The Strategic Director of Children, Families and Adults’ Report to School Governing Bodies

Summer Term 2013

Publication date: 2nd May 2013

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All the documents and links referenced in this report are available on the governor webpages at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/governors
Welcome to the summer term report, which is my last as Strategic Director of Children, Families and Adults, as I will be moving to take up the position of Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning during the course of this term. As you may be aware, the Council is currently restructuring its senior leadership, and as far as work with children and adult services is concerned several key appointments have now been confirmed. Tony Crane, currently Deputy Director of Children’s Services, succeeds me as Director, whilst Nigel Moorhouse becomes Head of Early Intervention and Prevention and Brenda Smith, Director of Adult Social Care and Independent Living. Tony Crane retains responsibility for the Local Authority’s statutory duties in relation to schools and standards.

Clearly the Local Authority’s role around schools is changing, but we retain an absolute commitment to work with head teachers and governors to drive improved learning outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East. The developing education partnership to which I refer below reflects this determination.

Work is underway to progress the next phase and details of the next round of appointments as they affect schools will be communicated to you during the course of this term. It is anticipated also that a new Chief Executive will take up post in June following a recent national recruitment process. At the time of writing this awaits confirmation by the full Council. As you would expect, I am keen that next stages of the management review should secure the management talent that we have in our combined Directorate and will do all that I can to ensure that that happens.

Finally, I am keen also to build upon the very positive achievements of the combined Directorate over the last 18 months and am very much wanting to ensure that while my former role is once again separated into 2 roles that we don’t lose the synergies of joint working and learning. I know Tony and Brenda are also keen to build upon that positive learning going forward.

Within the Council we still have some way to go in our improvement journey, while also navigating the landscape of local government which is transforming before our eyes. Included in this report is a summary of the issues that we are now working on, following Ofsted’s March unannounced inspection of our arrangements for the protection of children.

I am also conscious that there has been a great deal of discussion and debate around school funding, including the revisions to Special Needs Funding. I have written to all chairs of governors and head teachers to explain the background and detail to the changes now agreed, which followed extensive consultation and discussion, especially with the schools forum, and also with the Department for Education. My letter, and an associated DfE briefing overview of school funding, may be accessed on the school governance webpages (www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/governors).

I would also draw your attention to the Schools Forum website (there is link from the governor webpages) which provides further information about the Forum and the agendas and papers for meetings.

Please look out for further information about our developing education partnership strategic board, which is designed to act as a forum for key stakeholders to influence, promote and develop the effectiveness of school to school support, taking account of key national policy developments, with a view to ensuring
children and young people have access to the highest quality of provision. Further information will be shared during the course of the term.

As I progress into my new role I would like to thank governors for your hard work and support. There can be no doubt that there is a new and sharpened focus on the critical importance of effective governance in ensuring schools and academies provide the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

My best wishes for the term ahead,

Best wishes

Lorraine Butcher
Strategic Director: Children’s, Families and Adults Directorate

If you have any concerns about a child contact the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) on ☎ 0300 1235012 (option 2)
☎ 0300 1235022 – Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours)
✉ checs@cheshireeast.gov.uk
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/checs

Cheshire East's multi-agency Child Protection Procedures can be found at www.online-procedures.co.uk/cheshireeast
This includes a Search engine allowing quick access to information on any safeguarding issue from local and national sources.
Cheshire East Local Safeguarding Children Board has its own website at www.cheshireeastlscb.org.uk

Governing bodies may wish to consider making arrangements to e-mail copies of the report to all their governors, to facilitate the discussion of relevant items at committee, or to enable them to be dealt with by the appropriate designated governor prior to the full Governing Body meeting, particularly if the meeting is to be held later in the school term.
2. Governance and Liaison Update

Andy Kent, Liaison Manager, Schools, Settings and Services
☎ 01606 275078 ✉ andrew.kent@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Ruth Agnew, Principal Officer, Governance and Liaison Service
☎ 01606 275079, ✉ ruth.agnew@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Governance and Liaison Team ☎ 0300 123 5036, ✉ schoolgovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk

New Procedures Regulations

The government has recently consulted on new regulations, which will replace the School Governance (England) (Procedures) Regulations 2003, the Education (School Government) (Terms of Reference) (England) Regulations 2000 and the Education (Governors’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The School Governance (Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 will come into force on 1st September. The final wording of the regulations are not available at the time of writing, but the main practical change is that governing bodies will be able to determine that governors are able to “attend” meetings and vote, virtually, e.g. via video conference. This is something that is already allowable for academy governing bodies. The wording of the draft regulations was that: “the governing body may approve alternative arrangements for governors to participate or vote at meetings of the governing body including but not limited to by telephone or video conference”. We will be issuing guidance once the final wording of the regulations is available.

