

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Education Advisory Panel
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Title:	The Impact of School Improvement
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Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Summary

1.1. This report describes the way in which Hampshire County Council carries out its statutory Local Authority (LA) school improvement function. It also considers how the impact and effectiveness of school improvement in Hampshire can be assessed and provides some information about the cost of some of the activities which fall within the remit of the service.

2. The role of the Local Authority in school improvement

- 2.1. The “**Duty to promote high standards in primary and secondary education,**” originates from the 1996 Education Act. This provision was amended in the 2006 Act to include, “...and the fulfilment of potential.” The 2006 Act spells out the responsibility of the LA to promote high standards, ensure fair access and promote the fulfilment of every child’s educational potential
- 2.2. It is the 2006 Act which also introduces the inspection of LA statutory functions by Ofsted. Many LAs did not perceive this as pertaining to school improvement functions until the publication by Ofsted in May 2013 of “The Framework for Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement,” based upon sections 135 and 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The LA duty to write an action plan following an unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection had already been introduced in the 2005 Education Act.
- 2.3. The 2006 Act also lays out the range of intervention powers LAs have at their disposal when the performance of individual schools is a cause for concern. These powers are draconian and range from the issue of warning notices to removal of the governing body and suspension of the school’s delegated budget.

- 2.4. The above powers are still statutory and LAs are required to intervene in schools within their administrative area which underperform. The Academies Act in 2010 removed schools which followed this route from LA intervention but the Inspection Framework introduced by Ofsted in 2013 makes abundantly clear that LAs are still responsible for the standard of education children within their area receive and so, by default, they must assume their responsibility to extend, at least in part, to academies.
- 2.5. The ability for LAs to carry out this school improvement function has been sorely tested. Firstly by legislation which makes intervention in failing academies very challenging, secondly by the extraordinary budget pressures from the combination of public sector cuts coupled with the transfer of centrally held school improvement funding directly to schools and thirdly from the host of new posts, structures and bodies created by government in an attempt to carry out direct oversight of schools itself. None of these have the statutory responsibility for school intervention, none are inspected or held to account for impact and all make the intervention by those LAs determined to carry out their duties more complex and less comprehensive.
- 2.6. The funding for LA statutory responsibilities for school improvement is within the Education Services Grant (ESG). This is a grant which is not ring-fenced and is intended to cover a range of LA statutory responsibilities. The ESG is due to reduce for 2015/16 to £87 per pupil plus an additional £15 per pupil for retained LA duties. The national median spend on statutory school improvement within maintained schools will then reduce to around £27 per pupil. When a school converts to academy status, the £87 per pupil is paid directly to the academy and not to the LA, although the £15 per pupil for retained duties remains with the LA.

2. Hampshire's approach to school improvement

- 2.1. In responding to the reductions in local authority budgets in 2010, Hampshire County Council made the strategic decision to retain a core school improvement service in order to fulfil statutory requirements but also to carry out its function as the champion of children. A core feature of this service is the allocation of a Leadership and Learning Partner (LLP) to each maintained school. This LLP role enables the LA to maintain a working knowledge of all schools, to put data into context and to alert the local School Improvement Manager (SIM) to the early signs of decline. In addition, the LLP provides a vital point of contact with schools so that they recognise the reality of their relationship with the LA and know who to call in times of need.
- 2.2. Identifying those schools in need of intervention before they fail their children and their community is the fundamental intention of Hampshire's school improvement service. SIMs maintain a "watching brief" on all schools in their area and receive a great deal of general information from a wide range of sources which they are able to consider in the light of more formal monitoring processes. The LLP process, funded through the core budget, begins with a forensic analysis on the data for each school; this analysis is also carried out in respect of academies in Hampshire. For maintained schools, the data analysis, coupled with the most recent Ofsted report, informs the annual visit

by the LLP to each school. For good and outstanding schools where the data indicates no cause for concern, this visit will be focussed on supporting the school with their identified improvement priorities.

