
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN DARLINGTON

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the local authority's school improvement strategy and to provide a summary of educational performance in Darlington, including the contribution made by DBC's Learning & Skills Service.

Summary

2. In July 2014 Cabinet approved a new strategy for school improvement, taking into account the make-up of Darlington schools, where almost 80 per cent of them are academies or Free Schools. Whilst the majority of schools are academies, the local authority currently still has a responsibility for promoting high educational standards in the local area.
3. The new strategy included a guarantee that Ofsted trained inspectors would review schools' data and work with them and the local authority officers to agree improvement priorities. It also agreed a stepped approach to support for schools, with a focus on those in the greatest need. However, the strategy also confirmed that schools were responsible for funding their own improvements.
4. An Annual Report, outlining the impact of the school improvement strategy, is attached as **Appendix A**. The report covers the school year from September 2014 to August 2015. There are a multitude of ways to measure educational performance and standards. However, two main points of reference are the Department for Education (DfE) performance data and OfSTED reports.
5. Data for the primary sector shows that Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 performance sits above the national average. GCSE results are declining and are now just below the national average. Of particular concern is the poor progress in English and Maths. In post 16 education, A level performance is above the national average.
6. The DfE have reviewed the measures they use to monitor school performance. A summary of the changes are included in the Annual School Improvement report. It is expected that the changes introduced by the DfE will impact on the measures used by the local authority to monitor school performance and to determine the level of

support or challenge required. Therefore, a review of the school improvement strategy is required.

7. The proportion of Darlington schools deemed to be good or better by Ofsted stand at 88 per cent compared with a national average of 84 per cent, whilst 75 per cent of the post 16 provision is good or better.
8. Local Authority Officers are providing support, or brokering external support, when required where schools or colleges are underperforming.

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Director of Children and Adults Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Increased engagement in education and educational attainment could have a positive impact on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Increased engagement in education and educational attainment could have a positive impact on health and well-being.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report.
Diversity	There are no issues around diversity this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	This reports impacts on the whole of Darlington.
Groups Affected	Children and young people
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework. But supports targets in the Children and Young People's Plan.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Relevant to the education and skills outcomes of the sustainable community strategy.
Efficiency	There are no recommended efficiency savings in this report.

MAIN REPORT

Background

9. As part of the Direct School Grant (DSG) local authorities receive an amount of funding called the Education Support Grant (ESG) to allow them to deliver their statutory obligations on behalf of schools. This covers a range of duties in relation to maintained schools including; school improvement, premature retirement/ redundancy costs, asset management, education welfare, and HR and finance services.
10. ESG is allocated on a per pupil basis and as schools convert to academy status a relevant proportion of ESG passes to that school from the local authority. As the vast majority of Darlington schools are now academies the amount of funding available to the local authority has reduced dramatically. This has been further compounded as the amount per pupil has also reduced over the last few years. For 2015/16 the total ESG funding is £512,000 and in 2016/17 it will reduce to £486,270.
11. In addition to the reduction in ESG, the local authority worked closely with schools through the schools@onedarlington model to increasingly delegate funding for school improvement directly to schools – so that the body responsible for delivering education also had access to the resources to improve the standards of the education delivered.
12. However, Ofsted still inspect local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement as LAs have a duty to promote high standards of education across the local area under section 13A of the Education Act 1996. The local authority remains responsible for intervening in underperforming maintained schools, whilst the Schools Commissioner will intervene in underperforming academies.
13. It should be noted that the government will be consulting in early 2016 on the statutory duties of local authorities with a view to ceasing the Education Services Grant, and possibly removing the local authority's responsibility for school improvement. However, until any changes are made the local authority remains responsible for educational attainment in their area and is subject to inspection by Ofsted on their arrangements for supporting school improvement. Not only does the local authority hold the overall responsibility for the education of all children within its remit; it bears the moral responsibility, and the legal one, for ensuring that all those children are well-educated: all children have only one chance at a decent schooling.
14. The authority acts as a 'watchman' by overseeing an analysis of the performance of every school, including academies. In particular, it monitors the progress of every group of pupils at each school.

