

Report of the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People

The York Education Partnership – the Local Response to Changing Times

Summary

1. The paper provides an overview of recent developments in education policy and a briefing on key local issues notably the formation of the York Education Partnership. This is followed by a summary of the educational attainment and examination performance of children and young people during 2011, and finally a short commentary on the governance of York schools.
2. During 2010/11 local debate and extensive consultation led to the formation of the York Education Partnership that aims to maintain and support the strong relationships that exist between schools and between the local authority and schools across the city. This paper describes the purpose, membership and ambition of the Partnership.

Background

3. The coalition government has introduced legislation that is expected to lead to wide and significant change in the education system, and the way in which schools are funded, managed, governed and held accountable. The Academies Act sought to *“enable more schools to become academies and give them the freedoms and flexibilities to continue to drive up standards”*.
4. In York both of the Voluntary Aided Church of England secondary schools, Manor and Archbishop Holgate’s, elected to convert to academy status in April 2011. Both schools remain committed to working closely with other schools in the city and with the local authority. Both schools have continued to purchase a wide range of support services from the local authority and are keen to contribute to the new Education Partnership.
5. The governing bodies of maintained schools across the city will wish to monitor developments nationally and to keep the option of academy conversion under review. An ongoing concern for many heads and governing bodies is the uncertainty regarding future

funding levels for all schools and for the services and support provided by the local authority.

6. The DfE is currently consulting schools and local authorities on the introduction of a national funding formula. The DfE have indicated that there will be equity in the funding of maintained schools and academies. Local authorities continue to express concerns regarding the levels of funding that may be taken from core local authority budgets. It is expected that some changes to standardise the way that central LA budgets are allocated to academies will be introduced from 2012/13.
7. The Education Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on in January 2011. The bill was due to proceed to Report stage on the 18 October 2011 and is expected to receive Royal Assent later this year. The Bill:
 - provides for the introduction of targeted free early years care for children under compulsory school age:
 - makes changes to provisions on school discipline and places restrictions on the public reporting of allegations made against teachers
 - abolishes five quangos: the General Teaching Council for England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and the Young Person's Learning Agency and gives new powers to the Secretary of State as a consequence of some of these changes
 - removes certain duties on school governing bodies, local authorities and further education institutions, including the duty on local authorities to appoint school improvement partners
 - makes changes to the arrangements for setting up new schools, and amends the Academies Act 2010 to make provision for 16 to 19 academies and alternative provision academies
 - includes measures relating to school admissions, school meals, composition of school governing bodies, school inspection, & school finance All schools will continue to have to comply with the School Admissions Code. Local authorities will play a strong role in ensuring fair admissions in their area. The Bill removes the duty on local authorities to establish an Admission Forum for the area
8. There is no specific template from Government about the future relationship between a local authority and local schools. The Government's stated principle is to devolve power to schools and to strip away unnecessary bureaucracy. *"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.”

9. The future role of the local authority is described positively in the Bill as being the champion of children, parents, and families in ensuring the quality of education and ‘services supporting education’. In particular, councils’ key function in supporting vulnerable groups is emphasised. Overall the approach to local government is permissive with a major deregulation of councils’ role, including removing school based performance targets and repealing aspects of children’s trust legislation, but retaining key statutory responsibilities including the requirement for a Director of Children’s Services and a Lead Member. Importantly, the Bill continues to envisage a central role for councils in driving up school improvement through a commissioning/quality assurance role rather than necessarily the direct delivery of school improvement services.

Consultation

10. It is worth restating that we absolutely believe as a LA that this is not a time for defensiveness, for retreating to protect the status quo, or for denying that improvements are necessary. It is a time which presents us with an opportunity to establish new leadership arrangements in the city - a newly constituted strategic partnership of schools and the local authority with clearer collective decision-making about both strategy and funding arrangements
11. Following wide consultation the proposals for the York Education Partnership were strongly endorsed by the education community. The Partnership provides a local opportunity in which schools, with support from the local authority, can continue to work together in providing the best possible educational experience for all children and young people across the city. This is a challenging agenda given the national context of diminishing resources and the potential for fragmentation of the community of schools if schools choose not to work in collaboration with each other and the local authority.

The York Education Partnership – Progress to Date

12. During the summer term an Interim Board was established in order to progress the work needed to establish the York Education Partnership. The Interim Board has now concluded its work and the following paragraphs describe the terms of reference & the membership of the full Board of the Education Partnership. More detail is provided in Annex 1.

