

Report to: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 27 June 2016
By: Director of Children's Services
Title: The Government's White Paper "Educational Excellence Everywhere"
Purpose: To update the Committee on the current position regarding the White Paper, "Educational Excellence Everywhere".

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to note that the proposals have significance for the future delivery of services to schools and to note that a further report will be provided once further detail around the proposals and timelines is available.

1. Background

1.1. The Department for Education (DfE) published a white paper in March 2016 setting out the next stage of its strategy for education, "Educational Excellence Everywhere". The white paper proposes extensive changes for the role of Local Authorities (LAs) in education should it pass into law. While much of the detail remains unclear, the Committee is asked to note that there are potential implications for services such as the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES), Training and Events and the Data, Research and Information Management team (DRIM). There are also wider implications for Personnel, Finance, Schools' IT and services which would, under the current proposals, stay with the LA, such as admissions, place planning and ISEND.

2. Supporting Information

2.1. A key proposal of the white paper was to legislate to require all schools to become academies. The Government has now responded to feedback and dropped plans to legislate for compulsory academisation but, at the same time, has reaffirmed its continued determination to see all schools become academies in the next 6 years. Underperforming schools (those that are judged as inadequate by Ofsted) will continue to be required to convert to academy status where they can benefit from the support of a strong sponsor and 'good' schools will be supported to convert and to take the lead in supporting other schools as part of multi-academy trusts. The response also indicated that small rural schools would not be forced to join large national academy chains.

2.2. In addition, the government has said it will bring forward legislation to trigger conversion of all schools within a local authority area in two specific circumstances:

- Where it is clear that the LA can no longer viably support its remaining schools because a critical mass of schools in that area has converted.
- Where the LA consistently fails to meet a minimum performance threshold across its schools, demonstrating an inability to bring about meaningful school improvement.

2.3. In addition to proposals for converting schools to academies, the white paper also includes proposals to:

- Transition to a new national fair funding formula by 2019
- Shift responsibility for school improvement from LAs to Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and outstanding school leaders.
- Introduce a National Teaching Service, replace Qualified Teacher Status and introduce new quality criteria for initial teacher training providers.
- Develop new web tools to help schools with recruiting and introduce more flexible working practices for the teaching profession.
- Launch performance tables for MATs and consider the case for periodic reviews of MAT arrangements.
- Launch a new Parent Advice and Information Portal.

2.4. As it stands, the White paper sets out that certain services would remain within the remit of the local authority, even if all schools convert to academy status. These are:

- Ensuring every child has a school place. The government would continue to provide funding to councils to do this. LAs would keep a duty to work with schools and parents on home to school transport and on crisis management and emergency planning.
- Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met. This would include retaining current responsibilities for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and looked-after children; school attendance and tackling persistent absence; alternative provision for excluded children; safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism.
- Acting as champions for all parents and families. This would include a continuing role in co-ordinating admissions; supporting parents to navigate local SEND arrangements and provision; and championing high standards locally for all pupils and, where necessary, calling for action from the Regional Schools Commissioner.

2.5. The white paper also proposes a new duty on LAs to facilitate the process of maintained schools becoming academies.

2.6. LA responsibilities in relation to early years' provision and post-16 participation are not mentioned in the White Paper, which focuses on schools.

3. Implications

3.1. Once the detail of the Government's proposals and timelines are clear, particularly the change in emphasis over academy conversions, a further report will be brought to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion. We anticipate that this will be in early autumn. However, it is likely that this agenda will move quickly.

3.2. The schools' funding consultation has already indicated that there will be changes in the funding formula that will effect schools and the LAs delivery of services to schools. In addition, the RSC will have additional powers of intervention in coasting schools from the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year that will impact on the delivery of school improvement by the LA. Even if legislation is not brought to force academisation on schools, there is likely to be greater pressure on schools to convert in future. In the first instance, this would mean a need for greater capacity to support schools with academy conversions, broker partnerships between schools and build capacity for system leadership.

3.3 **Appendices 1, 2 and 3** set out the current position in East Sussex in terms of academies/federations.

4. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 East Sussex is well-positioned to facilitate the conversion of school to academies where necessary. Our *Excellence for All* strategy has provided the foundations for federations and partnerships between schools and we have put in place an effective strategy for developing system leadership and school to school support. Education Improvement Partnerships present a useful vehicle to support local discussions about how schools might want to group together to ensure that no school is left behind.

4.2 The Committee is recommended to note that the proposals have significance for the future delivery of services to schools and to note that a further report will be provided once further detail around the proposals and timelines is available.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Diana Francombe

Tel. No. 01273 481902

Email: Diana.francombe@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – School re-organisation dashboard - April 2016

Appendix 2 – East Sussex Academies - April 2016

Appendix 3 – East Sussex Federations – April 2016

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None