

Chair of Governors
School Address

#

Peter Dwyer
Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service

Paul Brennan
Assistant Director – Education & Skills
County Hall, Northallerton
North Yorkshire, DL7 8AE

Our ref: PB/AWL

Tel: 01609 532166

Contact: Paul Brennan

E-mail: paul.brennan@northyorks.gov.uk
Web: www.northyorks.gov.uk

18 July 2017

Dear Chair of Governors

First and foremost I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, your colleague governors and your school team for all your hard work, commitment and achievements over the past year, one of continued turbulence and challenge. I would also like to update you briefly about Local Authority (LA) developments that may impact upon your work in the coming year.

Ofsted

Across North Yorkshire we have been pleased to maintain 90% of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. However, the number of schools nationally that have been judged as either requiring improvement or inadequate since Christmas has shown a marked increase and is close to 50%. Ofsted tell us that this is for broadly two reasons. Firstly, there are a number of 'good' and 'outstanding' schools that have not been inspected for many years and which have failed to keep up with recent changes in education. These schools have often isolated themselves from challenge and support. A second reason has been long-term persistent challenge faced by schools. We would recognise these factors in North Yorkshire school inspections. Key areas of focus for inspections now are; safeguarding, the progress of vulnerable groups, 'Prevent', British values and the quality and breadth of the curriculum.

Academy programme in North Yorkshire

In North Yorkshire 345 (89%) schools are maintained by the LA and 11% are now academies. We know that some more schools are considering becoming academies in the near future and this will bring the total percentage to about 15% by the end of 2017. In the longer term further schools are also exploring academy status.

I would like to clarify our approach to schools that are considering or have decided to become academies. Our priority is to ensure we have the best possible quality of educational provision for all children in all schools in North Yorkshire and we are focusing relentlessly upon school improvement. As yet no conclusive evidence is available to show that the governance structure of schools has a significant impact on outcomes for pupils. This also appears to be the DfE's approach, a change from some months ago. Further, if a school is considering becoming an academy we would encourage them to make any decision based upon whether or not becoming an academy will improve the quality of provision for the children in the school and the children of the community that the school serves.

We believe that the benefits of being a maintained school, working in close partnership with other schools and the LA is a cost effective and proven model upon which to move forward. We actively encourage schools to consider partnerships and federations as steps to closer working. The financial benefits that once accrued from academy status are no longer in place and the 'earned' autonomy that governors and headteachers enjoy as maintained schools is greater than that enjoyed within most, if not all, Multi Academy Trusts. If you are considering academy status please do speak to your school improvement adviser in the first instance. If you do choose to become an academy please also speak to us and we will help support your journey to ensure that you have all the help you need to make this a success. However, once governors decide to become an academy they can never reverse this decision. If your school does become an academy we will commit to continued working in close partnership with you but we will not (legally) be able to provide services that divert funding intended for maintained schools.

The future of North Yorkshire County Council in Education

North Yorkshire is a large, strong local authority, it was judged 'good' in its Ofsted inspection of children's services and it has a full range of services to support schools these include: HR, Payroll, Finance, Legal, communications, planning, school improvement, safeguarding, health and safety, inclusion, governor support, educational psychology, behaviour and attendance, ethnic minority achievement, Music, Outdoor Learning, transport, school visits, FMS and others. The LA is committed to maintaining all these services and all these services continue to thrive. Any maintained school will continue to benefit from immediate access to one of the most comprehensive levels of support available anywhere in the country. The County Council has committed to maintaining its support for schools in this way.

The LA has a statutory responsibility for "promoting high standards in schools and among other providers so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential"; this is set down under section 13A of the Education Act 1996 and it applies to all children in the area whether they attend maintained schools or academies. In this context the LA has a duty to hold all schools to account for their standards and how well they meet their statutory responsibilities. This will include continued monitoring, challenge and support from the School Improvement Service working in close partnership with the Teaching School Alliances, Dioceses and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Currently we are evaluating the way that school improvement is carried out across the county and I will be writing to you again in the new school year to update you with progress on that matter.

