

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ON WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY 2004 at 10.00A.M.**

Agenda Item No.

4

Report of the Monitoring of Schools Topic Group

Report of the Director, Children, Schools and Families

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Members of the Topic Group: Ian Simpson (Chairman)
Tony Dodd
Derek Hills
Seamus Quilty
David Billing
Maureen Thompson (Parent representative)

Executive member: Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of report

To provide members with an interim report on the work of the group and an outline of the future programme.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Members of the Topic Group appointed a Chairman, Ian Simpson.
- 2.2 Members scrutinised the case studies of two schools which had been through special measures and commissioned further information.
- 2.3 Members were briefed about the Director's intention, during the early spring term, to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the local authority's identification of, and intervention in, schools causing concern.

3. Conclusion

The Topic Group agreed that a significant aspect of their remit would be to make a well-informed contribution to the review of work with schools causing concern.

4. Background

- 4.1 The CSF Scrutiny Committee have expressed concern over time about:
- the number of schools going into Ofsted categories;
 - the time that it takes some schools to be restored to 'good health';
 - the effectiveness of the measures taken by the CSF Department to prevent schools 'at risk' being identified for intervention by Ofsted.
- 4.2 When the Monitoring of Schools report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee in June 2002, members agreed to set up a Topic Group in the Autumn Term 2003. The first meeting of this Group was held on 12 December 2003.
- 4.3 At its meeting on 12 December, the Group:
- elected a chairman;
 - received information about the Director's intention to review work with schools causing concern;
 - scrutinised the case studies outlining the journeys of two schools, one primary, one secondary, through special measures;
 - considered the effectiveness of the intervention with these schools;
 - identified further information to be provided for the group.
- 4.4 During the academic year 2003/2003 sixteen schools were cleared from Ofsted categories and seven new schools were identified. While this trend was in the right direction members were rightly concerned about the number of new schools identified. Since the beginning of this academic year (03/04), when the new Ofsted framework was introduced, the trend has reversed as detailed below:
- 5 schools cleared from categories;
 - 4 new schools identified (1 special measures, 3 serious weaknesses) (SW)
 - 3 schools already in a category (2 SW and 1 underachieving) changed category and were placed in special measures.
- 4.5 It has been reported in the educational press that the number of schools identified for Ofsted categories has increased by about 35% since September 2003 and the introduction of the new framework. It is too early for comparative data to be available.

4.6 Over time Hertfordshire comparisons with the national picture and with statistical neighbours are as follows:

	Herts	Statistical Neighbours	National
Percentage of schools requiring special measures since 1993	4.2	5.1	5.9
Percentage of schools requiring special measures for 18 months or more (primary)	61.5	50.5	54.2
	Herts	Statistical Neighbours	National
Percentage of schools requiring special measures for 18 months or more (secondary)	11.5	5.3	5.9
Percentage of schools removed from special measures (from total number)	73.1	83.6	85.2
Percentage of schools with serious weaknesses since 1997.	6.5	7.2	7.3
Percentage of schools judged by Ofsted to have remedied serious weaknesses since 1997.	92.5	69.5	71.4
Percentage of schools judged by Ofsted to require special measures which have previously been serious weakness.	12.5	13.2	11.1
Percentage of schools judged by Ofsted to be underachieving since 2000.	1.1	0.9	1.0

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The chairman of the Topic Group met with the Director of CSF to discuss the impending review of work with schools causing concern and the overall framework for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support. The Director was invited to address the Topic Group on this subject on 8 January 2004.
- 5.2 Governors, teacher consultants and acting headteachers from the two case study schools will address the Topic Group as expert witnesses on 27 January 2004. They will be invited to give their perspective of the progress of the schools, the most effective interventions and how support could be improved.
- 5.3 Members of the Topic Group expressed their wish to contribute to the forthcoming review of work with schools causing concern. This contribution will be facilitated by the Interim Deputy Director, Learning and School Effectiveness, who took up post earlier this month.
- 5.4 A final report from the Group will be submitted to the March 2004 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

6. Rural Implications

None arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

None arising from this report.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report.

- *Ofsted Form 4 Performance Indicators*
- *Reports and minutes of the Monitoring of Schools Topic Group*
- *Schools Causing Concern records and data base*

If you would like to know more about the issues referred to in this report please contact Gill Jones, Telephone: 01582 830357