

Education Strategy for Barnet

**Education Strategy Board
6 December 2012**

Agenda item 4: Emerging themes from consultation

1. Role of the local authority in the partnership

At the first Board meeting, a discussion took place regarding the national research into the evolving role of the local authority within the changing education landscape. The author of the DfE sponsored national research into this issue, Natalie Parrish, led our local conference on the 20 November. Natalie's presentation can be found at http://www.barnet.gov.uk/WorkingWithChildrenInBarnet/info/20045/education_strategy

Around 50 headteachers took part in the discussion and the following roles for the local authority were identified as being valued by the local school community:

- trusted and well informed local challenge partner
- holder of the 'strategic view' of the local education landscape
- co-ordinator and 'filter' for information and guidance
- holder and provider of data and data analysis
- broker in identifying and sharing support and best practice between schools
- lobbyist and champion for the education agenda within the council
- signposter and referral route to other services for children (health, community safety)
- co-ordinator of support for vulnerable children
- co-ordinator and facilitator of partnerships
- supporting and informing governors to effectively challenge and support their schools
- democratic accountability to parents and other residents
- planner of places and provision

These themes will continue to be explored throughout the consultation phase and the views of secondary headteachers (underrepresented at the conference), the views of local authority senior officers, local further education providers and the views of elected members will be captured and reported to the Board.

2. Developing the local monitoring and challenge role

Primary headteachers at the conference expressed the value they put in the relationship and link provided through the retention by Barnet of the Learning Network Inspector role. They found this an important source of challenge – using data contextualised for Barnet. The LNI's were also valued for their support, advice and guidance on a range of issues, particularly in sharing best practice between schools. In the Barnet Education Forum and elsewhere however, secondary headteachers have expressed quite strongly that they would value an LNI with secondary experience. The national debate about the responsibility of local authorities in

During the conference, having heard about models elsewhere in the country, there was an emerging consensus that consideration should be given by the local authority to commissioning the monitoring and challenge function through BPSI. This would result in BPSI providing this service for schools that do not currently purchase the traded service element (mainly secondary schools). It would also provide, for as long

as the local authority chose to commission through BPSI, an element of core funding. This will be explored further in the workshop on the 5 December.

The role that elected members can play in monitoring and challenging education standards will be a focus of the Scrutiny Panel being established (Agenda item 5).

The discussion about the role of governors in monitoring and challenging is outlined below.

Decision:

For the project to

- develop options for the future commissioning of the monitoring and challenge role of the local authority – to consider how it can most effectively be delivered within the resources available

3. Role of schools in improving outcomes in the wider community

A round table discussion within the conference asked headteachers to identify ways in which they could lead their schools to improve outcomes for the wider community.

Headteachers identified:

- Setting a vision for the school that is wider than the school community
- Encouraging governors to adopt a wider view, building on the role of community and parent governors
- Knowing the local community, learning from how children's centres have set about identifying and designing services to serve the locality needs
- Attending and actively participating in partnerships to build relationships with other schools, providers and services
- Actively encouraging the use of school assets by the local community.

However, there was some concern expressed about the capacity of smaller primary schools to undertake a broad community role. The wider role of schools within their community will continue to be explored as the consultation phase continues – including in individual interviews with key stakeholders and within the early intervention and prevention workshop.

4. Models of school improvement

There are a number of models of school to school support emerging and local arrangements are developing around the teaching school (Compton). There was a desire by headteachers to better understand what is available locally, how best to commission support and how to access it.

Most primary schools are purchasing school improvement services through Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI). When BPSI was established, it was with the intention to develop it into a sustainable, arms length organisation. It is currently fully traded and all but a few primary schools have chosen to buy into the service. Discussions and some initial exploration about developing BPSI and what the most appropriate way forward has begun.

Decision:

For the project to:

- develop ways to better facilitate schools (particularly primary schools) to access school to school support, exchange information and share best practice

- commission an options appraisal to support the development of BPSI to become a sustainable arms length service -overseen by the BPSI steering group

5. Increasing diversity of education providers and models of governance

Barnet's administration is a strong supporter of the Coalition's developments in relation to education. As such, Barnet has been a welcoming place for free schools and Barnet secondary schools have seized the opportunity to convert to Academy status. Primary schools, as reflected nationally have been less quick to convert but there is now a clear desire by the Government for primary schools to consider alternative forms of governance. This was an issue that emerged strongly at our conference and it was clear that primary schools would welcome support to consider their options and to steer how best schools can come together if they wish. Whilst there was a feeling that this was being considered reluctantly by schools, there was also a feeling that Barnet schools do not want to be left behind and need to consider 'seizing the agenda' to shape how it all turns out.

At the same time, Academy chains will be moving in to the borough in the near future. The Lead Member is beginning to be approached by providers wanting to set out their offer. As part of the education strategy we have the potential to develop a set of principles to describe the nature and expectations of the local Barnet education partnership that any prospective provider should be aware of or could be evaluated against in the event that Barnet has an influence between providers.

Decision

For the project to

- engage with the DfE to develop a pilot project to shape a borough 'map' of Academy governance arrangements for the primary sector
- develop a set of local principles/framework for engagement with Academy chains

6. Role of governors

In the conference, headteachers were invited to think through how best schools and the local authority can help governors to more effectively challenge and support. Within the first few Ofsted inspections within the new framework, we are seeing that the effectiveness of governors is coming under increasing scrutiny. Ideas included

- Pre-requisite preparatory training for governors before their appointments;
- Checking that LA/Community governor candidates are considered carefully for suitability;
- Reconstitution of governing bodies, reducing them to 7 members. Legislation passed earlier this year permits governing bodies to do this;
- Using seconded governors, including headteachers, to share best practice and to challenge governing bodies;
- Holding peer reviews of governing bodies;
- Getting governing bodies to consider how governors could develop a shared vision above and beyond their individual schools;
- Fixed tenures of 5 years for Chairmen of Governing Bodies to ensure the relationship between the Chairman and Headteacher does not become overly familiar or comprised by that familiarity;
- Set templates for Headteacher reports for all schools to ensure headteachers pass on all appropriate/required information to governors; and,
- Development of an overarching 'governors' trust' appointed to consider the more strategic issues affecting governors and governing bodies and their role in the school and wider community.

Decision:

For the project to:

- Develop local good practice guidance for Governors to increase effectiveness in the challenge role, including ways for Governors to access data and information

7. Raising Participation Age and 14-19 provision (up to 25 for LLD)

The 14-19 partnership group has been steering the local response to the Raising Participation Age and a range of other policy initiatives in the post 14/employability agenda. There are a number of new duties arising in this area that require a local response. A workshop for all providers is being held on the 29th November to bring together a number of existing workstreams to develop our partnership work on participation, progression and employability. This policy arena has multiple links across council services and across partner organisations as well as local employers and business. Funding arrangements are complex and are changing.

For the purposes of the Education Strategy we propose to achieve an agreed set of broad high level priorities to deliver this agenda over the next few years. This will cut across provision (eg for vulnerable learners through the Inclusion Strategy and a potential Studio School), funding (e.g. priorities for funding post 16 curriculum developments) as well as Barnet's emerging approach for increasing employment opportunities for 16-24 year olds. The high level principles and priorities will need to be supported by a delivery plan (Participation, progression and employability plan)

Decision;

For the project to;

- Commission a Participation, progression and employability plan.