

SCRUTINY REVIEW of SCHOOLS COPING WITH CHANGE – THE WAY FORWARD

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT ACTION PLAN

| SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION | DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN | TIMESCALE |
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| <p>R1 The Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee to write on behalf of the committee to the Secretary of State for Education seeking further detail regarding his vision for schools and academies. In particular, the letter should seek clarity regarding the Department's stance on the academy programme and the promotion of formal partnership arrangements.</p> | <p>The department and service welcome the intervention.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee to write on behalf of the committee to the Secretary of State for Education.</p> | <p>Feb 19</p> |
| <p>R2 Work to be undertaken by the Local Authority to promote the leadership role of Governing Bodies and Head teachers. Such activity should seek to empower schools to consider actively their current organisational arrangements and the potential benefits of partnership arrangements. If already in some form of partnership, then relevant schools should review whether the benefits of their current arrangements are being fully exploited and actively consider how they strengthen these arrangements over the coming years.</p> | <p>The Council's strategy <i>Excellence for All</i> contains a number of priority areas that promote the leadership role of Governing Bodies and Head teachers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support leaders and governors to develop strong partnerships including federations and multi-academy trusts so that all schools and settings have a sustainable future. • Support the development and alignment of partnerships to provide sustainable system-led structures through which schools take responsibility for improvement in their local area, identifying underperformance and working together to secure strong outcomes on all measures. <p>The department welcomes Scrutiny's recognition of the role of school leaders in taking responsibility for ensuring sustainability, and Scrutiny's recognition of the work undertaken by SLES to support this. There is good evidence of impact (15% of schools are in federations and a further 9% in collaborations), but we recognise that there is scope for more schools to actively consider their options for the future.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>The department will consider what more can be done within available resources to encourage strong partnerships as part of the forthcoming review of <i>Excellence for All</i>.</p> | <p>Sept 19</p> |

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| R3 | <p>The Local Authority to undertake a thorough review of how the ongoing budget for SLES is best utilised. This will help ensure the purpose of the service and its staffing arrangements are appropriately aligned to meet the needs of the evolving educational landscape in East Sussex.</p> | <p>The department can provide reassurance that the service has anticipated the future landscape in relation to its staffing and planning. The planned major reduction in resources over the next three years was based upon a wholesale review in 2017/2018 and is aligned with the core offer.</p> <p>Given the recent review of SLES the department believes that a further wholesale review would not be appropriate at this time. However, the service continues to keep priorities, budget and staffing under review to ensure they are aligned.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The service will continue to keep under review priorities, budget and staffing arrangements to ensure they are aligned and deliver maximum impact for children and young people.</p> | July 20 |
| R4 | <p>a) The Local Authority to consider promoting to Head teachers and Governing Boards the benefits of a formal partnership arrangement, as well as developing its critical friend role with regard to partnership proposals.</p> <p>b) The Local Authority to consider also clarifying to individual schools at risk what it sees as the potential dangers to them of not actively pursuing a formal partnership arrangement.</p> | <p>The department welcomes the Scrutiny Review highlighting the potential benefits of partnerships to schools in appropriate circumstances.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The department will consider what more can be done within available resources to encourage strong partnerships as part of the forthcoming review of <i>Excellence for All</i>.</p> | Sept 19 |
| R5 | <p>The Local Authority to consider developing the next iteration of its <i>Excellence for All</i> strategy document and other related documents so that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotes the development of formal partnership arrangements; • emphasises the leadership role of schools; and • offers bespoke advice that is tailored to meet the needs of rural primary and small schools. | <p>Work to review and update our strategy <i>Excellence for All</i> will commence in May 2019 for publication in September 2019. The updated strategy will cover the period 2019-2021 and will take account of the core offer proposals.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The Scrutiny recommendations will be considered as part of the review of <i>Excellence for All</i>.</p> | Sept 19 |
| R6 | <p>So as to present a consistent and clear message to schools, and to draw on the</p> | <p>The department takes a planned strategic approach to engagement with other strategic bodies, in line with the relationship articulated in our strategy <i>Excellence</i></p> | |

