

Our Ref: SW/CO
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Dear Headteacher and Chair of Governors

Suffolk Key Stage 2 Performance

You will by now be aware of the position that Suffolk is in following the release of the national Key Stage 2 results and league tables last week. I am sure you will agree that to be ranked third from bottom nationally for attainment and fourth from bottom for progress is not a good place to be.

It is not our 'worst performing' schools (or pupils) that need to make a step change in performance. Last year those schools below floor improved more quickly than other schools and the attainment gap between our lowest quartile of pupils and the average actually narrowed. The real issue in Suffolk is that the majority of schools, regardless of their attainment level, were below the national median for two levels of progress. The other lesson from the national league tables was that even though we improved at the same rate as the national average, we were overtaken by other comparatively low performing areas. They were acting with more urgency and determination than Suffolk.

Only 30 schools with Key Stage 2 results were at or above the national median for two levels progress in both English and maths. All other schools are currently unable to ensure that sufficient numbers of pupils make the minimum expected progress from Key Stage 1. This is disappointing as there have also been some stunning improvements in schools where the Governing Body and Headteachers have had a relentless and rigorous approach to school self evaluation and used this to drive up standards.

It is important that you are aware of the seven key actions we plan to take immediately:

1. Undertake a detailed analysis of each school's performance data against the national standards. Letters will be sent to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors where the rates of progress are lower than would be expected.
2. Where there are serious concerns we will need to hold individual meetings with schools to discuss their plans for improvement and will be requesting that the Headteacher and Chair of Governors attends a meeting in January. This meeting will be with Sally Rundell, Assistant Director for Learning and Improvement, the Interim Director of Children's services Allan Cadzow and Graham Newman, Cabinet lead for CYP, and will be held at Endeavour House, Ipswich.
3. Provide to schools of concern a direct link to a headteacher from an improving school. Twenty headteachers have offered this support through the Raising the Bar Families of Schools work.

4. Provide to all schools at the January Headteacher and Chair of Governor briefings, a toolkit of school improvement resources that we have drawn from in the highly successful targeted support to schools which have been proven to raise standards and rates of progress.
5. Ensure that all Governing bodies focus their spring term meeting on the key agenda of raising attainment and discuss their position against national progress schools and the strategies they will ensure are in place. This will be a key focus at the briefings.
6. Promote a culture of 'challenging' professional dialogue between Headteachers at termly meetings which will be led by Headteachers for Headteachers
7. Work with the Department for Education (DfE) to find appropriate academy solutions for schools 'below floor' or in Ofsted categories.

On a more positive note we are clear that the schools that have seen the greatest and most rapid improvements, including those schools targeted for support from the Learning and Improvement Service, have focused on the following five areas that have led to this impact:

- High expectations for all children: two levels of progress is expected as a minimum
- Headteachers and teachers tracking pupil progress half termly and acting on slippage
- Rigorous performance management with all teachers held accountable for pupil progress
- A close focus on classroom practice and the quality of teaching and learning with support provided to teachers for rapid improvement
- Engaging parents with a clear emphasis on supporting their child's learning

We know these strategies work and want to ensure that every school has access to schools and resources that bring about rapid improvement. I am sure that by working together in partnership, we can build on the good practice generated from successful schools.

The County Council's Raising the Bar programme has ensured improving attainment is now the County Council's number one priority. Raising attainment is seen as everybody's business. It will take the efforts of the whole community of Suffolk to improve the current position.

You are no doubt aware, both SCC's Leader, and the Cabinet Member for Education & Young People are very concerned about the weaknesses this year's Key Stage 2 results have exposed, and are fully supportive of all the action we are now seeking to put into place.

Many thanks for your ongoing support.



Deborah Cadman
Chief Executive



Allan Cadzow
Interim Director for CYP