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Corporate Director - Children and Young People's
Service

Your ref:

Our ref: AN/AWL

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End of year 2020-21

I would like to start by thanking you, your staff, governors and school communities for the tremendous work that you have done over this school year. For many of us, 2020-21 presented us with the most challenging of circumstances faced in our working lives. The impact of the pandemic on day-to-day school life has been significant - everyone in the school community has had to work together to adapt to the changes required. Without your strong leadership, this would not have been possible, and so on behalf of the LA and your school communities, I wish to express huge gratitude. I sincerely hope that the end of term means that you will have the opportunity for a well-deserved rest and relaxation over the summer.

School Improvement (SI) strategy 2021-24

As we are wrapping up another year, I would like to share with you some changes to the council's school improvement strategy from September 2021.

Following the changes to the SI service last year, the service has developed four strategic priorities for the next 3 years: ***developing the service to ensure high quality work with schools; revision of the SI strategy; ensuring a culture of safeguarding; and developing effective collaboration to enhance the experience for all learners.*** During 2021-22, the key focus for our work is centred on 'knowing our schools'.

We are changing the way that the council monitors, supports and challenges maintained schools so that every LA school will benefit from a greater allocation of adviser time. We know that curriculum reform, changes to the inspection framework and the impact of the pandemic have brought new challenges for schools over the last few years and so we are pleased to offer additional core-funded adviser days from September.

In addition to the four priorities above we have four short term priorities for 2021-22: ***integrating governance into school improvement work; enhancing our SI offer for small schools; targeted support for areas of underperformance (eg reading, curriculum, outcomes for dis. pupils and those with SEND); and reviewing the quality of, and access to, EY and Post 16 provision.***

These eight priorities will be visible through the core offer for maintained schools and in our wider communications via briefings, networks and traded activity in schools and academies across the county.

Changes to the SI team

The service has a brand new leadership team from September:

- Rebekah Taylor will step into the role as head of the school improvement service

We will be welcoming three new principal advisers:

- Laura Birkett will have oversight and responsibility for medium to large primary schools and the early years team
- Andrea Walker will have oversight and responsibility for smaller primary schools and the governance team
- Louise Wilson will have oversight and responsibility for secondary and special schools and PRUs and the new safeguarding team

Julie Pattison and Matt Blyton will end their periods as interim principal advisers and will be returning to their roles as Senior Education Advisers (SEA). We appreciate the work they have done to step up, provide continuity and add capacity to the team this year.

We are sad to say goodbye to Christine Noyes after many years of service to the local authority and to the children and schools of North Yorkshire and we wish her a long and happy retirement. Some of Christine's responsibilities will be passed to Olivia Kelly, a new SEA. We will provide more information about this in the autumn.

Elaine Broadbent and John Banks have recently been appointed into new roles as Early Years Advisers and this will allow them to spend more time working with schools and academies with a specific focus on Nursery and Reception classes.

These changes also mean we have some vacancies for Senior Education Advisers and we will be advertising these with an expectation for new colleagues to join us from January 2022. We will soon advertise two posts for School Safeguarding Advisers; please look out for our new posts and contact me if you wish to discuss the opportunities. We are keen to add capacity to the team and we are looking for people with successful, recent and relevant school leadership experience.

Focus on safeguarding

We hope to further raise the profile of safeguarding in schools over the course of the next few years, some of this will be through the additional SEA allocation and some will be through a new traded support offer delivered by the two new posts. We are prioritising the monitoring of safeguarding in our core SEA visits, and we will continue to provide specific training in safeguarding for school and academy leaders and governors.

As part of this particular priority in 2021-22, we have commissioned the NYCC schools' HR team to undertake a safer recruitment and single central record check in all of our category 3 and 4 schools over the next few months. The check will result in advice and recommendations to enable your school to be confident that compliance with the latest expectations has been met. LA schools in category 1 and 2, and academies, can purchase this check from the HR team in the usual way.

