

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date: 1st October 2015
Report of: Acting Corporate Director, Children Families and Wellbeing

Report Title

Proposed education scrutiny topics for 2015-16

Summary

The report outlines the proposed topics to form the programme of activity for the Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the next year.

Two areas are proposed as follows;

- **Closing the Gap:** Trafford has the highest performing education system nationally when you take into account the level of attainment at each stage from Early Years through to Key Stage 5 (A-level). This performance has continued to improve from its existing high base despite a number of national changes that have impacted on other LA's. However there continues to be a challenge in relation to reducing educational inequalities and whilst attainment for our vulnerable groups is higher than national averages the gap to the highest attaining is not reducing.

As a result further work is being developed to support our activity in this area and an action plan established for the 2015-16 academic year. It is a particularly issue within the secondary sector reflecting a national trend so proposals have been established for additional targeted activity in those schools identified as high risk following an assessment of performance. In addition to targeted activities in relation to closing the gap Sub-Committee may want to explore aspects such as;

- Progress rates and target setting for pupils within the Free School Meals (FSM) Cohort
 - Secondary destinations of pupils within FSM Cohort i.e. how many progress to good or outstanding schools compared to their peers
 - National evidence base for interventions to support closing the gap
 - Review of the emerging Closing the Gap action plan
- **School Funding:** Whilst Trafford has the highest performing education system nationally we are also one of the lowest funded on a per pupil basis and this is starting to have a significant impact on many of our schools. National school funding formulas are very complex and prescriptive on how local School Funding Forum is able to allocate monies to schools via the formula. Each LA area is allocated a funding level and that is then used to distribute monies via three blocks of funding; Early Years, Mainstream, and

High Needs. There is an ongoing national campaign to establish a fair funding formula for schools that ensures a level of basic funding that is the equivalent regardless of the geographical location of a school. That would then be 'topped up' by targeted funding i.e. Pupil Premium.

It has been recognised by governments over many years that the system needs fundamental reform and there is a commitment from the Department for Education to work towards a National Fair Funding Formula. Trafford is a member of the F40 group of councils who lobby government on behalf of the lowest funded LA's and we have been very active in seeking a fairer allocation for Trafford. The Sub-Committee may wish to explore the following areas;

- Impact of inequity in funding on Trafford Schools
- Opportunities for more flexibilities in the system that can be identified for lobbying on a national basis
- Demographic factors impacting on funding in both the mainstream and high needs block
- Impact of fragmentation on school place planning and how that effects funding.

It is recommended that to provide additional support for the Committee that a representative Headteacher from both the Primary and Secondary sectors are co-opted to work with the Committee. Nominations should be sought from the respective Standing Heads Conference and will be facilitated by officers within CFW. The Head of Educational Standards will be the key link to the work going forward and there is a range of documentation available to the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to inform the proposed review.

Recommendation

That the Sub-Committee agrees the areas outlined for scrutiny and the approach to be taken.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None