

**From: Richard Long TD, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**  
**Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education**

**To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 9 March 2021**

**Subject: The EEFfective Kent Project: The Education Endowment Foundation's work with KCC and Schools to reduce the gap for vulnerable children**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of report: None**

**Future Pathway of report: None**

**Electoral Division: All**

**Summary:**

This document outlines the range of work taking place to support schools through KCC's partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation. It outlines the work to date, engagement of schools and next steps for the project.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked TO NOTE the report.

**1 Introduction and Context**

- 1.1 The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity, funded by a grant from the Department for Education and established in 2011 to improve the educational attainment of the poorest pupils in English schools. It is dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. The EEF aims to support teachers and senior leaders by providing evidence-based approaches and resources designed to improve practice and boost learning. It aims to raise attainment and close the disadvantage gap which roots its response to this educational challenge in the best available evidence. The organisation is the leader in evidence-based practice for schools. It provides an easy-to-use evidence tool kit synthesising research for schools, it funds trials, and its mission is to support schools to use evidence-based practice.
- 1.2 The EEF established a partnership with Kent County Council (KCC) in Autumn 2019, namely the EEFfective Kent Project. This three-year partnership is due to run until August 2022. Both organisations have contributed to a joint funding pot worth £600,000 to support the implementation of evidence-based approaches and interventions in Kent. The fund is offered as match-funding to schools to engage in a range of evidence-based programmes and activities. The match-funding is mostly

offered as 50% to all Kent County Council schools to ensure engagement and a strong commitment to complete from schools. Some aspects of the project are offered as fully funded by the fund.

1.3 The overarching project aim is to improve educational outcomes for all pupils and raise standards in Kent, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds by encouraging schools to use evidence about what works as they make school improvement decisions. To achieve this, the project has four aims:

- Raise educational standards in Kent, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Influence spending of schools and key partners in Kent towards evidence-based approaches.
- Support schools in Kent to use evidence confidently to support their decision-making.
- Encourage collaborative working across the Kent school system.

## 2 The EEFective Kent Project Structure and Activity

2.1 The EEFective Kent Project has three strands of work as outlined in the diagram below.



2.2 These strands are being rolled out sequentially however, there is crossover between all. The third strand of work which aims to provide sustainability, draws on all the project work.

### 3 Strand 1: Promising Projects

3.1 Promising Projects are EEF validated projects which have shown initial promise when trialled. This means they have demonstrated the potential to improve attainment for young people cost-effectively when independently and robustly evaluated. This is a 'what works' approach to interventions that close specific gaps in schools. All the promising projects offered as part of the EEFective Kent Project have been shown to make at least two months, in most cases three months, additional progress for targeted pupils.

3.2 EEFective Kent is running three rounds of these projects. The first took place in January 2020, the second was due to open in April 2020, however was moved in response to the COVID-19 situation and opened later in the academic year for a significantly extended time period. The third and final round will open in April 2021.

- 3.3 The EEF selected 13 different promising projects ensuring a range of subjects and educational phases were covered to meet the needs of Kent schools. The subject-focused range of projects included five Maths, four literacy, two science, two wider curriculum and one assessment for learning. In terms of phase appropriacy, there were eight for Key Stage 1 and 2, four for Key Stage 3 and three for Key Stage 4. Five of the projects were also appropriate for Special schools.
- 3.4 The impact of COVID-19 on Promising Projects Strand work has been and continues to be significant. Many of the projects involved face-to-face training which required the providers to rework their programmes for virtual delivery and validate this new delivery mode with the EEF. Over the course of the year, we have lost five of the promising projects on offer due to a range of reasons such as providers collapsing, some Maths and science programmes being unable to deliver virtually, and some withdrawing due to internal stresses. The additional burden of COVID-19 and the change in their circumstances led to a small number of schools withdrawing from projects they had applied to do.

In response to the issues faced, we extended timeframes to give to give schools greater flexibility, facilitated them to change their choice of project to respond to new learning gaps and priorities, and supported providers to adjust their delivery model where possible.

The offer for the final round will be reduced to eight promising projects, with all but one project offering a choice of face-to-face or virtual delivery. This is to ensure we can deliver whatever the constraints of the pandemic.

- 3.5 Engagement so far has been positive despite the issues created by the pandemic. 78 schools have started, or have plans to start, their chosen promising project, of these 64 are Primary schools, 10 are Secondary schools and two are Special schools. Of these, 25 schools are academies whilst 53 are maintained schools. An additional group of schools successfully applied but are still considering their changing needs and options.

Primary schools have predominantly chosen Maths projects while formative assessment has been popular in Secondary schools. There has been a slight difference in take up with the lowest in the North of the County and highest in the East.

- 3.6 Initial feedback from schools undertaking promising projects is very positive. The following quotes evidence this.

*'Our project has got off to an amazing start. Our mentor school lead is great and extremely knowledgeable, and we have the 2 years planned out already!! We can already see how the project will impact our school.'* Embedding Formative Assessment Training.'