13. The purpose of the Education Partnership is to:
 - promote sector-led collaboration between all schools in York for the benefit of the children and young people of the city
 - champion a vision for 0-25 education in the city in the wider context of the Children and Young People's Plan
 - build capacity in the system for school improvement, embracing and generating opportunities for school to school support
 - commission a comprehensive range of high quality services needed to support schools – either from the local authority or external providers
 - approve strategic plans concerning Early Years, Special Educational Needs, 14-19 Strategy, the education of Looked After Children, & the provision of services offered by the Danesgate Community
 - provide oversight and scrutiny of school admission arrangements and to consider any proposals for changes to school organisation
 - carry out the statutory functions and duties of the Schools Forum. The statutory regulations concerning the duties and membership of the School Forum are subject to review and further change

14. Whilst not, at this point, established as a specific legal entity or legal partnership the Board shares a long term vision for the delivery of excellence in the education of children and young people in the City of York. This is a strong example of publicly funded institutions working collaboratively for the benefit of the wider city an approach which is fully in line with the council's commitment to being a cooperative council.

15. The partnership seeks to draw representatives from leaders of all forms of publicly funded schools & FE colleges in the York community. The Partnership needs to be large enough to be inclusive and representative whilst, at the same time, small enough to be focussed and effective.

16. The Membership of the Board will include:
 - a. an independent chair appointed by the Board
 - b. seven primary headteachers: one to be nominated by each of the six York cluster groups and the seventh to be the Chair of the York Primary Heads' Forum
 - c. four secondary headteachers to be nominated by the Secondary Heads' Group and Chair of the Secondary Forum

- d. One headteacher of a Special School to be agreed by Special School headteachers
 - e. one FE College Principal to be nominated by the Principals' Group
 - f. two Chairs of Schools Governing Bodies to be elected from and by the chairs of governors
 - g. one Early Years PVI sector representative
 - h. the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (non-voting)
 - i. an opposition Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (non-voting)
17. The Interim Board proposed that the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Lead Opposition Member should be invited to join the Partnership, as non-voting members. This is the same arrangement that is in place currently for elected members who serve on the Schools Forum, which is governed by regulation.
18. Elected members of all parties value the relationships that have been established with leaders of the education community over many years and have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Partnership. The Cabinet Member will also consider with the Board those advisory and decision-making functions that may be carried out by the Board in future.

Chairing the York Education Partnership

19. The question of who should chair the proposed Partnership prompted a diverse range of responses during the consultation period. Many emphasised the importance of qualities of integrity, independence and educational expertise. Some suggested a retired headteacher, others proposed the appointment of a serving headteacher, but most believed that greater independence from individual institutions was required. The Board agreed that, on balance, an independent chair should be appointed, mirroring the arrangements in place for appointing the chairs of the local Safeguarding Boards.
20. The Interim Board considered possible nominations and decided to approach Mr David Cameron, a highly experienced and independent educationalist. Mr Cameron is known following his attendance at the York Headteachers' Conference earlier this year. Mr Cameron is a former Director of Children's Services in Stirling and prior to that Head of Education in East Lothian. His background is in teaching and he has extensive experience in school management at all levels and of leading major national development of curriculum and

assessment. He has held the office of President of the Association of Directors of Education Scotland and has been involved with a range of national groups, notably on Curriculum for Excellence and Looked After Children.

21. Mr Cameron has recently accepted the offer to chair the Education Partnership Board. The Interim Board is confident that he will bring a passionate, expert and rigorously independent approach to the role. The Board agreed to appoint the chair for an initial term of one year.

Establishing the York Education Partnership

22. The York Education Partnership will hold its first formal meeting in November. The membership of the Partnership is now being finalised following election of the various representatives. Initial business for the early meetings of the Board is expected to include:
 - confirmation of the Board's terms of reference and the detailed constitution of the Partnership
 - progress with the Teaching School Alliance Bid
 - review of educational attainment 2010/2011 and priorities for improving performance and the commissioning of school to school support
 - capital and revenue budgets for schools and LA in 2012/14
 - review of school admission arrangements and plans to address increasing demand in the primary sector
 - review of specialist services provided by the Danesgate Community and the impact of DfE proposals on funding of Pupil Referral Units
 - feedback from termly LA briefing of headteachers and governors
23. As noted above, the York Education Partnership will carry out the functions of the local Schools Forum, a body that is currently subject to statutory regulations. The Education Partnership will ensure that it meets the statutory regulations that govern membership. It is expected that the regulations governing the operation of Schools Forums will be revised significantly as further reforms are introduced by government.
24. In order to reduce bureaucracy and overlap between consultative groups the Joint Consultative Group (JCG) and the 14-19 Resources & Strategy Group has been stood down. Consultation on emerging key issues will continue to be carried out via termly briefings of all headteachers and governors which continue to be attended by representatives of all schools.

