

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17 November 2020

Warwickshire Challenge

Recommendation

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report, endorses the project, commits to future continuous funding and notes that initial development is crucial to successful implementation and depends on capacity within teams which may be impacted as the COVID19 situation continues to develop.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 WCC is committed to supporting young people to overcome the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Many disadvantaged children and young people will have suffered with poor mental health or will not have been able to participate in remote learning due to not having access to technology.
- 1.2 The idea of the Warwickshire Challenge emerged in response to a key question – what can Warwickshire County Council offer vulnerable pupils, over and above what schools provide, that might help to bridge the gap for those pupils who may have been disadvantaged by lack of access to remote learning as a result of the Coronavirus lockdown?
- 1.3 The Warwickshire Challenge links with Warwickshire’s Closing the Gap Strategy whose objective is ‘to ensure support for disadvantaged pupils remains a key priority and has a high profile across the work of the County Council’. To avoid stigmatisation the challenge will be a universal offer for all Key Stage 3 pupils.
- 1.4 Leadership of the programme will reside in Education Services, but is intended to be a county-wide, universal offer to which other teams (Marketing and Communications, Economy and Skills, Family Information Service, SEND Integrated Services, ICT Services) are contributing.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The Warwickshire Challenge attempts to capture and promote the opportunities on offer beyond school that will help pupils develop confidence and self-belief underpinned by knowledge, skills and experience that comes from all aspects of their lives.

2.2 The Warwickshire Challenge may help schools to demonstrate how they are fulfilling Ofsted inspection requirements¹, for example in terms of cultural capital² or character education. However, this is not the primary intention. This initiative has the individual pupil at its heart, not the school. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) acknowledges that, whilst character education has an impact on life chances, more research is needed to establish the impact of character education on academic outcomes.

Essential life skills (or ‘character’) are important in determining life chances and can be measured in a robust and comparable way. Much less is known, however, about how these skills can be developed and whether they lead to increased academic attainment. This is a major focus of work for the EEF³.

2.3 Political opinion is divided on the use of the term ‘cultural capital’, which some consider to be a politically loaded term, disproportionately valuing white, middle-class values, traditions and culture. The Warwickshire Challenge is not designed to perpetuate this. The Warwickshire Challenge focuses on broadening, widening and deepening pupils’ experiences beyond school, capitalising on existing opportunities and encouraging pupils to evaluate for themselves the impact and significance of their experiences so that they develop self-belief and confidence to make positive life choices.

2.4 Whilst it is acknowledged that the Warwickshire Challenge may not necessarily have a significant impact on academic outcomes, it is likely to have an impact on other indicators which may in turn lead to better life chances and reduced reliance on public services, such as:

- Positive post-16 destinations
- enhanced motivation and aspirations
- improved wellbeing, resilience and confidence
- higher school attendance
- reduction in exclusions
- reduction in gang-related activity and/or youth crime

3.0 The Warwickshire Challenge

3.1 The Warwickshire Challenge consists of over 50 suggested activities for Key Stage 3 pupils (Years 7-9). Schools can use the ‘challenge’ to support pupils’ mental health and wellbeing. However, participants can take part in the suggested activities outside school, independently, working towards a bronze, silver or gold Warwickshire Challenge award. The support of parents or carers is helpful but not essential. For those pupils who do not have the active support of parents or carers, a mentor will be offered by Warwickshire County Council to support and encourage pupils to engage.

¹ [School Inspection Handbook November 2019](#)

² [The Cultural Learning Alliance](#)

³ [Education Endowment Foundation \(EEF\) Closing the Gap – Key Lessons Learnt](#)

The programme is consistent with and would link into the bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, offered by many schools from Year 9 onwards.

3.2 The suggested activities fit into 5 generic topic headings:

Enterprise	Careers or work-related activity, planning and leading, skills for life
Emotional Wellbeing	Mindfulness, wellbeing and mental health
Engagement	Volunteering, democracy, active citizenship
Enjoyment	Art, music, singing, performing, skills or hobbies
Energy	Physical activity or sport

Participants should aim to complete an agreed number of activities for each of the 5 topics. This will include a reduced number of challenges for young people with Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND) or pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

A full set of the draft challenges are contained in appendix 1. Where possible, links will be provided to online resources or websites with more information. Participants will be guided to choose from the activities on offer in their local area.

3.3 Mentors

As part of the Warwickshire Challenge, volunteer mentors will be recruited to help vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils to participate in the programme. Their purpose will be to motivate the young people to take part, help them overcome barriers, actively seeking opportunities for them and help to make the programme bespoke to their needs. Mentors are likely to be recruited and trained via MentorLink, Grandmentors or Post 16 young people and could be drawn from other sources such as school governors. The aim is that they will operate remotely to interact and engage with young people to support and encourage them to participate as meaningfully as possible as they work through the programme.

3.4 Sponsorship

Most of the suggested activities do not require funding, but they may require some equipment or entrance/travel costs. For those participants who are registered for free school meals (FSM) a small allowance will be made available. This likely to be around £50 per participant.

3.5 Awards

There is no official accreditation. However, participants will receive recognition from Warwickshire County Council. This will be a Bronze award at the end of Year 7, Silver Award at the end of Year 8 and Gold Award at the end of Year 9.

3.4 Budget

£20k has initially been allocated from school improvement budgets 2020-2021 to support the start-up costs including development of materials and running a pilot project within three schools.

3.5 Demand

The scale of demand is not yet known. There are on average 6,600 pupils in each year group with 14.2% eligible for free school meals. A total of 19,800 potential participants of which 2,811 are FSM per year. A realistic view of demand will be gained when we review the spring term pilot.

