

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 JULY 2016

STATEMENT OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ARTHUR BARKER

White Paper “Educational Excellence Everywhere”

As yet, no draft legislation has emerged which would further inform thinking around the implications of the White Paper. Nevertheless, the period between last County Council and this has seen a large number of constructive and helpful conversations with school leaders across the county. It has been a welcome opportunity to share thinking amongst the North Yorkshire education community.

Whilst some schools are continuing to seek academy status, there is now a sense of taking further time to consider possibilities and, critically, to look, as groups of schools, into the possibility of changed organisational arrangements. The Directorate is supporting such discussions wherever it can. We are also looking into what possibility there might be for the local authority – either in its own right, or through individual staff leaving the organisation, to set up a North Yorkshire Learning Trust which might in the future be able to sponsor academies. Further information is needed through legislation in order to determine whether this might be feasible.

School Funding

In March, the DfE launched the first part of a two-stage consultation on a national funding formula. This consultation kept very much to principles but allowed us to gain some insight into the government’s longer term plans. We have lobbied for a number of years now for a fairer distribution of school funding across England and it looks likely that the details – when available later this year – will confirm a move towards this. However we do have some concerns if the government moves to allocate funding direct to every school in the country – without any local input – from April 2019. In particular they have suggested getting rid of a “mobility” factor which is absolutely necessary at schools in North Yorkshire with high pupil turnover. This is an issue for those supporting service families or in areas with seasonal employment trends. I have recently written a letter to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Sam Gyimah MP, about my continued concerns at these proposals and have strongly urged the Department to look again at this proposal to ensure that families who serve in the armed forces are not forgotten.

We also have concerns about the simplistic way of calculating sparsity which does not take account of the nature of North Yorkshire and such geographic barriers as rivers, dales, moors and hills. Our response noted these concerns and we await with interest the government’s reply to these, along with the details in stage two of the consultation. The proposals will also have an (as yet unquantified) impact on the council’s overall finances and services as it seeks to restrict the local decision-making abilities of the North Yorkshire Education Partnership and County Council in setting budgets. The timeline for stage two of the government’s consultation on development of a national schools funding formula and is still awaited.

School Ofsted inspection outcomes

The percentage of schools graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted continues to be an improving picture with all indicators remaining above national averages. As at 1 July 2016, 89.7% of North Yorkshire’s primary schools are graded as good or outstanding which is above the national figure

of 88.4%, and 85% of secondary schools are good or outstanding, which remains considerably better than the national figure of 77%.

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 July 2016, 91.3% of North Yorkshire's primary school pupils attended a good or outstanding school (better than the national figure of 87.6%). 86.9% of North Yorkshire's secondary pupils attend a good or outstanding school, which again is considerably higher than the national figure of 79.9%.

There remain three primary schools which hold an inadequate judgement - Moorside Infants, Hawes Community Primary and Richmond CE Primary Schools – and the LA is working closely with the DfE, the schools and potential academy sponsors.

School Organisation

Fellow Councillors will be pleased to know that the new primary school being built in Selby is now complete and will open in September. It will be called The Staynor Hall Community Primary Academy and will be run by the Ebor Trust.

Following a request from the governors of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Bishop Thornton, the Executive has, on 5 July, approved consultation on a proposal to close the school. With only 13 pupils on roll in a school which could accommodate 60, and with no new entrants anticipated for September, the opportunities for children to access the full range of experiences they need, particularly opportunities for working and playing with children of their own age, will be limited. The school also faces a budget deficit with little or no prospect of an improvement. The request for the consultation to be carried out is supported by the Diocese of Leeds.

A final decision will be made by the Executive on 16 August, with closure potentially with effect from 31 August 2016.

Scarborough Pledge launch

The Scarborough Pledge was launched formally on 22nd June 2016. There was an excellent attendance with schools, settings, FE, business and employers, the County Council and Borough Council all represented. The Pledge is funded by the County Council with £250k each year for three years. The collective ambition is to improve outcomes and life chances for all children and young people. Pete Dwyer opened the Launch and presentations followed summarising the key themes and workstreams focussing on literacy, supporting parents to support their children's learning, speech and language, cultural experiences, employability skills, raising aspirations and employer engagement. The strap-line for the Pledge is "transforming coastal futures" and one of the next steps will be to involve the children and young people themselves in roles as Pledge Ambassadors.

County Councillor Arthur Barker
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