

Education Annual Report

Report of the Interim Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee be asked to:

- (a) Note the content of the annual report
- (b) Consider and note the proposed strategic direction of the service and the key analytical questions for evaluation purposes

2) Background / Introduction

2.1 The Annual Performance Report for Autumn 2024 highlights key statistics and trends in Devon's education system; including school types, pupil numbers, free school meal eligibility, special educational needs, phonics and Key Stage 2 attainment, absence and exclusion rates, NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) figures, Ofsted ratings, and school complaints.

2.2 The Inclusion & Learning Update outlines the proposed Inclusion and Learning Strategy for Devon, focusing on building inclusive learning communities, improving universal provision, promoting engagement, fostering partnerships, and enhancing accountability, alongside the redesign of the Inclusion and Learning Team and the implementation of FSM auto-enrolment.

3) Main Body / Proposal

3.1 **Annual Performance Report for Autumn 2024** – Summary of slides

3.1.1 Overview

- **Schools in Devon:** As of October 2024, 64% of schools in Devon are academies or free schools, while 36% are LA maintained schools. The number of academies has increased, with most supported by multi-academy trusts (MATs).

3.1.2 Pupil Numbers

- **Total Pupils:** 107,924 pupils attended 415 schools in Devon in 2023/24, a slight decrease from the previous year.
- **Primary Schools:** Pupil numbers have decreased by 1.3%.
- **Secondary Schools:** Pupil numbers have slightly increased by 0.2%.
- **Special Schools:** Pupil numbers have increased by 7%.

3.1.3 Free School Meals (FSM)

- **Eligibility:** 20,098 pupils were eligible for FSM in Spring 2024, representing 19.9% of the pupil population, which is below the national average of 24.6%.

3.1.4 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- **EHCPs:** 5.4% of pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), higher than national and regional averages.
- **SEN Support:** 14.8% of pupils receive SEN support, also higher than national and regional averages.

3.1.5 Phonics and Key Stage 2 Attainment

- **Phonics:** 82% of Year 1 pupils met the expected phonics standard, higher than national and regional averages.
- **Key Stage 2:** 56% of pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths, slightly below national and regional averages.

3.1.6 Absence and Exclusions

- **Absence Rates:** Overall absence rates have decreased slightly but remain higher than national averages.
- **Exclusions:** Permanent exclusions have decreased by 13%, while suspensions have increased by 18%.

3.1.7 NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)

- **NEET Rates:** The percentage of NEETs among 16-17-year-olds has improved slightly to 3.9% but remains higher than national and regional averages.

3.1.8 Ofsted Ratings

- **Good or Outstanding Schools:** 87.3% of Devon schools are rated good or outstanding, slightly below the national average.

3.1.9 Complaints

- **School Complaints:** There were 156 complaints in 2023/24, a decrease from the previous year, with most complaints related to secondary schools.

3.2 Inclusion & Learning Update

3.2.1 The Authority is due to consult on and launch an Inclusion and Learning Strategy that builds on the SEND Strategy and identifies strategic priorities, an implementation framework and effective monitoring procedures:

3.2.2 Proposed Strategic Priorities

A. Building Inclusive Learning Communities

- **Principled School Improvement:** Facilitate a locality based [School Improvement model](#) that is inclusive, sustainable and student centred.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Develop a shared vision of inclusion across all schools and education providers in Devon, underpinned by the principles of Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision.
- **Cultural Change:** Foster a culture of shared responsibility for inclusion, where diversity is seen as an asset that enriches learning for all.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Facilitate collaboration among schools to share best practices in inclusive teaching and leadership.

B. Strengthening High-Quality Universal Provision

- **Inclusive Classroom Practices:** Ensure all educators are trained to deliver high-quality, inclusive teaching that supports a range of learning needs.
- **Professional Development:** Provide ongoing training and resources to support schools in implementing inclusive strategies.
- **Collaborative Approaches to Improving Mental Health:** Brokering multi agency partnerships to address Mental Health challenges and create local solutions.

C. Promoting Belonging and Engagement

- **Trauma-Informed Training:** Deliver training on trauma-informed approaches to help staff create emotionally safe environments where all learners feel valued and supported.
- **Attendance as a Priority:** Use insights from the **Education Endowment Foundation's Supporting Attendance** to address barriers to attendance through early intervention, relationship-building, and family engagement.
- **Student Voice:** Empower students to co-create their learning environments, ensuring they feel heard and included in decisions that impact their education.

