

Committee:	School Forum
Meeting Date:	15 July 2014
Title:	Update on the Learning Partnership
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Decision making / consultative / information:	For information

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

To note the progress of the set up of the Learning Partnership.

Reason for recommendation

n/a

Alternative options

n/a

Who will be affected by this decision?

All schools in Suffolk and the Learning & Improvement Service (LIS).

Main body of the Report

Introduction

1. This paper gives an update on the approach and progress towards establishing the Learning Partnership.
2. The Learning Partnership's purpose is to lead school to school collaboration for improvement and harness the capacity of all schools for self-improvement. Building a new relationship with Suffolk County Council it will have a well-defined structure which models and embeds system-led leadership working in partnership with all schools in Suffolk. Through shared regular monitoring of school standards, the Learning & Improvement Service (LIS) and the Learning Partnership will build a picture of the performance and educational attainment of all schools in Suffolk and their direction of travel. Once that picture has been built, both the Learning Partnership and LIS will have specific roles. LIS will intervene quickly and

- appropriately to move schools from “Special Measures or “Requires Improvement”. The Learning Partnership will support this by identifying and signposting best practice in strong schools through the ‘Best Practice Brokerage’.
3. Where schools are deemed “Good” or “Outstanding” but with a declining direction of travel, the Learning Partnership will quickly broker support in reversing that trend. Where schools are deemed “Good” or “Outstanding” and have an upwards direction of travel, the Learning Partnership will celebrate their success and broker support from staff within those schools to help others. The expected outcome of this work is that the stock of “Good” and “Outstanding” schools grow and will not reduce.

Learning Partnership’s vision and objectives

4. The Learning Partnership has the following vision:
“The Suffolk Learning Partnership will foster collective responsibility for the lifelong learning of all children and young people in Suffolk. Leaders and teachers will model the pride and ambition we seek for all students, improving outcomes for all groups of learners. There will be renewed respect for education in Suffolk”
5. It will be a sustainable, outward-looking Learning Partnership that raises outcomes for all by:
 - a) Embracing change
 - b) Building and sharing the excellent resources, including leadership skills, within our schools and colleges
 - c) Being accountable to our communities and to one another
 - d) Building strong partnerships that increase confidence and provide challenge
 - e) Developing effective relationships between individuals, institutions and communities
 - f) Providing a rich environment which attracts and supports high quality staff

Approach to the set-up of the Learning Partnership

6. The Learning Partnership will be set up in two stages.
7. Initially, in September 2014, it will be set up within Suffolk County Council, but with complete operational freedom and working for this period with an independent interim board (similar to the set-up of Schools’ Choice).
8. The intention is to turn the Learning Partnership into a fully independent organisation in September 2015.
9. The approach allows the Learning Partnership to become operational in a short timescale and “hit the ground running”, being able to focus on its operational priorities rather on procedural activities of setting up a company.
10. It gives the Learning Partnership time to sort out all formalities of establishing the company - including setting up the company, its articles and governance, and sorting out staffing issues such as pension and liabilities, and arranging for accommodation and any required back office

provision. It also provides time for setting up legal agreements and contracts between the County Council and the Learning Partnership.

11. Some of this work has already been set in motion, for example, lawyers are already working with the Learning Partnership to prepare articles for the company.

Interim board

12. An interim board is being set up for the first year of the Learning Partnership's operation (to exist until the Learning Partnership becomes an independent organisation).
13. The membership of the interim board will include a primary and a secondary Headteacher, a school governor representative, the Director for Children and Young People's Services as local authority representative, a Further Education representative and two representatives of the executive team of the Learning Partnership (initially Madeleine Vigar and Sarah Rees - who are on part time secondments to the County Council to set up the Learning Partnership - until permanent appointments have been made).

Funding

14. The County Council will provide annual contributions towards the running costs of the Learning Partnership. It has redirected £500k budget to the Learning Partnership, coming from the £1.1m intervention and support fund used by Learning Improvement Service (LIS) to support under performing schools and develop partnerships and other improvement initiatives. This will not affect or reduce LIS's core staffing or capacity to do its statutory work.
15. The level of funding will be reviewed before the Learning Partnership is divested, with the assurance of the County Council that appropriate funding will be made available beyond 2014/15.
16. An additional one-off £100k has been committed from the Raising the Bar programme budget towards the set up costs of the Learning Partnership.
17. The Learning Partnership will also manage the Raising the Bar Challenge Fund, to offer grants to schools to introduce new effective approaches to raise attainment. £1m of the Raising the Bar programme budget is committed towards the costs of this grant scheme over the next 4 years.
18. The Learning Partnership has the possibility to raise additional funding from schools by introducing a subscription approach.

Priorities and timescales

19. The Learning Partnership has currently five key priorities:
20. Set up the Learning Partnership
 - a. Set up of the Interim Board, to first meet in September 2014.
 - b. The job description, person specification and job advert for the Executive Director of The Learning Partnership are now being drafted with a view to appointing to the post for January 2015.
 - c. Work with a legal expert to set up the governance & staffing to enable system-led leadership for The Suffolk Learning Partnership
 - d. Set up a Learning Partnership website – this summer.
21. Set up "The Bridge":

This will be a high profile physical and virtual space at West Suffolk College, Bury St Edmunds from which Learning Partnership personnel, the Learning Improvement Service and others can work in partnership. Fully accessible online, this space will facilitate high quality communication and robust system-led leadership, with Key Dials showing self-evaluation data and other data produced by schools. It is possible that additional spaces can be developed across Suffolk as The Learning Partnership develops. The Bridge will be the mechanism used to broker and deliver school-to-school support and facilitate Peer Challenge. Due to be set up by September 2014.

The Teaching Schools Alliances in Suffolk and the Eastern Region will play a key role in this brokerage. All Headteachers (and school leads) of TSA's are meeting to discuss how this could work on June 24th 2014.

22. Stakeholder engagement

The Learning Partnership team is continuing to engage with Headteachers around the county, to develop and secure the ethos and culture for the Suffolk Learning Partnership using the agreed vision as the starting point. A primary Headteacher, Sarah Rees (Great Barton Primary School), has been seconded to support this work, and applications have been received from other primary Headteachers to create additional capacity to help school leaders proactively shape The Learning Partnership.

23. Work on Teacher recruitment:

Set up a scheme, with incentives, for Suffolk working with an agency to attract high quality staff to Suffolk. This could include the setting up of an educational research academy and involve other local partners. A governor and small group of Headteachers have volunteered to develop this initiative.

24. Strengthen Curriculum:

Implement resources and training to enable Maths Mastery, Advantage Maths and or Philosophy for Children (or other proven medium to promote communication skills) to be delivered in Suffolk schools to improve Numeracy and Communication Skills.