

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

24 FEBRUARY 2016

STATEMENT OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ARTHUR BARKER

Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to meet its savings targets. The scale of budget cuts required – and achieved to date, whilst maintaining service levels, has been a significant challenge. The objective has been to protect front-line services as much as possible, thus enabling a restructured Directorate to operate effectively across its universal, preventative, targeted and acute service responsibilities, in line with legislation. Although the Directorate is facing emerging pressures in some of the higher need budgets, such as Special Home to School Transport and Disabled Children's Services, we are on track to achieve the savings and transformation projects agreed by Council.

This past year has seen the implementation of some major transformation programmes, including the review of Preventative Services and a new way of delivering school improvement.

This information appears in the Statements to Council for both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service as this reflects our joint responsibility for all relevant resources.

Sutton-in-Craven Primary School

During the course of the recent flood event at Sutton in Craven, the Community Primary School was affected and was closed for the first week of the Spring Term. The School has since re-opened although further works are required to be undertaken to replace the boiler which was damaged as a consequence of the flood.

School Ofsted inspection outcomes

The percentage of schools graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted continues to be an improving picture with all indicators now above national averages for the first time. As at 1 January 2016, 85.5% of North Yorkshire's primary schools are graded as good or outstanding which is just above the national figure of 85.3%, and 75% of secondary schools are good or outstanding, which is now better than the national figure of 74.3%.

The percentage of pupils attending a good or outstanding school has also increased and at a faster rate than the national rate. As of 1 January, 86.6% of North Yorkshire's primary school pupils attended a good or outstanding school (better than the national figure of 84.8%). 83.8% of North Yorkshire's secondary pupils attend a good or outstanding school, which again is higher than the national figure of 78.5%.

The number of inadequate schools has reduced by one. There is now only two in primary and none in secondary. Hawes Community Primary School was placed in Special Measures in January. The school is working with School Improvement colleagues to address the issues. The LA is making an application to the Secretary of State for an Interim Executive Board. A parents' meeting was held on the 27 January and the school and LA committed to a parents forum to keep parents updated with regard to progress of improvements and also to seek their views.

School performance

Two areas of foci for improvement are around maths at Key Stage 2 and Closing the Gap between pupils eligible for FSM and their peers. The School improvement Service has commissioned an external research on best practice and the most effective strategies. The reports are being finalised and will be shared with schools this term.

School Organisation

There has been a good deal of activity on school organisation in the last quarter, reflecting the responsibility of the Council to challenge and support schools, our duty to ensure that we are providing places where they are needed, and the increasing interest amongst schools in working in new ways.

We have been consulting people in the Catterick Garrison area about how we might provide places in response to the ever growing housing developments there. We are also currently consulting parents in the Selby area about a proposal to amalgamate Brayton High School and Selby High School through the technical closure of Brayton High School and the enlargement of Selby High School. At the time of writing this statement, I am aware that I am scheduled to take a decision on whether to start consultation in the Whitby area on a similar proposal to amalgamate Eskdale School with Caedmon College through the technical closure of Eskdale and the enlargement of Caedmon College and I will update Councillors on that our meeting on 17 February.

We are in the process of publishing our strategic approach to schools organisation, which promotes the view that all schools are stronger by working with others, and that we welcome and support new models of deliver that lead to improved outcomes for children. One example of this is being consulted on at present by Ryedale School and a number of its feeder primaries, who are looking to form a cross-phase federation. We welcome such innovative approaches and we are in active discussions across the county with various groups of schools.

LA School Governor appointments

Over the last few years the roles and responsibilities of school governors have increased and developed as new legislation has been introduced. Those of you currently serving on school governing boards will understand how central to school success governance has become and the scrutiny governance comes under when a school is inspected. Can I therefore take this opportunity to thank those of you who serve or have served on governing boards for your contribution to school improvement in North Yorkshire.

New legislation has recently been introduced which moves from the concept of governors as representatives of particular groups to governors being appointed for their skills and expertise. The status of LA governors was altered under these regulations. The local authority can nominate any eligible person to serve on a governing board but it is now for governing boards to decide whether or not the nominee has the right match of skills and expertise to contribute to the effective governance of the school. This has meant that the LA school governor process has had to be amended.

In future the governance team will contact elected members annually inviting them to nominate people they feel would be suitable as a school governor, including themselves. Once those nominees have completed an application form they will be matched with a suitable, local, school with a governor vacancy that could benefit from their skills and experience. Where Members nominated someone to serve on a specific governing body, officers will ensure that the school is made aware of this preference. I must stress however that under the revised legislation, it is the school governing board who will have the final say on whether or not they accept a nominee.

In every school across North Yorkshire governors give up significant amounts of time as volunteers committed to ensuring their schools provide a good standard of education. This is laudable work and we need to sustain this high level of commitment in the coming years. I sincerely hope, therefore, that you will all continue your commitment to this important role and to nominating high quality individuals to be governors.

County Councillor Arthur Barker
Executive Member for Schools and Early Years