D. Fostering Partnerships with Families and Communities

- **Family Engagement:** Strengthen relationships with families by providing clear communication, accessible resources, and opportunities for co-production of policies and practices.
- **Community Collaboration:** Work with community organisations to provide wraparound support, promoting a sense of belonging for learners within and beyond school.

E. **Embedding Accountability and Continuous Improvement**

- **Inclusion Audits:** Regularly assess the inclusiveness of school environments, policies, and practices to identify strengths and areas for growth.
- **Outcome Monitoring:** Track attendance, achievement, and well-being metrics to evaluate the impact of inclusive practices, ensuring alignment with principles of Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Share progress publicly to build trust and demonstrate commitment to inclusion.

3.2.3 Whilst the draft plan is subject to change, as a result of consultation, we intend to publish the strategy during the Spring Term. Partners have indicated that the absence of a coherent strategy for Education in Devon has inhibited collaboration, partnership and progress in ensuring that all of Devon's young people are able to thrive in our Education settings.

3.2.4 The strategy will be structured around 3 key analytical questions that will shape monitoring procedures:

- **Are children safe? Do they feel safe?**
- **Are children attending? Are the places of education fit for purpose?**
- **Are children achieving? Are we providing the opportunities and support they need to achieve?**

3.3 **Inclusion & Learning Service Redesign**

The redesign of the Inclusion and Learning Team commenced on January 6th, 2025. Phase one focuses on establishing the leadership team and a locality model supported by a central team, which will drive the strategic direction and operational effectiveness of our inclusion and learning initiatives. This restructuring aims to enhance leadership and oversight, ensuring robust financial and practice decision-making.

3.4 **Free School Meals (FSM) Auto – Enrolment Implementation plan**

[Implementation](#) of FSM auto-enrolment has frequently been discussed at Devon Education Forum. We have created a plan to ensure all eligible children in Devon receive their entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM) through an auto-enrolment system, inspired by successful implementations in North Yorkshire and other regions.

Officers have utilised Department for Education resource to identify best practice examples nationally. The implementation plan has clear timescales and updates on the scheme will be provided to DEF and to Scrutiny Committee.

Officers will be seeking the support of elected members to address the challenges posed by information sharing between tiers of Local Government.

4) Options / Alternatives

4.1 There aren't any alternatives options to be considered for the information within this report.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

5.1 There aren't any alternatives options to be considered for the information within this report.

6) Strategic Plan

6.1 The **Proposed Inclusion and Learning Strategy** is well-aligned with the **Devon County Council Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025**. It supports the Council's vision of creating a child-friendly, fairer, and more prosperous Devon by focusing on inclusive education, equity, and community collaboration:

6.1.1 **Be Ambitious for Children and Young People:**

Council's Priority: Work together to ensure all children are safe, healthy, and can thrive with opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Strategy's Alignment: Emphasizes building inclusive learning communities, fostering a culture of equity, and ensuring high-quality universal provision for all students.

6.1.2 **Tackle Poverty and Inequality:**

Council's Priority: Make Devon a fairer place, address poverty, health, and other inequalities.

Strategy's Alignment: Focuses on inclusive classroom practices, trauma-informed and relational practices, and collaborative approaches to improving mental health, which directly address educational inequalities.

6.1.3 **Improve Health and Wellbeing:**

Council's Priority: Help people to be healthier and more resilient, ensuring everyone gets the care they need.

Strategy's Alignment: Incorporates trauma-informed training, promoting emotional safety, and fostering partnerships with families and communities to support overall wellbeing.

6.1.4 **Help Communities Be Safe, Connected, and Resilient:**

Council's Priority: Support communities to be safer, better connected, and more resilient.

Strategy's Alignment: Advocates for restorative practices, community collaboration, and family engagement to create cohesive and supportive educational environments.

6.1.5 Support Sustainable Economic Recovery:

Council's Priority: Achieve inclusive economic recovery and sustainable growth.

Strategy's Alignment: By ensuring all learners have access to quality education, the strategy supports the development of a skilled and inclusive workforce, contributing to economic recovery and growth.

7) Financial Considerations

7.1 The are no specific financial considerations at present. However, should the review be undertaken around auto-enrolment then full costings, resource and additional income potential will be brought to the group.

8) Legal Considerations

8.1 There are no specific legal considerations.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

9.1 There are no specific environmental impact considerations.

10) Equality Considerations

10.1 There are no specific equality considerations.

11) Risk Management Considerations

11.1 No risks have been identified.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

12.1 Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are asked to review and comment on the attached annual report.

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