3.6 How can business and enterprise get involved?

There is an opportunity for businesses to be involved the Warwickshire Challenge. We will ask organisations within Warwickshire to help us by considering the following opportunities:

- Support for the development of an App to host the programme, together with a tracking mechanism
- Sponsorship of £50 or more to support one or more participants
- Vouchers for money-off activities or goods such as stationery or transport
- Subsidised tickets for events such as theatre, concerts or cinema
- Work experience opportunities – remotely if necessary
- Higher and further education visits or experiences
- Volunteers to act as mentors, subject to normal DBS checks and training
- Sponsorship could be acknowledged through publicity material. Major sponsors will receive prominence.

4.0 Next steps

The next steps are:

- Finalise the challenges based on feedback from Children in Care Council, SEND, EAL and Traveller Education teams
- Develop a communications plan with strands covering young people, parents, schools and businesses
- Set out a funding plan
- Run a pilot project initially with year 7 pupils at the volunteer schools: North Leamington School, Woodlands Special School and Lawrence Sheriff School and possibly Myton School. The pilot will inform practise as the project grows.
- Develop a digital platform to host the challenge. This is likely to initially be a webpage and if successful an App will be developed.

5.0 Potential barriers

The Warwickshire Challenge has been well received and gained early support from Councillors and WCC Senior Leaders and Education Challenge Board. There is a potential for this over time to become a significant project and could take up significant resources in terms of staff time and sponsorship of young people.

The Warwickshire Challenge has been developed to support disadvantaged children but is being offered universally to all pupils. We will need to secure good engagement from the targeted disadvantaged young people.

If young people eligible for Free School Meals are sponsored to take part and the onus is on the young person to plan and organise challenges how do we ensure funding is spent on taking part in those challenges?

6.0 Summary

Warwickshire Challenge is an excellent opportunity to contribute to Warwickshire's COVID19 recovery strategy for the greater good of our young people.

Background papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: None

APPENDIX 1
Draft Challenges

1	Volunteer with a charity
2	Learn how to play a new sport
3	Take a leadership course
4	Learn how to draw or paint in a certain style
5	Walk at least 5000 steps a day
6	Learn how to bake a Victoria sponge
7	Learn some basics in 2 different languages
8	Open a savings account
9	Find three new things you like to eat and learn how to cook them
10	Arrange a trip to the theatre
11	Perform in front of an audience
12	Gather views via a survey and present findings to a local MP
13	Learn to swim/ improve your technique.
14	Put a flatpack piece of furniture together.
15	Learn to ride a bike or skateboard
16	Learn how to repair a puncture on a bike
17	Visit an art gallery, research your favourite and have a go yourself.
18	Read a novel cover to cover
19	Learn how to use DIY tools to put up a shelf
20	Volunteer in a charity shop
21	Plan a journey involving public transport
22	Plan and cook a meal for others
23	Sow some seeds and look after them
24	Make something and sell it for charity
25	Learn basic sewing skills
26	Learn about local democracy
27	Listen to 3 pieces of classical music and think about them
28	Find out more about organisations you could join e.g. cadets/ DofE
29	Attend a concert or live musical
30	Think about how to create a deskpace/ save up for a desk
31	Listen to a podcast/ radio programme and create your own.
32	Find out about part time jobs in your area and prepare a CV

33	Learn how to put up a tent and camp out overnight
34	Download the 'Couch to 5K app' and start running
35	Save up for a high-ticket item
36	Plan a local route using a map and go for a bike ride
37	Teach yourself how to improve the photographs on your phone/ camera and set up an exhibition
38	Set up a work experience placement
39	Learn how to mow the lawn and weed the garden– this could be at a relative's house
40	Calculate your age on other planets
41	Be an advocate for Art
42	Design an awareness poster for something you feel passionate about
43	Look up the definition of respect. Write it down. Now describe ways you have acted respectfully or disrespectfully this week
44	Work alone or with a partner to create a song, a rap, or a chant about respect. Your words should tell why respect is important and how it could make the world a better place. Write the rap on a piece of paper and be ready to respect it to the group if called upon
45	Volunteer to do an 'odd job' for a friend or neighbour
46	Make a list and act out 10 random acts of kindness
47	Choose an animal and plan all the things that you would need to do and to provide to care for it
48	Make a game/teach a nursery rhyme/write a story for a younger child
49	Create a questionnaire and interview an older person about life when they were young
50	Create a family tree
51	Research someone from your community who you admire and write an article about them
52	Complete some mindfulness colouring
53	Write a meal plan for the day including 3 meals and some snacks. Try to include some foods from all 5 food groups
54	Make a timetable for the week ahead and think about how you'll spend your time after school; make sure you have time to do your homework, but also spend time with your friends/family and do things you enjoy doing!
55	Hold a debate with your friends or classmates about a topic you are passionate about
56	Learn how to iron a piece of clothing
57	Practice some breathing meditation
58	Have a go at washing a car

59	Sort out a pile of clothes washing and learn how to use a washing machine
60	Teach someone how to use Zoom/ Teams/ WhatsApp/ Social Media so they can keep in touch with people more easily
61	Make pancake batter and try to successfully flip a pancake
62	Make a birthday card for someone
63	Do a local litter pick (could be at school)
64	Handwrite a letter to a friend or relative
65	Watch a 'classic' movie
66	Do one thing that you're afraid of
67	Learn how to use chopsticks
68	Complete a 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle
69	Go 48 hours without a screen