- 2.3. The importance of knowing schools well cannot be underestimated. It is the cornerstone of a successful school improvement service since it allows early and accurate intervention to be out in place in advance of published outcomes which indicate that the decline has already happened. It also supports the decisions about where scarce resources need to be deployed so that intervention is targeted effectively. This is an expert and an expensive activity which relies on more than very good data analysis, important though this is. Knowing and understanding schools and having the confidence of headteachers so that intelligence is timely and accurate requires skilled practitioners who spend time in schools across the county and who maintain the highest levels of professional expertise. It is important that efforts are also made to know academies and maintain a relationship with them, since they also provide education for Hampshire children.
- 2.4. Where analysis of data, the most recent Ofsted report, and the wide range of “soft data” gathered through regular contact with schools and an excellent Governor Services function suggests a cause for concern, the LLP visit will be longer and focussed on exploring the concerns. When those concerns are justified, the school will be categorised as high or medium priority; this determines the level of support to be allocated. The SIM will then begin the process of negotiating with the school the shape of this support and the role of both the improvement service and the school in reversing the decline.
- 2.5. When the data suggests issues in relation to the performance of academies, these will, in the first instance, be raised with the academy itself. In many cases the academy then welcomes a visit from the SIM to explore what needs to be done. When this is not the case, the LA would regard it as its responsibility to pursue this with the school’s governing body and/or the sponsor. The introduction of Regional Commissioners will hopefully make this a more immediate and productive process.

3. Co-construction and shared accountability

- 3.1. Schools are responsible for their own improvement and hold a budget to support that. When significant intervention is needed in a maintained school the SIM meets with the headteacher to agree the package of support and how it will be funded. LA officers have access to schools’ finances and this assists an open process of negotiation which generally agrees that the school will fund some days and the LA school improvement budget will fund others. This is underpinned by an agreement around the improvement plan and the impact that the support will have in the school. Whilst a school can opt to purchase its support from elsewhere, the LA would expect to hold the school to account for the impact of that support and would expect to agree the impact measures with the school in advance.
- 3.2. The agreed plan is followed up by a letter which summarises both the support and the challenge which will follow so there can be no misunderstanding at a

later date. Schools subject to this level of support will generally have a “Strategy Group” established around them, particularly if the school has been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate. This Strategy Group meets on a half-termly basis to review progress against the plan and assess the impact of the intervention, and it includes the headteacher, chair of governors, LLP, SIM, finance, HR and other relevant personnel. If this progress is unsatisfactory, action will be taken which may result in the exercise of statutory LA powers.

4. What intervention looks like in Hampshire

- 4.1 The fundamental principle behind Hampshire’s approach to school improvement is based on helping the school to focus on improving the things that matter; teaching, learning and leadership. It seems ludicrously simple to state but where these are good, schools are good and children learn. It is unhelpful to tell schools they are ineffective unless they are supported to avoid the distractions of quick-fix initiatives and given the appropriate tools with which to improve what happens in the classroom.
- 4.2 Any school causing concern is doing so for a range of reasons and Hampshire designs a bespoke programme to address those. This is not an off-the-shelf school improvement “tool” but the effective deployment of expert support to improve teacher subject expertise so that they know and can teach to the required standard in their subject. This teacher support is carried out by LA school improvement professionals but generally involves at least one other school so that school-to-school support is focussed and specific rather than general, and it enhances and embeds the professional training and challenge from the LA. Teaching techniques are modelled and wider training to improve pedagogy and pupil engagement, alongside specific support for middle and senior leaders, is deployed either from a Hampshire school with particular expertise or from the LA.
- 4.3 Teachers in classrooms need to maintain a clear understanding of the standard children should be working at, and the minimum expectations of their skills, knowledge and understanding in a subject area at a given age. The use of end of KS and examination targets has led some schools to focus on “marginal gains” and targeting levels of progress rather than the expectation that all children will be reaching the expected standard and, in some cases, this has led teachers to lose sight of what that looks like. Much of the work Hampshire carries out with individual teachers is about recalibration of these expectations and revisiting the pedagogical skills that drive them.
- 4.4 Allied to effective support, the LA provides regular moderation of impact and robust assessment of progress through the gathering of both hard and soft data by the LLP and through the Strategy Group meetings. Much energy goes into improving medium term planning so that lesson sequencing and the progress pupils make towards the expected standard are properly understood by teachers.
- 4.5 Where intervention and support is having no impact it is often, though not always, due to a lack of leadership capacity to drive through and embed improvement, and good teaching and good leadership only happen during the

intervention itself and cannot be sustained by the school when left to its own devices. When this is the case, the LA must support the governing body to tackle those leadership issues. Because Hampshire is working on a daily basis with its schools, the majority of headship change, in these circumstances, is brought about through a negotiated departure since headteachers can be brought to recognise their lack of impact. When this is not the case, the LA has a range of statutory powers which allow it to effect rapid change in the governing body and the leadership of the school. Hampshire uses these powers sparingly but rapidly and to good effect.

