



Report to Policy Committee

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Report of: *Strategic Director of Children’s Services*
Report to: *Education Children and Families Policy Committee*
Date of Decision: *19/12/2023*
Subject: *An approach to School Improvement*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? (2461)				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				
<p><i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>				

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the report is to outline what School Improvement consists of both looking at (a) the Councils’ statutory duties (b) any locally commissioned school improvement activities and (c) looking at national considerations when thinking about School Improvement as a whole.

Recommendations:

The Education, Children and Families Policy Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Agree to receive further updates to any changes in school improvement approaches either on a school, local or national level.

Background Papers:

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>(Kayleigh Inman)</i>
		Legal: <i>(Nadine Wynter)</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>(Bashir Khan)</i>
		Climate: <i>(NA)</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Meredith Dixon-Teasdale</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllr Dawn Dale</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Pat Butterell</i>	Job Title: <i>Assistant Director School Effectiveness</i>
	Date: <i>19/12/23</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This report on the Approach to School Improvement shows how Sheffield City Council and Learn Sheffield work together to support educational settings (schools) in both their (a) self-evaluation and (b) how they conduct / exercise school development activities.
- 1.2 The Council continues to hold a wide range of statutory duties in relation to schools. These are many and varied but can be summarised under the following key headings, some of which apply to maintained schools only, but some of which apply to all schools including academies and private schools:
- School Place Planning
 - School Admissions
 - School attendance
 - Home-to-School Transport
 - Education Funding
 - Home Education
 - Alternative Provision
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - Early Years
- 1.3 None of these statutory duties relate to specific school improvement activity (e.g providing advice on improving phonics outcomes). However, some of these statutory duties impact on the outcomes achieved by children. For example, it is difficult for a child to achieve good outcomes if they aren't in regular attendance at their school.
- 1.4 As well, as framing the statutory duties that we are responsible for, through a broader policy environment, the DfE (Department for Education) has also made it clear that they do not see a role for local authorities in direct school improvement activity. The prevailing view, which has been in place since the 1990s, under different governments, is that the sector - schools and other providers - best place to advise each other on how to improve outcomes. The government's key school improvement intervention, now, is the academies programme. Academies were originally introduced by the 1997/2010 Labour Government, and the number of academies was significantly increased from 2010, onwards by the van coalition government and the subsequent Conservative led government. Individual local authorities are specifically prohibited from setting up or managing Academy trusts.
- 1.5 In the main, the decision as to whether a school should become an academy rests solely with the individual governing body for that school. In some circumstances, where a school's performance is consistently low (a "coasting school") or where it is found to be inadequate by Ofsted, the school, then becomes subject to a 'directive Academy order' and is forced to become an academy by the DfE.

- 1.6 Currently, in Sheffield, about 60% of all schools are academies with over at 75% of the entire school population, now attending an Academy. The proportion of children attending academies is a key indicator because it equates to other resource profiles. So, 75% of children attend academies, which means that 75% of school funding sits in academies and 75% of all staff employed in the city work for Academy trusts.
- 1.7 The funding available to the Council to support schools that wish to remain as maintained reduces every time a school becomes an academy. In reality, this means that for the scores which remain maintained, there are less and less resources available to support them but, the statutory duties held by the local authority remain just as broad.
- 1.8 With this ongoing and continuous change in resources, linked to the lack of statutory duties in relation to school improvement, has led us to take a different approach to school improvement in Sheffield. In 2011 the “City Wide Learning Body” was set up in order to allow all schools and academies to work collaboratively and in partnership with the local authority to help shape the education policy environment, strategy and approach to services. This was superseded in 2015 by the setting up of Learn Sheffield (see below). Learn Sheffield is currently Working with the Council and with schools to further develop a Sheffield “Education Partnership”. This is likely to be a “civic partnership” recognising that some aspects of education strategy, and approach go beyond schools and the Council (also see below).
- 1.9 Learn Sheffield delivers a school improvement commission on behalf of Sheffield City Council. The key elements of this commission is outlined below, alongside the traded school improvement activity delivered as part of their subscription model. The commission includes four specific activities which Learn Sheffield is best placed to continue to deliver.