15. Darlington's school improvement strategy is shaped by a small number of significant considerations :-
- (a) It is unusually small – Darlington is the 3rd smallest unitary authority.
 - (b) It has a higher proportion of academies – 100% of Secondary Schools and 69% of the primaries are academies, in which the authority can play an important, but limited role. As a result, only a minority of pupils who go to school in Darlington do so in local authority maintained schools.
 - (c) It has higher levels of deprivation than are found nationally; deprivation is not a barrier to learning, but requires high quality practice to overcome the effects of disadvantage.
16. The authority's work in promoting improved outcomes therefore places great emphasis upon identifying the best practice in the authority, wherever it is found, and using it to promote improvement where learning is weaker. With only slender staffing itself, the authority works in partnership with our teaching school, alliances and academies to broker the sharing of this best practice or to call it in from elsewhere if needed.
17. The authority's work to monitor and improve schools has five main elements :-
- (a) Authority staff will provide appropriate challenge to schools through a review of the performance data for every school and by discussing responses to the data with school leaders and governors, including links to the self-evaluation.
 - (b) Performance data, Ofsted inspections and evidence from visits are used to draw up a plan for the level of support and challenge each school needs; schools can access support in many ways.
 - (c) The authority can use its wider perspective to help schools access the support which best meets their requirements.
 - (d) Supporting innovation through encouraging schools to exercise their professional expertise in tailoring the activities to the needs of their pupils.
 - (e) Where concerns about a school persist, the authority has additional intervention powers or – in the case of academies – it may request the intervention of others.
18. In the first 12 months of the strategy the percentage of children educated in schools graded as good or better by Ofsted increased from 77% to 82%. This equated to 1,035 children additional children and young people being educated in good or better schools.
19. Locally, 85% of schools were judged to be 'good' or better by Ofsted, which was higher than the national figure of 82%.

20. However, the percentage of primary schools in Darlington graded as 'good' or better is currently 93% and has consistently been over 90%, whereas the percentage of secondary schools graded as 'good' or better has not been above 66% in the last 3 years and currently stands at 58%. The percentage of secondary pupils attending a 'good' or better school in Darlington, at 69%, is below the regional and national average.
21. In September 2014 the schools' performance data was reviewed by a panel which included an Ofsted trained inspector and the following schools were identified as requiring further support to improve to get to a judgement of 'good' :-
- (a) Longfield
 - (b) Haughton
 - (c) Darlington School of Maths and Science
 - (d) St. Aidan's
 - (e) Rydal
 - (f) Skerne Park
 - (g) Cockerton
22. During the first year of the new strategy, three of the schools improved their grading and one of the schools saw a deterioration in grading.
23. In 2013/14, four secondary schools were less than 'good'. This was reduced by 1 during 2014/15 but there continues to be a history of some of the secondary schools failing to achieve a judgement of good over a number of inspections. St. Aidan's Church of England Academy was judged to be inadequate during 2014/15.
24. During 2014/15 Cockerton improved its grading to 'good' but Northwood was inspected and received a judgement of 'requires improvement'.
25. Details of actions taken by the local authority for each school are included in the Annual Report.

A summary of educational performance for the academic year 2014/15

26. There are a wide range of measures for identifying educational performance across the age ranges, a number of which will be readily available to an inspection team and are published via the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT). Some key results are listed below. Where there are tables the Darlington performance has been RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated with the following key :-

Above England average

Equal to England average

Below England average

27. In Foundation Stage provision 66.2% of children are achieving a good level of development, slightly below the England average (66.3%) but above the North East and statistical neighbours. The year on year trend is positive and Darlington currently ranks 73rd out of 151 LAs.

28. In Key Stage 1 (KS1) Phonics (Year 1 – age 6 years) Darlington ranks 9th in England at 82%, above the England and North East averages of 77%. For free school meal (FSM) children it is 73%, still 8% above the England average.
29. In the individual KS1 (Year 2 – age 7 years) assessments Darlington is either equal to or above the England average, with the lowest ranking being 58th.

