

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 APRIL 2016

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS IN EDUCATION

Annex 1: Summary of Implications for Oxfordshire County Council of the March 2016 Government White Paper [‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’](#)

Report by the Director for Children, Education and Families

The Government sets out a very detailed suite of commitments, promises and intentions for reforming education in England. The overarching message is that local authorities will no longer lead education locally. This is not unexpected. The academies programme is only part-finished and the Government intention for ‘systems leadership’ to be at the heart of school improvement, with no role for local authorities, has been heralded for some time.

This White Paper outlines: **‘a clearly defined role for local government’** with local authority education duties focusing on:

- ensuring every child has a school place
- ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met (including SEN reforms)
- acting as champions for all parents and families (and championing pupils; 4.6 d)

Local authorities will also continue to have ‘oversight of testing arrangements’ (4.74), and ‘a number of growing functions relating to the education of 2, 3 and 4 year-olds’ (4.75).

Cutting through the rhetoric of the current ‘monopoly’ of local authorities, there is useful policy direction in the paper. Local authorities will ‘become one of the key **partners** working to deliver educational excellence everywhere’. This fits well with Oxfordshire’s Strategic Schools Partnership, and links appropriately with the work of the Dioceses and Oxfordshire Teaching School Alliance.

The paper focuses on improving standards across the whole country. In Oxfordshire the role of Joint Commissioning in analysing educational data is key to the local authority keeping all schools under review.

There is a focus on educational ‘outcomes’ rather than methods. In Oxfordshire, the dismantling of the school improvement function reflects advance cognisance of this.

The Government recognises the risk that strong schools may get stronger and weak schools may get weaker. Local authorities have a role to play in supporting Regional School Commissioners in mitigating this.

The paper summarises **seven main strands of educational excellence** with accompanying actions for Government (many of these aspects have been historically led by local authorities);

1. **Great teachers;** recruitment, training, development and retention are now the prerogative of the front-line, and will be completely school-led, for example Initial Teacher Training. There will be a national free of charge teacher recruitment website. 'Qualified Teacher Status' will be replaced by school-led accreditation of teachers by 'great' schools. There will be a new national College of Teaching and a new national Teaching Service. There will be new standards for professional development opportunities for teachers, and mechanisms for this to be school-led, as well as a new peer-reviewed national Education Journal.
2. **Great leaders;** these will be based in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and Teaching Schools. New, voluntary, national professional qualifications for education leadership will be developed by school leaders. There will be a new Excellence in Leadership fund. There will be some changes to support governing bodies (now called governing 'boards').
3. **A school-led system with a defined role for local government;** this has been reported extensively in the press; all schools to become academies by 2022 with Government 'direction' (ie forced academisation). Small schools should join MATs, but stand-alone academies are still allowed. There is reference to Government stepping in 'where the local authority no longer has the capacity to maintain its schools'. 'Local authorities should act as advocates for their electorate, challenging school providers to deliver high educational standards and better outcomes for children.' In Oxfordshire, this is the role of the 'Education Quality' function in Education and Learning. The paper encourages high performing local authority staff to move to work in MATs. The best MATs will manage under-performing schools. The programme for the development of new schools will continue.

The paper is weak on impact on **children**, and virtually ignores safeguarding. One section attempts to rectify this, but proposes:

- a new parent portal
- a new complaints system (governing board – DfE – ombudsman; no longer via LAs)
- consultation on three changes to current admissions arrangements, coordinating in-year admissions, handling independent admissions and a single route for escalation of admissions maladministration.

4. **Preventing underperformance through school-led improvement;** there will be 300 more teaching schools and 800 more National Leaders of Education (NLEs). School improvement will be brokered locally without the need for local or national government. It will be interesting to see how successful this can be; will some schools be left behind? New Achieving Excellence areas will be set up by the Government in areas of underperformance. Might Oxford City / Blackbird Leys / Rose Hill qualify?

5. **High expectations and a world-leading curriculum;** schools will continue to embed the new national curriculum, with freedoms for academies. There will be extra funding for secondary schools to extend their school day for sports, arts and debating. An action plan to improve Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) provision will be written by headteachers. Alternative provision will be reformed so that mainstream schools are accountable for excluded pupils. A strategy will be published for improved careers provision. The government has stated its commitment to ensuring that an increasingly autonomous school system remains inclusive and meets the needs of all pupils wherever they are educated, stretching their lowest attaining and most academically able pupils.
6. **Accountability;** the Government will focus on progress, destinations, attainment 8 and progress 8, and there will be a new primary floor standard. Coasting schools will be academised by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). This has urgent implications for some Oxfordshire schools. Ofsted will consult on removing the separate judgement on the quality of teaching. The Government will publish performance tables for MATs. The RSC and headteacher boards will replace the role of the local authority in monitoring accountability. Local authority warning notices will need to be agreed with RSCs for maintained schools ie in the future, even maintained schools will be subject to RSC intervention.
7. **Resources;** the consultation on the national funding formula for schools (and the High Needs Block) is currently live. The Government will organise access to better procurement frameworks for schools.

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