

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

PRIMARY AREA SEMINAR
MONDAY 10 OCTOBER 2016
9.00 am – 11.00 am
The Holiday Inn, Basildon
Notes of seminar

Action

1. IN ATTENDANCE

Tim Coulson, Regional School Commissioner, East of England and North East London
Claire Mycock, Deputy Director EENEL RSC Office
Dan Cooke
Rosemary Prince

Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer

Numerous other headteachers and governors, predominantly from Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

2. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE ACROSS THE REGION

Tim reminded us that, historically, the Eastern region has had lower attainment than many other regions in the country. To perform a “miracle in the East” there has been a focus on:

- Shifting the dialogue from structures, to structures that deliver better standards
- Expectation rising in a context of shifting support for the system
- Increasing social mobility
- The challenge of leadership

The eight Regional Schools Commissioners came into post in September 2014 and report to the National Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter. RSCs take decisions regarding academies on behalf of the Secretary of State. They are supported by a Headteacher Board, which includes 4 elected members and 4 co-opted or appointed.

Next elections for the Headteacher Board take place in 2017.

Education systems across the world are more and more ambitious, and in England the Government is clear about raising the bar, albeit in a climate when funding will decrease – a challenge for the whole system.

The overall objectives for the East of England and North East London (EENEL) region are set with the aim of driving up standards across the region so that every child attends a school or academy whose results are above the national minimum floor standard and rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Objectives include:

- Building strong sponsors

There are currently 141 approved sponsors in the EENEL region, with 51 additional sponsors agreed in the last two years.

- Facilitating collaboration
- Opening high quality new provision
- Challenging underperformance

The RSC now has responsibility for intervening in all schools causing concern, including maintained schools.

The accountability landscape:

- SATS (Single Academy Trusts) and MATS (Multi Academy Trusts) are accountable for outcomes in their schools
- OFSTED assesses how well schools perform against schools with same context
- Regional Schools Commissioners challenge and support those schools not yet good enough
- National College Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) provides the pipeline of teachers and leaders and system capacity
- Local authorities oversee SEN, admissions, safeguarding, transport and sufficiency of places

A number of slides gave the 2016 outcomes across the region:

Phonics	Essex in line with EENEL and national		
%age meeting expected standard Year 1	81%	81%	81%
% meeting expected standard Year 2	92%	91%	91%

Newham the highest performer at 87% and 92% - they have taken the most consistent line on the teaching of phonics in the borough.

Key Stage 1

	Reading	Writing	Maths
EENEL	76	69	75
Essex	77	68	74
England	74	65	73

Range of results

In reading – from 68% (Peterborough) to 81% (Hackney)

In writing - from 61% (Peterborough) to 78% (Hackney)

In mathematics - from 69% (Peterborough) to 82% (Hackney)

Key Stage 2 – mixed picture (provisional outcomes)

Pupils achieving expected standard range from

Norfolk 49% - Essex 55% - Hackney 63% - EENEL average 53%

Average of reading progress score – Essex	0.01	EENEL	0.15
Average of writing progress score – Essex	0.51	EENEL	0.64
Average of maths progress score – Essex	0.13	EENEL	0.00

Number of schools in Essex below floor 2016 – 13

Ofsted judgements – primary

Essex has gone up from 73% good or better in 2014, to 89% in 2016

3. EDUCATION AND ADOPTION ACT 2016

What is a coasting school?

A coasting school is where data shows that, over a three year period, the school is failing to ensure that pupils reach their potential. A school will only be coasting if performance data falls below the coasting bar in all three previous years.

Schools will identified for the first time in December 2016, based on revised 2016 performance data

The coasting definition is not linked to Ofsted judgments.

The RSC's role with coasting schools

- Coasting schools are identified on data alone
- All identified schools will have to submit information/a plan for how it will ensure improvement
- We will have to decide whether the school:
 - is supporting pupils well at this time OR;
 - has a sufficient plan and capacity to improve OR;
 - needs additional support/challenge OR;
 - needs formal intervention in order to improve.
- We then need to decide on what, if any, action is appropriate to bring about sufficient improvement

The presentation included a slide giving information about the coasting process.

Free schools

- In England there are currently 429 open free schools and 236 pipeline ('pre-opening') projects. 77 of these projects were announced on 16 September 2016.
- In the East of England and North East London region:
 - 67 open free schools including 7 University Technical Colleges and 2 studio schools. 20 open free schools are at primary phase.
 - 50 pipeline free school projects including 1 University Technical College. 24 pre-opening projects are at primary phase .
- The latest application window closed on 28 September 2016. DfE does not publish the number or details of applications received until a later date.
- Currently 86% judged good or better in the region

Information included on how to apply and future developments.

