

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 1st February 2023

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Subject:

Raising Attainment Strategy

Summary statement:

This report provides an update on the Raising Attainment Strategy.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

There is no direct impact in terms of equality and diversity from this report

Marium Haque
Acting Strategic Director Children's
Services

Report Contact: Sue Lowndes
Assistant Director

Schools
E-mail: sue.lowndes@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of the Raising Attainment Strategy. It outlines the status of work to date.

2. BACKGROUND

The Raising Attainment Strategy was intended to be a 5 Year plan. However, budget constraints have meant that much of the work has already ceased and most will end in July 2023.

The Raising Attainment programme included the following work streams:

- Early Years Intervention – Language for Learning
- Primary Intervention
- Secondary Intervention
- Reducing Persistent Absence

The whole strategy has been managed by the Education and Learning Programme Management Team. They supported the procurement processes. The programmes have then been delivered operationally and integrated into business as usual.

A. Early Years Intervention – Language for Learning

Opportunities to hear and engage in language at an early age supports children with their capacity to learn and ultimately their readiness for Primary School. Research shows that Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are on average exposed to around 30 million fewer words than their advantaged peers. This impacts on the child's ability to engage with the curriculum as a whole. This project aimed to address language deficit across Bradford PVI and school nursery settings. Whilst the programme was designed and commissioned, the budget for its delivery was removed as part of the Council budget planning process and so the programme did not start. The innovative approach was viewed as best practice by other LAs that have decided to implement the model. It was a joint commission and programme delivery with public health who are intending to continue some reduced aspects of the project.

B. Primary Intervention – Phonics, Literacy and Numeracy

The focus is on improving attainment at KS1 and KS2 in Phonics, Literacy and Numeracy. By providing a solid platform for children to thrive as they progress through Primary School, pupils will achieve well in their Y6 Stats offering a good start at Secondary School.

The LA commissioned support for primary schools for English and mathematics from local DfE Literacy and Numeracy Hubs – White Rose Maths Hub and Burleigh Woodhead English Hub to deliver proven programmes of support and intervention for identified schools and year groups in identified schools. These programmes are intensive and lengthy to ensure impact in schools – 16 weeks' provision. The programmes are delivered by Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) and it has been necessary to train additional SLEs for English to deliver the programme. A programme manager was seconded from her role as deputy headteacher of a primary school to manage the programmes.

Current Status – Mathematics

- 21 schools expressed initial interest in Maths support, however one academy trust has withdrawn involvement for all of its schools
- Audits of provision were done in all schools
- Most of the other schools now have SLEs appointed to work with them and are meeting on a regular basis either weekly or fortnightly
- A network' event is planned this term for all schools involved in the spring term so there is an opportunity for RAS schools to meet

Current Status – English

- The SLE training day at Burley Woodhead has been completed. It was very successful and the capacity for support for English is now increased and standardised.
- There are now 4 SLEs auditing schools with a reading and writing focus.
- 8 schools have now accessed English support
- English Hub now has 2 Hub support schools to support delivery
- 3 schools are now receiving support for both English and Maths

Next Steps

- 15 other schools have expressed an interest in being involved however we are now getting close to capacity in terms of funding
- Regular meetings with Maths and English hubs to ensure support from SLE's is standardised
- Support in some schools is now coming to an end.
- Impact statements are now being created to begin to look at the effectiveness of the project so far
- Evaluation planned to review impact in schools on teaching and learning
- Data outcomes for summer 2023 will show evidence of impact for schools involved
- Plan to end programme as funding ends in July 2023

C. Secondary Intervention – Maths and English

Funding for the Secondary Intervention Programme was withdrawn as part of Council budget planning.

D. Persistent Absence

Post pandemic the return to school has not been smooth for many children. Bradford has had historically poor attendance, being near or at the bottom compared to national averages for many measures. Long periods of absence from school will have created a lack of routine and structure in children's lives which regular school attendance provides.

Our objective was to develop a multi-agency response to support increased attendance at school, alongside building confidence and promoting healthy approaches to attendance with parents of pre-school aged children who attend nursery. Collaboration with schools, health, early help, children's social care, youth offending and the voluntary sector agencies

are enabling a wraparound service to build resilience and increase school attendance at all phases.

To achieve this, we engaged a highly skilled Specialist Attendance Team with experience of intensive family engagement to model and advise schools on how to improve attendance. We had a head start on the government guidance which followed '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' and had already begun with most of the recommendations when this was published in May 2022.

Current Status

- Service Manager started December 2021 and entirely overhauled LA approach to attendance support, advice, prosecution and reporting along with the Traded Attendance Support Team.
- Additional Attendance Improvement Officers and supporting roles started January 2022 – focus for Persistent Absence (PA) has been one Senior Attendance Improvement Officer and 4 Attendance Improvement Officers, now increased to 5.
- The PA team use supporting data to identify children with vulnerabilities who are persistently absent (less than 90% attendance). Interventions are short, to safeguard, remove barriers to attendance and support schools to ensure best practice.
- The Officers will align with localities and tie in with various services across the district, including Early Help, YJS, Youth and Neighbourhood services.
- Cohorts of children are identified, an assessment made and action plan discussed with school. A review takes place at the end of the half term, with follow up actions.
- Out of 62 children in the first half term of working, 42 children experienced improved attendance following PA Team involvement (68%). Some dramatic improvements included:
 - MF, who went from 0% attendance to 55%
 - KM, who went from 18% to 84%
 - CH, who went from 28% to 84%
 - LBS, who went from 39% to 95%

Next steps

In the light of the implementation of the government guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' from September 2023 it will be necessary to explore mechanisms for funding the approaches outlined above to improve persistent absence in Bradford.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Funding removal for the early years and secondary programmes will mean there is potential negative impact on attainment in future years
- If there is no continuation of funding for the PA work it will be very difficult to implement the DfE requirements on LAs from September of 'Working together to improve school attendance' and consequently to improve attendance in Bradford from its current low level.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- Early Years Language for Learning - £687,132 removed as part of Council Budget setting for 23/24
- Primary English and mathematics spend to date - £260,000 mathematics £116,480 English
- Secondary £500,000 removed as part of Council Budget setting
- Persistent Absence £500,000 committed until July 2023

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

➤ N/A

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

➤ Impacts on all children and young people. Specific focus on supporting children to engage with learning and achieve following pandemic disruption

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

➤ Not applicable

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

➤ Not applicable

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

➤ Not applicable

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

➤ All children have the right to an education

7.6 TRADE UNION

➤ Not Applicable

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

➤ All wards

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

Children Looked After will also benefit from this work

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Not applicable

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

➤ None

9. OPTIONS

➤ Not Applicable

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to accept the reports and note the progress of the Raising Attainment Strategy implementation.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None