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Service

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Dear Colleague

ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 / 2019

I hope that you have had a restful and well deserved break and have enjoyed spending time with friends and families over the summer.

I am taking this opportunity at the beginning of term to make you aware of a number of highly significant challenges across North Yorkshire in terms of finance, exclusion and SEND. These issues will be the subject of further discussion through headteacher and SENCo networks in the autumn to provide further opportunity to share our analysis and engage in discussion about how we collectively address these areas. However I thought it imperative to share the headline information with you prior to these meetings.

Exclusions

Analysis of the latest 2016/17 DfE statistical release data released in July identifies a worrying increase in the trends of exclusion in North Yorkshire. We have gone from below national and regional benchmarks for incidents of exclusion to a rate of increase significantly above, 42% in comparison to 13% nationally.

We are now ranked **14th** out of 152 local authority areas for increases in fixed term exclusions from 2015/16 – 2016/17 and the incidence rate/100 pupils is also significantly higher at a rate of 5.8% in comparison to 3.5% for statistical neighbours.

Permanent exclusions in 2016/17 for secondary pupils is similar to national figures but ranks us as **57th** out of 152 nationally which again is of concern especially when we know that permanent exclusion has such a detrimental effect on future life chances and long term cost to society. A recent study revealed a £370K cost to society for each child who has been permanently excluded and a higher incidence of children entering the criminal justice system, experiencing mental health problems and disengagement with society.

When we have compared our internal data for the academic year 2017/18 (as yet unpublished) we can see the increasing trend for both fixed term and permanent exclusion continuing:

- 28.5% increase in fixed term exclusions from 2016/17
- Additional 143 children subject to fixed term exclusion from 2016/17 totalling 2097 children
- 109 permanent exclusions – a 26.7% increase from 2016/17

On a very positive note in 2017/18 310 out of a total of 348 schools did not permanently exclude and 201 schools did not issue any fixed term exclusion. Over the past three years 295 primaries and 5 secondary schools have not excluded any children. This highlights that we have a high number of very inclusive schools and we intend to negotiate how we can use the expertise within these schools to improve performance across the sector.

However we also have a small number of schools that have unacceptable levels of exclusion, fourteen secondary schools in North Yorkshire make up 54% of secondary fixed term and 51% of permanent exclusions in the county in 2017/18. We will be entering into discussions with these schools to discuss their plans to reduce exclusion early this term.

Identification of children with SEND

In 2017/18 we received 621 requests for statutory assessment. 41% of these requests did not result in a plan, 32% were refused at point of request as the SEN team were of the view that needs could be met at SEN support by schools. 9% underwent assessment but again it was agreed that needs could be met by schools without the need for a plan or additional funding.

This appears to suggest that some schools are requesting statutory assessment unnecessarily and are not utilising the framework for SEN Support to meet need. We intend to undertake more work in this area to understand why this is happening.

High Needs Block Funding

North Yorkshire receives a total of £46.5 million to support the education of children and young people with special educational needs. As you are aware there is immense demand on this budget and we are currently predicting a minimum of a **£5.5 million** overspend for 2018/19. This level of deficit is not sustainable and despite ongoing lobbying to national government we do not expect to receive any significant uplift in funding in the future.

The strategic plan for special education provision will ensure that we reshape local provision longer term and thereby reduce costs but we have to take immediate action to address the current financial situation. Significant work has been undertaken over the summer period to establish a recovery plan to bring the budget back in line. The initial plans will be presented to the Schools Forum in September but some proposals will be uncomfortable and controversial.

As I have mentioned earlier we will have the opportunity to discuss the detail of the analysis undertaken at network meetings in the autumn term but we need to work together over the next year to address the issues that are causing this level of demand on services, assessment and budgets.

In the next few weeks we will be sending an individual performance score board to you and your Chair of Governors so you are aware of your school's performance in comparison to the county overall. We will then be requesting a meeting with schools that are outliers to discuss plans and how the local authority can support the school.

Schools Finance

Following receipt of school budgets, I can confirm that 1 in 5 North Yorkshire LA-maintained schools were in deficit at the start of the financial year. We know from your projections that within two years, a considerably higher number of schools are expecting to be in deficit and we recognise the general financial pressure on school budgets. Whilst we continue to lobby MPs and DfE for a fairer funding deal for North Yorkshire, we are, at the same time, looking at measures to support schools achieve a financially sustainable position. This will involve some difficult conversations; we will promote collaborative and innovative solutions where possible but the collective financial challenge facing schools across North Yorkshire will be significant and will require strong and tenacious leadership.

Standards

2018 Primary attainment:

The percentage of children in North Yorkshire achieving a good level of development in the EYFSP or the expected levels in KS1 and KS2 has increased in 2018. KS1 writing (+2.2%) and KS2 combined reading, writing and maths (+3.5%) seeing significant improvement.

Whilst we do not have access to official national data the early information we have suggests that North Yorkshire has improved in line with national trends.

Overall our performance remains broadly the same at KS5 this year and we are likely to remain above national. This is likely to be the case as well in KS4 based on early indications.

Thank you for all your dedication and hard work in securing the best outcomes we can for North Yorkshire young people.

Traded

There are a variety of new products being developed as traded services for schools. You will already have received information about 10 including Headteacher performance management. Our lead for this development Joy Willis is very keen to hear your thoughts and further develop bespoke trading with the information provided by schools and MATs. During this term there will be more information being distributed and discussions around future products.

School Improvement Strategy

We will be consulting on the School Improvement Strategy in October and November in preparation for implementation in January 2019. It would be greatly appreciated if you could have a read of this document when it is sent to you and provide feedback. Thank you.

Early Help

Our Children and Families Service is currently in the process of developing an Early Help Strategy in response to the publication of Working Together 2018. The strategy will set out how partners will work together to deliver our responsibilities to strategically plan and deliver Early Help services in North Yorkshire. It details the steps that we will take to streamline the early help processes, the support that needs to be provided to ensure that services are effectively working together and how we will keep children and families at the centre of our services; delivering support at the earliest opportunity. At the foundations of the strategy is the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 statutory guidance which emphasises the crucial role of effective early help and the focus on the collective responsibility of all agencies, including schools, to identify, assess and provide effective early help services.

The overall objective of early help is to address family needs to the point where they can be best met from within universal services. In North Yorkshire all agencies working with children and families are committed to early help and committed to addressing the needs of families whether or not that need falls within their immediate area of professional expertise. We hope this work will create the right foundations

to build on family strengths, ensuring young people receive the right service at the right time and in the right place.

Ofsted

Many of you may be aware that North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Service were subject to a rigorous Ofsted Inspection, shortly before the end of term break, with a team of nine from HMI working to the new ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) framework. We were extremely pleased that the inspection found the service to be Outstanding in all areas which is of national significance. North Yorkshire is the only Local Authority to have received an outstanding judgment for help and protection (Safeguarding) and the only local authority to have been judged Outstanding in all areas. This is not only down to the outstanding quality of the service but also reflects on the exceptional quality of partnership working across the county.

The Children's Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director for Social Care, and Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for England have all applauded this outcome and commented on its national significance for the social care sector. We are pleased to be seen as a lead in this crucial area of work but maintain considerable ambition to do even more for our young people in North Yorkshire, to ensure every child is able to reach their full potential irrespective of their start in life.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'R' or similar character, positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service