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| Committee: | School Forum |
| Meeting Date: | 22 October 2015 |
| Title: | Intervention Fund |
| Author: | Adrian Orr: Deputy Assistant Director Education and Learning |
| Decision making / consultative / information: | Information |

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

1. Schools forum are being asked to delegate the resources currently referred to as the Intervention Fund in order that the council can meet its obligations with regards to standards. This decision making will be part of paper F and this paper provides background information to inform this decision. The council's ambitions are clearly set out in the Raising the Bar School Improvement strategy which prioritises intervening in schools causing concern. Key targets in the council's strategy are that, all children will attend good or outstanding schools and all children will achieve their potential. Key measures the council will be judged on are the percentage of children attending good or better schools and the councils and whether the aggregated end of Key Stage measures meet or exceed national averages.

Reason for recommendation

2. Standards are rising in Suffolk schools. In 2015, the end of KS2 attainment data (unvalidated) indicates an improvement in excess of the national average improvement over the same period. The historic gap to national for this measure is the smallest it has been in more than 3 years (3% in 2015 compared to 7% in 2012).
3. At the end of Key Stage 4, school self-reported results suggest a rise in overall attainment of 5A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths, which may put Suffolk in line with national figures. At the time of writing unvalidated data was not available but will be published in October 2015.
4. Gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are closing and the percentage of children attending good or better schools is increasing. Currently 77% of children attend a good or better school compared to 70% at the end of 2013.
5. The improving trend in performance is encouraging and in no small part due to the hard work of school leaders and school staff. The improvements in some schools are also down to the hard decisions made by governors and Interim Executive Boards.

6. Although there is a clear improving trend, Suffolk still sits below a number of key national measures and the council, Schools Forum and School leaders need to remain firm in their resolve to drive further improvement.
7. The support provided through the intervention fund has contributed directly to improvements in some of the most challenging schools. Support and challenge has led to improved pupil outcomes and Ofsted outcomes. In some cases the fund has allowed governors to secure new leadership.
8. Although there have been improvements we need to further accelerate the pace of improvement. This is likely to mean more intervention activity in 2015-16 and continued demand on this resource.

Alternative options

9. No alternative options are being proposed while Suffolk sits below key national measures.

Who will be affected by this decision?

10. All maintained schools and Pupil Referral Units will be affected by the decision.

Main Body of the Report

11. All local authorities are charged with specific duties regarding school standards and performance. These duties are set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Specifically the LA has a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential. The full details of these duties are set out in Section 13A of the act. In addition LAs are required to intervene in schools causing concern and the DfE document: Schools Causing Concern-January 2015 sets out in detail the expectations of the secretary of state. The LA is expected to fund its duties through both base budget and retained DSG.
12. The intervention fund supports the provision of direct support and challenge to schools in complex circumstances to provide:
 - Funding for additional leadership capacity
 - Interim Executive Boards where governance is not strong enough
 - Additional governance capacity and Chair of Governor mentoring
 - External accountability to School Improvement Boards
 - Targeted school improvement interventions
 - Challenge Partners Support for school leaders
 - Support for schools meets the costs of compromise agreements

- The council is committed to ensuring all children attend a good or better school and the intervention fund support challenge and support for school in the most challenging circumstances. This can include school in Ofsted inadequate categories, schools meeting the DfE Schools causing Concern Thresholds and schools facing unique challenges that require additional support

Activity and Impact

- Currently the intervention fund is proving additional leadership in three schools. In one school the leadership arrangements have stabilised complex safeguarding issues. In two schools robust headship has been secured and both schools have seen end of key stage results improve.
- The number of Interim Executive Boards varies across the year. At the time of writing there are 6 Boards in place.
- Summary of the current IEBs (*A is the longest running, F is the most recently established*)

| School | Leadership | Standards | Planned IEB end date |
|----------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| A | Strong leadership now in place | At or above national in all key measures except one | TBC |
| B | New Leadership in place | Results up on 2014 | 1/11/15 |
| C | New Leadership in place | Results up on 2014 | 1/1/16 |
| D | New Leadership in place | Results not yet strong enough-Plans for rapid academisation in place | 2/1/16 |
| E | New Leadership in place | Results not strong enough, plans for reorganisation and academisation in place | TBC |
| F | Interim Leadership in place | Standards not yet good enough, new leadership addressing the concerns | 1/3/16 |

- There are currently 11 School Improvement Boards in place, these boards are independently chaired to ensure that both school and the LA are held to account for the impact of improvement plans. School Improvement Boards seek rapid solutions to issues relating to standards, leadership and or financial concerns. Of the 11 schools, 7 will be converted to academies within the next 6 months and the others will secure appropriate improvement.

18. Some schools require time limited targeted and specialist support. This is delivered by a small team of intervention staff, some of whom are school based practitioners. At the time of writing 13 Challenge Partners are undertaking this focused work in 14 schools. This work is kept under review to ensure progress. In the year ahead this work will shift and be undertaken by the developing School to School Support Partnership. In line with the consultation undertaken with all schools in spring 2015 the Schools to School Support partnership will be based around Teaching school alliances and other strong school partnerships. It is proposed that up to £500,000 of the current intervention fund will be available to the school to school support partnership to release staff from schools to provide direct support to schools in need of intervention.
19. A final but key aspect of the deployment of this fund is the use of compromise agreements to secure changes in leadership. Compromise agreements are not undertaken lightly and many avenues are explored before they are suggested. However in order to secure rapid improvement in outcomes this approach is sometimes taken. Since April there have been 5 such agreements totalling £68,000. In all cases the LA and governors have been able to secure new leadership with pace.
20. In summary this fund provides the LA the resources to secure timely intervention and improve outcomes for children. When the aggregated results from all Suffolk Schools exceed the national averages it would be appropriate then to review which of the current approaches could be ceased and funding allocation reviewed.