5. What does this Cost?

- 5.1. The most costly generic element in maintaining an effective school improvement service is the process of ensuring sound and comprehensive knowledge of all schools. This process includes the analysis of data and a visit to each maintained school plus follow-up visits and phone conversations as required. A desk-top analysis of academy performance followed up by conversations as necessary will also be carried out. This process for 486 maintained schools and 47 academies takes approximately 1300 days per year and costs around £770k.
- 5.2. The improvement activity which flows from the above process varies considerably. Good and Outstanding schools often require specific intervention concerning governance, relationships, acceptable practice or specific areas of weakness. Schools which are failing or at risk of doing so require substantial but tailored packages of intervention which vary in both make-up and duration depending on the nature of the issues. This intervention in around 135 schools per year takes approximately 1,600 days and costs £975K. Schools also use their own retained funding to supplement activity, usually by purchasing additional days from Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) since the total time spent to turn around a school which has failed its Ofsted inspection can extend to well beyond twice the average ten days per year deployed by the LA.
- 5.3. In addition, LA school improvement professionals are required to provide detailed information to Ofsted during every inspection in order to support the school and confirm or challenge the emerging judgments, and attend the feedback for each of the 190+ Hampshire schools which are inspected or monitored each year. Each of these activities takes approximately half a day amounting to more than 190 days a year and costing in excess of £120k.
- 5.4. This activity relates to specific work with individual schools. This work is underpinned by detailed and careful activity locally with groups of schools, and across the county as a whole with headteachers, teachers and middle leaders. This work ensures that schools understand local priorities and national priorities and are well supported in the decisions they make about governance, curriculum and assessment. Time is also spent advising schools and governing bodies, and meeting with DfE, sponsors and other interested parties in support of Hampshire schools and children. Issues and concerns raised by MPs, local members, the press and members of the public about our schools and their work also require time and thought from school

improvement professionals, as does regular reporting. It is difficult to cost this activity but it is fundamental to the successful operation of the service as a whole. School Improvement also funds time from Governor Services and from Education Personnel, Legal Services and Financial Services since more robust action with schools often requires specialised input from these services.

- 5.5. Overall, the core school improvement budget is currently £2.66M which equates to just under £23 per pupil for core school improvement. This is a lower spend than the proposed £27 national median from 2015/16 which is after the 23% reduction to the overall ESG.
- 5.6. Although the individual improvement plan for any school is costed in full, it is not possible to cost the overall improvement of an average school since the infrastructure and practices which underpin the service as a whole are fundamental to its success.

6. Measuring Impact

- 6.1. There are a range of impact measures which can be deployed to assess the effectiveness of intervention. However, most improvement is the result of a combination of factors so it is a challenge to isolate the impact of a specific action or set of actions. It is also quite unacceptable for any sort of “control” group to be allowed to continue without intervention since this is the education of children. That said, with the number of schools in Hampshire, some comparative study of impact is possible.
- 6.2. In 2014, Hampshire has 305 mainstream schools with KS2. According to the methodology described above, schools are considered high priority and in need of “High Support,” typically more than 10 days across the academic year; medium priority, in need of “Medium Support,” typically between 6 and 10 days; or low priority, in need of only “Light Support,” typically between 1 and 3 days. The only primary phase schools that receive no LA support are those nine schools of the eleven no longer maintained by Hampshire County Council because they are either converter or sponsored academies which have chosen not to access LA support.
- 6.3. The table at 5.4¹ shows a very clear correlation between the level of support a school receives from Hampshire’s school improvement service and the rate at which it improved during the last academic year. As described in Section 4, the nature of the support package for any specific school varies. It is also important that the intervention is properly monitored so that it can be increased, reduced or changed if it is not having sufficient impact.