National Leaders of Governance – New Recruitment Round

Andy Kent was designated a National Leader in the third recruitment round in April. This mean that we now have three Cheshire East chairs (Jackie Thorp, Middlewich Primary, Sally Stedman, Gorsey Bank and Richard Hinkley, Congleton High School) as well as both Andy and Ruth who have been designated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (the new name for the National College) as system leaders to support other schools. The next recruitment round is expected to open in June, with a closing date in late September. Further details of what the role involves can be found on the Department for Education website.

If you are interested in possibly applying in the next recruitment round please note that Andy and Ruth are running an information session for governors in the Merseyside and Cheshire region on Tuesday 21st May, 1.30-3.30pm at the Stobart Stadium, Halton. This session is free to any governor regardless of whether your school purchases governor support. To express an interest email schoolgovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

New partnership with the NGA

Following a full procurement exercise, from the beginning of next term we will no longer be providing access to Ten Governor Support via our ChESS Agreement (Cheshire East
Services to Schools). Instead we will be working more closely with the National Governors’ Association and enhancing your existing membership to include benefits similar to those which we had formerly purchased separately from Ten Governor.

This means that those of you who are users of Ten Governor will not be able to use your existing accounts from 1st September. I understand from Ten that they will be contacting / have already contacted schools to offer individual school membership directly. Any school choosing to purchase this should be aware that this will be at an additional cost, over and above what is being paid for Cheshire East support.

Instead of directing questions to Ten, from September governors should direct their questions to the National Governors’ Association either by email to glp@nga.org.uk or by telephone on 0121 237 3782. The new arrangements also extend the previous membership benefits to include a hard copy of the NGA bi-monthly magazine to the home address of every governor, additional places at NGA events and conferences. At the time of writing it is anticipated that the next NGA conference in the north west will be in Liverpool on Saturday 5th October 2013. Purchasing governing bodies will have three free places at this or other NGA events. Further information will be circulated when available.

The new arrangements have enabled the Governor and Liaison team to reduce the cost of the governor development and training agreement for next academic year.

Performance Related Pay for Teachers

The School Teacher’s Pay and Conditions Document has now been amended (in draft form) to reflect the recommendations of the School Teachers’ Review Body’s (STRB) 21st Report and. The report recommends giving schools more freedom and flexibility in a number of areas. The main STRB recommendations are:

- linking all pay progression to performance;
- removing automatic progression based on time-served;
- giving schools the option of awarding differential pay progression based on performance;
- giving schools more scope to pay high performers more;
- replacing the current threshold test for progression from the main to the upper pay scale with simple criteria; and
- allowing more discretion for schools in the use of allowances for recruitment and retention and time-limited Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments (TLRs) for specific projects.

Further advice will be available during the autumn term.

Governors’ Forum Date

The summer term governors’ forum will take place on Wednesday 26th June at the Chimney House Hotel, Sandbach, with sandwiches available from 6.30pm for a 7pm start. This event is free to all governors, but please email schoolgovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk to confirm your place.
Chairs’ Leadership Development Programme

We continue to deliver the Chairs’ Leadership Development programme under licence from the National College. Cheshire East is the lead licensee working within a partnership called the Governors’ Network North West (GNNW). Details of forthcoming units are available on the GNNW website at www.gnnw.org.uk.

Ofsted Documentation Republished (again)

All the key Ofsted inspection documents were republished in January and/or February and then again in April. The main change for the inspection of governance in February was that the subsidiary guidance for inspectors introduced the instruction that: “inspectors should meet with as many governors during an inspection as is possible”. This has not been explicitly stated in the past, though will obviously still be subject to governors’ availability. The April version added this sentence “governors are not expected to undertake lesson observations, unless the school has clear protocols for visits so their purposes are understood by school staff and governors alike”.

Both new versions added information about external reviews of governance. The guidance now states that: “where governance is ineffective in a school judged as ‘requires improvement’ and is graded three for leadership and management, inspectors should include an external review of governance in their recommendations for improvement”. The previous guidance said that ‘inspectors may’ make such a recommendation. This makes it increasingly likely that schools judged as ‘requiring improvement’ will have the recommendation made that they should commission an external review of the governing body, and there is a growing market in providers offering such reviews, including Cheshire East governor services. The cost of this will fall to the school.

Both Andy Kent and Ruth Agnew have been trained by the National College for Teaching and Leadership in undertaking such reviews and Ruth has conducted reviews on the College’s behalf during the Ofsted pilot. Reviews of the governing body can now be commissioned from the Local Authority. Email schoolgovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk for more information.

For reference the whole of the section on inspecting governance from Ofsted’s Subsidiary Guidance for Inspecting Maintained Schools and Academies, from September 2012, republished on 8th April 2013, is reproduced below (updates in bold):

75. Inspectors will increasingly encounter different models of governance, such as those associated with federated arrangements, free schools and academy chains.

