

School Improvement Strategy Presentation Spring Governors Briefing 2016 - Feedback

Response to short presentation about the 'Sheffield Approach'

- Documents and improvements should be communicated to governors / chair as well as head / school. The plans should be more explicit in involving and informing governing body.
- Primary categorisation – large gap between school in top and bottom e.g. especially amber category.
- Lots of terms could be defined better e.g. 'consistently good' 'rapidly improving' otherwise loose definitions could lead to disputes.
- What is meant by 'rapidly' improving? What time frame?
- A school could drop down categories very quickly. What frequency would school checks be. Could a decline be too quick to be picked up.
- Dealing with inept chairs.
- Peer challenge as well as support.
- Building capacity from within schools (peer evaluation)
- Resources – quantity and quality.
- Isn't everyone expected to be self-improving?
- Pressure on 'outstanding' (green) schools to support – impact on own performance – avoid 'beacon' status.
- Definition of 'outstanding' should include contributing to other schools.
- Contribution to locality (cash?) working.
- Source of data to use for judgements?
- Dependent on openness and trust.
- Categories need further work.
- How to avoid complacency.
- Impact of National Academy operation v local issues.
- Realistic judgements.
- When and how are governors involved? (Needs to be explicit)
- Need to share best practice
- Intervention powers – where is it coming from (DfE / LA)
- Red or Green categories. No mention of attainment, coasting, how old is Ofsted judgement, expectation that green offer best practice?
- Not clear re role of Governors. Peer support and challenge but where do we fit?
- Applaud document as a starting point. Positive exercise but more detail / thought needed. Too simplistic
- Is school improvement fund big enough / sustainable? What about PRU and Special.
- Where do academies fit in? Accountable to Trust and RSC.
- National definition re SENDs – does every school do the same?
- Accessible, relevant training for governors in key areas for SMART outcomes.
- Training and development is the keystone.
- Too many priorities – we need to focus and achieve visible improvements asap even if some must wait a bit longer.
- How does the Sheffield approach compare to other cities?
- What is meant by support and challenge?

- How will Sheffield-wide perspective be fed back to localities
- Degree to which locality nominees will be accountable to member schools.
- Will the profile included information about the context of a school.
- Don't feel that this is an adequate consultation mechanism.
- Different localities? Are some already 'better'? Is that shared with others? How do different localities interact? Different deprivations and challenges?
- Concern over Learn Sheffield capacity to carry out the offer.
- Concern is there enough capacity to provide all the support packages identified by Learn Sheffield?
- How are all the best practices being identified so that they can be shared? Central coordination of putting the two sides together.
- Has the partnership process been bought in to by all schools?
- How do we share data better so that all schools can benefit from it?
- How will good schools cope with capacity demands from weaker schools whilst continuing to work with other good schools to continue their improvement?
- How quickly will the reds be re-acted to?
- Is assumption that localities work as a group. Some schools have others more closely linked.
- What is the role of a governor?
- Who organises and brokers support?
- No trust between secondary schools. Feeling of competition.
- Action plans written in partnership with steering group and Learn Sheffield member.
- Who validates decisions?
- How does the offer work with Trusts and Academies?
- Primary – will one representative be enough? Very difficult to represent all in locality. Who would rep be head? Governor?
- Capacity for all promised visits?
- Social media contacts / facilities
- Cost? How is it funded?
- Parent governor mailing list so we can share good practice and ideas.
- Costs fairly allocated.
- Consistency of personnel.
- What is the role of the 'monthly board' – who attends? Is monthly too frequent as this is a big time commitment.
- When will localities develop their 'action plan?' Who organises this? Are governors included in this 'action plan?'
- 'A programme of support and challenge'. What does this programme look like? How is it resources?
- Is it Learn Sheffield's intention to encourage development of localities and if so how? e.g. SSELP very strong, other not so.
- Locality steering group. Who? Governance driven?
- Locality action plans – who produces these?

Sheffield Priorities – Emerging Themes

Spring Governors Briefing Feedback

Recruitment and Retention

- Shift focus from ‘getting rid’ of underperformance to how to support towards improvement.
- Increase governors’ skills in recruitment and key aspects of HR leadership.
- Understand and develop succession plans.
- Enhance opportunities through collaboration.

Inclusion / Overcoming Barriers

- Attendance.
- Use of nurturing / friendship groups.
- Promoting cultural / social / racial diversity within schools.
- Developing links between mainstream and special schools.
- Promoting SEAL / PSHE within schools.
- Enriching curriculum entitlement for all – educate whole child.

Enrichment and Entitlement

- Health – mental and physical.
- Arts and culture.
- Raising aspirations – external partners. Links with universities and FE.
- Gifted and Talented programmes.
- Apprenticeships.
- Sports partnerships.
- Extra-curricular activities – Children’s University.
- Funding?

Vulnerable / Disadvantaged Pupils

- Language
- Pupil and parents translators needed and family advocates.
- Equity – available to all.
- Extra-curricular activities and clubs – available to all.
- Health.
- Changes in criteria to PP.
- Closely related to enrichment and entitlement.

School Improvement Capacity

- Impact on school’s finances / capacity e.g. can’t release leadership staff as have to teach. Pipeline: bringing people on to support leadership roles.
- Will impact on schools.

Recruitment and Retention of Governance

- Expectations need to be explicit from the outset.
- Recruitment is positive. Keep it fresh.
- Onerous time commitment (especially the chair).
- Refresh membership. 28 years is too long!

Training and Development

- How is it quality assured in order to ensure we are getting the best?
- Understand what could be different (new building / new resources).
- Range of venues in schools.
- Academy Trusts are different. Does this change the skills and experience required?

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

- If Sheffield offered extra support for teachers it might attract them to the city.
- On-going University input in to teacher training / development.
- Too little support within school work / life balance.
- Can't manage workload / expectation = stress.
- Not enough support in behaviour management and how to motivate.
- Encourage regular meetings with a mentor to talk about what was worrying you. Appraisal, nurture, counselling.
- Unreasonable expectations. Appreciate that NQTs might not be 'good' straight away and allow to develop and improve in job.

Recruitment and Retention of Leaders

- Succession planning.
- Deputy head training.
- Encourage visionaries not bean counters.
- Grow your own.
- Train for succession.
- Business support.