

ACE Scrutiny Commission

25th March 2019



Title: Bristol Learning City

Ward: City Wide

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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Commission continue to support the work of the Learning City partnership by providing challenge regarding the learning, education and skills outcomes for our most disadvantaged citizens.

The significant issues in the report are:

The Learning City Partnership Board has developed a number of projects based on partnership priorities over the past two years. These include creating and establishing:

- 1) Bristol WORKS
- 2) A school attendance strategy
- 3) A schools standards board for Bristol (Excellence in Schools)
- 4) The Bristol Education Partnership
- 5) A Recruitment and Retention wellbeing programme
- 6) A Family literacy pilot
- 7) A Post 16 Strategy group

In addition to this the Learning City Partnership has provided significant input into the development of the One City Plan 2050.



1. Summary

Learning City is an established strategic partnership in Bristol. Significant change in leadership over the past two years has slowed progress in the delivery of the partnerships vision of *a city where everyone benefits from and values learning*. Over the past 12 months the Partnership Board has stabilised its membership and in June 2018 agreed a set of priorities up to 2020. These are school attendance, a Post 16 strategy and family literacy. In addition to these priorities the Board has also agreed a set of outcomes linked to the One City Plan 2050, as well as supporting the work of a number of other strategic boards and delivery groups. These include Excellence in Schools, the Bristol Education partnership and Recruitment & Retention of teaching staff. Learning City partners continue to provide either financial or in-kind resources to support the delivery of strategic priorities. Additionally partners have developed funding bids to bring greater capacity into the city. This is a model the Learning City team will continue to develop. The Learning City Board still needs to rebuild its membership to develop a more diverse and wide reaching strategic partnership for Bristol, this is a key priority for the chair and the Learning City team.

2. Context

- 2.1 Bristol is a successful city, with a strong economy, two world class universities, plenty of good and outstanding schools and a thriving cultural scene, but outcomes are all too often dependant on where people live. Simply put, if you are born in the south of the city you are less likely to go to a good school, progress into higher education or access the benefits of Bristol's strong economy, including highly skilled and well paid employment. One in four Bristol children live in poverty and without fairness of access to good quality education and training, future generations are unlikely to see change. Bristol Learning City champions learning as a way to transform lives, communities, organisations and the City. The Partnership wants everyone to be proud to learn throughout their lives. Being a Learning City brings the city together, as partners, to realise a shared vision, deliver change and make a greater impact in the City.
- 2.2 In 2016 Bristol became the first city in England to gain UNESCO Learning City status. In 2017 Bristol received the UNESCO Learning City award for outstanding progress against the UNESCO Framework. Over the past two years Bristol Learning City has developed links with a number of learning cities and regions including, Cork, Limerick, Derry, Belfast, Swansea. As well as supporting Wolverhampton and Swindon in their learning city developments.
- 2.3 Bristol Learning City has developed a culture of sharing expertise, targeting resources and taking collective action to add value to the work organisations do individually. In 2016 a group of education leaders formed the Excellence in Schools Group to act as a Schools Standards Board for the city. The Group oversees a universal offer of school improvement, as well as a Leadership for Learning programme, funded by a Department of Education grant. City wide school data is used to inform decisions and develop interventions.
- 2.4 In addition to this ongoing school improvement work, the Learning City Partnership Board has overseen a number of projects aimed at increasing access to higher education and improving opportunities for experience of work. The Board has recently agreed a number of priorities to be delivered by 2020, including: the creation of a Post 16 Strategy; improving school attendance; promoting Bristol as a city that reads to its children. Children/Young people with special educational needs & disabilities and those in care or leaving care remain a key focus for the

Partnership.