76. Whatever the mode of governance, inspectors must evaluate the extent to which governors both challenge and support the school and hold senior staff, including the headteacher, to account for the achievement of the pupils. Governors are not expected to be routinely involved in the day-to-day activity of the school. Governors are not expected to undertake lesson observations, unless the school has clear protocols for visits so their purposes are understood by school staff and governors alike (see reference). However,
they hold important strategic responsibilities for the development and improvement of the school. (The reference is to School Governance: Learning from the Best, an Ofsted best practice guide, published in May 2011).

77. Inspectors should meet with as many governors during an inspection as is possible, and should determine how well governing bodies evaluate the performance of the school, particularly in terms of: pupil progress; the leadership of teaching; the management of staff; and the difference made by initiatives such as the pupil premium or the Year 7 catch-up premium.

78. Inspectors should consider whether governors:
- carry out their statutory duties
- understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the quality of teaching
- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- understand and take sufficient account of pupil data, particularly their understanding and use of the school data dashboard
- are aware of the impact of teaching on learning and progress in different subjects and year groups
- are challenging and supporting leadership in equal measure
- are providing support for an effective headteacher, or whether they are hindering school improvement by not successfully tackling key concerns
- understand how the school makes decisions about teachers’ salary progression
- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- are failing to perform well and contributing to weaknesses in leadership and management.

79. Inspectors should also satisfy themselves that the governing body is ensuring that the school’s finances are properly managed, and investigate governors’ role in deciding how the school is using the Pupil Premium.

80. If inspection evidence reveals particular weaknesses, these should be followed up assiduously. For example, if safeguarding arrangements do not meet required standards, inspectors must take this into account when evaluating governance and judging leadership and management. Similarly, if pupils’ performance is in decline and the governing body has not pursued this issue effectively with the headteacher, this should be reflected in inspectors’ evaluation of the effectiveness of the governing body and may have an impact on the leadership and management judgment.

Schools judged as ‘requires improvement’

81. Where governance is ineffective in a school judged as ‘requires improvement’ and is graded three for leadership and management, inspectors should include an external review of governance in their recommendations for improvement. The form of words to be used in the report under What the school should do to
improve further is “An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved”.

It is for the school to decide how this review will take place, and to commission and pay for it. Such reviews aim to be developmental, and do not represent a further inspection. Full details on what might be the form and nature of such reviews can be found on the following link: http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/review-of-governance

82. In addition, when HMI conduct monitoring visits to schools judged as ‘requires improvement’ where the section 5 inspection was AI-led, HMI may judge that such schools may warrant an external review of governance. In such circumstances, the monitoring HMI should raise this matter with the school at the feedback session and refer to it in the monitoring visit letter, through reference to the evidence that led the inspector to recommend a review.

Schools placed in categories of concern

83. Where leadership and management is found to be inadequate and governance is weak or failing, Ofsted will write to the responsible authority (for example, the local authority, an academy organisation, the Department for Education, or a diocese) to draw the issue to their attention. In such cases, inspectors must include a statement that Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school, under “What the school should do to improve further”. Inspectors should also consider that, when writing to the responsible authority, the recommendations for actions could also include an external review of governance. It will be for the school to commission and pay for the external review.

There is a link to the full guidance and other inspection documentation at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/governors.

For further information:
Contacts: Andy Kent / Ruth Agnew
andrew.kent@cheshireeast.gov.uk
ruth.agnew@cheshireeast.gov.uk
www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/governors
www.gnnw.org.uk
www.governorslearningpartnership.com

Recommendations for Governors...
- Please note the above information and consider the implications for you and your school
- Note the new arrangements with the National Governors’ Association from 1st September
3. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children March 2013

Karen Porter, Safeguarding Children in Education Manager
☎ 01270 375228  karen.porter@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Jenny Crowther, Local Authority Designated Officer
☎ 01606 288931  jenny.crowther@cheshireeast.gov.uk

The revised “Working together to safeguard children” guidance (published March 2013) is a response to Professor Eileen Munro’s report “A child-centred system”; it clarifies the requirements on individuals and organisations to keep children safe and emphasises that safeguarding is the responsibility of all professionals who work with children. It strengthens the focus away from processes and onto the needs of the child.

Sections 175 and 157 of the Education Act 2002 place a duty on governing bodies to exercise their functions with a view to “safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children” who are pupils or students under 18 years of age. In order to fulfil their duty schools and colleges should have regard to specific guidance namely, “Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education” and “Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff”.

All schools should have in place:

- a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;
- arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);
- a designated professional lead for safeguarding with an explicitly defined job description. Their role is to support other professionals in their educational setting to recognise the needs of children, including rescue from possible abuse or neglect. Professionals should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities;
- safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the school will permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check;
- appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training;
- a way of ensuring that staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role;
• mandatory induction for all staff, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed;
• regular reviews of practice to ensure this improves over time;
• clear policies, in line with those from the LSCB, for dealing with allegations against people who work with children.

