



**22 July 2024**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Caversham Independent Learning Review Report and Action Plan</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Brian Grady, Director of Education
<b>Lead councillor</b>	Ruth McEwan, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Inclusive Economy
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the report regarding the Caversham Independent Learning Review</li> <li>2. Note the action plan and progress on actions</li> <li>3. Receive confirmation from the Executive Director, Children's Services that actions have been completed, at a future ACE Committee</li> </ol>

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. Education is a strategic priority for Reading Borough Council. The Annual School Standards report sets out how Brighter Futures for Children, on behalf of Reading Borough Council, supports statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of Reading Borough Council strategic priorities and policies.
- 1.2. As reported to ACE Committee in March 2024, January 8th marked the first anniversary of the untimely death of Ruth Perry, a beloved colleague, peer and friend to so many in our education community. School leaders continue to be supported individually and in groups as our community continues to come to terms with the loss of Ruth, and the Education Partnership Board is maintaining our collective prioritisation on school leader wellbeing.
- 1.3. HM Coroner conducted an inquest into the death of Ruth which concluded on 7th of December 2023. The inquest recorded a narrative conclusion of suicide, contributed to by an Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2022. HM Coroner published a Prevention of future deaths report on 19 December, requesting Department for Education, Ofsted and Reading Borough Council to respond to identified matters of concern. ACE Committee received a report in March confirming the work undertaken with schools in response to the Coroner's findings, through Education Partnership Board.
- 1.4. One of the actions that Reading Borough Council has taken in response to the Coroner's findings is to undertake a learning review. This report to Committee confirms the completion of the Independent Learning Review and includes the actions we are taking as a result of the review.

## **2. Policy context**

- 2.1. The Council's Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
  - Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Communities
  - Inclusive Economy
- 2.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
  - People first
  - Digital transformation
  - Building self-reliance
  - Getting the best value
  - Collaborating with others
- 2.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.
- 2.4. The Council Corporate Plan sets out our ambition as "a town where everyone can access education, skills and training and good jobs and where child poverty is eradicated... by Enhancing education, skills and training opportunities, particularly for our more vulnerable residents"

## **3. Priorities, actions and next steps**

- 3.1. An action plan in response to the learning review is appended to the report.
- 3.2. One of the actions in the plan which is already completed was for Reading Borough Council to submit a response to the national consultation undertaken by Ofsted on inspections and inspection practice, The Big Listen. The Reading Borough Council submission to Ofsted is also appended to this report.

## **4. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 4.1. The Council Corporate Plan sets out our ambition as "a town where everyone can access education, skills and training and good jobs and where child poverty is eradicated... by Enhancing education, skills and training opportunities, particularly for our more vulnerable residents"
- 4.2. The work undertaken on behalf of Reading Borough Council with Reading schools helps secure access to consistently high-quality education for all Reading children, to help them succeed and thrive as full participants in Reading's inclusive economy.

## **5. Environmental and climate implications**

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. Ensuring high quality education available to all residents would be expected to reduce carbon emissions from unnecessary travel. There are no direct environmental and climate implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

## **6. Community engagement**

- 6.1. As set out in the report above, the learning review has engaged widely with relevant stakeholders, including Ruth's family, schools in Reading and others impacted by Ruth's death.

## **7. Equality impact assessment**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The actions set out in this report are not intended to have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.

## **8. Other relevant considerations**

- 8.1. No other relevant considerations have been identified related to this report.

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1. The Education Act (1996) identifies that any child learning within the borough is a Reading pupil regardless of the form of governance of the school. Reading Borough Council (RBC) is therefore responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools and local education provisions.
- 9.2. Statutory duties and power are delegated by RBC to BFfC, who undertake the local authority statutory duties (Children Act 2004, 2006) to:
- a) act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, or have a social worker
  - b) be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
  - c) exercise its education functions to promote high standards
  - d) Exercise its powers to intervene in schools causing concern (in line with the DfE Schools Causing Concern 2022 statutory guidance).

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1. With the removal from Local Authorities by HM Government of the School Improvement and Monitoring Brokerage Grant, the work of Brighter Futures for Children with Reading schools to support and challenge improved standards and attainment is funded solely through community and maintained school funding of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Any financial implications regarding the actions set out in the action plan will be considered through a review and redistribution of Dedicated Schools Grant resources.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1. This report sets out actions being taken in 2024/25.

## **12. Background papers**

There are none

## **Appendices**

- 1. Caversham Independent Learning Review**
- 2. Caversham Independent Learning Review Action Plan**
- 3. Reading Borough Council response to the Ofsted Big Listen**

