrock has been above, close to or above the national average for Level 2+ in the last 2 years. This year the gap has closed at Level 3+ in reading and speaking & listening but the advantage over national at Level 2+ has reduced. Writing and maths have been the weaker subjects for Thurrock in 2015.

#### **Key Stage 2 performance – (11 year olds)**

- In Thurrock performance at Level 4+ and Level 5+ has improved across all of the major subjects at Key Stage 2 – reading, writing, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS). It looks encouraging for Thurrock with the national increases less or in line in most aspects.
- For the key measure of Level 4+ for reading, writing and maths combined, Thurrock looks to have closed the gap to the national average to be just 1% behind (79% overall).
- Reading performance at Level 4+ is currently in line with the national estimate with Thurrock improving by 2% to 89% with the national average unchanged from 2014. The gap to national at Level 5+ has reduced even further from 7% in 2014 to an estimated 4% in 2015. These results are backed up with excellent progress in reading for 2015 with 95.5% of pupils making at least 2 levels progress, a big improvement from last year.

- Performance at Level 5+ has improved with reading, maths and GPS all improving and closing the gap to national. Despite a 1% improvement for writing at this level, the national improvement is greater as it increased by 3%.
- Maths is the weakest subject in 2015 with a small increase in pupils achieving L4+. However, the national increase was also small so the gap remains unchanged from last year.
- Overall, there have been some significant improvements for many Thurrock schools over the past 3 years which has helped the authority to close the gap with the national average. However, there remains a small number of primary schools (4 of the 39) that have not seen the same increases or have seen a concerning downward trend in performance.

### **Overall Performance of Thurrock Secondary schools**

This year saw Thurrock's best ever results at early years and foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2. In a year which saw a dip in GCSE results locally following changes in the grade boundaries for GCSE English and maths by the examination boards, the number of Thurrock young people that achieved the benchmark 5 grade A\*-C including English and Maths decreased by 5 percentage points. This affected the majority of secondary academies, however, our only maintained secondary school, Grays Convent, achieved a 7 percentage point lift to 70%. There is considerable support from the local authority, from academy trusts and from the Thurrock Education Alliance to support schools and academies which perform less well than others.

In terms of OFSTED outcomes, Thurrock has retained its strong position with 74% of our primary schools and academies currently rated as good or outstanding – up from 33% in 2010. We believe that 6 of our primary schools where we have no Ofsted judgement (Academy converters) would be judged good or better raising the percentage to above 80%. This shows the significant efforts being made to raise standards undertaken by governors, teachers, headteachers and support staff which have contributed to this.

In the secondary sector currently 80% of our schools and academies are good or outstanding and places Thurrock is in the top quartile in the Eastern region and a strong performance compared with the national position. Until very recently no Thurrock school or academy was in an Ofsted category, however, following an inspection in January 2016 we are anticipating one of our secondary academies to be placed in a category.

Three of our secondary academies have been subject to unannounced Ofsted inspections following concerns around safeguarding following parental complaints. I am delighted to inform you that all 3 academies were found to be safe and received excellent comments which can be found on the Ofsted website.

The outcomes at GCSE for children looked after (CLA) remain a significant concern to the local authority. Of the 38 pupils in Year 11 last summer, only two young people in care achieved the benchmark 5 GCSE A\*-C grades whilst all pupils gained Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

Areas for development over the coming year continue to focus on supporting the attainment of children who are looked after, who often have disrupted schooling and, in common with the national picture, underachieve compared with their peers.

### **Pupil Place Planning and School Building**

Over the last 12 months we have continued to see an increasing trend in the demand for primary school places. I am very proud to say that, through the strong relationships that have been built with Academy sponsors and our schools, we are able to increase capacity for school places and deliver an excellent working environment for our children. Our partnership working with Reach2 will see the completion of the expansion of the Purfleet Primary Academy by 1FE and this is due to be completed in the next few months. I am pleased to report that work continues at pace at the new 5FE Harris Mayflower Academy and this is due for completion in September 2016.

We have commenced with the expansions of Thameside and Woodside schools, which will increase each school by 1FE. We will be taking an application to the Planning Committee in the next few months to seek agreement to expand Somersheath School by 1FE by re-commissioning the old Knightsmead school site which is adjacent to Somersheath. We have also put in additional primary classes at East Tilbury, Kenningtons and Giffards schools.

### **Pupil Attendance**

Children are unlikely to reach their full potential if they do not attend school regularly. Although national figures for the academic year 2014/15 are not yet published, the indications are that overall absence in primary schools is likely to be only slightly lower at 4%.

Secondary absence was 4.6% which, whilst 0.1% higher than previously reported, is still likely to be lower than the anticipated national average for the second year running.

The Education Welfare Service, which monitors attendance and intervenes where necessary, continues to work closely with staff and families at schools and academies to ensure that good attendance is a top priority for all. Our expectation is that the improvements in primary attendance will provide an improved foundation for attendance in secondary schools as expectations about and patterns of good attendance are embedded early.

### **Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**

This year Thurrock has once again done well in ensuring that young people not in education, employment or training are all identified and Thurrock careers personal advisers support them into an appropriate training/education or employment option. The NEET figure has continued to decrease down to 4.7% in December 2015.

Particularly pleasing is NEET 16 Year old figure standing at 1.2% which is 0.6% less than England average (1.8%). Participation figure has increased in December 2015 to 83.7% placing Thurrock above England average at 81% and well above South East average at just 77.5%.

The not-known figure now stands at just 0.4%. The Department for Education (DfE) has praised Thurrock Careers on their commendable partnership with other Thurrock Council departments and would like to use Thurrock as an example of best practice for other local authorities.