What does Learn Sheffield Do?



What does Learn Sheffield do?

- **School improvement (commission & subscription)**
 - Project work (including funded programmes)
 - Added value (city infra-structure and capacity)

- **Commissioned school improvement activity:** categorisation, additional targeted support, support for partnership groups, monitoring, moderation, Ofsted inspection & HT recruitment.
- **Subscription activity:** deployed LSIP days + training programmes (including governance, leadership, research, networks, etc.) + packages (including data, Create Sheffield, etc.)
- **Other traded activity** includes governance services, GDPR, etc.

SCC School Improvement Commission

The current commission (£60k pa from September 2023 – August 2025) includes four activities:

- **Monitoring** (primary SATs)
- **Moderation** (primary writing)
- **HT recruitment** (maintained schools)
- **Ofsted inspections** (speaking to inspectors & attending feedback)

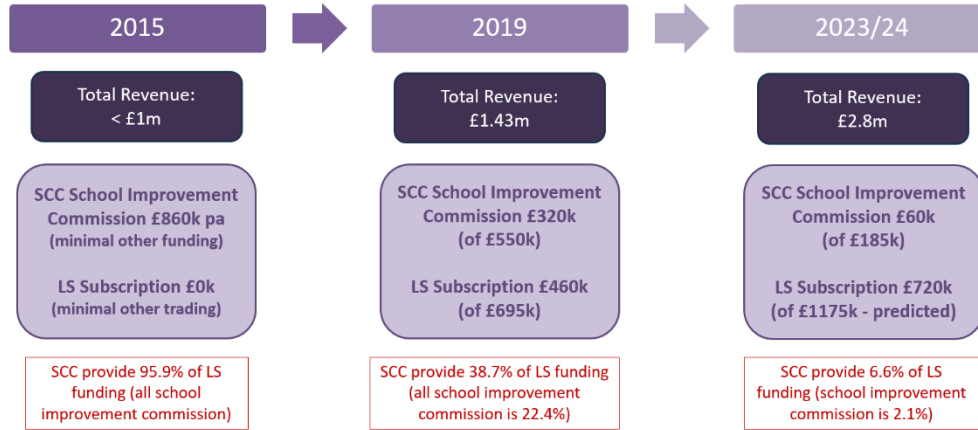
Details of the current [Learn Sheffield subscription](#) can be found on the [Learn Sheffield website](#).

The slide below outlines how the current commission (and other funding from SCC) fits into the overall revenue for Learn Sheffield.

Learn Sheffield Funding



- Level and proportion of LS funding from SCC (including the School Improvement Commission)



2 Moral Purpose & Professional Agency – Areas of best practice EEF

2.1 The EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) is a UK-based charity dedicated to improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. Established in 2011, it conducts rigorous research to identify and promote evidence-based practices that enhance learning. The EEF's work matters because it provides educators with valuable insights into effective teaching and educational strategy methods, helping them make informed decisions to bridge educational gaps. By focusing on evidence, the EEF contributes to the development of strategies that can positively impact student achievement, particularly for those facing socio-economic challenges, thereby promoting equity and raising the overall quality of education. The following are the 7 areas of best practice as identified by the EEF

2.2 Beyond the commission, Sheffield City Council and Learn Sheffield work together to promote a culture of improvement in the city through:

- Collaborative practices
- System-wide strategies
- Consistency within and across schools
- Better use of and sharing of data
- Leadership at every level
- Locally owned and supported CPD
- Use of local & national expertise and evidence of best practice
- School-to-school peer reviews
- Multi-academy trusts (MATs) and Maintained schools collaboration
- Flexible support for schools in need
- Moderation of assessments and examinations
- Data sharing for performance evaluation

