

Education Reform News

July 2017

A briefing on the government's education reform agenda

Welcome back....

Much has happened over the last few months, not least a General Election. It is still unclear as to the future policy direction, particularly around the "Schools that work for Everyone" proposals concerning grammar schools but work continues around other aspects of the national education reform agenda. It is therefore timely to provide a short update on what North Yorkshire and others have been progressing whilst the national picture remains to be clarified by the new government.

The continuation of Justine Greening MP as Secretary of State will also be supplemented with the appointment of one of North Yorkshire's local MPs – Robert Goodwill – as the new Minister of State for Children and Families. His role and remit have now been clarified and include responsibility for child protection, children in care, care leavers and adoption, early years and childcare, special educational needs and disabilities, school sports and healthy pupils and oversight of the 12 Opportunity Areas. We have recently hosted a visit from him as part of his induction into this new role. Supported by key civil servants, the Minister not only met the Leader and Executive Member with senior officers but also welcomed the opportunity to discuss practice with front line staff of the LA and partners. During the visit he also spent time with young people who had experienced the care system in North Yorkshire. Further visits to local services are already planned. We anticipate that the appointment of a local MP into such a key role will see further opportunities to enhance the high national profile of our practice both in these areas and in relation to our work on the North Yorkshire Coast Opportunities Area and look forward to working closely with him over coming months.

Future role of the LA in education

We now, post purdah, await government's response to the Wood Review on the Role of the LA in Education. We have seen his submission and welcome the summary which describes his view that achieving a world class education system "is made more difficult if local authorities are not the key strategic partner of national government". He goes on to identify three key roles:

Ambition and challenge

To advocate for high standards of pupil attainment, celebrate and promote success of the system and to be timely in identifying and ensuring an effective response at the first sign of an institution beginning to struggle.

Equity and cohesion

To ensure sufficient places and arrangements are available, particularly for vulnerable, able and disabled children; that they are offered on a transparent and fair basis; and for ensuring a range of school types is available for parents to express a preference for.

Regulation and fidelity

To ensure children are attending school or educated otherwise; for child protection issues to be consistently and effectively dealt with; and resources are spent on the purposes they were provided for.

He cites “a moral argument about equity and justice” because the Local Authority

- “carries the ambition of residents for a local education service
- Is linked closely to every school irrespective of constitutional status by virtue of its role as the Children’s Services Authority
- Is the body which local people expect to “do something” to ensure public money is used wisely and local children are provided with quality education
- Has access to funding for capital development via regeneration
- Has a view beyond the interest of one school or a group of schools
- Its strategic planning reach takes account of what is happening beyond its boundary
- Has a statutory duty toward each and every child in its area irrespective of the school they attend – “your schools but our children!”

We await the publication of the Government’s response with interest.

Developing a North Yorkshire “Learning Trust”

You will recall that at its meeting in November last year, the North Yorkshire Education Partnership endorsed work to explore the development of a North Yorkshire Learning Trust which would bring together a wider group of interests, including Further and Higher Education providers, the LEP, academy trusts, independent schools and training providers. There is real potential for building on the Education Partnership, the Children’s Trust and the School Improvement Partnerships to create a dynamic agent for change and support for all education providers in the county and proposals would also sit well within the Regional Schools Commissioner’s new Regional Strategic School Improvement Board arrangements.

Two workshops were held recently to discuss how the proposal could be developed and taken forward and a presentation was made to the Partnership in May reporting on the key points and feedback from the workshops which reflected the views of those who participated in these sessions. In summary:

- Key challenges identified as transitions between phases of education, home/school and into work, curriculum gaps, breadth and balance, equity of opportunity, workforce recruitment and retention, collaboration and strategic planning of the right provision in the right places