- 2.5 Building on the previous work of the now disbanded Learning for Work Group, a Post 16 task and finish group has been created to develop a collaborative strategy to achieve a fundamental transformation of the post 16 offer in Bristol. The aim is to significantly improve provision planning and outcomes. The project is currently in the research phase, with the group collecting evidence against priority themes with a view to using key findings to inform strategic plan priorities from 19/20.
- 2.6 In 2018, Bristol ranked in the bottom five local authorities for school attendance at a primary and secondary level, as well as in specialist education. The Learning City Partnership Board identified this as a key priority for the city. Bad attendance habits are likely to continue into further and higher education, as well as the workplace. Over the past 10 months partners have created an attendance strategy which aims to improve city wide attendance and ensure our children are safe and in school. During the consultation stage a number of parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provided feedback. This information is now being incorporated into the strategy, with an expected launch date in September 2019. In the meantime, schools will be provided with a Toolkit to support their work to improve attendance and a series of School Attendance Network meetings have been established to share best practice.
- 2.7 Expected reading rates in Bristol schools continue to sit below national averages. In 2017 Bristol began taking part in an EU transnational exchange programme looking at innovative practices regarding reading, literacy and language development. During this programme representatives from Bristol visited Gothenburg and were introduced to a project 'The city where we read to our children'. The purpose of this project is to encourage reading with and to children early in life. In June 2018 the Bristol Learning City Partnership Board agreed to support the development of a similar project in Bristol. Over the past 8 months partners have developed a 'Cloakroom Library' programme in Children's Centres. The programme is supported by Hargreaves Lansdown, Clifton College, Bristol Libraries, University of Bristol and the Literacy Trust. The pilot will launch in March 2019 with the aim of testing scaling up.
- 2.8 Improving SEND outcomes was originally set as a stand-alone priority for the Learning City Board, but on reflection it was felt that this priority should cut across work on improving attendance, literacy and Post 16 progression. In early 2019 Bristol Learning City submitted a funding bid to the Education Endowment Foundation to test four interventions with Key Stage 3 students with SEND in Bristol. The EEF will inform applicants of progress to round 2 of the process in April 2019.
- 2.9 Recruitment and retention of teacher workforces continues to be a problem for some schools in Bristol. A recent school survey identified teacher and leadership wellbeing as a key concern. In response the Recruitment and Retention Task Group commissioned a Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Wellbeing programme using acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). The programme was delivered by a BCC Educational Psychologist and initial pre and post interventions have shown encouraging results. The Task Group have now commissioned a further round of train the trainer sessions aimed at school mental health leads. The aim is to train up to 40 mental health leads to embed ACT practices in schools. The Group has also commissioned a Teacher Wellbeing Conference and Workshop in June 2019. The workshops will be facilitated by Dr Paul Flaxman a world leader in ACT.

2.10 The Bristol Learning City Partnership has created and funded Bristol WORKS to build an innovative education, business and community partnership that aims to raise the aspirations of young people and their parents/carers through the development of experience of work opportunities and clear post 16 pathways for all young people, particularly those who face the greatest challenges in relation to learning, skills and employment. In the academic year 2017/18 (WORKS year 1) 2477 experience of work opportunities were delivered directly through the WORKS project. In addition, WORKS supported a number of other experiences of work activities and developed working relationships with key partner organisations in Bristol. Three further schools have joined WORKS in 2018/19 they are Bridge Learning Campus, Oasis Brightstowe and KnowleDG. So far 59 employers have made the pledge and delivered 492 experiences of work. Activities include:

- Real challenge: Supporting students to develop a newsletter. Including a number of employers visits from the media sector.
- Employer visits: Assemblies led by volunteers from the creative sector
- Specialist skills: Performing arts workshops with performing arts volunteer
- Mentoring: Male / Female small group mentoring sessions
- Real Work Challenge: Visit to the WAVE site
- Employability Skills: Ask Me Anything session with a wide range of creative, digital and media organisations.

2.11 The Learning City has also been working with a number of state and independent schools in Bristol to create the Bristol Education Partnership. The Partnership aims to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students across the partnership by opening up new opportunities for collaborative learning. Both Universities have joined the partnership and will work with partner schools to improve progression into higher education. The Partnership will also focus on identifying and progressing gifted and talented students from all participating schools linked to the WORKS programme to offer a varied work experience opportunities. The work of this Partnership is being funded by contributions from the independent schools.

2.12 In February 2019, the Bristol Learning City Board commissioned a scoping exercise to gather feedback from community learning groups for a possible Learning City Festival. A number of Learning Cities in the UK and Ireland host their own learning festivals where learning providers offer free learning activities over the course of a week. Cork, Limerick and Belfast have continued to grow their learning festivals into priority events for their cities. This type of festival would give Bristol the opportunity to celebrate learning in all its forms and shine the light on our local lifelong learning offer. A survey has recently been sent to over 100 learning providers in Bristol to gauge enthusiasm for such an event, if the idea proves popular planning will begin for a possible March 2020 festival.

2.13 In 2018 the decision was taken to disband the Challenge Group model of governance and switch to a task and finish group model. This decision has resulted in some issues regarding

governance as the Challenge Group model provided a consistent framework to discuss skills and education priorities, as well as vulnerable groups. The Learning City team are currently redesigning the governance framework for Bristol Learning City with the aim of bringing greater diversity and a wider reach to the Learning City Board.

2.14 Bristol Learning City is funded from a reserve budget. Original contributions came from Bristol City Council, City of Bristol College, University of Bristol and UWE. The remaining budget will be sufficient to fund a skeleton Learning City team until January 2022, additional funding from partners will be required to increase capacity and deliver on some of the Learning City priorities set out in the One City Plan 2050.

3. Policy

Not Applicable

4. Consultation

a) Internal
Not Applicable

b) External
Not Applicable

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

- 5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);

- encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

Appendices:

N/A

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

N/A