- 2.3 The Department for Education considers school improvement to be a traded service. For example, schools can buy in school improvement support but can also contract with other schools to share their expertise and to provide support. Examples of this include, Maths Hubs; Phonics Delivery Hubs; English Hubs and Behaviour Hubs.
- 2.4 Local School improvement initiatives continue to be developed including a new Sheffield Strategic Education Partnership. The partnership's focus is still being developed but could include, a will focus on attendance, inviting collaboration from different settings and civic organisations. We would consider attendance to be an obvious priority for Sheffield and suitable for a civic partnership response. This is because:
- The impact of improved attendance would lead to improved attainment and improved life chances for children and young people in Sheffield.
 - This improvement requires a wider partnership response. Each partner (including education settings) can always improve their practice, but unless all partners contribute a significant improvement in attendance outcomes will not be realised.
- 2.5 The footprint of this work may also need to stretch beyond the city and include, for example, transport which is a significant barrier to attendance for some young people.
- 2.6 School improvement is not the sole responsibility of the SCC Education and Skills
- Emphasise that school improvement is not solely the responsibility of educational settings – it's cross-council.
 - The impact of external factors on students' life chances
 - The need for collaboration across various sectors
- 2.7 Below are examples of where Learn Sheffield has contributed to these areas of best practice
- Collaborative practices. ***Promoted by both SCC and LS***
 - System-wide strategies. ***We are currently exploring a new strategic partnership.***
 - Consistency within and across school. ***Part of the School Improvement commission up to August 2023 using a categorisation process***
 - Better use of and sharing of data. ***Data Service is included in LS subscription.***
 - Leadership at every level. ***LS has extensive training for leaders.***
 - Locally owned and supported CPD. ***LS has a wide training offer inside the subscription but is also commissioned for SEND training.***
 - Use of local & national expertise and evidence of best practice. ***LS uses expertise within the subscription but also in projects funded by SCC (for example Mary Myatt on curriculum and Tom Sherrington on teaching).***

2.8 Race Equality Commission (REC)

Our school advisor has led for Education and Skills on the response to the Race Equality Commission, specifically focusing on Action 2, is aimed at fostering racial equality in education.

3. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 3.1 The approach will suggest ways to cascade current practice; identify development needs and opportunities for timely collaboration with wider organisations to keep school improvement firmly on the agenda.

4. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 4.1 Previously there have been consultations regarding the funding model and with Learn Sheffield's offer. This consultation has been done with settings (such as schools) to receive their input on what's the most impactful for their students.

5. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

5.1 Equality Implications

- 5.1.1 Decisions need to consider the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 5.1.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

- 5.1.3 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and identified that having effective school improvement impacts in the life chances of BAME; SEND; LGBTQ+ and other marginalised groups and promotes greater social mobility.

5.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 5.2.1 There are no financial implications for this Committee (December 2023) The decision regarding the Learn Sheffield commission was agreed at a committee earlier this year.

5.3 Legal Implications

- 5.3.1 The approach set out in this report will assist the Council in meeting its various statutory duties. For example, the Council is under a duty imposed by section 13A of the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential of children and young people in its area. Also, when delivering its school improvement function, the Council must have regard to the Schools Causing Concern statutory guidance. This guidance provides clarity about the role of local authorities in delivering school improvement for maintained schools and for academies.

5.4 Climate Implications

- 5.4.1 Using a local company will benefit / reduce climate impacts such as long-distance travel and carbon emissions. School improvement will also equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to address climate related factors and contribute to these as they manifest in the future.

5.5 Other Implications

- 5.5.1 A joint approach to School Improvement will impact on the life-chances of children and young people and promote social mobility & equality.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Currently the above model in partnership with Learn Sheffield is pro-active and impactful. If the Educational Landscape changes, Education and Skills will work in partnership with Learn Sheffield to assess what we can do to adapt to any changes from either the Department for Education or other accountable bodies such as Ofsted. These would then always go through a process of consultation and considered with Members.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To provide information on an approach to outline what School Improvement consists of through Sheffield City Council; Learn Sheffield and any local or national approaches to School Improvement as a whole.