

Subject:	Report of the Secondary School Commission		
Date of Meeting:	13 October 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, People		
Lead Member:	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Terry Parkin	Tel: 29-0730
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: CAB24026	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Secondary Commission was established by the Strategic Director , People shortly after he joined Brighton and Hove City Council at the request of the then Leader of the Council. The Leader of the Council and Convenor of the Green Group, Councillor Bill Randall, and the Cabinet Member for Children, Councillor Sue Shanks, joined the Commission for a challenge session in July.
- 1.2 The commission was established because of recognition that while performance in early years settings and primary schools is very encouraging, secondary school performance overall does not appear to match this, or the ambition of the city for its young people. Given the importance of education in building a positive future for young people and resilience against, for example, teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and participation in crime, this represents an important vulnerability. It was recognised that more work is required on how the educational assets of a highly educated adult workforce and the presence of three high performing further education establishments can be harnessed to improve the education provided in Brighton & Hove. If the city can get the education of its children and young people consistently to the highest standards, then many of the other factors which play an important role in building resilience will improve as a consequence.
- 1.3 Secondary performance was seen to be unsatisfactory overall: of our ten statistical neighbours, we sat second from bottom, and our performance outcomes for 16 year olds were at least 10% lower than one might expect from analysing the performance of similar schools in a national context. This was highlighted in the Annual Assessment of Children's Services published by Ofsted in the Autumn of 2010:

The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. Day care for young children has improved since the last assessment. The large majority of nursery and early years provision in primary schools is good or better. More primary schools than in similar areas are good or better and almost a quarter are outstanding. ***In contrast, the overall effectiveness of secondary schools is weaker than at the last assessment and is well below the national and similar area averages with only three of the nine schools good or better and one inadequate (author's italics).*** The quality of Post-16 provision is mixed. Although

both sixth form colleges are good and the general further education college satisfactory, only one of the four secondary school sixth forms is good and one is inadequate.

- 1.4 Headteachers had recognised some of these issues and were already working together, although initially on Building Schools for the Future and thereby with a focus on buildings rather than purely on outcomes. Provisional performance targets set by schools for the performance of 16 year olds in summer 2012 were considered lower than acceptable by the incoming Strategic Director People, and these were revisited in November/December to ensure a more appropriate degree of challenge.
- 1.5 The importance of improving secondary school performance reflects the fact that a good secondary education, and particularly success in English and mathematics at 16, is one of the very best protective factors in securing employment and future family stability in adults. The relatively high numbers of young people not engaged in education, employment or training, then, relate directly to performance at 16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet makes clear its aspiration that our secondary schools are to be performing in line with, or better than, the top quartile of similar schools by 2014;
- 2.2 That schools and the Council commit resources to offer all teachers the opportunities to become outstanding practitioners;
- 2.3 That the Lead Commissioner for Learning and Partnerships should work with secondary schools, academies and their governing bodies to agree a formal structure that requires secondary schools and academies to work together collaboratively, and to raise outcomes for all pupils at 16 in line with 2.1 and 2.2 above;
- 2.4 That the widest possible engagement of the communities served by the schools should be engaged in this development; and,
- 2.5 That this should include annual reports on progress to Cabinet and other key stakeholders.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The composition of the Secondary Commission is given in appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Secondary Commission agreed it should work in tandem with headteachers, providing challenge to help raise expectations and outcomes at all levels. This meant that recommendations from the Commission on day-to-day practice could be fed directly to headteachers and so change could be rapid. Five meetings of the commission have taken place. It has looked at quality of teaching, expectations, models of partnership and new ways of organising services to schools.
- 3.3 Since the Commission was established, the future role of a Local Authority (LA) within schools has become increasingly unclear. Recent speeches by the

Secretary of State for Education point to schools holding greater responsibility for managing their own performance and supporting that of others, while LAs will exist to promote collaboration and to intervene on failure. Previously, this role has been to pre-empt and prevent failure: the progressive movement by central government of resources for school improvement to schools themselves makes this rather more humane role less possible. This has included most recently, for example, a withdrawal of the funding for school improvement partners, often experienced former headteachers themselves, who provided independent challenge to governing bodies and their schools. We need then to find a cost effective way to ensure schools continue to receive external challenge that can pre-empt, and help prevent, failure.