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| | combined strengths and experiences of each party, the Local Authority should seek to strengthen its relationships with the main strategic educational bodies in East Sussex. For example, this might include exploring the development of a common approach to formal partnerships. | <p><i>for All.</i></p> <p>The department welcomes Scrutiny's recognition of the importance of these strategic relationships. However, ability to further develop work with partners will be limited given the planned reduction in resources in this area.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The department will take this recommendation into account when updating existing guidance on partnerships as part of the forthcoming review of <i>Excellence for All</i>.</p> | Sept 19 |
| R7 | That the Local Authority develop further it's 'brokerage' role and develop innovative ways of facilitating school partnership that might not otherwise come into being. | <p>The department welcomes Scrutiny's recognition of the important role the LA has taken in brokering school partnerships, federations and academy trusts. All academy trusts, bar one, have been brokered by the LA.</p> <p>The department's ability to further develop this role is limited given the anticipated reduction in resources for this area.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The review of <i>Excellence for All</i> will take into account the future local authority brokerage role and consider what can be achieved within available resources.</p> | Sept 19 |
| R8 | <p>The experiences of successful formal partnership arrangements are recorded and shared by the Local Authority. The aim being to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help other existing partnerships more fully realise the benefits of their arrangements; and • develop advice for 'single' schools who are considering entering into a formal partnership arrangement. | <p>The department agrees that it is helpful to share experiences from existing partnerships. Although we already provide case studies, and guidance for single schools that are entering into a formal partnership arrangement, we recognise there is always scope for information to be updated and enhanced.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The service will continue to record and share details of successful existing partnerships, taking account of Scrutiny recommendations.</p> | Ongoing |
| R9 | To help encourage the development of formal partnerships, the Local Authority | Action: | |

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| | <p>should consider promoting to schools the creation of a federation as an initial step. This approach would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help address some of the perceptions which are discouraging change; and • better enable schools to consider, in the context of their local circumstances, whether or not they then wish to convert to academy status. | <p>The messages proposed by Scrutiny will be considered as part of the review of <i>Excellence for All</i> during 2019 (see R5).</p> | <p>Sept 19</p> |
| R10 | <p>The Local Authority to develop further guidance which has a focus on the specific role and responsibilities of the formal partnership arrangement governor and their training and development needs.</p> | <p>The department welcomes Scrutiny's recognition of the increasing complexity of the educational environment for governors, particularly partnership governors. One of the priority areas within the existing <i>Excellence for All</i> strategy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of strong governor-led support and provide high quality training and support for governors and clerks to develop their skills and expertise to secure ongoing improvement in a complex educational environment. <p>The department's ability to provide significant support to governors will be more limited in future given reduced resources.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The Scrutiny recommendation will be incorporated within the future provision of lighter touch support to governors.</p> | <p>July 20</p> |
| R11 | <p>The Local Authority to further develop its toolkits and guidance for schools who are considering creating a federation or converting to academy status, or who are already in a formal partnership. Such guidance should include specific advice on the role of the Executive Head and Heads of School and their training and development. Consideration should also be given to developing such guidance in partnership with other regional strategic bodies.</p> | <p>The department agrees that it is helpful to share experiences from existing partnerships.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>The department will take into account the areas of focus suggested by scrutiny when updating existing toolkits and guidance. The potential for any common messages across strategic partners will be considered though our ongoing discussions with the other parties.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| R12 | <p>Alongside the guidance set out in the Education Commissioning Plan for small and</p> | <p>The department is not aware of research evidence to promote the use of technology to address the challenges with regard to the viability of small English schools within</p> | |

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| | <p>rural schools, that the Local Authority to take steps to explore innovative solutions to the specific problems small, (and in particular), small rural schools are facing. Such solutions could include, for example, technological responses and adapting training provided to primary school teachers. It could also include exploring the solutions which other authorities in similar situations have developed.</p> | <p>a mainstream context. ISEND has experience of using these strategies as a teaching and learning tool. Although they find that they work with a small limited number of pupils unable to attend schools the impact in terms of pupil performance is limited.</p> <p>The department therefore believes it is unlikely that technology will provide a realistic solution to the particular challenges faced by small rural schools.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>None</p> | |
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