

DRAFT

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th September 2012

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

**Title of Report: THE OXFORD CHALLENGE: ACHIEVING WORLD
CLASS TEACHING IN OXFORD CITY SCHOOL
SERVING DISADVANTAGED**

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To outline the key findings from stakeholder engagement on the City's Education Attainment Project and to get endorsement of proposals

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Board Member, Young People, Education and Community Development

Policy Framework: Strong, Active Communities

Recommendation(s):

Appendices to report

Appendix 1 – ***Title?***

Appendix 2: List of the key stakeholders consulted on the project

Introduction

1. Oxford City Council under the aegis of the Oxford Strategic Partnership has committed significant funding alongside the County Council to raise attainment in primary schools in Oxford City. It has set ambitious targets to raise levels of attainment in City schools serving the most disadvantaged communities to 10% above the national average. This would mean:
 - 95% achieving level 2 in Reading at age 7 and
 - 84% achieving Level 4 in English and Maths at age 11 by 2016

2. The current attainment in City schools at age 7 and 11 is presented in **Appendix 1**. The ambition is for schools in Oxford City serving the less advantaged communities to be world class in their ability to raise attainment. It is proposed to designate this programme 'The Oxford Challenge: Achieving World Class Teaching.'
3. Following a conference in July 2011, a decision was made by the City Council in its budget for 2012-16 to invest £1.4 million to support this type of programme. An education adviser was engaged to gather and analyse the views of key stakeholders (listed in **Appendix 2**) and to make proposals for strategic investment to achieve a significant improvement in attainment. The results of this stakeholder engagement were shared and discussed in a seminar at the University of Oxford, Department of Education on June 14 2012, and at the Oxford Strategic Partnership on 21 June 2012.

Analysis of the issues

4. Oxford City primary schools serving the more disadvantaged areas of the city have been very successful in securing an environment where children feel safe and cared for. However, children's failure to learn is too often attributed to the chronic problems and low expectations associated with poverty, mobility, EAL etc, rather than to the approaches to teaching and learning and community engagement. Stakeholder engagement identified the following key issues as ones that would have to be addressed to achieve the aspirations of the City Council:-

(a) Training and development to improve the quality of teaching and learning

Schools leaders need support to provide class teachers with the skills that are needed to ensure progress in children who come from communities of poverty.

Teachers need more training and support to teach the skills of reading, writing, language and numeracy to children aged 4-7 in Key Stage 1 so that they learn fast and effectively, and are not hindered by delayed language development and reduced access to home learning. For children from ages 8-11 in Key Stage 2, the need is to help children who have not developed these skills to catch up – some may need to make 3-4 level of progress (ie cover 6-7 years of schooling in 4 years).

Finally, not enough school leaders and governors feel confident that they have the skills, tools and resources to set and achieve more ambitious targets and significantly improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good, and from good to outstanding. Leaders should have access to instructional methods that work right from the start so that children do not fail and become identified as having special needs.

(b) Support to leadership teams in schools serving communities of poverty

Many head teachers who have effectively led schools in other settings, find that specialist strategies are needed to effectively lead schools in disadvantaged areas. There is too often a significant focus on the vulnerabilities of children and the community, sometimes to the point where professionals feel disempowered and pessimistic.

Leaders need to be provided with support and guidance to be able to challenge this view and to enable staff to believe that they have the competence to help children progress, and enable the children to believe in themselves. They also need innovative strategies for engaging with the community. The research shows that in primary schools particularly it is the values, qualities, competences and decision making of the whole leadership team that is important to success.

(c) Recruitment

Recruitment is a challenge for certain posts which are hard to recruit, these include SENCOs, senior leaders, and experienced coordinators with experience in good and outstanding schools.

5. This analysis given by the head teachers, teachers and other stakeholders finds significant support in research. The seminal reports on leadership for schools in disadvantaged areas conclude that:-

‘The leadership of schools is second only to classroom teaching in terms of its influence on student learning, with the greatest impact found in schools where the learning needs are most significant; [11](#).’

6. The conclusion of the analysis is that the raising attainment project should focus on the two key areas of classroom teaching and leadership.

Proposals

7. **A whole class based programme to accelerate learning in literacy and numeracy**

There is a strong need to provide all primary teachers with training in a research based classroom programme that is grounded in instructional psychology and is able to be successful both at raising standards in language, literacy and numeracy at KS1 to 95% levels, but also to assist children who have not had a good grounding in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 1 to catch up at Key Stage 2.