Subject	Darlington	England	Ranking
Reading	92%	90%	16 th
Writing	88%	88%	58 th
Maths	93%	93%	55 th
Science	92%	91%	41 st
Speaking & Listening	91%	90%	41 st

30. Overall the performance at KS2 (Year 6 – age 11 years), is above the national average with 83% of Darlington pupils achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, compared with a national average of 80%. Of this, 88% of non-disadvantaged pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, compared with an England average of 85% (ranked 25th), against 73% for disadvantage pupils compared with an England average of 71% (ranked 49th). Performance with regard to progress in these subjects is equally strong and above national average.

Subject	Achieving Level 4 or above		Making expected progress (KS1-KS2)	
	Darlington	England	Darlington	England
Reading	90%	90%	93%	91%
Writing	86%	87%	95%	94%
Maths	90%	87%	93%	90%
Science	90%	89%		

31. At secondary level (Year 11 – age 16 years) GCSE results have been declining nationally due to the impact of policy changes around examination entries. For the first time since 2007 Darlington's GCSE results have dropped below the national average. Results for 2015 show that 52.5% of Darlington pupils achieved 5+A*-C GCSEs including English and maths compared with a national average of 53.8%.

5+A*-C GCSEs including English and maths	Darlington	England	Ranking
Overall (2015)	52.5%	53.8%	120 th
Overall (2014)	56.9%	53.4%	75 th
Overall (2013)	64.8%	59.2%	34 th

32. The percentage of pupils making expected progress, between KS2 and KS4, in English is slightly below the England average. For maths it is significantly below.

Subject	Darlington	England	Ranking
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English	69.6%	71.1%	96 th
Maths	54.9%	66.6%	144 th

33. At KS5 (Post 16 – age 18 years) the average point score per A level student was 726.8, above the national average of 700.3. Darlington ranked 22nd in the country and results rose by 2.7 points compared with a national decline of 13.7 points (*DFE Performance Tables 2015*). A level is just one type of qualification within the overall study programme. In 2013/14 success rates for study programme in Darlington ranged from 90.2% to 67.8%. The England average was 81.2%. This represents provision across a wider range of qualifications from level 1 vocational qualifications to A level provision. 2013/14 success rates for apprenticeships ranged from 90.9% to 53.3%, with one provider below the minimum standard threshold of 55%. The England average was 71.1%
34. The training arm of Darlington Borough Council makes a contribution to the KS5 results through the Learning & Skills Service. Provisional data for the 2014/15 academic year indicates that Study Programme success rates sit at 87.3%. This provision was extended in 2015 when the Tubwell Row Centre was opened by the Council to cater for some of the most vulnerable young people in Darlington. Apprenticeship success rates for Learning & Skills sits at 80.0%, above the national average for 2013-14 of 71.1%.
35. Attainment of a level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is above the national average, whilst attainment at level 3 is below :-

Attainment level by the age of 19	Darlington	England	Ranking	Change from previous year
L2 overall	86.5%	85.4%	50 th	+7.0% (+0.9%)
L3 overall	56.9%	58.2%	77 th	-3.5% (+1.1%)
L2 inequality gap	14.0%	17.0%	36 th	+2.0% (+1.0%)
L3 inequality gap	29.0%	25.0%	82 nd	+3.0% (+1.0%)

England change for previous year in brackets().

36. One school, St Aidan's Academy, has been graded as inadequate. Darlington College was also graded as inadequate.
37. In October 2015 Ofsted reported that St Aidan's was taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. Darlington College's OFSTED report from September 2015 reported that the college was making 'reasonable improvements' against all key improvement priorities and the post inspection plan.
38. Local authority officers sit on the improvement groups of two schools and Darlington College, whilst eleven schools have received additional monitoring visits during 2015/16 as a part of the school improvement strategy. Three schools are accessing the school to school support grant through the Carmel Teaching School Alliance.

39. Adult education remains a key priority. The local authority supports adult education through the Learning & Skills Service. It delivers adult and community learning in community settings and delivers employability training and maths and English qualifications provision as part of a varied portfolio. Provisional data for 2014/15 shows success rates for adult skills provision at 85.5% and Community Learning success rates at 96.7%. Over 1,200 adults accessed the Service. Further detail at Appendix 2.

Future Actions

40. Pending the outcome of the DfE consultation on school performance monitoring, we will continue identifying schools at risk and actively promote positive measures for improvement and review the school improvement strategy and propose any necessary revisions.

