

Briefing on Post Election Policy Direction for Education & Children's Services – *For Information only*

Summary

1. This paper provides a summary of developing policy direction since the General Election. It is provided to summarise the changing policy landscape which will impact upon the work of individual schools, the wider children's services agenda and the local authority.

Background & Context

2. To assist in understanding changes of policy direction and the compromises that may have been reached in delivering the Coalition publication "Our Programme for Government", the policies of the three main parties prior to the General Election are summarised at Annex 1.

Information / Update Provided

The Coalition Government

3. Following the General Election on 6 May and the resulting Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition, the Ministerial Team for the new Department of Education is:
 - Secretary of State for Education - the Rt Hon Michael Gove (Conservative)
 - Minister of State for Schools - Nick Gibb (Conservative)
 - Minister of State for Children and Families - Sarah Teather (Liberal Democrat)
 - Under Secretary of State for Children and Families - Tim Loughton (Conservative)
4. In an interview in TES on the **28 May** the Secretary of State made it clear that Ms Teather was "unambiguously" his number two in the department. It has also been announced that the team will lead in the following respective areas.
5. Junior children's minister Tim Loughton has assumed responsibility for youth services, safeguarding, social work and children's workforce issues while minister Sarah Teather takes on early years, families and child poverty. It has been confirmed schools minister Nick Gibb, meanwhile, has been handed

responsibility for NEETs, apprenticeships, careers and information, advice and guidance as part of his remit.

6. Jonathan Hill, parliamentary under secretary of state for schools, will cover Academies/'Free' schools/Ofsted inspection of schools/school improvement (including the National Challenge, City Challenge and other improvement policies)/School funding (including the Pupil Premium and BSF)/teachers and workforce issues/teacher supply/quality/Technical Academies.
7. The new Coalition Government moved quickly to produce "Our Programme for Government". This document included within it, the following key and relevant priorities:

On Schools

8. "The Government believes that we need to reform our school system to tackle educational inequality, which has widened in recent years, and to give greater powers to parents and pupils to choose a good school. We want to ensure high standards of discipline in the classroom, robust standards and the highest quality teaching. We also believe that the state should help parents, community groups and others come together to improve the education system by starting new schools."
9. And more specifically:
 - We will promote the reform of schools in order to ensure that new providers can enter the state school system in response to parental demand; that all schools have greater freedom over the curriculum; and that all schools are held properly to account.
 - We will fund a significant premium for disadvantaged pupils from outside the schools budget by reductions in spending elsewhere.
 - We will give parents, teachers, charities and local communities the chance to set up new schools, as part of our plans to allow new providers to enter the state school system in response to parental demand.
 - We will support Teach First, create Teach Now to build on the Graduate Teacher Programme, and seek other ways to improve the quality of the teaching profession.
 - We will reform the existing rigid national pay and conditions rules to give schools greater freedoms to pay good teachers more and deal with poor performance.
 - We will help schools tackle bullying in schools, especially homophobic bullying.
 - We will simplify the regulation of standards in education and target inspection on areas of failure.
 - We will give anonymity to teachers accused by pupils and take other measures to protect against false accusations.
 - We will seek to attract more top science and maths graduates to be teachers.

- We will publish performance data on educational providers, as well as past exam papers.
- We will create more flexibility in the exams systems so that state schools can offer qualifications like the IGCSE.
- We will reform league tables so that schools are able to focus on, and demonstrate, the progress of children of all abilities.
- We will give heads and teachers the powers they need to ensure discipline in the classroom and promote good behaviour.
- We believe the most vulnerable children deserve the very highest quality of care. We will improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren, prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools, and remove the bias towards inclusion.
- We will improve the quality of vocational education, including increasing flexibility for 14–19 year olds and creating new Technical Academies as part of our plans to diversify schools provision.
- We will keep external assessment, but will review how Key Stage 2 tests operate in future.
- We will ensure that all new Academies follow an inclusive admissions policy.
- We will work with faith groups to enable more faith schools and facilitate inclusive admissions policies in as many of these schools as possible.

