

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 JULY 2021

STATEMENT OF EDUCATION & SKILLS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Covid-19 – impact on schools and early years

Schools have remained open to all pupils since March and attendance figures across the county have been positive. Schools have continued to manage risks relating to Covid cases and only a very small number have needed to close, sometimes this has been due to operational issues (eg when staff are isolating). Alongside this, school leaders have tried to balance work on their school improvement plans; Ofsted inspections of schools have recommenced and a number of schools have already had visits this term.

As we approach stage 4 of the road map, the guidance for schools has been updated and current models are expected to change after the end of term. Control measures in terms of hygiene, cleaning, ventilation and working with colleagues in Public Health will be continued into the new school year. As pupils will potentially mix with lots of other people during the summer holidays, all secondary school pupils should access two on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term - schools can stagger return times to cope with this as they did in March. Following this, home testing for staff and students will be in place, until the end of September at which point it will be reviewed.

Covid Local Grant Scheme and Holiday Activities & Food programme (known locally as FEAST”

Through DWP funding the local authority has provided funding to schools, academies, colleges and early years providers to purchase supermarket vouchers for potentially vulnerable households. The scheme started during the Christmas holiday period in 2020 and has continued through each school holiday period. I am pleased to confirm that eligible households will again receive up to £75 support through the school summer holiday period and I am grateful to our school, college and early years providers in helping to ensure that funding reaches those families most in need.

Alongside the Covid Local Support Grant, we will implement our FEAST programme of holiday activities over the school summer holiday period, providing enriching activities (including some face-to-face), nutritional advice, digital resources and food. This follows our Easter programme where up to 11,000 activity packs were distributed to eligible school-age children across the county.

Strategic Plan for SEND Education Provision and Selby Free School

Over the past year, progress has continued to be made on the implementation of the SEND Strategic Plan which was approved in late 2018. The plan sets out in detail a number of key developments in provision for Children and Young People with SEND in response to the rapid growth in demand we have seen since 2015.

In September 2021 the restructure of SEND and Inclusion support services was implemented as planned. The restructure has allowed the creation of locality based Hubs of specialist practitioners to support children, schools and families to receive the right support for their needs and ensure they can continue to be educated within their own local

community. Throughout the pandemic staff within the Hubs have continued to maintain an offer of support to children in what has been an uncertain year for all.

The Pupil Referral Service began operating its new model of provision under new funding arrangements in September. The changes have allowed young people to access support prior to exclusion and new local area partnership arrangements are allowing those with the greatest need to be prioritised for this support. The new funding arrangement means that the commissioning of places is a joint endeavour between schools and the LA and allows children to remain part of their local school community whilst receiving flexible support.

Demand for more Special School Places continues to grow and this year over 1000 places have been commissioned in our special schools. This has been possible due to a number of small to moderate investments utilising the limited capital resources allocated to the County Council by the Department for Education. The most significant investment has been the development of a new satellite site of Mowbray School in Ripon. The LA have invested over £700k and supported the school to develop a superb facility for up to 60 children with Communication and Interaction Needs. Despite these investments we continue to see demand increasing and the current special school estate has limited capacity to expand further.

A further significant development continues to progress after the Council's successful bid for a Special Free School in Selby. The council is working with the DfE and Wellspring Multi Academy Trust to design the school which will be subject to planning approval. This special school is much needed in the Selby and will provide 100 additional places for children in the district. At present Selby does not have any special school provision so families will see the added benefits of being able to access this support much closer to home and without the need for children to spend extended periods travelling out of the area. All partners remain committed to delivering the new school as soon as possible.

New Schools

The new school proposals for both Knaresborough and Northallerton have progressed during the recent period. Applications from a number of Academy Trusts who wished to operate the schools were assessed during February and March. The Regional Schools Commissioner confirmed the appointment of the successful Trusts in early May, with Elevate Multi Academy Trust appointed for Knaresborough and Dales Academies Trust appointed for Northallerton. Issues relating to the land transfer for each site resulted in NYCC being unable to commence construction in summer 2021 as was planned, and therefore the target opening date for the schools has been revised to September 2023.

Kell Bank CE VC Primary School

On 23 March 2021 I determined the closure proposal for Kell Bank CE VC Primary School. There were no objections received during the representation period and therefore the School will close at the end of the current academic year.

Outdoor learning service

The strategic review is continuing. Extensive data from the service and the views of many stakeholders have been gathered in order to secure a full understanding of the current service offer and operating model. Both sites at East Barnby and Bewerley Park have been visited to assess the condition of the property. An outline business case for the future of the service is scheduled for the September Executive meeting.

School funding

2021-22 represents the second year of a three-year funding settlement for schools and we await the publication of indicative funding allocations from the national funding formula for the financial year 2022-23. We expect these to be published during summer 2021 along with the outcome of a national consultation on sparsity funding which will potentially assist a number of North Yorkshire's schools. Indicative allocations are also expected for High Needs funding. In line with the national trend, North Yorkshire continues to experience significant financial pressure in this area although the Strategic Plan for SEND seeks to deliver a number of actions to mitigate demand pressures (e.g. building a new free special school in Selby, increasing the number of commissioned places in North Yorkshire special schools).

COUNTY COUNCILLOR PATRICK MULLIGAN