

# Kent Challenge

Tackling Underperformance

‘Putting Children First’

(From Kent Association of Schools)



# Context

The Secretary of State, in March, required us to draw up a plan for improving the performance of all schools, excluding academies, below the floor standards.

We were challenged to be ambitious. 'Kent Challenge – Tackling Underperformance in our schools' is our response to that challenge.

This will see us using the best practice in Kent schools to ensure we create a sustainable school to school improvement network by 2015.

# Context

We know there is much to celebrate in Kent schools, with evidence of outstanding leadership and classroom practice, innovation and dynamism.

We also know that performance in some schools does not meet the high standards we expect and which the families and children of Kent deserve.

We share the Secretary of State's concern that every day that children spend in classrooms where they are not learning properly is another day that they are held back from achieving their full potential.

## Significant consideration

We are very aware that some schools face specific challenges, and accept that part of our leadership role is to help them overcome these challenges, as well as creating an environment in which high performing schools can improve further as part of a self-sustaining network.

## The Partnership

Kent Challenge will be a partnership between KCC, schools, central government and other key players who can contribute to improved outcomes.

We will be working with all schools in establishing a successful school to school support system within districts, areas and across Kent as a whole. We will use the best practice wherever it is to be found.

# The Partnership

The majority of Kent schools, including those judged as satisfactory, have good and outstanding practice which can be shared for the benefit of their communities. We also know that school to school support has benefits for all schools working in a collaborative approach.

We will therefore look to commission a wide range of support from individual schools, teaching schools, networks and academies when facilitating school improvement on an individual or geographical basis.

# Outcomes for Kent Challenge

Improve outcomes for all pupils in Kent schools at a faster rate than is currently occurring

Ensure that Kent schools perform better than the national average

Provide support for schools to break the link between disadvantage and low attainment

Ensure access to high quality learning experiences for all children and young people whilst raising aspirations and expectations for every child

# Outcomes for Kent Challenge

Maximise achievement for all children and young people

Establish excellent system leadership between networks of schools, recognising schools autonomy, that allows effective partnerships to be established or built upon enabling the needs of all learners in the district to be tackled quickly and progress to be accelerated.

Create bespoke programmes tailored to meet local needs using some of the proven approaches to school improvement

# **Building on the effectiveness of the District Approach 2010-2011**

A new model for school challenge and support was introduced in September 2010. This has been very effective in supporting school improvement across Kent and has resulted in a reduction by 30%+ of schools that were identified of being serious concerns and an increase by 9% of schools who are now good or outstanding.

The success of this work can be attributed to the district team approach and the partnership arrangement between the school, the Local Authority (LA) and commissioned resources. We therefore intend to ensure that the strengths of this model continue to support school improvement across all Kent schools at a district and area level.

# **Key Principles of the District Strategy have included:**

A detailed and ongoing analysis of all schools to identify those that are a priority for support, challenge and intervention in the right mix, dependent on the situation

Early and rigorous intervention and action for those schools where leadership and/or the quality of teaching is impacting adversely on pupil progress and attainment

A clear plan for improvement, six weekly progress meetings to identify impact of the support in place and clearly defined outcomes for improvement

Ensuring that support for groups or individuals who might be vulnerable, finds its rightful place at the heart of whole school improvement

## **Key Principles of the District Strategy have included:**

A clear line of accountability which states expectations of the key stakeholders in improving the school, including the Head teacher and staff, the Governing body and the school improvement team linked to the school

An understanding that if schools do not make the expected progress the following actions are considered: the serving of a Warning Notice; introducing an Interim Executive Board; changes to the leadership structure; federation or amalgamation; or conversion to an academy

# The Specific Partnership Approach

## PLEASE NOTE:

We know, and are confident, that many Headteachers and their Governing Bodies know their school, their priorities and the action needed to make the improvements to drive up standards. The Specific Partnership Approach will acknowledge that and positively support by ensuring that the schools receive the resource they need to achieve their ambitions. In some cases this may not involve additional resource with the exception of the monitoring arrangements for school improvement.

# Differentiating the Kent Challenge; The criteria for identifying those schools involved in the Specific partnership approach

**DfE determined criteria for underperformance:**

**Floor Standards:** *(2011 Floor Standards may be subject to Change) (72)*

- *Schools currently below 60% Level 4+ English and Maths combined (2010 SATs)*
- *Schools below national median in terms of two levels of progress KS1 – 2 in English (87% in 2010)*
- *Schools below national median in terms of two levels of progress KS1 – 2 in Maths (86% in 2010)*
- *5 Years below the floor standard of 60% Level 4+ in English and Maths combined*

## Criteria

### **The most recent attainment and achievement data and trends over time**

- *Test and examination results are particularly volatile or are below the minimum levels of performance expected for all schools*
- *3 Year declining trend in attainment in core subjects at KS2 (Overall)*
- *3 year declining trend in value added in core subjects KS2 (Overall)*
- *3 Years below the floor Standard of 60% Level 4+ in English and Maths combined*
- *2 Years below the floor Standard of 60% Level 4+ in English and Maths combined*

# Criteria

## **External monitoring reports** (i.e. Ofsted inspections/LA commissioned reviews)

- *Current Ofsted Judgement for Overall effectiveness*
- *School that are satisfactory in previous two inspections (Grade 3 for the judgements against Leadership, Teaching)*
- *No aspect of the school's work was judged to be better than satisfactory at its last inspection*
- *Any significant issues brought to LAs attention, including safeguarding concerns and parental complaints.*
- *Behaviour : rates and patterns of permanent and fixed-period exclusions*
- *Attendance and punctuality : latest Ofsted / Schools judgement*
- *Exceptional Circumstances that could impact on school performance (recruitment issues / long-term illness / capability issues etc)*

# Key Elements of the Specific Partnership Approach

A 2 year partnership with intensive support from a Kent Challenge Adviser (KCA), and a tailored package aimed at raising standards and building capacity for sustained improvement. These packages will include Team Around the School where that is clearly the support required.

A further 2 year sustainability package that secures the rapid improvements.

Access to recognised and agreed resource quickly

An appreciation of the significant challenges that some schools face and a determination on the part of the LA, as part of the Kent Challenge, to reduce the socio economic barriers to learning where at all possible.

# Resources for the Specific Partnership Approach

Any funding allocation from the LA for the Specific Partnership Approach will be based on the audit of need and not on a formula basis. The LA will access central resource and will be able to commission resource from Edukent and external providers as identified in any agreed individual school plans.

There will be an expectation that all parties involved in the wider Kent Challenge, will use their best practice to develop the schools supporting schools network in their districts or areas.

The Improvement Plan, based on the statement of action format, where required and agreed with the school, will identify personnel, funding and activity that will be required to strengthen the schools capacity for sustained improvement.

In addition....

**A county-wide Leadership Strategy and Teaching and Learning Strategy led by school leaders for school leaders**

In addition and running alongside Kent Challenge we are currently developing a new leadership strategy. Over the next few months we will work with School Leaders to ensure we develop an innovative and effective new leadership strategy.

**A tailored package of support for 'students vulnerable to underachievement'**

Working in partnership with schools, we will identify barriers to learning for vulnerable learners in each district of the county and develop bespoke support programmes for them.

In addition....

## **Governance**

Kent Challenge will be overseen by a Challenge Board. The board will comprise representatives from the school sector, local authority elected members, school improvement advisers from both the County Council and the private sector, and expert advisers from the Department for Education.

## **Central Support**

We are currently reviewing the staffing structure we need to ensure that Kent Challenge can be delivered effectively. We will keep schools fully informed of any changes that might be made following this review.