

APPENDIX 4 – PLYMOUTH CHALLENGE UPDATE



Background

In February 2018 a Plymouth Challenge concept developed by the RSC office and the LA was presented to schools. It was well received and detailed action plans are now being formulated with many activities already in implementation along the themes of raising standards, leadership and aspiration. The work isn't directly funded and is led by schools

Following the first year of planning, the Challenge continues to develop with its three key work streams: raising standards, improving leadership and raising aspirations.

The coordination and governance of this work requires further development to maximise the impact of the three workstreams.

Three strands etc. launched February 2018 – much activity. Coordination and governance a challenge. Clear it is a school led project.

Update on work done by Plymouth Secondary schools towards Plymouth Challenge

Leadership Training: All 19 of the Plymouth Secondary schools are now involved in the SSIF2 (Strategic School Improvement Fund) project (via PTSA Plymouth Teaching Schools Alliance) which includes each school sending for training one or two middle or senior leaders in the NPQSL (National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders). Most schools have put 2 staff forwards for this and the one year training course is half way through completion. Staff have 3 face to face days and 3 weeks of after work on-line training and have to lead a whole school development project. In most cases in Plymouth these projects are aimed at improving the lot of disadvantaged students - in some cases also High Prior Attaining students - in some schools the focus is on boys within these groups in particular. Training is delivered by LSSW (Leading Schools South West). There will be a feedback conference to show case all of the work achieved later in the year. The NPQSL qualification is not a requirement for promotion to Senior Team leadership in schools but will be very helpful to the individuals in gaining interviews.

Education Development Trust (EDT) Peer Reviews: All 19 schools, along with some other Devon and Cornwall Secondaries have been matched in groups of 5 to undertake one day Peer Reviews of each others' schools. Many of these have now taken place - all will be by Easter. Heads and Deputies have been trained in how to undertake a Peer Review by EDT (Education Development Trust). We review in pairs and have a pre-meet then a one day review of a school, focusing on an issue that the Head of the Reviewed school has agreed in advance as being important to their development priority. Again most of the reviews focus on Disadvantaged students, High Prior Attainers, improvements in Teaching and Learning and/or the progress of boys in particular. After the Review an Improvement workshop is held with each school's leaders to focus on the findings of the review and how to implement the changes that the school decides to go ahead with. This project will be evaluated by PTSA later in the year and there is an external quality assurance process, led by National Leaders in Education, reported back to PTSA as part of the SSIF2 bid evaluation.

PLT meetings: PLT is Plymouth Learning Trust - the collective of Plymouth's Secondary schools Headteachers. A focus of every meeting this year and a standing agenda item is to discuss Plymouth Challenge. There are 6 full Board meetings per year and Plymouth Challenge progress is always discussed. There are additionally 6 PLT Executive meetings per year to which the Service Director for Education for PCC, DfE representatives and a representative each from Primary and Special

schools are invited for the first agenda item to specifically discuss Plymouth Challenge progress. The Executive of PLT involves 6 Headteachers, including 4 Headteachers who were originally on the Plymouth Challenge Steering Group so it has been expedient to adjust these meetings to enable the Steering Group to meet at this time. They offer a vehicle to pull the 3 strands of the Plymouth Challenge together and to consider external encouragement or pressure on Plymouth regarding Challenge from Ofsted, DfE, Ministers, Special Advisors etc.

Aspiration/Careers strand of Plymouth Challenge: a representative Headteacher from PLT Executive has joined with PCC officers and others to consider Careers and Aspiration development in the city's schools. There has been one initial meeting so far, with more dates planned.

The Raising Aspirations strand:

This strand of work is led by the Local Authority and is essentially, in four parts:

- Improving careers education, advice and guidance
- Developing contact between schools and a number of stakeholders so that a city wide 'conversation' on education becomes a regular feature of the discourse. This includes a communication strand aimed at residents in order to engage them in the conversation and present positive stories about education as well as the challenges
- Increasing the opportunities for employers and partners to support young people
- Reaching into communities to support engagement and opportunities for family learning

A steering group for the raising aspirations strand has been established and is being led by the LA. Terms of Reference have been written and agreed and an action plan is being produced. The communication and careers work started in October 2018.

Regarding the careers element, it has been decided by the steering group that the Raising Aspirations Strand will concentrate on promoting the use of the 'Gatsby Benchmarks' in schools (these are features defining world class career guidance.) A workshop for senior leaders in schools to support the delivery of world class careers education is being organised together with increasing the involvement of employers in the development of the school curriculum. An Enterprise Co-ordinator is in place who will help schools develop their careers offer to pupils and students.

One school is systematically exploring how to raise aspirations amongst disadvantaged pupils and will bring their findings back to the group to help inform the future actions of the group. The steering group is also reaching out to colleagues in other Career Hubs to share their experiences of developing careers education in their schools and academies. It has been agreed that looking beyond the city for good practice is critical.

The communications team in the Council have prepared an offer of training to communication officers in schools as a means of improving the flow of information from schools to the wider community. Advice has already been sent to all schools concerning the effective use of social media and in addition, there is an opportunity for schools to share good news stories as well as useful information with pupils, parents and the wider community through the Council's Facebook page. A calendar of key events have been identified and this will be used to give out and receive information and messages concerning developments and key events e.g. British Science Week, mock exam dates and the dates when school results are published during the summer.

Training for Senior School Leaders on careers leadership in schools has been arranged for 29 March 2019.

Summary

This is work in development and the office of the RSC have aligned resource to support the coordination of all three strands of the Challenge. This is critical to ensure that resources are used as well as possible and the impact can be measured. In addition the LA have begun work on a diagnostic to support better understanding of the underlying causes of underperformance and the characteristics of the city. The Head Teachers, through the Plymouth Learning Trust, plan to bring forward a costed action plan at the next Plymouth Education Board Meeting to facilitate the continuing work of the Challenge.