School Improvement Annual Report September 2014 – August 2015

1. In July 2014 Darlington Borough Council approved a revised approach to school improvement. The revised approach, which was the result of extensive consultation with schools, reflected the make-up of Darlington's school system, where the majority of schools were academies. It also recognised the statutory duties of the local authority to promote high standards across all schools. The new arrangements were needed because the previous policies, agreed in 2008, had increasingly become out of date and both Members and schools recognised this.
2. The revised School Improvement Policy included :-
 - (a) Increased use of timely data and of the analysis of sub-sets of data;
 - (b) A guarantee that the data will be reviewed by someone with the training and experience of an Ofsted inspector;
 - (c) Greater opportunity to consider the school's own self-assessment;
 - (d) A clear, stepped approach to what schools should do to respond to any areas of underperformance;
 - (e) A clear approach to how schools can help and support each other;
 - (f) Recognition that schools are responsible for funding their own improvement.
3. What remained unchanged in the new policy was :-
 - (a) The use of published data to inform judgements;
 - (b) A dialogue with schools about their performance;
 - (c) The expectation that schools are responsible for their own performance.
 - (d) The ultimate power of the local authority to issue warning notices and/or to escalate concerns to agencies such as Ofsted and the Department for Education.

4. Overview of performance across the Key Stages 2015/16 academic year

<p>Worse than national average but with improving trend</p> <p>Foundation Stage - average points score Foundation Stage – achieving a good level of development Attainment of Level 3 qualification at age 19 (2014 data) Attainment of Level 3 qualification at age 19 for pupils who were eligible for free school meals (2014 data)</p>	<p>At or better than national average and improving trend</p> <p>% of 2 year olds in funded early education places at providers with QTS/EYPS % of 3 and 4 year olds in funded early education places at providers with QTS/EYPS Key Stage 1 Writing Key stage 1 Maths Key Stage 1 Science Key Stage 1 Speaking and Listening Key Stage 1 Phonics decoding Key Stage 1 Phonics decoding (children with FSM) Key Stage 2 Level 4 English Key Stage 2 Level 4 Maths Key Stage 2 Level 4 Science Key Stage 2 Level 4 Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Key Stage 2 Level 4 Reading, Writing and Maths Key stage 2 Level 4 Reading, Writing and Maths for pupils not eligible for free school meals (2014 data) Level 2 qualification with English and Maths by age 19 (2014 data) A Level average points score per candidate Attainment of Level 3 qualification at age 19 for pupils who were not eligible for free school meals (2014 data)</p>
<p>Worse than national average and with flatlining or deteriorating trend</p> <p>Key Stage 2 Level 4 Writing Key Stage 2 Level 4 Reading, Writing and Maths for pupils eligible for free school meals (2014 data) Key Stage 4 5xGCSEs at A*-C (inc Eng and Maths) Percentage achieving English Baccalaureate Pupils making expected progress between KS2 and KS4 in Maths Pupils making expected progress between KS2 and KS4 in English Level 2 qualification in English and Maths at age 19 for those who had not achieved it at age 16 (2014 data)</p>	<p>At or Better than national average with flatlining or deteriorating trend</p> <p>Percentage of 3&4 year olds taking up some free education Inequality gap in achievement across early learning goals Key Stage 2 Level 4 Reading Level 2 qualification with English and Maths by age 19 for those who were entitled to free school meals (2014 data)</p>

5. Although the Table 1 shows a generally positive picture of performance there are some underlying concerns that are not picked up through a simple presentation of headline performance data. For example, across the authority there are Key Stages where girls significantly outperform boys and there are individual schools where pupils with SEN or from disadvantaged backgrounds make less progress than they would in other schools.

