

# White Paper News

## 29 April 2016

### Briefing on the government's White Paper "Educational excellence everywhere"

It's hard to realise that it is still only 43 days since the publication of the White Paper "Educational Excellence Everywhere".

As you will have seen there has been a tremendous amount of national discussion and debate in the media, amongst schools, local authorities, MPs and indeed at a parliamentary level. If the purpose of a White Paper is to encourage discussion and pave the way for legislation it is certainly achieving that.

A statement of intent has been made by the Government regarding a direction of travel towards a fully academised system. What is not so clear is the manner in which that will come about. If the national engagement in the debate has been high, so has the local with many good individual and collective conversations underway and more to follow. This is necessary and welcomed and we are keen as an LA to be open and actively engaged wherever possible.

For areas such as North Yorkshire, where the numbers of existing academies are very small (below 8%), the challenge for schools is to ensure they are in good, productive and quality arrangements which will secure improvement as well as retaining appropriate levels of autonomy. As you will know existing and new Multi Academy Trusts do - and will - vary both in terms of their style/culture and indeed effectiveness. Try and view "due diligence" as something that operates both ways and ensure, if exploring options, there is organisational and cultural fit.

As we have said previously, part of our local strategy is to ensure that we are communicating well across the school community. It is really important that individual and groups of schools feel empowered to make good timely decisions.

## **The Local Authority's position**

Our position remains clear and consistent with our ambitions for all schools to be good or outstanding and welcoming the essential role school/sector led improvement plays as a key component of that.

In terms of academy status:

- We are not concerned with the “name over the door” – we are concerned with what best drives and embeds improvement
- We do feel that where possible and appropriate local solutions bring additional value and believe that there is much about “community of place” and “leadership of place” that remains important.
- We want to work closely and positively with all current academies, academy trusts and teaching school alliances and also positively fulfil a role in enabling the growth and development of new organisational forms.

In terms of facilitating further academies:

- We are concerned about the relative lack of capacity in the region in terms of MATs to take in the 92% of non-academy schools in North Yorkshire.
- We are actively encouraging good and outstanding schools in strategic locations and existing partnerships/teaching school alliances to form MATs. We are also in dialogue with the Diocesan Authorities to discuss their ambitions.
- We are already working with some groups of schools to support and facilitate their thinking. The decisions to be made are ultimately for schools, but we can help with setting the scene, enabling school leaders/governors to consider the wider picture, and with modelling options.

## **So what can we do to help?**

- We want to encourage open debate and avoid, wherever possible, any sense that discussions need to be secretive. Sharing intelligence will help us fulfil our facilitative role.
- We acknowledge there is also some anxiety in some areas of the school community following the publication of the White Paper. We want to support schools to make the right decisions at the right time and we are concerned that rapid decisions may not always be the right ones.
- We can facilitate workshops for groups of headteachers and governors
- We can instigate if necessary or indeed join discussions between schools/existing academies/MATs/TSAs or try and answer specific queries that may exist on eg funding/HR issues

- We can simply provide – as we always have – a knowledgeable objective and confidential sounding board for headteachers and governors

## Next steps

Aligned to the White Paper, we will be clarifying future roles for the LA and, in particular, the School Improvement Service. Some are asking whether we will develop the suggested option of an arms-length umbrella trust. At this stage we are keen to understand this further and discuss with yourselves. Our early thinking recognises that there are some risks in confusing our future “championing” role with that of direct delivery arrangements, but we are interested and want to understand any opportunities there may be. It is still early days in terms of the developing scene. We do anticipate that those looking for “places to shop” will be able to access a rich School Improvement Traded Service.

There will be many opportunities created for further discussions on both an individual and collective basis in the coming weeks.

We want to be involved. We are available to help. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Your Local Authority contacts

**Pete Dwyer, Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service**

email: [pete.dwyer@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:pete.dwyer@northyorks.gov.uk) – telephone: 01609 532234

**Carolyn Bird, Assistant Director – Strategy and Commissioning**

email: [Carolyn.bird@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.bird@northyorks.gov.uk) – telephone: 01609 532740

**Jill Hodges, Assistant Director – Education and Skills**

email: [jill.hodges@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:jill.hodges@northyorks.gov.uk) – telephone: 01609 532843

**Anton Hodge, Assistant Director – Strategic Resources**

email: [anton.hodge@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:anton.hodge@northyorks.gov.uk) – telephone: 01609 532727

Visit: [cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/educationwhitepaper](https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/educationwhitepaper)

Any comments on this or any suggestions for future issues  
please email us at [pete.dwyer@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:pete.dwyer@northyorks.gov.uk) or [carolyn.bird@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:carolyn.bird@northyorks.gov.uk)