In addition the guidance says that:
• there should be a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. In Cheshire East the LADO is Jenny Crowther. The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process;
• if an organisation removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work such as looking after children (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organisation must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It is an offence to fail to make a referral without good reason.

The current arrangements will continue to be followed regarding allegations of abuse against adults who work with children.

The revised guidance came into effect on 15\textsuperscript{th} April 2013.

For the avoidance of doubt it is not an expectation that all governors have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (these have now replaced CRB checks) unless they have regular contact with children in which case they would be checked in line with other volunteers.

Neither is it an expectation that school staff members are re-checked on a three-yearly basis.

For further information:

Contacts Karen Porter, Safeguarding Children in Education Manager Karen.porter@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Jenny Crowther, Local Authority Designated Officer Jenny.Crowther@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Recommendations for Governors...

• Read the report in full: http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory “Working together to safeguard children” guidance
• Read “Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education” and “Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff”.

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4. Finance Update
Angela Roberts, Schools Finance
☎ 01625 374774 ✉ angela.roberts@cheshireeast.gov.uk

2013-14 Deficit Budget Applications
The Cheshire East Scheme for Financing Schools requires governing bodies to seek approval from the Director of Children’s Services to set a deficit budget. Local Authorities are unable to write off school deficits. Schools seeking approval will need to complete an application form and submit to Angela Roberts, Schools Finance Team Leader angela.roberts@cheshireeast.gov.uk. The deadline for applications is Friday 12th July 2013.

All schools with a deficit budget will need to make an application. This includes those schools which had been granted approval in previous years who will need to make a new application. This is due to the major changes in the funding formula which will have impacted on future year budget forecasts and expenditure plans.

The application form can be found at the Schools Finance Team CEntranet (site Cheshire East’s intranet). While governors will not have direct access to this resource, the form should be made available by the school where this is necessary.

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)
The Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) has been available for schools to use from September 2011. The SFVS was designed in conjunction with schools to assist them in managing their finances and to give assurance that they have secure financial management in place. Governing bodies have formal responsibility for the financial management of their schools, and so the standard is primarily aimed at governors.

Local authority (LA) maintained schools are required to complete the SFVS once a year. For all schools the first submission of the self assessment questionnaire was required by March 2013. All eligible schools made a submission. Once the questionnaire is submitted by a school it is assessed and schools are informed of the outcome.

The assessment outcomes were based against three criteria. The number of schools who reached each of the criteria is recorded below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assurance Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Assurance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Assurance</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory Assurance</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Local Authority Chief Finance Officers are required to submit an annual assurance statement to the Department of Education (DfE). The statement provides information on
the number of submissions made and confirms that a system of audit which gives adequate assurance over the standards of financial management and the regularity and propriety of spending is in place.

**Internal Audit – Schools Financial Audit Regime**

An internal risk assessment of all schools will be undertaken based on the following:
- The deficit / surplus of the school
- The Ofsted rating of the school
- Internal information from schools finance

From this a sample of 9 schools to be audited will be selected, who will receive the audit, at a cost to the authority, and will each receive a final audit report directed to the school / governing body.

Results of the authority’s audit programme will feed back to all schools in the form of an annual schools financial audit summary in order to share both good practice and advice on improvements that may be needed. The format and regularity of this is to be decided.

**Schools Finance Team – Commissioned Audits and Monitoring of SFVS Returns**

At the same time, the Authority will offer a commissioned audit to all schools which will be undertaken using a similar programme as the non-commissioned audits.

Internal audit will additionally review the work of the commissioned audits in order to determine whether this would provide additional assurance.

The assurance Statement will be signed by Rachel Musson, Interim Chief Operating Officer and submitted to the DfE by the deadline of 31st May 2013.

**The position as at 31st March 2013 is as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Nursery</th>
<th>PRUs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of eligible schools in LA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of eligible schools completed the SFVS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of eligible schools that did not complete the SFVS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2 schools which did not complete had already been issued with academy orders.

The Schools Finance Team will continue to provide support and advice to governors along with co-ordinating and assessing ongoing submissions made by the schools.

**For further information:**

Contact: Angela Roberts
angela.roberts@cheshireeast.gov.uk

**Recommendations for Governors...**
- Regularly review the SFVS submission
- Note the audit findings in identified schools
Governors may be aware that the report of the recent Cheshire East inspection into its arrangement for the protection of children have now been published and, while the report highlights a range of positive developments, it concludes with an overall judgement of inadequate.

Whilst the inspection identified there were no children or young people where immediate action was needed to protect them from significant harm, it is accepted that, in a small number of cases, delays in the Local Authority’s (LA’s) response resulted in the potential for risk.

