

Lancashire School Networks – a Vision

Currently, the needs of majority of pupils across the majority of schools in Lancashire are met successfully by schools and settings. This is not the case, however, for a number of vulnerable pupil groups. Depending upon school location, context and existing network links, some headteachers are able to access the support they need to tackle underlying issues, but others are not – a postcode lottery.

It might be helpful to think of the proposed new structures and ways of working in Lancashire as a vehicle to allow formal, transparent communication between schools and services across the local authority and wider services (such as health); providing headteachers with the 'levers' to access, influence and inform the strategic and targeted deployment of resources within the local authority and the wider services.

The following simple example is offered as an illustration of how this might work out in practice...

The data profile for School Network A shows that test and exam results are below average across all Key Stages and key subjects, with notably high absence and exclusion rates. All network partners explored the notion of a more coherent support plan for children and families which considered all aspects of a child's life, not just those within the direct control of schools, discussing ways to work jointly to try to address underlying causes rather than just tackling the consequences we see played out. Headteachers in the network identify parental engagement and child and adult mental health as key underlying causes, expressing concern about the availability of external support to address this.

The issue is agreed as a priority for the School Network and is fed to the Locality Board. The Locality Board notes similar priorities coming from three of their associated School Networks and explores with Early Help, Health, CSC and local special schools what support is currently in place, what might be available and whether there are any specific barriers or capacity issues.

At the meeting of the Lancashire Education Partnership Board (LEPB) the same priority is identified by three of the five Locality Boards, so there is a change of the deployment of support from across Lancashire to prioritise the identified localities. Working with school leaders, a multi-agency strategy is developed and key indicators agreed in order to monitor the effectiveness of the new approaches.

During the implementation of the strategy, headteachers in School Network A express concerns over a lack of apparent engagement from a local academy which is part of a large MAT; this is communicated to the LEPB and the Regional Schools Commissioner works with the MAT to ensure the school is fully involved. There is also limited engagement from a maintained school; this is communicated to LEPB and the senior adviser/network facilitator works with the school to seek higher engagement.

Alongside this, three primary schools in Network A identify a significant issue where children's literacy development is a barrier to learning; the three schools agree to work together to address this. Another school in the same network has seen strong

improvement in children's literacy in recent years and agrees to work with the schools in this project to share their learning; the secondary schools in the network also ask to join the group in order to see how they might be able to support continuity for pupils transferring into Year 7, as they recognise the same issue. The schools also explore drawing in potential expertise from SLEs and the English Hub.

Advisers working with the School Networks note that around 100 primary schools identify the same concern over children's early literacy, so they work with the BBL sub-regional network to address this using evidence based approaches through a school led partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation and the Research School Network. This reflects concerns with early speech and language development identified by Virgin Care, who respond by training all of their staff to ensure a common baseline of skills and knowledge to use in support of parents and nurseries to better prepare children for school readiness.

Note: the above is totally separate to, and runs alongside, the advisory School Service Guarantee to support individual schools. The intelligence that advisers have about schools is used to inform the identification and deployment of school to school support.