Implementing the school improvement strategy

6. In the first 12 months of the strategy the percentage of children educated in schools graded as good or better by Ofsted increased from 77% to 82% and 85% of schools were judged to be 'good' or better by Ofsted, which was higher than the national figure of 82%.
7. However, the percentage of primary schools in Darlington graded as 'good' or better is currently 93% and has consistently been over 90%, whereas the percentage of secondary schools graded as 'good' or better has not been above 66% in the last 3 years and currently stands at 58%. The percentage of secondary pupils attending a 'good' or better school in Darlington, at 69%, is below the regional and national average.
8. In 2013/14, four secondary schools were less than 'good'. This was reduced by 1 during 2014/15 but there continues to be a history of some of the secondary schools failing to achieve a judgement of 'good' over a number of inspections. The 3 secondary schools not yet 'good' are Haughton, Darlington School of Maths and Science (DSMS) and St. Aidan's Church of England Academy. Of those, leadership and management is judged to be good at DSMS and Haughton and the quality of teaching is good at DSMS.
9. There are 2 primary schools which are not yet 'good', Northwood and Rydal. Leadership and management is good at Rydal, as is pupil achievement.
10. The local authority has identified a gender gap in development and attainment in Early Years, some lack of stretch in Key Stage 2 Maths and declining performance in Key Stage 4 as areas for future focus.

Understanding the school improvement journey

11. An Ofsted judgement of 'requires improvement' does not mean that there is a single approach to raising performance. Each Ofsted report makes clear what it is that the school needs to do to improve. For example, at DSMS Ofsted noted that *'not enough pupils of all abilities and starting points exceed what is expected of them across a range of subjects'*. At Haughton inspectors wrote that *'some lessons are not motivating..'* and *'attendance[...], though improving, is still not good enough'*. At St. Aidan's inspectors wrote that *'a significant minority of students show a lack of respect for teachers and for each other, and a lack of self-discipline'*.

12. These extracts from the published reports serve to illustrate the diversity of the contributing evidence which underpins judgements and the diversity of the approaches required to improve schools.
13. In September 2014 the schools' data was reviewed by the school improvement panel which included an Ofsted trained inspector and following schools were identified as requiring further support to improve :-
 - (a) Longfield
 - (b) Haughton
 - (c) Darlington School of Maths and Science
 - (d) St. Aidan's
 - (e) Rydal
 - (f) Skerne Park
 - (g) Cockerton
14. During the first year of the new strategy, three of the schools improved their grading and one of the schools saw deterioration in grading.
16. Cockerton improved because of a strong improvement partnership between the governing body, the local authority and the Diocese which strengthened the governing body and instigated a review of middle leadership, as well as bringing in additional senior leadership capacity. Very rigorous challenge was put in place by the partnership. As a result, the subsequent inspection graded leadership and management as outstanding, noted the extremely capable middle leaders and commented on the role played by governors. Ofsted noted 'The local authority has provided good support for the school by helping them to procure an external adviser from another authority. This adviser helps leaders to *check the quality of teaching accurately*'.
17. At Skerne Park and prior to September 2014, the local authority had challenged the leadership of the school about their performance and there was a change of leadership, with the local authority bringing in an interim Headteacher, which brought about some rapid improvements. However, to secure the future success of the school the local authority worked with the DfE and with a local academy to broker a longer term solution. The school was brought into an academy trust, a new permanent Headteacher was appointed and the subsequent inspection noted that '*pupils make good progress*' and '*the progress of pupils leaving Year 6 in the past two years has been particularly strong in reading and writing*'
18. At Rydal, Ofsted inspectors noted '*School leaders and governors value the effective support provided by the trust and also the support that they have bought from the local authority. Staff value the range of well-targeted training opportunities from a variety of sources, including the local authority*'.

19. Longfield was an early academy converter and was instrumental in supporting other schools which were underachieving, partly by exporting staff out to those schools. However, its own performance dipped and it needed a period of review in order to ensure that pupils were given a good education. The academy trust includes experienced and strong leaders and the Headteacher was supported to tackle underperformance. The Ofsted report which moved the school up to 'good' noted the *'headteacher's high ambition...senior leaders have worked tirelessly to eradicate underperformance teachers are working successfully to raise the aspirations of all students'*.
20. For the school that saw their grading deteriorate – St Aidan's - Ofsted wrote: *'the principal, supported by the governors, is leading academy improvement strongly...senior leaders and governors know the academy's weaknesses and have identified the right priorities'*. However, because the school did not make sufficiently rapid improvements to reach a judgement of 'good' when it was re-inspected, the Ofsted framework required that it be judged to be 'inadequate'.
21. One school that had not been identified as at risk of underperforming was also inspected and downgraded by Ofsted during the first 12 months of the new school improvement strategy. This was Northwood - previously judged as good.
22. The school was graded as 'requires improvement' in March 2015. Ofsted noted that *'the new Headteacher is highly ambitious and determined to eradicate past underachievement' but also noted that 'standards at the end of Year 6 have not been high enough [and] the achievement of disadvantaged pupils...requires improvement...the wide gaps that exist between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are not closing fast enough'*