The new inspection framework, which is a significantly harder test, has resulted in a number of LAs falling short of the mark. This is borne out by the fact that some services were recognised as providing consistently good support and this contributed to a judgement of adequate for the effectiveness of help and protection. There was also an adequate judgement in regard to leadership and governance. However Cheshire East did fall short, albeit against a tougher inspection, in the quality of practice and this judgement was enough to give an overall rating of inadequate.

The following identifies the positive areas inspectors found:

- When children are at risk of immediate harm, quick action is taken with the help of other services to make sure they are protected.
- When children and their families need help at an early stage, the council and other organisations work well together to support them to make life their lives better. Children’s centres, family centres, schools and other local services give good advice and help to parents who are having difficulties in looking after their children.
- Early help and support to older children and young people is generally good and so fewer young people are involved in anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhoods or are getting into trouble with the police, and school attendance and behaviour is getting better. If a child or young person goes missing, local services and the police have good systems in place to make sure they return home safely.
- Social workers, family service workers and other staff who work with children and their families receive regular and effective training and support so that they can do their job well and ensure children are safe.
- Good joint working between the council and lots of different services makes sure that support is available and in many instances this prevents problems from getting worse.
All the agencies work well together to make sure that children and young people who have a child protection plan are helped and that they are safe.

And in turn areas for improvement:

- The council has done a lot of work to make services better in order to keep children safe but sometimes progress has been too slow and could be faster.
- Some cases of children who were at possibly risk of harm were not always considered carefully enough when they were referred to social workers. This meant that sometimes decisions and actions to find out more about their situations were not taken at all or not taken quickly enough.
- Some children in need plans that describe how children are to be helped and supported are not clear or checked well enough. Also not all children who have these plans are visited regularly to check that they are well and that they are safe.
- Children, young people and their families are not always asked about their views or opinions. This makes it harder for the council to know how to improve services to make sure children are getting the services they need.
- The ways in which managers check that work is being done and written down properly varies a lot and need improving.
- The council and other agencies need to think carefully about the different communities living in Cheshire East and make sure that children from all these groups are supported by services that understand their needs.

Schools will be aware that we had recognised our need for improvement and a number of plans and actions had already been agreed. This includes a recruitment and retention strategy to attract the best social work managers and front line workers. This has resulted in the recruitment of a new experienced Head of Social Care, a new Principal Social Worker to drive improvements in practice and standards and a number of experienced social workers.

The vast majority of recommended actions from the inspection have been in train for quite some time and a significant number are already complete. For example we have planned together over a number of months the design of Cheshire East Consultation Service - a new service which will handle all contacts for children’s services. This went live on 22nd April and will address a number of the issues raised in the inspection report. A single improvement plan will drive and challenge the pace of change moving forward and more detailed feedback will be given at the next LSCB and Children’s Trust meetings.

Finally, we need to continue working together to fulfil our ambition to provide outstanding services to local children and young people.

For further information:

Contact: Lorraine Butcher
lorraine.butcher@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Recommendations for Governors...
This item is for information only.
Cheshire East Services for Schools (ChESS) is the name for the new on-line system via which schools can purchase Local Authority services for the next academic year. ChESS 2013/14 went live in March and schools and academies have the opportunity to purchase over 100 individual service offers. Services are offered through subscription or on a pay-as-you-use basis. It is intended that all services offered to schools and academies will be included within this system.

Under the fair-funding proposals and best-value principles, governing bodies are responsible for deciding how the services are provided in their school. While governors will not have direct access to the system it is important that they discuss with their head teachers the services that are on offer and the costs, and have a role in deciding the services schools purchase.

As part of its response to the changing educational landscape and its increasing role as a commissioner of services, the Local Authority is currently exploring options which will allow it to trade services through a more business-focused approach that offers increased value-for-money to schools. It is important to ensure that services provided by Cheshire East Council are highly competitive and rightly-costed and that schools and academies, who are stakeholders as well as customers, have a say in how those services are shaped in the future. The establishment of a strategic governance board is a key step towards promoting a structured decision-making system where direct evidence from schools is used to influence new procedures.

The proposed timeline below provides information for schools on the arrangements for purchasing services for the next academic year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cheshire East Services for Schools (ChESS) Timeline.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17th May 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For further information:**

**Contact:** Bev Davies  
bev.davies@cheshireeast.gov.uk  

If you have any queries regarding this timeline or the ChESS system please contact  
Ben Jones at  
ben.jones@cheshireeast.gov.uk

**Recommendations for Governors...**

- Note the arrangements for purchasing LA services for 2013/14
- Ensure governors have agreed the services to be purchased
Phase one of the new Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) went live on Monday 22nd April 2013.

