

PLYMOUTH CHALLENGE UPDATE

Education Participation and Skills



1. Raising Standards and Leadership

The secondary schools of Plymouth have continued to engage in the Education Development Trust (EDT) Peer mentoring programme scheme this year set up via the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA) Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) 2 bid. Preparations for the second round of peer mentoring for the next academic year are well underway and a recent meeting arranged by PTSA saw cluster groups setting up their themes for next year.

The Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office have resourced time from a well-regarded National Leader in Education from the Teaching Schools Council to visit and support several Plymouth schools since January. He has visited schools for a day, given advice and has written bids for funding to support some schools in the city. He has begun the next round of meetings with new schools added to his portfolio by RSC office. He met early in 2019 with Stoke Damerel, Tor Bridge, Eggbuckland and Plympton, (schools that make up the STEP Alliance). He was able to offer some financial support and guidance to this emerging alliance. In addition he has also brokered support for Lipson who now have an NLE as their acting headteacher (Martin Brook). He wrote a successful bid that has supported All Saints Academy to develop further in the spring term. He also visited Plymouth School of Creative Arts (PSCA), St Boniface, Sir John Hunt and Notre Dame in the summer term and is considering next steps to broker support for St Boniface during this summer. He has not yet visited or supported all schools but has a priority list and has been re-commissioned for the academic year 2019-20.

The subject hubs arranged via PTSA for secondary schools have been adjusted this term as new alliances have been formed: also some Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in the city have focused more on internal improvement within their MATs than externally in the wider system for school improvement and professional development. PTSA continue to lead some subject hubs for next year which will now have the acronym SISC (Subject InspirEd School Communities). These are being led by Devonport High School Boys with PTSA and a smaller group of 7 schools who remain committed to the subject hubs and a joint training day in October (InspireEd). These 7 schools are Devonport High School for Boys, Plymouth High School for Girls, Devonport High School for Girls, Notre Dame, St Boniface, PSCA and Tor Bridge.

During the summer term the DFE also arranged for some education events to take place: the 'Education Series.' These are designed to be events for all Plymouth schools to hear from system leaders, Ofsted, the RSC and keynote speakers drawn from the field of national experts. Two have taken place and whilst the Minister for School Standards had to cancel his appearance, other speakers have been well received. The Council have spoken at each event too and are now working with the RSC office to design the series for 19/20.

2. Aspiration

The LA continue to develop the Aspiration strand with the main update being the work done on the Careers and Enterprise hub and summer programme of STEM activities. Fifteen secondary schools now have Enterprise Advisers who work with the schools to develop robust and inspiring careers information and activities. We can see for example schools improving their Gatsby benchmark scores, creating careers libraries, working more closely with employers in the school and student mentoring.

3. Next steps

The GCSE results for the city are not yet known at the time of writing. Schools acknowledge that results across the city may not rise significantly this year with many school leaders newly in role and several schools struggling to rise from a low baseline. With regard to the Plymouth Challenge, the medium term challenge remains sustainable funding for improvement activity and evaluation of 'what works'. The longer term system design work is gradually building capacity but is not a 'quick fix'. All schools are engaging in an improvement agenda but there is no collective view of the Challenge or mandate to create one.

The LA continues to work with the RSC office, the Teaching School Council and the DFE to establish better coordination.