25. A key focus for the York Education Partnership will be the development of a new approach to the commissioning and delivery of School Improvement Services.

Changes to the School Improvement Service

26. The White Paper, “The Importance of Teaching”, brought radical changes to school improvement across the country. The national and local picture is still evolving and LAs now have vastly different models for school improvement. With the transfer of National Strategies funding to individual schools, the LA has needed to make significant reductions in its school improvement service. The LA has retained a small school improvement team (The Hub) to fulfil our continued statutory responsibilities.
27. On behalf of the York Education Partnership and the LA, the Hub will be accountable for:
- monitoring the performance for all schools
 - monitoring the impact of interventions in maintained schools and as agreed with DfE in academies
 - targeted support for maintained schools below floor standards and support for those at risk to improve quickly
 - commissioning new provision, brokering support for school improvement
 - allocation of resources for vulnerable schools from the Vulnerable Schools Fund (£200k) including the commissioning of school to school support and support from other providers
 - development of school to school support from the School Improvement Commissioning Budget
 - deployment of the City of York School Improvement Team, NLEs (National Leaders in Education), LLEs (Local Leaders in Education) and SLEs (Specialist Leaders in Education) although this needs to be explored alongside any future Teaching School Alliance
 - quality assurance of external and internal school improvement providers
28. The Hub will discharge its LA statutory duties and support the work of the new partnership with regard to the monitoring of school performance and interventions. It will also commission school improvement including school-to-school support and fulfil the new expectations of dialogue with the DfE. It will report to the York Education Partnership on the number of schools below floor

standards, those at risk and other vulnerable schools, the impact and quality of interventions (including school to school support), outcomes of meetings with the DfE, resources and allocations, and updates on OFSTED inspections.

29. The Hub will support the Education Partnership as it seeks to build capacity in the system for school improvement, embracing and generating opportunities for school to school support, building on recent success, evident in this year's results.
30. Annex 2 summarises the examination results for the city for Key Stages 2, 4 and 5 for the academic year 2010/11. The results are based on available data and are provisional. National results have yet to be released for certain key stages.

Governance Update

31. The Interim Board proposed that chairs of governing bodies should be represented on the board of the Education Partnership and elections are currently underway to determine the appointment of two representatives.
32. Schools in York are exceptionally well supported by volunteer governors and the LA is grateful for their commitment and contribution. Governor Support and Development Service has also achieved much over the year 2010-2011. This saw the first full year of delivering accredited governor training in partnership with York St John University. The arrangement has worked well and University tutors have been greatly impressed by the standard of work produced by governors towards accreditation. The next step will be to look at ways to evaluate the impact of the training on practice within governing bodies.
33. In response to the national education agenda the service has developed a toolkit to inform and assist governing bodies to consider whether Academy conversion is right for their school. The toolkit has been evaluated by others, including an Academy chair of governors, to ensure that it is unbiased and covers all aspects to be considered prior to applying for Academy status and accurately reflects the conversion process.
34. Some of the notable highlights compared to our statistical neighbours are as follows:
 - lowest LA governor vacancy rate (1.1%)
 - lowest overall governor vacancy rate (6.6%)

- lowest number of governor vacancies lasting for more than 6 months (0%)
- highest percentage of governing bodies subscribing to governor training (100%)
- highest percentage of new governors attending training (82%)

Implications

35. There are no specific Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, IT, Property or Risk Management implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

36. The paragraphs above describe progress in establishing the York Education Partnership. Feedback from consultation demonstrated a strong desire to retain an inclusive and collective approach to the education of children and young people in York. The establishment of the York Education Partnership represents a significant step in maintaining the unique collaboration between schools, and between the schools and the local authority, that exists in the city.
37. We have moved on from what, to some, looked to be an imminent world of institutional fragmentation and the strategic and financial emasculation of the LA. Commitments to partnership working have resounded, the Bill makes LA powers explicit and amongst the most difficult budget round possible the LA support for school improvement has been proportionately maintained. The opportunity to continue to provide an educational experience which is the envy of most and which genuinely seeks to liberate all remains deliverable.

Recommendations

38. Cabinet is recommended to support the formation of the York Education Partnership.
39. *Reason: Following wide consultation the proposals for the York Education partnership were strongly endorsed by the education community. The Partnership will provide a local opportunity in which schools, with support from the local authority, can continue to work together in providing the best possible educational experience for all children and young people across the city.*

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Specialist Implications Officer(s): None			
Wards affected: List wards or tick box to indicate	All	✓	
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Annexes

Annex 1 – York Education Partnership Draft Constitution

Annex 2 – Summary of the examination results for the city for Key Stages 2, 4 and 5 for the academic year 2010/11