

Our Ref: AN/CS

Date: 29 September 2014

Dear Head teacher/Chair of Governors,

Introduction from Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Every child deserves a good education. The right foundation of learning and skills is vital for our young people to access good jobs and live healthier, happier and independent lives.

Every school in Staffordshire aims to give their pupils the best education and to be judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Over the past few years, we've seen significant progress in this regard, and at present, 78% of our schools are judged as being at least good. But this does not yet meet the ambition the council has for Staffordshire's children and there is more to do. Our aim is to support head teachers and governors in their roles as school leaders, to support all schools to drive for excellence and to support our outstanding schools to be amongst the best in the country. The council is committed to seeing 90% of Staffordshire's schools judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' by 2016 and all schools by 2020.

This is why school improvement is at the top of the agenda in Staffordshire's Learning and Skills Strategy and why, with the sense of anticipation and excitement brought by the start of the new academic year, I'm throwing you the challenge of taking the action needed to lead your school to success.

Supporting School Improvement, Anna Halliday, Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing

You will have seen significant changes in Staffordshire's education landscape over the past few years, and as schools across the county become increasingly autonomous, we're establishing new roles and responsibilities with regards to school improvement.

Staffordshire's head teachers and governors are accountable for the performance of the county's schools and have access to a network of support and positive challenge to ensure that school strengths are maximised and any areas for development are addressed. Support for school improvement comes from the school governing body

and from the formal partnerships that your school is part of, be that trust, federation, diocesan group or through an academy sponsor – but you can also expect the county council to monitor school performance and work with you to accelerate your efforts to improve.

We do this through our professional dialogue with head teachers, and by facilitating relationships that enable schools to learn from each other and from best practice.

The county council also collaborates with schools to commission targeted training or support from Entrust, our school improvement partner.

This information pack has been put together to ensure that you are aware of the county council's current assessment of your school's performance and of Staffordshire's school improvement offer, so that you can be clear on what is expected of you as a school, and us as a local authority. The pack includes:

- A letter detailing the county council's assessment of your school performance and your school's subsequent 'category' rating. This is important because your school category will determine the type of support you can expect from the county council. You can read the details around this on pages 6-11 of the School Improvement Framework;
- A copy of the School Improvement Framework, which details 'how school improvement works' across Staffordshire and the roles and responsibilities we all take as part of this;
- An event calendar giving you advance notice of the opportunity to attend a series of termly events that will support you in your school improvement efforts;
- A briefing note on Perspectives Lite, an online management information tool that you can use to inform decision making around the performance of your school.

Please take a moment to read through this information so that you're able to make the most of the opportunities available to you.

I'd particularly like to draw your attention to the idea of establishing a Staffordshire strategic partnership for school improvement. Facilitating school-to-school support is a real priority for the county council in 2014/15 and we're keen to hear from you about the practicalities of making this happen. We'll be getting in touch after October half-term to get your thoughts on the strategic partnership and how this might work in the future to provide effective school-led systems for school improvement.

Work is also underway to develop our support for highly effective governance across the county, and I am keen to hear from governors who may be interested in being part of a governance pool that we can call on to support and advise in strengthening good governance. If you have governors that may be interested please contact Russ Sheldon at russ.sheldon@staffordshire.gov.uk.

I know that there are many factors that influence each school's success and I am very mindful of how hard every school works to support their pupils to achieve. As a county council we are investing in supporting the wellbeing of our teachers and school staff. Information on the ThinkWell service was shared with you recently through the school bag. In regard to our children, I wanted to make you aware of some forthcoming changes to the way school nursing is delivered. The Public Health Team within the county council are currently in the process of tendering a new Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Programme which will go live in 2015 and lead delivery of the national Healthy Child Programme to all 5-19 year olds across the county. As we know, a healthy and happy child is more able to learn, so we'll keep you up to date as this, and other pieces of work progress.

I hope you find this information beneficial. You can find other key documents on school improvement online on the Staffordshire Learning Net (SLN) at www.education.staffordshire.gov.uk/schoolimprovement and I very much look forward to meeting you at our Autumn Breakfast Sessions, as set out in the events calendar.

Regards,

Anna Halliday, Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing

Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

C. Halliday

BA