

CABINET – 14 FEBRUARY 2012

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Member:

1. Councillor John Tanner to Melinda Tilley

“Could the Cabinet member explain why she is pressuring excellent, locally well-regarded and improving primary schools, such as Larkrise in my own Isis division, to take on academy status, when it damages the morale of staff and parents and there is no firm evidence that academy status will improve standards for children?”

Answer

“Today’s report confirms the Council’s absolute commitment to improve educational outcomes for children. It also says we wish to encourage a dialogue about how Academies might be part of our approach to improve those educational outcomes. This is a discussion that we want to have with all schools; however, it is of particular relevance to schools which are not reaching the required national standards.

Larkrise School is one such school. It is a school which was below the national floor standards in 2010-11. The Fisher Family Trust Value Added reports for the school show that last year it was performing below the level expected for similar schools (i.e. after allowing for their free school meal population, ethnicity, English as an additional language, special educational needs and pupil mobility).

The children of Oxfordshire have one chance to get an education. The education they receive impacts upon their life chances. This Cabinet will not stand by and allow continued under performance. We do not dispute the hard work of a great many individuals to ensure that schools like Larkrise are caring and supportive environments in which children are happy and safe. However, we believe that any school which has the best interests of its children at heart, will want to ask whether or not there is more they can do to improve their educational attainment. Our view is that these schools should ask whether or not becoming a sponsored academy might lead to the step-change that has not yet been achieved.”