What is it?
ChECS is a new service that will handle all initial contact with Children and Families Services regardless of the level of need of the child or family being called about. The service will be staffed by qualified and experienced Social Workers and Practitioner Support Officers who will be able to give advice about cases across the levels of need.

When is it happening?
From 22nd April 2013 all incoming calls have gone through ChECS.

Why is the council doing it?
The Cheshire East Consultation Service is intended to increase the support to all professionals working with children and families across the Children’s Trust workforce, ensuring that early help and support is available to children and families and that they receive the right help at the right time.

How is this different?
The key features of this new approach are a system:
- able to deal with all levels of enquiry without passing callers around;
- where forms come secondary to discussions with professionals; and
- where feedback on consultations & referrals to referrers is fundamental to the working of a multi-agency system.

If a member of schools staff has concerns about a child, they should continue to follow the school’s safeguarding procedures. If further support is required, they should discuss their concerns with one of the qualified and experienced Social Workers or Practitioner Support Officers from the ChECS service. For more information and contact details access the ChECS website.

For further information:
Contact: Gill Betton
gill.betton@cheshireeast.gov.uk
The ChECS webpages at
http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/education_and_learning/checs.aspx

Recommendations for Governors...
Ensure that staff are familiar with the new arrangements.
Latest news and developments

Thank you to all schools for the support that they give to Cared for Children within Cheshire East. Governors play a key role in ensuring that schools are giving the appropriate support and accessing training, to ensure that this vulnerable group of children continues to be well supported.

Pupil Premium

Governors will be aware pupil premium for Cared for Children has increased to £900 for this financial year and that funding will be in schools’ budgets. Designated Teachers should report regularly to governing bodies on how this funding has been spent and the impact as part of their reports.

Exams

Many of our pupils are hard at work preparing for exams and the additional support and revision sessions that schools have put in place in much appreciated. We look forward to reporting their success in the Autumn.

Vital training event

The Virtual School for Cared for Children is holding a training day with Louise Bomber on **Friday 15th November 2013**. Louise is the author of “Inside I’m Hurting”, “What About Me?” and “Teenagers and Attachment” and the training will be a full day session at Middlewich Community Church. This event is very popular and places are limited. The cost is only **£100** per person.

To book place(s) schools should email Vanessa Stokoe at vanessa.stokoe@cheshireeast.gov.uk as soon as possible. Details will be logged initially, with further information, venue address and directions, times and payment requirements to follow in due course.

In the meantime, for more information about Louise and her work, please visit her website.

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**For further information:**

**Contact:** Phil Mellen
Philip.mellen@cheshireeast.gov.uk
The virtual school website: [www.cheshireeastvirtualschool.com](http://www.cheshireeastvirtualschool.com)
Louise Bomber’s website: [http://theyellowkite.co.uk/](http://theyellowkite.co.uk/)

**Recommendations for Governors...**

- Ensure Pupil Premium is being spent effectively and reported on
- Ensure Cared for Pupils are receiving all appropriate support
- Ensure relevant staff are able to attend the Louise Bomber training in November
9. Determined Admission Arrangements for 2014
Barbara Dale, School Admissions and Organisation Manager
☎ 01270 686392 ✉ barbara.dale@cheshireeast.gov.uk

The Local Authority’s school admission arrangements and coordinated admission scheme for 2014 for community and voluntary controlled schools were determined at the meeting of the Council’s Cabinet held on 2\textsuperscript{nd} April 2013. These will apply to admissions in September 2014 and subsequent years, subject to any review.

Local Authority Coordination Scheme

The Coordinated Scheme, once determined, applies to applications for places in all Cheshire East publicly funded schools including academies and free schools. No changes were proposed for 2014, and the co-ordinated scheme is therefore the same as for 2013, other than minor changes to key dates for 2014, to take into account non-working days. The changes to the ‘in year’ admissions process, which were agreed last year for implementation from this September (2013) have been retained for 2014.

Please Note: Information for schools about the new procedure for ‘in year’ applications, which will be implemented from September this year, will be provided in the schools bulletin before the end of June.

Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools

There are a small number of changes proposed to some schools’ published admission numbers, which apply to the normal point of entry to school. Changes introduced in the 2012 School Admissions Code removed the requirement for admission authorities to consult on an increase in the published admission number and replaced this with a requirement for local authorities to consult at least the governing of the relevant school. Consultation with governing bodies has been undertaken. There were no other changes proposed to the admission arrangements for 2014, other than minor changes to key dates as aforementioned, therefore the arrangements remain the same as for 2013.

Further details are available on the Local Authority’s website.

Admissions for September 2013

The decisions on applications for school places for September 2013 were posted out on the statutory offer dates of Friday 1\textsuperscript{st} March 2013 for secondary applications, and Tuesday 16\textsuperscript{th} April for primary applications. This year we have once again had a high online take-up for both rounds, with 97% secondary and 98% primary applications submitted electronically.

