

Our Vision for the Future of School Improvement in Haringey

Given the imminent changes in funding and policy around the role for local government in school improvement we wanted to set out our common and shared view of the core ambitions and principles that any future arrangements in Haringey should be based on.

As you know we – LA officers and school leaders from the School Improvement Steering Group - are working together with the Education Development Trust (EDT) and the ISOS Partnership to design and create a new vehicle for the provision of school improvement services that can deliver our shared ambitions for creating an outstanding school system, and is both financially and politically sustainable.

The clear statements from central government that it sees no ongoing role for local government in the provision of school improvement services to schools, the removal of the Education Support Grant in September 2017 and the need for continuous system improvement all provide us with a burning platform for change.

That work has begun with a series of stakeholder engagements, supported by EDT/ISOS, to establish the current areas of strength and opportunities for further development. Thank you to all of those who have given your valuable time to date in this exercise.

For any new model of school improvement to be sustainable it must be co-designed with school leaders, staff and governors. A key factor in the recent marked improvement of school standards in Haringey has been the collaborative and collective approach between the LA and schools, working together to ensure all of our children have access to a world-class education system.

We – LA Members, officers and school leader representatives - believe that genuine co-design is an absolute pre-condition to a successful and sustainable model. We are therefore making sure that our discussions consider a full range of options. That said, many school leaders have asked for greater clarity on the LA's view of the key ambitions and values upon which we think any future model of school improvement must be based; what its key features should be; and our broad and initial preferences of what type of model we should pursue. So the LA drafted this statement which the School Improvement Steering Group fully endorses.

Our ambitions – from Good to Outstanding

We are rightly proud of what we have achieved together for the school system in Haringey, with 96% of our schools (and all of our nursery, secondary and special schools) being judged as good or better by Ofsted, a strong trend of improvement from early years to Key Stage 5 and with some remarkable results in 2016 that saw our children buck the national trends in GCSE.

The LA's corporate plan is a clear statement of our ambition for our children, with its first Priority being for every child to have the best start in life, including a high quality education, with every child having access to a good or outstanding school.

Our ambitions are not static however, and they cannot be limited to merely maintaining and sustaining our recent levels of success. We believe that we can – that we must – work together to create a system in which all of our children have access not only to good schools but to outstanding schools. We want Haringey to have a higher proportion of outstanding schools than our neighbours, both geographical and statistical. We want our children to be performing not just above national averages but well above London averages and in at least the top quartile.

And every child must mean every child - we want outstanding special schools, all schools to be inclusive and pupils to make excellent progress whatever their background. Despite our recent successes we know that unacceptable inequalities of outcome remain across and within our schools. Any future school improvement model must support this aim.

Our values

- Relentless ambition for all our children in all our schools (community, faith and academies)
- An unambiguous commitment to a truly comprehensive education system open to all children regardless of ability or background
- Closing the achievement gaps within and between our schools by identifying, sharing and promoting best practice
- Collaboration and cohesion – maintaining and strengthening the Haringey family of schools regardless of individual governance types or structures
- Serving our communities together – we want to see our schools remain firmly rooted in, reflecting and shaping their local communities.

The key features of any new school improvement model

While they provide us with a “burning platform” for change, government policies and changes are not and must not be our key rationale for change.

Collaboration between schools over a range of issues has been a characteristic of both national and local systems of education for many years. The growing understanding from research is that facilitating schools to learn from others' good practice is key to a self-improving community of schools.

That collaboration and school to school support must however be informed by a firm data and evidence base including best pedagogical practise, and should be directed, supported and facilitated by a borough-wide partnership organisation. We therefore believe that any future model of school improvement in Haringey should:

- Be a partnership body of school leaders and the LA, with shared accountability for publicly stated aims and objectives that reflect the ambitions outlined above
- Have highly visible and effective leadership with strong governance
- Work across and with all schools regardless of phase or type
- Ensure that the collective capacity in our schools is exploited for the maximum benefit of our children, utilising and building upon existing school to school support structures such as Network Learning Communities and Teaching School Alliances
- Offer excellent development and leadership opportunities across the system to senior and middle leaders in schools via school to school support arrangements
- Be financially sustainable and affordable with high impact
- Have the potential to include and provide a wider range of services than school improvement – ie early years, education welfare, governors support etc
- Have the potential to trade across and beyond the borough's boundaries

What type of model?

As all local authorities are redefining the roles and forms of school improvement in their communities, there is a huge variety in the formats of organisations delivering or offering school improvement services. In some areas LAs are effectively withdrawing completely from even facilitating or enabling such services. This has particularly been the case where there has been a high degree of academisation leading to a fragmented local system that relies almost completely on multi-academy trusts securing or providing all of their own services.

We can broadly characterise the emerging models of school improvement into four polar types:

Cluster models

School improvement is delivered primarily by school partnerships at cluster or local levels through activities such as peer review and research and development.

Strategic partnership model

A borough-wide partnership board led by schools (who provide overall co-ordination and strategic direction to all partners in the system)

Traded services model

These offer a broad range of services on a traded services basis to schools. The organisation is often owned by schools with schools paying a fee or subscription to access support.

Hybrid model

Might have some combination of 1,2 or 3 above for example both a schools owned company with a strategic board and a traded element.

Our initial view is that the hybrid model allows us to work together to develop a new organisation that incorporates the best features of each model.

We are however just completing our first phase of stakeholder engagement with school leaders and governors as well as LA school improvement advisers and are not therefore yet ruling out any of the above options.

But we are ruling two options out – burying our collective heads in the sand and refusing to change; and complete withdrawal by the local authority in championing and enabling the best possible school improvement service.

The first does not sufficiently unleash the collective strengths of our rapidly improving school system, and is no longer affordable given the removal of government funding. The second is morally unacceptable.

We have now established a new School Improvement Project Board, chaired by Cllr Weston, our Lead Member for Children & Young People, with school governor, headteacher and senior officer representation to take forward this work. In addition to members of the Project Board feeding back to their respective forums, we will provide written monthly updates to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.



Rory Kennedy
Assistant Director of Schools & Learning



Cal Shaw
Chair of Schools' School Improvement Steering Group and Headteacher of Stroud Green Primary