Summary of the first year of the strategy and any improvements required

23. The local authority used a combination of in-house resources, externally brokered support and peer support to ensure that a number of schools improved. The first year of a new strategy will always test out the written protocols and stretch the available resources and the authority needs to learn any lessons from this.
24. Where we have directly supported schools the evidence from inspection judgements is that schools have improved. Where we have brought in additional support from elsewhere it has generally been effective. The in-house resource and the funding for external support are sufficient to support a small number of schools at any one time. During 2014/15 the resource was sufficient for our needs. If needs change, then the level of resourcing would have to be reviewed.
25. The categorisation of schools, and therefore the targeting of resources for school led support or Local Authority intervention, is informed by the measures used to evaluate them. These include Ofsted judgements and also significant measures based on data analysis. These measures have changed considerably in recent years and continue to do so. Changes in inspection frameworks mean that the local authority

should now review and revise the school improvement protocol. A summary of relevant recent changes are set out, below.

26. **Floor Standards** have been introduced which are also amended year on year. A secondary school is below the 'floor' in 2014 and 2015 where fewer than 40% of the school's pupils achieve 5 A*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths and the school has a below median score for the percentage of pupils making expected progress.
27. The introduction of the Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017 (published in March 2015) provides a measure of pupils' progress from the end of primary school to 8 qualifications at the end of secondary school compared to other pupils with the same starting point. The government has already announced that the absolute floor standard for 2016 will be -0.5 (where, on average, pupils in a school achieve half a grade less than those with similar starting points nationally).
28. A primary school is below the floor standard in 2014 and 2015 if fewer than 65% of pupils achieve Level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics and below the median percentage of pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and maths. 2016 sees curriculum and assessment changes for primary schools and the government has already announced that they will be holding schools to account for the percentage of pupils achieving a new higher than expected standard at the end of primary and against a new, value-added measure of progress. A school will fall below the floor standard in 2016 where fewer than 65% of pupils achieve the expected standard and pupils do not make sufficient progress.
29. The new definition of 'coasting schools' will mean more schools are eligible for intervention. Outcomes data over a three year period will be used and schools will not be classed as coasting until 2016 when data from 2014, 2015 and 2016 will be used to define them.
30. A 'coasting' secondary school will be one that :-
 - (a) In 2014 and 2015 had a five A*-C GCSE pass rate (including English and Maths) of below 60%;
 - (b) In 2014 and 2015 had a below average proportion of pupils making expected progress in English and maths between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4;
 - (c) In 2016 receives a below-standard score on the new Progress 8 measure. (This standard will be set after the 2016 results to ensure it is at a suitable level).
31. The Progress 8 measure will then gradually replace the 5 A*- C based measures until by 2018, coasting schools will be selected on the basis of three years of Progress 8 scores.

32. A 'coasting' primary school will be one that:

- (a) Had less than 85 per cent of children achieving level 4, in each year between 2014, 2015 and 2016, had below average proportions of pupils making expected progress in reading and writing and maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

33. Further changes previously announced around assessment and curriculum include :-

- (a) Progress 8 – this is a new way of demonstrating school performance in league tables by setting a measure of progress from KS2 outcomes which includes English, Maths, 3 English Baccalaureate subjects and 3 other GCSEs;
- (b) GCSEs will be judged with a scale 1-9 instead of A*-G;
- (c) Assessment without levels – schools will need to demonstrate how they will chart progress against the new curriculum without the use of levels.

Implications for Darlington

34. Given the size of the authority, the small number of maintained schools in it and the relationship with academies, the school improvement strategy should be reviewed in light of any changes to monitoring introduced by the DfE to ensure that it is fit for purpose and can support a small number of focused interventions and school improvement strategies.