*'We are developing Philosophy for Children, due to COVID-19 we delayed our launch to this month (January 2021). Everyone is enthusiastic and it is working well. We are confident it will have an impact.'*

## 4 Strand 2: Evidence-Based Training

- 4.1 The EEF has a national network of 37 Research Schools who are leaders in evidence-based practice. They have a remit to deliver training based on the EEF's published guidance reports (user-friendly summaries of academic research and best practice for schools) and to provide support to schools with embedding and implementing strong, evidence-based practice. The EEFective Kent Project is working with two Research Schools in the London and the South East region, in particular Charles Dickens Research School and Durrington Research School.
- 4.2 Via data analysis, discussions with our school improvement colleagues, and a wide consultation process including surveys, taster sessions and focus groups with schools, we identified four training programmes that responded to the needs and concerns of Kent schools. The four topics currently being delivered are:
- Training and Retaining Great Teachers
  - SEND and Learning Behaviours
  - Delivery of Remote Learning
  - Characteristics of Deprivation
- 4.3 These match-funded training courses are running virtually (due to COVID-19) over a 6-10 week period and are equivalent to three days of training. To support schools to use the training to effect change, a senior school leader is required to attend with another member of staff. At the core of all four training courses is the EEF's implementation plan. All schools undertaking the training will be offered a fully funded day of one-to-one, wrap-around support by an Evidence Leader of Education (ELE).
- 4.4 The first round of this training started at the end of January 2021 and, dependant on demand, will be repeated over the summer term and through the next academic year. Depending on the pandemic and in response to feedback, subsequent sessions can be run remotely or face-to-face.
- 4.5 Engagement has been strong in this first round with currently 69 schools in attendance across the four courses. Schools are match-funded to access up to two of the courses. Unsurprisingly Delivery of Remote Learning has the highest uptake with 27 schools attending, Characteristics of Deprivation and SEND and Learning Behaviours have respectively 18 and 17 schools attending, whilst Training and Retaining Great Teachers has had three withdrawals and has dropped to just seven schools attending.
- 4.6 Feedback from the training so far is very positive. One Headteacher doing the Training and Retraining Great Teachers course gave the following feedback.

*'The benchmarking tool - really great to a) see where we are at and b) give us a clear idea of why and how we need it to improve. The visioning tool - opened up lots of interesting discussions with staff about their views on CPD and how these can differ drastically from the evidence.'*

## **5 Strand 3: Developing Research Champions**

- 5.1 This part of the project is focused on developing evidence-based leadership in Kent and creating a sustainable legacy to ensure the learning from the project is retained. To do this, the EEEffective Kent Project Team is working in collaboration with the Kent Association of Headteachers (KAH) to build this work strand. The development of this is ongoing and meetings are taking place to ensure this strand is complementary to the work already started on KAH's Research Hubs.
- 5.2 The aim of this strand is to develop, embed and sustain evidence-based practice and leadership at multiple levels within the system to ensure a legacy beyond the life of the project.

To do this we anticipate undertaking the following areas of activity:

- Developing a role for school-based evidence champions to complement the KAH Research Hub.
- With KAH, work to establish and embed collaborative school level evidence-based working and networking.
- Running an open application round to appoint a school or collaboration of schools to be designated Associate Research School for Kent status, an official link to the EEF which includes access to training and support and involves acting as a training and support centre for evidence-informed practice.
- Provide ongoing access to Promising Projects by running a Train the Trainer programme, thus ensuring ongoing access to high quality Promising Projects.
- Designating Evidence Leaders in Education (ELEs), to deliver school-to-school support, initially to provide wrap-around support to the schools participating in the Evidence-Based Training.

Whilst elements of this Strand are in development, both the Train the Trainer programme and the ELE work is well underway.

- 5.3 A recruitment process has led to the designation of six ELEs who will work alongside the two Research Schools to support schools with implementation. The group are seconded from a range of system leadership roles in the sector, three are current senior leaders in Kent schools, two are school improvement advisors working for The Education People (TEP) and one is independent but has worked extensively in Kent. The ELEs are each committed to delivering approximately 10 days of support.

## **6 Evaluation**

- 6.1 The EEEffective Kent Project is being independently evaluated. The EEF has appointed the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), an independent not-for-profit research organisation, to carry out research and evaluation as part of the EEEffective Kent Project.
- 6.2 The evaluation will aim to understand how successful the project has been with a particular focus on the increased uptake of evidence-based programmes in Kent schools and if it has supported ongoing evidence-based, collaborative working between schools. Learning and insights from the evaluation will be used to help develop the project and also to inform future initiatives.

### 6.3 The main research activities in the evaluation are:

- A short online survey of schools in Kent at two time points.
- Telephone interviews with key stakeholders involved in the project including KCC and EEF project staff, Promising Project providers, representatives from the Kent Association of Headteachers and Research Schools providing training.
- Analysis of project data, such as characteristics of the schools signing up to the project and information on their participation in Promising Projects (eg attendance at training, whether Promising Projects have been delivered as intended).
- Case study research with 16 schools to understand their experiences of taking part in the project.
- Analysis of pupil attainment data in EEFective Kent project schools and non-project schools (selected from a similar area in another part of the country) after the project is complete, based on publicly available data.

6.4 The baseline survey has already taken place. Most of the evaluation activity will take place at the end of project. We anticipate a draft report in the Autumn term of 2022.

## 7 Recommendations

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked TO NOTE the report.

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