

Swindon Challenge

Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 13th December 2017

Author: Peter Nathan - Head of Education, Swindon Borough Council
Wards: All
Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report sets out a strategy to address the issues of underperformance in primary, secondary schools and 16-19 education in Swindon through the introduction of “Swindon Challenge”. This is a three year programme to improve outcomes for young people and improve school performance.
- 1.2 The report is necessary to inform members of the Board of the strategy and the actions taken so far to implement the programme.
- 1.3 The “Swindon Challenge” initiative links into one of the key priorities of the Council’s vision for Swindon. Priority 2 is focused on education and includes a number of corporate performance measures including three related directly to secondary education or 16-19 provision.

2. Recommendations

The Board is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note and agree the approach outlined in this “Swindon Challenge” report.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 Swindon has 11 secondary schools and one UTC currently of which 7 are graded as good according to their latest inspection reports (3 schools are now in new Multi-academy trusts and have no current grading). This equates to 59% of schools being judged as good or better against a national average of 74%. In terms of GCSE outcomes for 2017 (Attainment 8 and Progress 8), unvalidated data for the borough puts Swindon in the bottom quartile for most indicators with concerns over the achievement of disadvantaged pupils particularly white disadvantaged boys and girls. The proportion of young people moving on into higher education is also relatively low compared to the national average. Data shows that 33% of young people in Swindon move to higher education against a national average of 48%. Swindon has two FE colleges one of which is graded outstanding and one graded good yet our relative position against other local authorities on a broad range of attainment indicators is at the lower end of the spectrum. Clearly, outcomes do vary from school to school and there are institutions that are being successful. However, the current data does show that there is a need for radical improvement in education outcomes at KS4 and KS5 in Swindon to realise individuals’ potential and the SBC’s vision.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Nathan, 01793 463067, pnathan@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.2 Primary schools have been more successful in recent years with outcomes tending to be in line with the national average for most indicators. Currently, 90% of primary schools are good or better and Swindon was ranked in 38th position (out of 152 local authorities) in the most recent HMCI (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector) annual report 2016 and 2nd in the South-West. Phonics outcomes are now in line with the national average, Key Stage 1 outcomes are in line or above for all indicators (bar one) and Key Stage 2 results this year were the most improved in the country for pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. The key area of focus is improving outcomes at the higher "greater depth" level as well as maintaining and improving on other outcomes.
- 3.3 There are 6 special schools in the borough and of these 4 are currently rated good or outstanding. One school is in special measures and this is our secondary SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) school which needs considerable improvement. Swindon also has an EOTAS (Education Otherwise than at School) provision which includes the Pupil Referral Unit and this has recently been inspected and graded as good.
- 3.4 This paper sets out clear aims and objectives and a strategy to improve primary & secondary school and 16-19 performance. To achieve the challenging objectives:
- 3.4.1 A Swindon Challenge Board has been established which held its first meeting in March 2017 and has now met 4 times including a September data workshop. Its terms of reference, membership list and initial action plan are attached as appendices to this report. Its function is to lead improvement and challenge practice, bringing in a range of expertise and good practice to support education in Swindon. It has an independent chair and consist of all relevant stakeholders including the Leader of the Council and the Lead member for Children's Services and the Shadow spokesperson for Children's Services. Headteacher associations are represented as are the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office, the Teaching School and the local business community. Officer representation will include the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the Head of Education.
- 3.4.2 Key performance indicators have been agreed and a plan of action was agreed within three months of the Swindon Challenge Board being established. This addresses school improvement across the town as well as specifically targeting key schools supporting them to improve by working with governors/directors and senior leaders. The board has a primary and a secondary sub group linked to the headteacher associations that play an integral role in ensuring that appropriate actions are agreed and taken forward. This is essential to ensure schools are at the heart of decision making. The Teaching School is represented on both boards and
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this should enable other funding that comes into the local authority to supplement, integrate and support programmes of school improvement.

- 3.4.3 The Swindon Challenge Board commissions bespoke specific support working with the RSC, national partners and leading schools. This has already involved commissioning work for example with the following:
- i. The National Education Trust has been carrying out a review of each secondary school's work with disadvantaged and SEND pupils in the summer term (terms 5 & 6) with recommendations for practice improvement. A conference was held with all Secondary schools in October and there will now be follow up visits in the Spring term 2018.
 - ii. All secondary schools have joined PIXL, a national network of schools focusing on developing good practice.
 - iii. Individual work has been agreed to support individual schools including working with nationally known programmes to improve practice including Achievement for All (AFA), the Teacher Effectiveness Programme (TEEP) and the Improving/Outstanding Teacher Programmes. This has further evolved into a bidding process with nine bids agreed with schools to support school improvement, most involving collaboration between schools.
- 3.4.4 The Council has agreed to fund the Swindon Challenge programme for 3 years with a budget of £600,000 over that time. This will pay for or contribute to the above and similar programmes. Reports on the use of these funds and its impact will go to the Challenge board and also to Cabinet and relevant scrutiny committees.
- 3.4.5 The Challenge board will need to work closely with school governors and directors to ensure that they are fully involved in the direction of travel of the board. This is critical to ensure that sustainable improvements are in place and that a clear strategy for improving quality and standards is in place. The Independent chair now meets regularly with a representative governors group to discuss the work of the board.
- 3.4.6 A key initiative in the plan for Swindon Challenge is to make Swindon "A Learning Town" with a campaign to highlight the importance of learning to all citizens across the town. This could involve the development of town wide education events such as "Swindon Reading Week", "Swindon Science Week", "Swindon History Week" and other such ideas. A further notion is that all senior council staff mentor several key stage 4 or 5 pupils to support them and raise their aspirations. This has been agreed by the Cabinet meeting held in October 2017 with the Learning Town board to be chaired by the Corporate Director for Children's Services.
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3.4.7 A “Swindon Challenge” action plan has been developed (draft) and this includes:

- i. **Leadership and management** – working with schools and governors to ensure that all schools have excellence in this area. Educational research for the past 40 years has emphasised the importance of strong leadership in achieving high outcomes. This could involve local leaders of education as well as NLEs.
- ii. **Teaching and Learning** – ensuring that there is high quality teaching and learning in classrooms and beyond. This would involve supporting the recruitment of high quality NQTs and other teaching staff and leaders. It would also involve working closely with the Teaching School Alliance to ensure that there is high quality training in place to support teacher development and effectiveness. This would also involve peer to peer support between schools and within schools using outstanding practitioners to develop practice.
- iii. **Behaviour, Personal Development and Welfare** – ensuring that all schools have appropriate systems in place for effectively managing behaviour to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions (as well as creating positive learning environments). Supporting schools to ensure that their schools are safe places to be and that young people are able to grow personally to become full and participating members of British society.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 An alternative would be to develop a much larger scheme as took place with the City Challenge programme, but it is recognised that current funding constraints would not allow this.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Cabinet have already approved a budget of £600k over the next 3 years to deliver the outcomes highlighted in this report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There are no legal and human rights implications arising from this report.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other implications arising from the report.

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Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment is available from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.5 None.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Swindon Challenge Terms of Reference.
8.2 Appendix 2 - Swindon Challenge Membership List.