- 3.4 Traditionally, school improvement has been a core function of Local Authorities. This is no longer the case. The resources available to LAs to secure effective schools have been largely diverted to schools themselves with an expectation that the school sector looks to itself to manage improvement and prevent failure. The total resource removed from the city council in the last two years by central government is of the order of £9.7m, (some of which now appears directly in the schools' budget).
- 3.5 This requires that the LA function of the Council reinvents itself. Schools are community resources but central policy direction has often been seen to make schools more remote from the communities they serve. A formal collaborative approach between all nine secondary mainstream schools, including our academies, should ensure a high degree of accountability and engagement with the communities they collectively serve. Other schools, including secondary special schools and primary schools, may also wish to join such a collaborative. This paper argues that with the limited resource now available to the LA function of the Council, our role is better focused on building collaboration, catalysing school to school support and holding schools to account, rather than the more traditional role of a school improvement service to our secondary schools.
- 3.6 A number of papers were commissioned externally, or prepared by its members, looking at, for example, the role and purpose of our schools, models of partnerships, as well as bringing together evidence on the very best practice from around the world. These have all been shared with secondary headteachers. This free flow of information and challenge between the Commission and schools has resulted in a number of changes to how the Council works with its schools during the short life of the Commission. It has also seen a significant increase in ambition from schools, both individually but also within a wider, collaborative partnership. Changes have included additional support provided to schools to secure high quality performance management, the implementation of a coaching programme for head teachers and the transfer of staff from the Local Authority to the schools themselves to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- 3.7 The Commission also feels that the outcomes should include a small number of key targets held in common: all teaching becoming outstanding, performance in the top quartile for similar schools, and all schools having outstanding leadership at all levels including in the classroom, for example. Headteachers identified a similar group of outcomes in their developing Raising Achievement Plan on which they have been working, with local authority support, over the last year:

By summer of 2014:

- to be in the upper quartile for our statistical neighbours in achievement of 5+ A*-C including English and Maths;
- 80% of teaching is good or better;
- all schools, via an Ofsted inspection, to be at least 'good' with 'outstanding features' and 'outstanding' for 'capacity to improve';
- to be in the upper quartile of our statistical neighbours for attendance, and with minimal levels of exclusion; and,
- to demonstrate that gaps have progressively closed in the secondary schools in relationship to attainment between significant groups.

The Commission felt these aims might be too distant, but agreed with the broad outcomes.

3.8 Finally, the Strategic Director, People is working with head teachers to relaunch the Learning Partnership to ensure schools can work in a variety of groupings - phase, locality and special interest – and use their groupings to influence local authority strategy and policy as well as creating a learning community of schools. Chris Thomson, the Principal of Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College, and a member of the Commission, is leading this work with headteachers and on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership. This work has now been presented to the Local Strategic Partnership and the final agreements should be in place by the end of October. We will then see a range of formal and informal partnerships, well placed to take a greater role in the collective improvement of all schools.

Moving Forward

3.9 2011 Provisional Results: (unvalidated and subject therefore to change)

School	Total no of Pupils 2011	5+ A*- C including English & Maths GCSE					
		2011 Early Data from Schools %	2011 No of Pupils 5 A-C E&M	2010 Result %	Difference from Last Year	2011 Target %	Difference from Target
Blatchington Mill	315	59.0	186.0	65	-6	59	0
Cardinal Newman	342	66.1	226.0	59	7	66	0
Dorothy Stringer	348	73.6	256.0	63	11	70	4
Hove Park	298	43.6	130.0	41	3	51	-7
Longhill	241	37.0	90.0	43	-6	49	-12
Patcham	180	50.0	90.0	37	13	54	-4
PCC	181	41.0	74.2	35	6	40	1
Varndean	237	56.0	132.0	58	-2	67	-11
All special schools	61	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Local Authority Average	2203	53.8	1184.2	49.1	4.7	54.0	0
England (all schools) 2010				54%			

3.10 National validated figures will not be published until later this year, but results for this indicator look to be up by around 3% nationally.

- 3.11 The Commission believes that the solutions are, in part, relatively simple. We know what makes for a good school – there is an unremitting focus on classroom practice and in ensuring that the school is driven from the top by a demand for high quality learning. Achieving this is less simple, and will need a concerted and co-ordinated effort across the partnership to ensure practice is informed at all levels by evidence. This reflects the headteachers' own wishes for our schools, and led to one of the first recommendations:

To allocate additional resources to eliminate all unsatisfactory teaching from schools within the year, and ensure all teachers have the opportunity to become outstanding.

We knew also that to function as an effective collaborative group, additional resource would be necessary and so the second recommendation supported this:

To transfer from the local authority to the schools staff to build capacity in change management.

This requires however, a more formal agreement between schools, placing them within a structure that can both employ staff but also hold one another to account effectively. True collaboration, the Commission believes, can be measured only when the challenge to its members is at its greatest: and so very clear accountabilities will be required:

It is a fundamental belief of the Commission that our schools will serve the city best if they work within a strong and accountable partnership enshrined in a formal Trust document describing both relationships but also accountabilities.