I am delighted to share with you that as part of this strategic priority we are working in partnership with Ofsted to offer safeguarding training for every headteacher in North Yorkshire schools and academies and your DSL – if this role is undertaken by someone other than the headteacher – at 10am on Tuesday 28th September.

This will be a two-hour session from Ofsted entitled ‘**An effective culture of safeguarding in your school**’ followed by a 90 minute session from the LA on how we can practically support you to achieve this. There will be an opportunity to ask questions to Ofsted’s Senior HMI linked to North Yorkshire, Claire Brown, and the Regional HMI with responsibility for safeguarding, Kate Rowley.

Stuart Carlton and I will lead the second session and after the presentation there will also be time for questions and answers.

**Please save the date – we will issue more details of how to register in September.
Tuesday 28th September from 10am**

Categorisation

We have refreshed the categories we use for assessing and allocating core funded adviser time in order to help us fulfil our duties in monitoring, supporting and challenging LA schools. The reason for the refresh of the categories is to ensure that we provide the right level of engagement with schools, in accordance to the level of risk posed to the school not being likely to be judged ‘Good’ under the current education inspection framework at the time of the school’s next inspection.

For some schools this may mean a change in category from September – and the reason for this could be due to the proximity to inspection, changes in leadership or the necessary deeper focus on curriculum. The limited time advisers have spent in schools over the last 18 months means we see the new categorisation as positive opportunity for working more closely with LA schools and we hope you share this view too!

Category	Typical evidence
1	<p>Safeguarding is effective</p> <p>Most recent Ofsted is good/outstanding and the school demonstrates continuation of provision</p> <p>Highly effective system leaders and governors with the capacity to support others</p> <p>Outcomes and trends across all phases and groups compare favourably with national standards. This includes the most vulnerable pupils.</p> <p>Curriculum – meets national expectations and Ofsted criteria across all subjects</p> <p>Teaching is consistently good</p> <p>Feedback from other LA services is consistently positive</p>
2	<p>Safeguarding is effective</p> <p>Most recent Ofsted is good/outstanding and the school demonstrates continuation of provision</p> <p>Well established leadership team that demonstrates strength over time, with some capacity to support others</p> <p>Outcomes and trends across most phases and groups compare favourably to national standards, including the most vulnerable pupils. Where there are gaps, steps are being taken to address these rapidly</p> <p>Curriculum – meets national expectations and Ofsted criteria across the majority of subjects and robust plans are in place to address any areas of weakness</p> <p>Teaching is consistently good</p> <p>Feedback from other LA services is generally positive</p>
3	<p>Safeguarding is effective</p> <p>Most recent Ofsted is RI or is good/outstanding but likely to be judged RI at the next inspection; the school may have received a S8 outcome 'with concerns'.</p> <p>Inexperienced leadership team (incl governors) or an experienced team but where there are concerns over capacity to improve</p> <p>Outcomes and trends are at or below national and /or there is a decline over time. There are persistent gaps in outcomes for groups.</p> <p>Curriculum – meets national expectations and Ofsted criteria across some subjects but there are inconsistencies</p> <p>Teaching is not yet consistently good</p> <p>Feedback from other LA services may indicate concerns</p>
4	<p>Safeguarding is not effective, or safeguarding is effective but some of the following may apply:</p> <p>Most recent Ofsted is RI or inadequate or is likely to be at the next inspection</p> <p>Leadership (incl governance) capacity is limited or deemed to be ineffective</p> <p>Standards are below national and not improving rapidly. There significant gaps in outcomes for groups.</p> <p>An effective curriculum is not yet embedded</p> <p>Teaching is not yet consistently good</p> <p>Feedback from other LA services indicates wider concerns</p>

We have recently undertaken a categorisation review, using the above criteria and will write to all LA schools on 6th September with details of your category for 2021-22.