The Council’s policy on admissions is that parents and carers can submit three preferences for school places. Admissions law requires that all applications are considered on the basis of ‘equal preferences’. This means that the order in which schools have been listed by the
parent on the application form must not be taken into account at the first stage – when all preferences are considered against each school’s published oversubscription criteria. This can result in a lower ranked preference from one parent being successful due to its high priority within the oversubscription criteria, whilst a higher ranked preference for another parent with a lower priority within the oversubscription criteria is unsuccessful for the same school. If more than one school preference is successful, the Council only makes a single offer for the school that is ranked highest by the parent on their application form.

After all preferences have been processed, any Cheshire East parents who are unsuccessful with all of their school choices, the Council makes an offer for the nearest school with a vacancy (Placed by LA).

Secondary (Year 7) Application Data

The breakdown of the allocation process this year for Cheshire East residents is shown below for your information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Successful Preferences</th>
<th>Offers Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4552</td>
<td>3447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This year, we have received a total of 4552 secondary school applications of which 3447 were from Cheshire East residents. In comparison, last year we received a higher number of applications with 4726 in total of which 3510 were from Cheshire East residents. The percentage of Cheshire East parents and carers securing their first preference school has increased slightly this year to 95.4% compared with last year at 94.4%. The number of parents and carers getting a school of their choice (stated as either a first, second or third preference) is broadly in line with last year with 97.7% in 2012 increasing very slightly to 98% in 2013. The number of Cheshire East school places offered for children resident in other local authorities is 306. This is compared with 182 Cheshire East residents allocated a school maintained by another authority.

Information about the criteria used to allocate places to each school is published on our website. If you are viewing this report electronically, please follow this link to open the document entitled ‘Breakdown of Secondary September 2013 Allocations’.

The closing date for 'accept or decline' responses was 18th March. After that date waiting lists were created and the reallocation of vacancies commenced allowing more families to secure a school of their choice. Waiting lists are held in criteria order and not on first come first served basis, in accordance with legal requirements. At the last count, there were 725
vacancies in Year 7 across all our schools, which represents 17.2% unused capacity (surplus). This figure is still changing as we process occasional late applications. Vacancies are created each year due to places being taken up in independent schools and as a result of appeals being upheld for a preferred school. This can include schools in other local authorities.

Parents and carers unsuccessful with a school preference were advised that appeal applications should be submitted by 15th April. Appeal hearings for appeals received by this date will be held up until the statutory date of 10th June.

Primary (Reception Class) Application Data

The breakdown of the allocation process this year for Cheshire East residents is shown below for your information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Successful Preferences</th>
<th>Offers Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE Residents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4115</td>
<td>3915</td>
<td>3508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This year we have received a total number of 4115 applications for Cheshire East schools, which includes 3915 applications received from Cheshire East residents. This is compared with an overall total for admission in 2012 of 4328 applications including 4089 from Cheshire East residents. We have increased the number of reception class places this year to 4130, which is an increase of 64 places on top of the 4066 available in 2012. This has helped to reduce the problems at allocation in areas with greater demand, for example Crewe and Wilmslow.

In total, 96% (3755) of Cheshire East residents have been allocated a school of their choice stated as either a first, second or third preference on the application form compared with 95% for 2012. Included in this are nearly 90% of Cheshire East residents who will be offered the school they included as their first choice. For 2012, due to lower capacity and increased number of applications, only 88% received their first choice.

There has been a decrease this year, albeit small, in the number of parents that have been offered a place in a school identified as the nearest school with a vacancy after all preferences have been considered (shown above as “Placed by LA”). This process is applied for CE residents who are unsuccessful with all their preferences. Last year 203 families (4.96%) were allocated a place on this basis.

Parents and carers are required to accept or decline the place offered by 30th April. Any vacancies arising will then be re-allocated to children held on the school’s waiting list,
which is held in criteria order and not on a first come first served basis. Waiting lists will be administered after 30\textsuperscript{th} April. All unsuccessful applicants have been advised of the waiting list process and of their legal right of appeal to an independent panel.

The number of places offered in each school and the criteria applied. The number of places offered in each school and the criteria applied is published on the admissions web pages of the Cheshire East website.

For further information:

Contact: Barbara Dale
Barbara.dale@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Recommendations for Governors...
To note the above information.

10. New Arrangements for School Exclusions

Jenni Elliott, Education Support Access Officer
☎ 01625 374241 ✉ jenni.elliott@cheshireeast.gov.uk

New arrangements for school exclusions came into force in September 2012 for all maintained schools, academies, free schools, alternative provision academies and free schools and pupil referral units in England.