The programme will need to:

- Move teaching from poor to satisfactory, from satisfactory to good and from good to outstanding;

- Support teachers to provide good quality class teaching which prevents children from failing and being identified as having special needs.
- Be used consistently throughout the schools to enable good progression as children move up the school;
- Be motivating and engaging for children who have not had the opportunity to access a supportive home learning environment
- Provide teachers with the skills and confidence to meet the targets set by the City Council for those schools;
- Have sound research evidence of its effectiveness in raising standards in schools serving disadvantaged areas;
- Draw on the latest research in instructional psychology which address the delays in language and vocabulary development in the children;
- Provide teachers with feedback on their class teaching in the school to enable them to accelerate pupils' progress

The City's education adviser has identified programmes that would meet these criteria.

8. A world class leadership programme for schools serving disadvantaged communities

To achieve the targets set and to deliver world class teaching will require a high quality leadership programme which enables senior leaders to learn from the best research and practice nationally and internationally. Senior leaders in Oxford City (head teachers, chairs and vice chairs of governors, deputy head teachers and middle leaders who are aspiring deputies) would be enabled to participate in a programme, which would provide:-

- Access to the best research and practice respect to raising standards in schools serving areas of poverty;
- Access to the latest research on what works in engaging communities successfully
- Presentations from successful practitioners who have raised standards;
- Participation in action learning and action research to facilitate application of knowledge and skills and reflect on how to manage change t
- Opportunities to shadow someone in an equivalent role in a school in a disadvantaged area that is achieving high standards;
- An opportunity for the leadership team to receive support within school at key points of the programme to reflect on how to ensure impact on learning;

- An accreditation to an externally approved standard
9. It is proposed that both the above programmes would be offered to schools in Oxford City serving disadvantaged communities which have volunteered to participate in the programme. Part of the process of awarding the tender will involve a presentation to head teachers of the methodology proposed. The contract will be finalised after schools have committed to take up the programme, and the final cost provided will be based on the number of schools involved. The timetable is to invite tenders in July, select providers in September, hold a conference for schools, councillors and other stakeholders on 24 September to present the successful programmes and start the programmes in October.
 10. The programme will be delivered in the 10 Oxford City schools serving the most disadvantaged communities that wish to participate in it. A number of these head teachers have expressed enthusiasm for the above programmes.
 11. The outcomes desired from both programmes are:-
 - Raised attainment in pupils in participating schools and achievement of the City's targets in those schools as set out in paragraph 1
 - Significantly increased proportion of teachers graded as good or better to 90% in participating schools.
 12. Discussions are taking place with Oxfordshire County Council senior officers to ensure that these programmes complement the reading and leadership programmes they are providing.
 13. The City is separately examining the scope for a shared equity housing scheme to address the recruitment issue and a further report will be brought forward to present these proposals.

Risks

14. The following risks have been identified and mitigating action is outlined below:-
 - Schools and academy sponsors will not agree these programmes would be useful. The risk of this is identified as low because the education adviser has met with a number of head teachers and talked to academy sponsors who support the analysis and are interested and enthusiastic about the programmes
 - There will be no contractors bidding for the programmes. The risk of this is low. There are providers who are interested in the programmes.
 - The programmes will not deliver the required improvements. The risk of this is low. The instructional programme contracts will not be awarded unless contractors provide evidence of proven success. The leadership contract will need to be backed by a reputable university.

- Schools will find the separate approaches from the County and City confusing. The risk of this is medium. Further meetings are being set up to ensure that this risk is minimised.
 - The programmes when awarded will not be sustainable. The risk of this is low. Both invitations to tender will require sustainability as part of the bid.
 - More schools will want the programme than is affordable within the funding available. This is a medium risk. The proposed criteria for choosing 10 schools is based on need (%free school meals) and level of attainment. This principle is accepted within the education community.
15. **Climate change / environmental impact:** We will require the instructional programme to be delivered in school thereby minimising travel for teachers. The leadership programme will be provided in a local venue accessible to public transport.
16. **Equalities impact:** There is likely to be a significant positive equalities impact as the instructional programme aims to narrow the gap for children from areas of disadvantage and who have English as an additional language. All school leaders, teachers and teaching assistants in 10 schools serving communities of poverty with the greatest need will be provided with support. Some schools with smaller percentages of children with free school meals/BME will not receive the programme. These are the schools with higher results. We will need to ensure best practice is shared so that children in other schools who are failing, benefit from the learning in the selected schools.
17. **Financial implications:** These programmes can be achieved within the identified budget
18. **Legal Implications.** A formal procurement process will be entered into to ensure that invitations to tender are seen by all possible providers.

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Background papers: ??

Report should be set out in numbered paragraphs. Please do not number heading – number paragraphs only. This makes it easier during the meeting to refer to a specific paragraph.

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List of background papers:

Version number:

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