On Families and Children

10. “The Government believes that strong and stable families of all kinds are the bedrock of a strong and stable society. That is why we need to make our society more family friendly, and to take action to protect children from excessive commercialisation and premature sexualisation.”
11. And more specifically:
 - We will maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020.
 - We will reform the administration of tax credits to reduce fraud and overpayments.
 - We will bring forward plans to reduce the couple penalty in the tax credit system as we make savings from our welfare reform plans.
 - We support the provision of free nursery care for pre-school children, and we want that support to be provided by a diverse range of providers, with a greater gender balance in the early years workforce.
 - We will take Sure Start back to its original purpose of early intervention, increase its focus on the neediest families, and better involve organisations with a track record of supporting families. We will investigate ways of ensuring that providers are paid in part by the results they achieve.

- We will refocus funding from Sure Start peripatetic outreach services, and from the Department of Health budget, to pay for 4,200 extra Sure Start health visitors.
- We will investigate a new approach to helping families with multiple problems. We will publish serious case reviews, with identifying details removed.
- We will review the criminal records and vetting and barring regime and scale it back to common sense levels.
- We will crack down on irresponsible advertising and marketing, especially to children. We will also take steps to tackle the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood.
- We will encourage shared parenting from the earliest stages of pregnancy – including the promotion of a system of flexible parental leave.
- We will put funding for relationship support on a stable, long-term footing, and make sure that couples are given greater encouragement to use existing relationship support.
- We will conduct a comprehensive review of family law in order to increase the use of mediation when couples do break up, and to look at how best to provide greater access rights to non-resident parents and grandparents.

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf

12. In comparison to Annex 1, Conservative positions on abolishing statutory requirements on children's trusts and children and young people's plans and Liberal Democrats policy on reducing the voting age, increases to paternity leave and making youth services a statutory responsibility, appear to be missing.
13. It was always clear that any new government was going to be operating in challenging financial circumstances. In that context the Coalition Government also made early statements about funding, announcing on the 24 May 2010 measures to make £6.2 billion of savings. Included here were important statements that schools, sure start and spending on education for 16-19 year olds would be protected from these in year savings. However it did include:
 - £320m saving from reducing and then stopping, government contributions to Child Trust Funds
 - £10m saving from closing BECTA
 - £16m from the budget of National College for Leadership of School and Children's Services
 - £15m from the Children's Workforce Development Council
 - Training and Development Agency for Schools is to make £30m savings
 - £1m from the School Food Trust communications budget

- £600m from cutting the cost of various Quangos
 - £1.165b savings to be made in savings by reduced grants to Local Government
14. Much of the detail behind these announcements was unclear. More recently we have also seen announcements to scrap ContactPoint and to axe the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (a body tasked with delivering developing and assessing the national curriculum and monitor the Early Years Foundation Stage). These announcements are, of course, merely a prelude to difficult financial announcements to follow in the Government's first budget.
15. In the Queen's Speech on the 25 May 2010 the following relevant Bills were announced
www.number10.gov.uk/news/topstorynews/2010/05/queens-speech-2010-3-50297

Amongst New Bills – For Immediate Introduction

16. **Academies Bill** - the Bill has been published and had the first reading in the Lords 26 May, and the second reading is scheduled for 7 June.
17. Relevant provisions in the Bill include:
- Allowing more secondary schools to achieve Academy status and expanding the Academy programme to include primary and special schools for the first time.
 - Pre-approving schools judged outstanding by OFSTED to become academies immediately. Early indicators suggest over 2000 new academies could be created immediately – 500 secondary and 1700 primary.
 - Allowing new providers to run state schools including private companies.
 - Removing local authority control with funding per pupil received from Whitehall.
 - Giving powers to teachers to devise and implement curriculum without local authority intervention.
 - Removing any need for consultation with local authorities and preventing local authorities from vetoing the creation of new schools.
 - Giving the Secretary of State final say over approving the business plan put forward by organisations wishing to set up schools.
 - Providing schools with freedom over curriculum, admissions and pay.

New Bills – To Be Introduced After The Summer Recess included:

18. **Education and Children's Bill:**
19. Relevant provisions in the Bill include:

- To reform OFSTED and other accountability frameworks to ensure that headteachers are held properly accountable for the core educational goals of attainment and closing the gap between rich and poor.
- To introduce a narrower curriculum allowing teachers to decide how to teach.
- To introduce a year 6 reading test.
- To give teachers and headteachers the powers to devise programmes to control behaviour and tackle bullying.
- Creation of more Academies and giving more freedom to headteachers and teachers over curriculum, admissions, exclusions and pay.
- To introduce a 'pupil premium' to target money at children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The expectation for a significant number to convert by September 2010.
- An obligation on successful academies to assist weaker schools in the same area.
- Academies would be funded at a comparable level to maintained schools.
- There would be no expansion of selection but grammar schools and other schools which select or partially select pupils will be able to continue to do so.
- The Bill would automatically make all new Academies charities.

