

South Gloucestershire Local Authority

School Sixth Form Support and Challenge Programme 2009 to 2010

Report for National Strategy

Background:

Post-16 provision in South Gloucestershire is characterised by a mixed economy of FE Colleges, work-based providers and school sixth forms. The majority of school sixth form provision is delivered through collaboration between institutions, with only 2 individual sixth forms having cohorts of over 250 learners. Collaboration between school sixth forms and the FE Colleges is established and growing.

A number of reports have highlighted that standards at level 3 post-16 in the Authority lag behind those nationally and in statistical neighbour authorities. A Local Area Agreement between 2007 and 2010 provided £300,000. This funding has been used to employ a part-time Post-16 Teaching and Learning adviser and to develop and deploy a team of ten Lead Teachers (LTs) to work intensively in identified underperforming departments.

Over the last 2 years the Post-16 Teaching and Learning adviser has worked intensively in targeted schools to support Heads of Post 16 in developing more rigorous approaches to self-evaluation and action planning, which has focused on key developments that should impact positively on standards and achievement. Funding has also been used to offer training and support from external providers in the public, private and third party sectors.

Council Members have highlighted post-16 performance as being a key priority and following an analysis of performance during summer term 2009, have commissioned an external review to establish greater understanding behind the current levels of achievement. It is intended that this review will then inform subsequent Council policy regarding post-16 provision and improvement planning as it assumes responsibility for funding and commissioning from the LSC in April 2010.

In addition to this review, the LA is funding a leadership and management coaching programme for Heads of Sixth Form in identified schools. This will be up to 10 days of support and challenge, which will be based upon the model used in National Challenge. Funding has also been secured for additional SIP time in identified schools in order to help with their post 16 action plan.

Recommendation

Based on the LA's analysis of Post-16 provision and outcomes, there is already a clear support and challenge programme in place which focuses on those school sixth forms where underperformance appears to be an issue. Each school has provided a structured, costed action plan and this is used to help determine the level of dedicated support from the LA (through the lead teacher programme, the leadership and management coaching programme and the additional SIP time). On this basis, the LA is already providing significantly more support than suggested in the DCSF proposals and is clearly targeting this at those schools that would raise concerns under the DCSF Sixth Form Support and Challenge programme. Therefore no schools are to be put forward for the programme at this point in time – however, this position will be kept under review.

***2009 data unvalidated**