Learning and Skills Service Performance Update

Background

1. The Learning and Skills service is the external training arm of Darlington Borough Council. The service is externally funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA - 16-18 provision) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA - 19+ provision) and both organisations set certain contractual specifications for the delivery of training.
2. The training is broken down into three discrete areas, each having different requirements:
 - 16-18 study programme
 - Adult learning
 - Apprenticeships
3. The overall funding allocation for the Learning & Skills service in 2015/16 is £920,450, this is split as follows
 - EFA: £271,704
 - SFA: £648,746
4. The 16-18 study programme is broken down into two levels, a generic employability programme (Elev8) with English and maths based at the centre at Tubwell Row. This programme supports the more vulnerable learners and seeks to enable them to progress into further education or employment. The higher level programme is more occupationally focused, offers Diploma level qualifications and is based at either the Coleridge Centre or the training units at Lingfield Way.
5. Adult learning (Adult Classroom and Community Learning) helps those aged 19 and over to develop their occupational skills or functional skills (English, maths and ICT) and ranges from entry level qualifications to Access to Higher Education (HE) courses, all of which are formally accredited. It also covers a wide range of areas from family learning to learning for interest, as well as intensive support in the home, some of which can be non-accredited. Adult learning is delivered across a range of sites including schools, community centres, children's centres and Crown Street library as well as our own training centres at the Coleridge Centre, Tubwell Row and Lingfield Way.
6. Apprenticeships allow people to earn while they learn. Learners must be employed and undertake both on and off the job training. The service offers apprenticeships in:
 - Business Administration
 - Childcare
 - Customer Service
 - Health & Social Care
 - Motor Vehicle
 - Site Joinery

7. The service also offers a small amount of alternative provision for 14-16 year olds who are at risk of exclusion from school.
8. In 2014/15 the service supported 1,260 learners, these are broken down as follows:
 - 54 Learners - Study Programme
 - 359 Learners - Adult Classroom
 - 774 Learners - Community Learning
 - 55 Learners – Apprenticeships
 - 18 Learners – 14-16 Alternative Provision
9. The service was graded as good by Ofsted in January 2012 and the intensive family support programme was identified as an area of good practice by Ofsted and was the subject of a Good Practice visit in 2013.
10. The main strength of the service is the support that it offers to the most vulnerable young people and adults in the community, helping them to take the first steps on their learning journey and progress to employment or more mainstream training provision. The service works closely with Darlington College and Queen Elizabeth College to support progression and avoid duplication of programmes.
11. The Learning & Skills Service works alongside specialist services, including the Family Intervention Service, and the 11-19 Partnership to deliver solution focused and creative approaches for individual children and young people. ESF funded provision is also managed through the service and is used to support young people who would otherwise not engage in education or training. The Learning & Skills Service supports the Council's strategic priorities for adults, promoting basic skills throughout the community, promoting employability and good mental health.

Recent developments:

- The new L&S brand has been promoted through a number of means including social media, bus advertisements and jobs fairs to raise the profile of learning and employability skills.
- In response to the falling number of training providers who were offering Study Programme opportunities in Darlington, including the loss of NACRO, The Tubwell Row Centre was opened in Spring 2015 to support the most vulnerable young people. This has been a great success; young people enjoy learning in the centre which is already at capacity and the service is now working with very hardest to reach.
- In response to increasing concerns about mental health needs within Darlington, the service bid for, and now delivers, a successful mental health pilot with local charity Darlington Mind.
- The Foundation for Jobs initiative is showcasing apprenticeships and raising the profile with employers and learners. It is also encouraging young people to go into STEM related areas, such as engineering, and challenging stereotypes.

- As funding for Council services has contracted, the Learning & Skills Service works even more closely with other council services such as Family Intervention to support the most vulnerable e.g. through the Intensive Support Service (where people are educated in their own homes).
- Access to Higher Education pathways have been developed in response to employer demand.
- The service has delivered two very successful ESF funded programmes for NEETs and WorkSkills, unfortunately funding for both those programmes has come to an end. The service is currently involved in a bid for further funding to support young people into employment.
- Learning and Skills is about to appoint to a new externally funded Employer Engagement Officer. The post holder will work very closely with the Council's Economic Growth Team to identify new opportunities to support skills as new developments such as the cinema complex come on stream, as well as addressing the needs of Apprenticeship reform.