Adviser allocations

Alongside the new categories, there will be an increased level of adviser days attached to each school. Every LA school will have a named adviser and we are pleased to announce our structure for using the new allocations is as follows:

Universal Offer	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Termly workshops and leadership briefings	1 virtual autumn planning meeting	1 virtual autumn planning meeting	1 virtual autumn planning meeting	1 virtual autumn planning meeting
Support for Headteacher recruitment (shortlisting and interviews)	1 full day face to face monitoring / support visit (safeguarding focus)	1 full day face to face monitoring / support visit (safeguarding focus)	2 full days face to face monitoring / support visit (safeguarding focus)	3 or more full days face to face monitoring / support visit (safeguarding focus)
Access to governor school improvement networks	1 full day face to face monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	2 full days face to face monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	3 full days face to face monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	5 full days face to face monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)
LA performance information	1 half day face to face or remote monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	1 half day face to face or remote monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	2 half days face to face or remote monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)	3 half days face to face or remote monitoring / support visit (SDP focus)
LA professional development and consultancy via NYES	0.5 report writing time	1 day report writing time	1.5 report writing time	2.5 report writing time
	4 days	5.5 days	8.5 days	13+ days

Autumn term planning meetings

You will see that we have specified some time for an autumn meeting for planning the work for the year. This online meeting, expected to last about 90 minutes, is planned to be chaired by one of the three Principal Advisers and attended by the named SEA, the headteacher and the chair of governors. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and agree the school improvement activity for the whole year. You will see that the monitoring and support days are intended to support you in achieving the aims of your school development plan. We would ask everyone attending to bring diaries as we anticipate dates to be booked in for the agreed allocated visits.

The agenda is organised into three parts, each expected to last about 30 minutes:

1. School self evaluation (SEF) – strengths and areas for development and priorities in the school development plans (SDP) (school)
2. LA evaluation of the school's SEF and SDP (SEA)
3. Planning for 2021-22 and use of allocated category days to support the SDP (all)

In order for this approach to be successful, we would like all schools to send in your current 'live' working version of your SEF and your SDP ahead of the meeting for your named adviser to prepare this.

We expect the meetings to take place for most schools in the first half of the autumn term and we would welcome SEFs and SDPs to be submitted by **Friday 17 September**. We acknowledge that many schools will want the SEF/ SDP to be signed off by governors during a scheduled autumn term meeting and so we are very happy to accept working documents, watermarked as DRAFT if required.

Every LA school will be sent details about the specific timings of your autumn term meeting in the categorisation and adviser allocation letter on Monday 6 September.

Communication

The SI service and other LA colleagues across Education & Skills, Inclusion, Children & Families, Finance and HR are aware of the huge number of communications we put out to schools over the course of a year. This year in particular has seen regular emails, bulletins, red bags, updates to CYPInfo and FAQs as well as targeted newsletters and phone calls. We recognise that at times, it has been difficult to see where the key messages are hidden. As part of our commitment to supporting your wellbeing and reducing your workload, we will be reviewing and refreshing our communications with schools over the course of 2021-22. We hope to achieve a more simplified and efficient way of communicating with you.

Assistant Director visit to schools

We all know that one of the best ways to communicate is through direct conversations and visits to your schools. One of the things I am most looking forward to in 2021-22 is coming to meet you and see your schools. *Both Rebekah Taylor and I have cleared our calendars for almost every Friday in the school year for this purpose alone and so if you would like either of us to visit your school, please contact Mandy (mandy.lambert@northyorks.gov.uk) so we can arrange a visit as soon as possible.*

Summer break

Finally, I would like to wish each of you a warm, relaxing and well-deserved summer break. Many thanks again for all your dedication and support for your children and staff this year and for the welcome so many of you have given me into my first year in North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely



Amanda Newbold
Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Key dates for your diaries

Monday 6 September – letter for LA school re: named adviser, category and details for the autumn meeting

Friday 17 September – SEF and SDP to be submitted to named adviser

Tuesday 28 September – NYCC and Ofsted safeguarding training webinars for HTs and DSLs

Monday 27 September to Friday 29 October – autumn term planning meetings (specific dates TBC on 6/9/21)