



Our Ref: CL/AB/MES

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The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
By email: [ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ministers@education.gsi.gov.uk)

Dear Mrs Morgan

We write to add our voices to that of others in expressing serious concern about the element of the White Paper that proposes forced academisation of all schools.

North Yorkshire, the largest geographic footprint of any Local Authority, has a well-established and strong reputation for its education and children's services. The County Council has recognised that success in this field necessitates a highly collaborative approach which fully embraces the contribution of education and sector leaders at all levels. The impact of such an inclusive approach is evidenced by rates of improvement towards good and outstanding education significantly ahead of other parts of the country. We currently see 87% of our young people attending such schools and are confident that we will achieve our 90% ambition for 2017. We have also made important progress in closing the gap in outcomes achieved by vulnerable groups and within more disadvantaged communities.

This inclusive and successful approach has seen a positive facilitated growth in Teaching School Alliances and a strengthening of our relationships with existing academies and MATs. Our obsession remains on quality education and not institutional form. If schools wish to convert that is a matter for them and they remain part of the North Yorkshire education community. To date only 8-10% have.

There is much in the ambitious language of the White Paper that we welcome and endorse. The recognition that "education is the hallmark of a civilized society" and the "best investment we can make in the future of our country" could have been written locally. It mirrors the words of our Children and Young People's Plan "Young and Yorkshire" which describes education as "our greatest liberator".

We differ when considering how such ambitions should be realised. Whilst DfE recognises that “outcomes matter more than methods” and schools should be freed from the rigidity of an overly prescriptive national curriculum or specific teaching methodology, the same approach strangely does not apply to organisational form despite the mixed and at times conflicting evidence base. Highly successful education leaders who have delivered great outcomes will, in the proposed White Paper, lose their existing autonomy to decide. We are greatly concerned about taking such an ideological approach which also risks providing an unnecessary distraction of these key leaders from their current focus on local improvement.

In addition I would also repeat our significant concern about the implications of the approach proposed in the White Paper to both small primary and small secondary schools. Again our collaborative approach to partnerships between schools has enabled local, if high quality, schools to be sustained as part of the local community infrastructure. The trajectory of improved outcomes described earlier applies equally to our smaller schools. We share the concern expressed by others that the forced academisation approach will increase the likelihood of the closure of small schools and see the LA picking up the costs of children travelling significant further distances for statutory education.

We do hope further consideration will be given to the proposals.

Can we also take the opportunity to offer an invitation for you to visit North Yorkshire at any time. You will be most welcome in a county of great natural beauty but also a place with much to contribute to the current debate on improving education and children’s services outcomes.

Yours sincerely



Carl Les  
Leader of the Council



Arthur Barker  
Executive Member (Schools)