

Interim Schools Partnership Board (SPB)

Context

Bromley is likely to be one of the first boroughs in England where all schools have become academies, with our remaining maintained schools expected to convert by the end of 2017. Given that schools are the main universal service to children and young people in Bromley, it is vital that we create a system that is designed to secure strong partnership working in the new educational landscape and to support the needs of our most vulnerable children. The legal and moral imperative to close the gaps experienced by our vulnerable children will require partnerships across the new landscape to not only identify the gaps but to capture and share good practice to improve the life chances of all of our children. It is proposed to create a Schools Partnership Board (SPB), made up of key partners in Education across the borough, to drive this new agenda forward.

Within the new education landscape, as described in the government's recent White Paper, the Local Authority (LA) will have the key responsibility of being champions of children and families while maintaining core education services including Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND), place planning, education welfare and admissions. We will continue to have the statutory duty to ensure that all our schools are safe places for children and it is in this context that the partnership board is expected to operate; covering the full breadth of safeguarding expectations.

Purpose

The ambition for the SPB is that it becomes the strategic interface between schools and partners for all aspects of work with schools and that it will set the agenda for key operational projects and activities, delivered by all partners, to ensure the agreed strategic objectives are achieved. Examples of areas the SPB would facilitate include:

- Fair Access Protocol and in-year admissions, ensuring that vulnerable children are able to access a school place in as short a time as possible;
- Mental health strategy;
- Closing the gap in academic performance for children on free school meals;
- Reducing the rate of permanent exclusions;
- Ensuring schools share attendance data to support the missing children agenda;
- Improving academic outcomes for white working class boys;
- SEND strategy including place planning for children with Education, Health and Care plans;
- Virtual school and the education of Looked After Children;
- School based gangs work;
- Support for children with health issues.

It is expected that the SPB would create task and finish groups to oversee specific, shared projects. These may be very school based, such as looking at curriculum content to engage particular groups of children; or include a wider group of partners when multi-agency input is required.

Process

The LA's role in school improvement has changed from being one where we lead on the quality of teaching and learning, taking direct responsibility for school performance, to a position where we need to strengthen the oversight of and the impact on the outcomes for the most disadvantaged members of our community within the context of our broader safeguarding duty. We are currently in the process of redesigning our school improvement service to meet these aims and have secured the services of an experienced school leader to support the setting up of the SPB. They will also advise on what will be required to support this structure going forwards. The first step is to create an interim School Partnership Board to agree the role, purpose, membership and operation of a permanent SPB

Proposed Membership of the Interim SPB

- Representative from the Regional School Commissioner's office;
- Primary and secondary school headteachers to represent the Bromley community of school children;
- Clinical Commissioning Group;
- Public health;
- Police;
- Youth Offending Service;
- Virtual headteacher;
- Director/Assistant Director Children's Social Care;
- Director Education;
- Portfolio Holder Education;
- Executive headteacher Bromley Trust Academy/Bromley Beacon Academy;
- Special school headteacher.

Governance

It is proposed that outcomes from the SPB will be reported into the Children's Services improvement governance board.

Timescale

This is a major exercise and we want to create a model that has lasting and significant impact. It is proposed that we have the first interim board meeting in September which will be a representative group that is tasked with designing a workable and meaningful SPB.