The Children and Young People's Plan: Young & Yorkshire 2

"A place of opportunity where all children and young people are happy, healthy and achieving"

In 2014 the LA published its ambition for all children and young people in the county in one county-wide plan; Young and Yorkshire. That document has now been refreshed. It continues to be ambitious and it places schools at the heart of children's services. The new document is about to be published and you will be sent a copy, it builds upon the strengths and successes of schools over the past four years and wide ranging consultation including with children, young people and their families. Three key outcomes have been retained;

- A Happy family life – Strong families and vibrant communities

- A Healthy start to life – Safe and healthy lifelong lifestyles
- Education is our greatest liberator – High aspirations, opportunities and achievements

In 2014 the North Yorkshire Education Partnership was formed to replace the schools' forum. In reviewing its work the Education Partnership has identified that the establishment of a North Yorkshire Education Trust would bring together all the relevant parties to ensure that the best possible synergies are maintained across the county. Further details of this development will be communicated to schools in the autumn term.

Budgets

One overriding concern that we hear repeatedly from schools is about finance and resources. We are in close liaison with the DfE and ESfA making plain the concerns of schools and the impact of budget changes in different parts of the county across phases and sizes of schools. If you as a group of governors continue to have major concerns please don't hesitate to contact my colleague Anton Hodge or his team and we will make sure that you have every support.

Tests, SATs, GCSEs and A Levels

The provisional primary Test results were published in the first week of July and across the county from Early Years to Key Stage 2 we have seen a significantly larger rise in standards than that experienced nationally. We now await the vital GCSE and A Level results and we wish all schools well for results day.

Finally, please accept my very best wishes for what remainder of the summer term with all its wealth of exciting events and very best wishes for a well-earned summer break.

Yours sincerely



Paul Brennan
Assistant Director, Education and Skills

NEW Bronze, Silver and Gold School Improvement Advisory Packages

North Yorkshire School Improvement Service packages enable you to know in advance that you have been able to secure regular high quality expertise and support from one or more school improvement advisers. Termly visits from a school improvement adviser provide you with objective challenge and support for self-evaluation, and moderation of judgements. Written reports provide evidence of effective leadership and management for governors, trustees and Ofsted.

"Our adviser has been both challenging and hugely supportive and has a thorough knowledge of our strengths and areas for development and is constantly pushing us to strive for excellence. Her expertise and experience in developing teaching and learning has been invaluable in moving our school forward. She has calibrated my judgements and those of the senior team through joint lesson observations and provides really honest and helpful feedback," Headteacher North Yorkshire Community Primary School, July 2017.

Early booking will secure convenient dates during the academic year.

Bronze Advisory Package £1320

- Bronze provides your school with three half day visits – each followed by a written report - from a school improvement or Early Years adviser. Typically, the same adviser would visit the Headteacher termly to support monitoring and self-evaluation activity. Alternatively, you may choose to book time with a subject (English or mathematics) or aspect adviser (eg: safeguarding) as part of the Bronze advisory package.
- Telephone and email support during the academic year included within this package at no additional charge.

Silver Advisory Package £1760

- Silver provides your school with a half day Headteacher Performance Management meeting in addition to the three half day visits and telephone/email support provided by Bronze. All four visits will be followed by a written report.

Gold Advisory Package £2350

- Gold provides your school with a full day advisory visit, typically for the purpose of subject specific support or a review (whole school, department, pupil premium, governance) in addition to the four half day visits and telephone/email support provided by Silver. All five visits will be followed by a written report.

A few examples of indicative charges for one- off purchase of improvement advisor work:

- Training event in your school: 3 hours £330
- Advisory visit with written report: Half day £480, full day £650 (£1000 if two advisers for a review).

Reduced prices for additional advice or training/coaching are available to schools who buy a package.

Multiple schools in eligible partnerships may secure a reduction in prices.

To discuss your requirements please contact the School Improvement Business Support Team via eands.smartsolutions@northyorks.gov.uk , 01609 798864 or speak to your SmartSolutions relationship manager. Book via www.smartsolutions/northyorks.gov.uk