NB: The Government is examining the extent to which the 'free schools' can be created without legislative changes, requiring only planning changes. It is likely that the Freedom Bill and Public Bodies (Reform) Bill will also include provisions relevant to education.

20. On the **25 May 2010** the new Secretary of State wrote to every headteacher in England saying he wanted to open up the Academies programme to all schools - including, for the first time, primaries and special schools. He also pledged to make the process of becoming an Academy quicker and less bureaucratic than previously, removing local authority powers to block schools that want to become Academies. Schools that are rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted were to be given opportunity to be fast tracked through the process. By 2 June 2010, 1114 schools had expressed interest, 626 of which had an outstanding judgment, of which 353 secondary. Subject to Parliamentary approval of the Academies Bill, the first tranche of these Academies will open in September 2010.
21. "The Government is genuinely committed to giving schools greater freedoms. We trust teachers and headteachers to run their schools. We think headteachers know how to run their schools better than bureaucrats or politicians. Many school leaders have already shown a keen interest in gaining academy freedoms. They want to use those powers to increase standards for all children and close the gap between the richest and the poorest. Today I am inviting all schools to register their interest. It is right

that they should be able to enjoy Academy freedoms and I hope many will take up this offer." (Michael Gove)

22. The Bill describes how if the Academy is to be a mainstream school (rather than a special school), it must have a broad and balanced curriculum, have a specialism (if secondary education is provided) and provide education for mainly local pupils, of all abilities. Details of the letter to schools describing the opportunities to have the "freedom to spend the money local authorities currently spend on your behalf", the application process and a Q and A section can be found at www.education.gov.uk/academies.
23. On the same day the letter went to headteachers, the Secretary of State also wrote to all Executive Members for Childrens Services and Council Leaders. A copy of that letter has been circulated to Headteachers locally. It describes how:

"Strong local authorities (LAs) are central to our plans to improve education. The Coalition Government has partnership at its heart and I want to work in partnership with LAs to drive up standards for all children in all schools. I want to help LAs to continue to be powerful champions of education excellence. As we develop our plans for the future, I would like them to have a strong strategic role working with schools to drive up standards, supporting schools who want to work together to share expertise, and promoting the spread of innovation to the benefit of all. I want local authorities to be shaping the vision for their local area and empowered to drive improvement."
(Michael Gove)
24. As yet the detail of how such a role is delivered in a rapidly changing environment is unclear.
25. On 2 June Gove announced plans to scrap the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) because the organisation "does little to raise teaching standards or professionalism". Gove said he would seek authority from Parliament to abolish the GTC as soon as possible, so that a new system for dealing with complaints about teachers can be introduced.
26. The National Governors Association has developed a Q and A for governors on the new Academies Bill. This is available at www.nga.org.uk/pol-academies.aspx. They "strongly recommend as good practice that the governing body carries out a formal consultation process as it would need to do for any other change in a school's status. This is a fundamental change in the designation of the school and will be difficult (if not impossible) to reverse".

Summary

27. The new Coalition is moving swiftly forward with key education and children's services reforms. New legislation is being prioritised within the Parliamentary calendar which will create significant choices for existing schools and introduces opportunities for new providers. The proposals are broadly consistent with the Conservative manifesto with some changes in language

and emphasis. Unsurprisingly it will be the detail on these key policy changes which will be important in assessing likely impact. At the same time we have seen a written statement from the Secretary of State supporting a strong strategic role for the LA. Again how such a role is delivered is not independent of the rest of the change programme. All of these policy developments must also be located within the context of public funding reviews which will increasingly impact upon actual service delivery.

Corporate Strategy

28. Information within this report relates to the Council's ongoing aim to make York a 'Learning City', by ensuring people have access to world-class education and training facilities and provision.

Implications

29. Any implications arising from the issues raised in this information report will be addressed within any associated decision making reports required in the future.

Risk Management

30. Any risks to the Council arising from the issues raised in this information report will be addressed within any associated decision making reports required in the future.

Recommendations

31. This report is for public and Member information only.

Reason: To update Members on the developing policy direction for Education & Children Services since the General Election.

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Report Approved

Date

17 June 2010

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Annex 1