Thurrock is providing career advice not only in secondary educational establishments but also in primary – raising children’s aspirations and ambitions from an early age.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The Local Authority has continued to work successfully in partnership with our pre-schools, schools and academies to implement the changes brought in by the reforms to the support arrangements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

There continues to have been close work and strong partnership with our representative parent groups, educational settings, health, social care and educational agencies. The comprehensive 3 year transformation plan to transfer statements of education to education health and care (EHC) plans is being implemented successfully and has succeeded in 354 reviews of statements in its first year from September 2014 to August 2015.

New arrangements for the co-ordination and delivery of support to pre-school children with SEND has taken place with a new multi-agency panel coordinating the statutory response from Education Health, and Social Care, building on our highly successful Early Support programme. There has been a significant increase in requests for statutory support, as anticipated, as part of this process. The Local Offer setting out the support and services for children and young people with SEND is firmly established and continues to be reviewed and developed in response to feedback from service users.

The new Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans have been reviewed and the format enhanced following feedback from the first year of their implementation and there has been positive feedback from the DfE Regional Adviser on their structure and content. There are clear systems of local quality assurance established for the EHC plans and there continues to be a significant level of regional working to ensure their successful implementation.

### **Arts and Cultural Entitlement – the Trailblazer programme**

2015 also saw the continuation of the arts and cultural entitlement programme in Thurrock for young people, with 28 schools involved in the pathfinder programme which was devised here in Thurrock and has created considerable national interest. The council commissioned the Royal Opera House Learning team to organise the programme for the schools. What particularly excites me, apart from the obvious cultural benefits, is the way the programme has been jointly funded between the council, the Arts Council and schools themselves. It is this partnership approach I believe which will support us through tough financial times ahead.

Participating schools are currently involved in a rich and diverse programme of activities including visits to leading arts organisations, as well as creating and responding to cultural activities themselves. One of the things which singles Thurrock out is the growing arts and cultural scene locally and I am delighted that this has been taken up so wholeheartedly by our schools.

## **Conclusion**

There has been a huge amount to celebrate in Thurrock's schools and settings this year. The whole educational community has worked very hard to develop a shared vision with the council and other partners. The Thurrock Education Alliance has made good headway in agreeing the vision and priorities and the Thurrock Excellence Network has already put together a comprehensive training brochure, is progressing a teacher recruitment and retention strategy and is organising support between different schools and academies across the primary and secondary sectors.

The Education Awards evening showed the best of Thurrock. It showcased the many examples of outstanding head teachers, effective governing bodies and inspiring staff members. We haven't got everything right. We know that there is more to do until all schools and academies are good and/or outstanding. We know that we would like all children to achieve their potential and there is more to do with some groups of pupils, particularly children in the care system who currently underachieve compared with others.

What I am enormously heartened by as I have visited schools and academies is the desire and drive to work together to get the best for our children and young people, regardless of type of school or institution.

## **Financial Information**

Education is funded through the Dedicated School Grant (DSG), which is the main funding source for all Schools. This is broken down into three blocks, Schools block - which is for direct School funding; High Needs Block - which covers the costs of additional needs of students, including both state and independent special schools and pupils with Statements in schools. The third block is the Early Years block - which supports the costs of 2, 3 and 4 year old provision in schools and private and voluntary provision.

Schools block funding is allocated to schools using a formula methodology agreed by the Schools' Forum. This is the same formula for both maintained schools and academies; however for academies the grant is "recouped" from the Local Authority and paid directly to them by the Education Funding Agency.

The Dedicated Schools Grant has stayed at the same per pupil amount for the last four years and has only been increased in relation to pupil volume.

Use of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2014/15 is as below.

## Notes

## Schools Budget Funded By Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

		Central Expenditure £000	Individual Schools Budget £000	Total £000
A	Final DSG for 2014/15 before Academy Recoupment	-	-	128,326
B	Academy figure recouped for 2014/15	-	-	73,743
C	Total DSG after Academy Recoupment for 2014/15	-	-	54,583
D	Brought Forward from 2013/14	2,784	0	2,784
E	Carry Forward agreed to 2015/16			0
F	Agreed budgeted distribution in 2014/15	4,880	49,703	54,583
G	In Year Budget Adjustments	(256)	440	184
H	Actual Central Expenditures	4,502		4,502
I	Actual ISB deployed to schools		50,143	50,143
J	Local authority contribution 2014/15	0	0	0
K	Carry Forward to 2015/16	2,906	0	2,906

- A** This is the original Final DSG Figure, before recoupment for historic and in-year Academy Conversions.
- B** This is the reduction in the Thurrock allocation of DSG for those Schools that are no longer under local Authority Control and are now funded directly by the DfE
- C** This is the Net DSG figure issued by DfE in March 2015. For Funding Maintained Schools and Specific Education services to Schools and Academies.
- D** This figure brought forward from 2013/14, is unspent Central DSG Contingency.
- E** Any amount which the authority decided after consultation with the schools forum to carry forward to 2015/16 rather than distribute in 2014/15.
- F** Budgeted distribution of DSG, adjusted for in year Academy conversions, as agreed with the schools forum.
- G** Budget movements from Contingency to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB)
- H** Actual amount of central expenditure items in 2014/15, after contingency allocations to ISB.
- I** Amount of ISB actually distributed to schools (ISB is regarded for DSG purposes as spent by the authority once it is deployed to schools' budget shares).
- J** Any contribution from the local authority in 2014/15 which will have the effect of substituting for DSG in funding the Schools Budget.
- K** Carry forward to 2015/16.