There continue to be three tiers to the decision making process;

- The head teacher’s decision
- The governing body’s decision
- The independent panel’s review

However there are important changes to be noted:

- The replacement of Independent Appeals Panels (IAPs) with Independent Review Panels (IRPs) who no longer have the power to expressly direct the reinstatement of the pupil;
- Parents’ right to request a Special Educational Needs (SEN) expert at the review to advise the panel how SEN may have been relevant to the exclusion;
- Parents’ right to make a claim of discrimination to:
  - The first tier tribunal in cases of disability discrimination;
  - The county court for other cases of discrimination.

IRPs must be set up, if requested by the parent of a permanently excluded pupil, by the Local Authority or the academy trust. This panel can make one of three decisions:

- To uphold the governing body’s decision to not reinstate the pupil;
- To recommend the governing body reconsider its decision;
- To quash the governing body’s decision and direct it to reconsider reinstating the pupil.
If a direction is given and the governing body subsequently does not reinstate the pupil a £4,000 payment may be required to help to pay for the cost of alternative provision.

The new statutory status of the guidance means that head teachers, governing bodies, the local authority, academy trusts, independent review panel members and clerks and Special Education Needs experts must have regard to it when carrying out their duties in exclusion cases. This means that the guidance must be followed unless there is good reason to not do so.

The guidance notes that there are certain groups of pupils who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion. This includes pupils with statements of SEN and looked after children (LAC). Head teachers and governing bodies should ensure their policies and practices take note of the particular guidance relating to these pupils.

The guidance and the statutory regulations around exclusions is very clear about the process to be followed. Schools must always follow the formal processes when sending a child home for disciplinary reasons. It is unlawful for a child to be informally excluded from school.

Ofsted’s briefing paper for section 5 inspections ‘additional provision to manage behaviour and the use of exclusion’ asks inspectors to evaluate the use of ‘remove rooms’, internal exclusion, Learning Support Units (LSU’s) nurture groups and exclusion. Schools must be able to show how exclusion is used as a last resort and with purpose and how their own analysis of data informs their practice.

To minimise the risk of challenge it is vital that head teachers and governing bodies are familiar with the new guidance particularly the complexities around the IRP’s decision. Training is offered termly or in bespoke sessions through the governance and liaison team.

**Recommendations for Governors...**

- to familiarise themselves with the new guidance
- to ensure anyone who may be involved in the exclusion process has attended an up to date training session
- to review their behaviour and other related policies to ensure they reflect the new guidance and do not discriminate against pupils by unfairly increasing their risk of exclusion

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**For further information:**

**Contact:** Jenni Elliott  
jenni.elliott@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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11. Education Welfare Service - Update
Anne Gadsden, Monitoring and Intervention Manager
☎ 01625 374764 ✉ anne.gadsden@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Cheshire East’s Education Welfare Team remains an essential service and will clearly feature in future Local Authority structures. Revised management arrangements for the Service and the direction it will take will be decided in the coming weeks and further information will appear in the next Director’s Report. In the interim period, Anne Gadsden will provide the strategic leadership for the service.

Within the last couple of months, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has received the latest national data relating to persistent absenteeism in both Primary and Secondary schools for the first 2 terms of the 11/12 academic year. For combined Primary and Secondary sectors, Cheshire East stand 29th out of 152 Local Authorities listed. Primary data shows that Cheshire East is a very healthy 8th out of 152 Local Authorities listed whilst the secondary data shows that our Local Authority is 57th out of the 152 authorities listed.

On a more local level, we now have access to the autumn percentage attendance data for all of our Cheshire East schools (persistent absentee data for the autumn term is not yet available at the time of preparing this report).

The Education Welfare Service RAG rate (red, amber, green rating) all of the schools in Cheshire East for attendance rates to determine a level of service delivery during the academic year. This rating is based on attendance data available for the first 2 terms of the 11/12 academic year.

For this current academic year we have 4 ‘red’ secondary schools. During the autumn term all 4 of those schools have improved their attendance compared with the same time period in the 11/12 academic year which is a positive outcome.

We currently have 11 ‘red’ primary schools, 6 have improved their attendance during the 12/13 autumn term compared with the autumn term in the 11/12 academic year. Out of the other 5 red primaries, 1 school have exactly the same attendance level as autumn term last year and the other 4 suffered with the effects of much sickness in school before the Christmas break.

During the current academic year the Education Welfare Officers are offering early intervention/prevention work for all of those designated red schools in an attempt to assist the schools in addressing absenteeism at an earlier stage.

For further information:
Contact: Anne Gadsden
anne.gadsden@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Recommendations for Governors...
This item is for information only.
Contact Details for the Governance and Liaison Team

📞 0845 141 0110 or 01270 686539 (both route through to the same line).

✉️ schoolgovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/governors
www.governorslearningpartnership.com

@CECgovernors

Summer term governors’ forum:
Wednesday 26th June 7.30pm, the Chimney House Hotel, Sandbach