¹ All percentages in tables are rounded to the nearest whole number

6.4. Table showing the impact of HCC Intervention on KS2 Results in 2014

Level of Support	Number of Schools	L4+ R/W/M 2013	L4+ R/W/M 2014	Rate of Improvement
National	N/A	75%	78%	+3%
Hampshire	305	77%	82%	+5%
High Support	52	70%	79%	+9%
Med Support	58	73%	80%	+7%
Low Support	186	81%	84%	+3%
No Support	9	85%	83%	-2%

6.5. Overall, Hampshire's KS2 performance improved by 5% at the key measure of Level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics, 2% higher than the national improvement. Those schools where both outcomes and progress were already above the national and Hampshire median, and about whom the LA had no concerns, received the usual monitoring visit, sometimes with a further one or two days at the school's request. These schools made the same improvement as schools nationally but from a higher starting point. The schools which, due to their relatively poor performance, received between 6 and 10 days of intervention and support improved, on average, at nearly twice the national rate within the year and by two points more than the Hampshire average. Those schools causing the most concern and subject to the highest level of support, at least 10 days of LA intervention, made three times the improvement that schools made nationally over the same period and nearly twice the Hampshire average rate of improvement. Only the nine schools which had opted out of the LA scheme and therefore received not even the lowest level of support from Hampshire did not improve and, on average, their KS2 headline performance declined by 2%.

6.6. At secondary level, such an empirical comparison is problematic. Although the available data does suggest a similar if smaller measurable impact, as shown in the table at 5.8, the changes in the way the headline measure is calculated and the longer period needed for sustained support to impact upon more complex institutions, along with a smaller sample size, makes the same method of comparison unreliable over such a short period. Measuring over a longer period has been impossible due to all the external factors which impact upon secondary school performance including alterations to the assessment regime, the impact of teaching school intervention and support in the same schools supported by the LA, and the myriad of government interventions both direct and through other bodies.

6.7. Although the data for secondary school improvement is far less reliable, the available information is shown in the table at 5.8. Those schools which have

received medium or high levels of support from Hampshire’s school improvement service for two years show improvement across the period despite the changes listed above. This is not the case with converter academies which, whilst they purchase some school improvement from Hampshire and from other providers for which they have identified a need, are not subject to regular monitoring and intervention. The “Supported Schools” are a sub-set of “All Maintained Schools” which receive at least the lowest level of LLP and follow-up support. Sponsored academies are supported by their sponsoring trust. Only converter academies have been free from LA intervention for the past four years.

6.8 Table showing Hampshire GCSE Performance by School Type

	Number of schools	2012 5+A*to C(EM)	2014 5+A*to C(EM)	Change
Secondary Schools Supported 2012-2014	10	52%	56%	+4%
Converter Academies	24	67%	67%	0
Sponsored Academies	6	37%	41%	+4%
All Maintained Schools	40	57%	59%	+3%

6.9. In terms of simple Ofsted grading, the position is clouded by the requirement for schools to have been good or outstanding at the point of conversion and the likelihood that sponsored academies were already failing when they acquired their sponsor. Therefore, the only useful measure of the impact of LA monitoring and intervention is to compare the rate of improvement or decline in a school’s Ofsted rating over time in LA maintained schools, subject to the processes described above, and in sponsored academies subject to the processes determined by their sponsor and converter academies which monitor their own improvement.

6.10. The table at paragraph 6.11² shows the impact of Hampshire’s monitoring and intervention approach to school improvement, which is a universal offer. Secondary schools subject to this process are twice as likely to have improved their Ofsted grading over time and half as likely to have suffered a decline as those schools which are no longer in receipt of regular monitoring and intervention from Hampshire’s School Improvement Service.