- What a Learning Trust could bring in terms of additional value: a catalyst which enables the system to develop strategic responses to strategic change; a vehicle to access funding through other bodies; meaningful collaboration between stakeholders connecting key influences from education, business and the wider community
- The body would be independent of vested interest and outward looking to influence national and regional policy, highlighting the most critical challenges for North Yorkshire. An influential body but not executive decision making which celebrates and shares success across North Yorkshire and has high aspirations for North Yorkshire children and young people.
- The group would be small: between 9-11 individuals invited to join the Trust, all non-executive, who are knowledgeable, operating at system level and influential in their sector: supporting secretariat provided by the Local Authority: at arms length from any body providing it with funding or resources.
- The group would have working relationships with schools/colleges, business and employers, the LA, and other national, regional and local stakeholders
- Next steps will be to undertake wider dialogue with schools and other stakeholders with recruitment to the Trust during autumn 2017 to enable formation of the Trust from early 2018.

Officers have now been commissioned by the Partnership to work up proposals further over the next term with a view to the Council's Executive being asked to consider these early in the Autumn Term. Your views are very much welcomed.

Working with the RSC team

We continue to work very closely with the RSC team with Jan and her colleagues being down in County Hall for at least two meetings over the past month. This reflects a growing understanding on the part of all that national uncertainties on respective roles is best overcome by ever more joined up conversations locally. Whether we are discussing new schools, opportunity areas, "coasting" branded schools or MAT capacity it must make sense and support improvement if we harness the knowledge and ideas of all.

Small schools

The Yorkshire Post ran a major feature last weekend on the sustainability of small schools in the county. It proved a factually accurate and balanced piece. The coverage had been stimulated by a number of school closure consultations either underway, under consideration or completed. These are difficult times and we are very keen to reiterate the LA position. We still believe that small schools enhanced by partnership arrangements of whatever form can continue to deliver quality local education within rural locations. Tiny schools detached from such partnerships face real financial, recruitment and as a result performance challenges. We do believe we have developed collective learning on what constitutes effective partnership working and in discussion with Diocesan director this week agreed to be more explicit about those elements. Truly integrated governance will feature for example in that analysis.

North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area

Work is well underway on the Opportunity Area programme covering Scarborough, Whitby and Filey. Twelve Opportunity Areas have been created in the UK by DfE to support areas with the greatest challenges in relation to social mobility. Opportunity Areas will see local partnerships formed with early years providers, schools, colleges, universities, businesses, charities and local authorities to support children, young people and families on the Coast. Young people from less

affluent backgrounds on the Coast are less likely to progress well through education compared to national and county performance. When they find work as adults, their wages are then significantly less than the median weekly salary of employees. However, the Coast is anticipating strong job growth in the coming years and there is high levels of commitment from business, schools and new provision such as Coventry University Scarborough to build capacity and try new approaches. We believe that this programme provides an opportunity for parents, young people and the wider community to come together so that every single child and young person, no matter where they live or what job their parents have got, grow up with the skills, experiences and opportunities they need to explore and pursue their passions.

The North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area also builds on pioneering work by North Yorkshire County Council. The Council previously committed £750,000 to an initiative called the Scarborough Pledge to bring about a community-wide shift in attitude about expectations for the area's young people. Progress has already been made on improving literacy skills, providing cultural experiences and attracting high quality teachers and teaching to the Coast. Further public announcements about the programme will be after June's General Election, but local meetings and partnership discussions will continue over the coming months. Updates will also be available through twitter at @coastoa.

Chartered College of Teaching

The [Chartered College](#) is a new, independent organisation set up with the purpose of enhancing the professional status and improving the professional framework for teaching in England. The Chartered College is the successor to the [College of Teachers](#), which was founded in 1846 by teachers concerned about standards within their profession. Dame Alison Peacock was appointed as the college's first CEO and took on the role full time at the start of 2017.

The Chartered College is an autonomous organisation, established to promote the "learning, improvement and recognition of the art, science and practice of teaching for the public benefit". It works in partnership with associations, unions and learned societies to build on the best of teaching and emerging research evidence covering all phases of education and subject specialisms and to provide an independent, authoritative voice for the teaching profession. The College aims to provide a professional body akin to those for medicine, accountancy and surveying eg the Royal College of Surgeons, Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. A useful briefing has been provided by the Local Government Information Unit which can be [downloaded here](#).

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