- 3.12 With the resource for school improvement largely within the budget of individual schools, we believe that Trust should look to take responsibility for all pupils 11-16 in the city and may therefore expand to include special schools and even independent schools. We believe that this partnership should be underpinned by clearly elucidated moral principles such as:

- We must work together to narrow the gap between the best and poorest performers;
- We must build expectations such that each year the lowest performer in each category or group performs better than the previous year;
- We must reinvigorate teaching in the city and encourage innovation, excitement and opportunity in classroom practice; and,
- We must engage the communities we serve to ensure they hold high expectations and are better capable of holding the system to account to make learning in the city a community-led endeavour.

- 3.13 All nine mainstream secondary schools, including our academies, have agreed in principle to join in this collaboration and headteachers are talking with their governing bodies about how best to move this forward. The Commission would

recommend that this collaborative group being overseen by a single Trust with the capacity to take in further members as appropriate. The Trust should have school, community and council membership. A draft memorandum of understanding is therefore being developed by the secondary schools and academies. Governors are also involved in looking actively at collaborative structures, and we are developing a programme for pupil engagement. The Commission would welcome discussion of a day or part day in the autumn being set aside to further engage parents and their communities in a conversation about what they want from their schools.

Accountabilities

- 3.14 Schools and colleges are accountable to their communities through their governing bodies. However, no equivalent model exists to monitor the accountabilities of a cluster of schools. The Commission would suggest therefore that the Council agrees a three-year compact with the schools, based on the outcomes suggested by headteachers but with a drive for greater pace and ambition. It would be appropriate for the Cabinet Member for Children to agree the sign-off of this document at her Cabinet Member's Meeting, but the report should be to the Cabinet as a whole. This compact should have targets for each of the three years and headteachers should be required to report to Cabinet or its successor body annually in September on their progress. It should also report through the Learning Partnership to both the Local Strategic Partnership and the Public Service Board, but the precise accountability arrangements will need further agreement with the Local Strategic Partnership through its relevant sub-group.
- 3.15 Cabinet might wish to invite all secondary headteachers to this meeting.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The work of the Commission was discussed at each stage with headteachers and principals, and recommendations within this report have been shared. Headteachers have also been asked to share them with their governing bodies. We would also expect schools to ensure their school councils are involved in discussion of this work.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report requires a need for change in the funding arrangements between the Council and its secondary schools. This will be achieved through a review of the funding for schools from of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and work around this is already taking place with the Schools Forum and its sub group the Formula Working Group. Further consideration will be needed during the year as central government develops clarity around its national funding mechanism for schools.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 22/09/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As set out in the body of the report the LA can use its resources to promote collaboration between schools to identify and address the issues and ambition set out in the report. For the reasons outlined within the body of the report within the current national context it will be for schools to ensure prioritisation and delivery of the aims and recommendations of the Commission.

Lawyer Consulted:

Natasha Watson

Date: 23/09/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Any equalities impacts will be considered as the collaborative develops its partnership agreement.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 This model places schools at arm's length from the Council in their day-to-day activities and requires that headteachers accept a collective responsibility for school performance. To minimise risk of failure, a small resource will need to be retained at the centre to secure effective accountabilities from individual schools.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The model, if adopted, will tie schools more closely together building cohesion across schools and the communities they serve.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 Alternative options are discussed in the body of the Report. With the reduction of resources made available to local authorities for intervention in schools, the Secretary of State has been clear that he expects schools to take a much greater role in peer to peer support. The role of the Council as described in this paper is to catalyse change and to support schools in working much more closely together and with far greater collective accountability.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 In spite of the changes in funding, local government remains responsible for intervening in failing schools. Whilst we cannot delegate this responsibility, we

can promote closer working between our schools to prevent schools failing. This report provides a clear direction of travel towards a headteacher-led local system of school improvement.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Composition of the Secondary Commission

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. ***Resilience***. Report of the Director of Public Health, Brighton and Hove PCT, 2011

Background Documents

1. Documents are to be found at (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/secondarycommission)

The Secondary Commission

The Commission was established as a 'commission of experts' but experts with close links to the city:

- **Professor Clare Mackie** – Pro-Vice Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, University of Sussex Chair of the Secondary Commission
- **Peter Dougill** – ex-HMI, local parent and formerly vice-chair of governors, Varndean School
- **Janet Felkin** – chair of secondary headteachers,
- **Professor Michael Fielding**, University of London Institute of Education and local resident
- **Terry Parkin** – Strategic Director People, BHCC, Visiting Fellow, University of London Institute of Education
- **Chris Thomson** – chair of the Learning Partnership, Principal, Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College (BHASVIC)

The Commission was fortunate to be joined at times by Professor Judy Sebba, University of Sussex, and Professor Denis Mongon, University of London Institute of Education, both of whom contributed papers and added significantly to the discussion in their specialist areas.