² All percentages in tables are rounded to the nearest whole number so may not add up to 100%

6.11.Trend in Ofsted OE Grade in Hampshire Secondary Schools

Trend in Ofsted OE Grade in Hampshire Academies since Conversion					
	No Insp Post Conversion	No Change	Improved	Declined	Total
Converter	5 (21%)	7 (29%)	4 (16%)	8 (33%)	24
Sponsored	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	0	3 (50%)	6
Total Academies	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	4 (13%)	11 (37%)	30
Trend in Ofsted Grade in HCC Maintained Schools since Previous Sect 5					
Maintained Schs	N/A	11 (27%)	22 (55%)	7 (18%)	40
Total All Schools	6 (9%)	20 (26%)	26 (31%)	18 (26%)	70

6.12. All of the above information makes it impossible not to conclude that professional and universal monitoring and intervention by a skilled and credible school improvement service has the greatest impact upon school improvement. In terms of spend, with a median LA spend on school improvement in maintained schools currently at £27 per pupil, it is also by far the most cost-effective approach to school improvement in the UK. Academy sponsorship appears to have some impact nationally for a higher cost, although evidence from the small Hampshire sample does not support this in terms of improvement against Ofsted criteria. It is impossible to measure any impact of teaching schools since, unlike both LAs and academy sponsors, there do not appear to be any mechanisms for doing so nor for holding them to account for the outcomes in the schools they support or judging whether such activity represents value for money. It is likewise impossible to escape the conclusion that setting schools free from LA intervention has not resulted in universal improvement.

6.13. In his Annual Report,³ Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw draws attention to the "excellent challenge, support and intervention" provided to schools by, "the best local authorities, for example Wigan and Hampshire." He also makes a comparison between the performance of converter academies which have improved by 1% since 2010 and LA maintained schools which have improved by 2% over the same period. There is a larger differential between the performance of these groups in Hampshire where maintained schools have benefitted from the quality of support and challenge identified by HMCI.

³ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/2014 (Published November 2014)

The regional report⁴ also draws attention to the quality of Hampshire, “a consistently strong authority,” and its work to improve school performance on the Isle of Wight. The decline in the percentage of Hampshire secondary schools which are good or outstanding is explained by the figures in the table at 6.11, since the 8 converter academies which have declined in Ofsted terms would all have been Good or Outstanding at the point of conversion.

7. Future Challenges for Improving Schools

- 7.1. The significant reductions in LA budgets in recent years have had a significant impact upon their ability to deliver a universal school improvement service. However, the greatest impact upon this service nationally has been the belief in some LAs that school performance was no longer their responsibility. Inspection by Ofsted has quickly corrected this misapprehension but many LAs had already lost experienced staff, and their schools. The proliferation of teaching schools, sponsoring trusts and free schools has made this a crowded field and the direct involvement of DfE national and regional officials has further muddied the water in terms of accountability. Schools in difficulties are often overwhelmed by the number of people telling them they must improve without providing the appropriate challenge or support for them to do so. Reaching for ready-made school improvement models from the increasing range of commercial and charitable providers is at best an uncertain business.
- 7.2. The greatest challenge for improving schools is the lack of coherence in the current system, with so many players whose interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the school or its community, coupled with the wide range of unaccountable bodies seeking to profit from schools. The statutorily accountable body is often deliberately by-passed with the information or debarred from applying for the funding or training available to others, such as teaching schools. The likely continued erosion of LA budgets will further impact upon their ability to carry out their role although a fair and level playing field, which allowed LAs to apply for such funding as there is, would seem the very least that a democratic system might expect. If LAs, like academy sponsors, are forced to concentrate only on those schools which have already failed and are not in a position to support the continued improvement of the educational provision for which they are responsible then the future looks bleak indeed.

8. Finance

- 8.1. There are no financial implications specific to this report.

⁴ South East Regional Report 2013/14 (Published November 2014)

9. Consultation and Equalities

- 9.1. No consultation has been undertaken for this report but the views of headteachers and other stakeholders were sought in the recent internal review of school improvement in Hampshire which accompanies this report.
- 9.2. No equality impacts have been identified.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1. Paragraph 1 of this report outlines the statutory responsibilities which relate to school improvement.

11. Recommendation

- 12.1. That the Panel notes the report.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The report is a description of the way in which Hampshire County Council carries out its school improvement function and, therefore, has no impact on groups with protected characteristics.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No impact on crime and disorder as a result of this report has been identified.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No impact on climate change as a result of this report has been identified.