

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 12 November 2009

AUDIT COMMISSION SCHOOL SURVEY 2009

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Strategic Priorities: Prosperous City; Healthy City; Safe City; Attractive and Inclusive City

Corporate Improvement Objectives:

C101 – Delivering customer focused services

C102 – Being 'One Council'

C103 – Efficient and effective Council

C104 – Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City'

1. WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 To provide Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee with a high level summary of the 2009 Audit Commission School Survey results.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This is the eighth year that Sunderland schools have completed the survey. Schools are invited to assess Sunderland Council's performance across a range of services for children and young people. The survey has been streamlined this year to provide a more focussed review of local services and to meet the needs of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- 2.2 The number of schools completing the survey continues to decline both in Sunderland and nationally. 29% (34) of schools completed the survey compared to 29% nationally. Of these, 3 were nursery schools, 24 primary schools, 4 secondary schools and 3 special schools. The responses were completed by headteachers in the main.
- 2.3 Questions are answered on a four point scale this year instead of five, which removes the ability to compare responses over time from previous years. Scores: 4 = Excellent, 3 = Good, 2 = Adequate, 1 = Poor. These individual school scores are then averaged to give an overall Sunderland score. For example, if all schools rated a particular survey question as Good, then Sunderland's score would be 3.00. If half the schools rated the council as Good and half as Adequate, the average response for that question would be 2.50.

- 2.4 The Audit Commission ranks each survey question across participating local authorities to create four benchmark groups. Please note that the benchmarks have been reversed this year, so 4 = top quartile (25% best performing local authorities nationally) and 1 = bottom quartile.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 4 questions on the survey are rated by schools as between good and excellent, 58 questions are rated between satisfactory and good, and 1 question rated between satisfactory and poor. See Appendix A for details.

- 3.2 The proportion of Sunderland survey questions in the top quartile has declined from 30% to 17% (representing 11 questions), 2008 to 2009. The proportion of questions in the top two quartiles has declined from 89% last year to 49% this year (representing 31 out of 63 questions). The proportion of responses in the bottom quartile has increased from 5% last year to 24% this year. The table below shows Sunderland's position over the last three years.

3.3 Sunderland's survey indicators by quartile band over the last three years

Proportion of Sunderland indicators in:	2007	2008	2009
1 – Top 25% of local authorities	24%	30%	17%
2 – Next 25% of local authorities	37%	59%	32%
3 – Next 25% of local authorities	30%	6%	27%
4 – Bottom 25% of local authorities	9%	5%	24%

Note: questions and scoring system were changed significantly in 2009

3.4 The following survey questions are in the top quartile this year:

- 2.1 Local services' safeguarding of children and young people and protecting them from harm and neglect
- 2.2 The training, advice and support on child protection provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board for designated members of staff and governors
- 2.3 Communication between the Local Safeguarding Children Board and schools
- 2.4 The guidance on when to make a child protection referral to the relevant service
- 5.1 The provision for 14-19 education in meeting local needs
- 5.2 The information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided by local services on options post-16
- 5.4 The provision of post-16 opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- 6.5 Your council's co-ordination of the admissions process

- 6.8 Your council's support in enabling you to be an effective purchaser or traded services, whether from the council or from external providers
- 6.13 Your council's support for promoting pupil attendance
- 6.21 The schools' forum

3.5 The following survey questions are in the bottom quartile this year:

- 1.6 Local services' support for promoting sexual health and reducing teenage pregnancies
- 3.1 Your council's support to develop self-management in your school
- 3.2 Your council's challenge to your school to perform better
- 3.7 The information you receive from your council about looked-after children in your school
- 3.8 The accessibility of the social workers responsible for the looked-after children in your school
- 3.9 Your council's support for meeting the needs of children and young people with English as an additional language
- 3.10 Your council's support for meeting the needs of children and young people from minority ethnic groups
- 3.11 Your council's support for meeting the needs of gifted and talented children and young people
- 3.12 The council's support for promoting sustainable development in schools
- 3.16 Local services' provision of appropriate formal and informal play areas
- 3.17 Local services' support for developing children's centres
- 4.1 Local services' support for children and young people to contribute positively to their local community and to the environment
- 6.3 Your council's communication with your school
- 6.12 Your council's behaviour support programmes
- 6.15 Your council's provision for pupils out of mainstream schools, including pupils who have been excluded

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Officers within Children's Services have considered the survey results in detail. It is important to recognise that the survey response reflects the views of schools and it is therefore important that in addressing issues that the survey raises, then discussions need to be held with schools to understand the results. 34 out of 115 schools responded to the survey and it is necessary to understand if the views are representative of most/all schools or if there are issues for some schools which are not shared by all schools. To enable an appropriate response 2 workshop sessions have been arranged for 10th and 12th November. Following these sessions, further focussed discussions will be held and a series of actions to respond to concerns will be implemented.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Members are requested to receive this report and note its contents and to agree to receive a further report following the detailed discussion with schools as appropriate.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 The attached Appendix A shows for each indicator:
- the average school score, where 4 = Excellent, 3 = Good, 2 = Satisfactory, 1 = Poor
 - The national quartile performance for each indicator, where 4 is top quartile (25% best performing local authorities nationally) and 1 is bottom quartile nationally.