Growing the system with care

- **Starter Trusts** – first 5 or 6 schools up to around 1200-1500 children
- **Established Trusts** - 5 to 15 schools or around 1200 to 5000 children
- **Regional Trusts**-15-30 schools
- **System Trusts** - 30 or more schools

Around 140 MATs across the EENEL region. About 10 are large trusts (chains); vast majority are MATs of 6 schools or less, and 100 consist of 3 schools or less.

Tim explained that once a school/governing body has made its initial decision to become a MAT, a couple of years later many Trusts decide that increasing the number of schools in the MAT would be beneficial. He argued that this is “the best home for a school that is really struggling” but that all schools “sharpen each other up” in the MAT. Tim stated that MATs can ensure that the best features of schools then become common practice across the organisation.

The approval of sponsors is critical and the RSC is developing a Growth Healthcheck, which is not an inspection but a formative review, including

- Standards and track review
- People and leadership
- Governance capacity
- Risk management
- Financial sustainability

When multi academy trusts work at their best...

- **Building a Community around moral purpose and high aspiration**
- **The authority of the lead educationalist**
- **Collective responsibility** for the results of all children
 - “If one fails we all fail”
- **Strategic governance** allied to educational focus at LGB
- **Recruitment and retention**
- **Career progression for staff**
 - retain the best staff in the trust if not in the same school
- **Efficient Management of Resources**
 - Trust appointments on behalf of the schools
- Where possible the “**all through**” **0 to 19 MAT** makes sense of the learning progression of children

Plus reasonable geographical closeness so that schools are able to support one another.

Tim noted that the DfE no longer accepts shared leadership of a Trust – there has to be a named “lead educationalist”.

This may well be an issue for groups of schools that want to group to form a MAT, but where the headteachers are seen as equally good and wish to be in charge of at least their own school this could be problematic. (My comment!)

Tim argued that headteachers should not lose their autonomy: “only if the MAT is very foolish. i.e. need to agree terms of reference/articles of association that enable heads

to continue to run their own schools, but to benefit from the experience of the CEO/Executive Head. Schools in a MAT will also benefit from being able to standardise financial systems, data systems, governance structures, curriculum delivery – and in the DfE’s view, the MAT would only intervene when the agreed approaches are not working in a particular school.

One solution is for a MAT is to employ an additional CEO (as well as Heads of all schools) but this is unlikely to be an affordable model for a small(ish) group of schools.

A question was asked about Faith schools and their options for joining MATs.

The Catholic diocese will only form MATs of Catholic schools.

Church of England schools can join with non-faith schools in a MAT but must get the approval of the Diocese. A mixed economy is difficult to achieve as the Diocese has strong views on the governance of schools; for example, the Director of Education for the Diocese must be a Director on the Academy Trust.

Qualities of successful system leaders

- **Diagnosis** of what is needed
- Can lead with credibility in the **school improvement space**
- Can see the MAT as an educational hub for excellence
- Ability to take **action and execute** the plan & evaluate it
- Understands how to **hold people to account** and welcomes being held to account
- Can tell the difference between **context and an excuse**
- Has a mindset that puts children’s needs ahead of adults’ expectations

Support and guidance

- ‘Growing multi-academy trusts’ – suggestions for ambitious trusts - [https://www.camb-ed.co.uk/Portals/0/Documents/CE%20Growing%20MATs%20-%20Suggestions%20for%20ambitious%20Trusts%20\(final%20published\).pdf](https://www.camb-ed.co.uk/Portals/0/Documents/CE%20Growing%20MATs%20-%20Suggestions%20for%20ambitious%20Trusts%20(final%20published).pdf)
- To be published shortly – commitment from ‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’ about MAT Design Principles
- Trust self evaluation tool

3. SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE

DfE consultation from 12 September to 12 December 2016

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone>

DfE rationale for change

The drive for change has been strong –

- 1.4m children more children attend schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010
- Free schools and academies programme has enabled strong schools and school leaders to extend their success to open a greater diversity of provision.
- New curriculum and qualifications reform are driving school standards to match best international comparisons.

But...

- 1.25m children are attending primary or secondary schools in England are rated either require improvement or inadequate
- Demographic pressure for places are increasing – 4% increase expected in Primary and 10% increase in Secondary in 2020.

A new/additional focus for DfE – “families who are just about managing”

We currently judge schools support families of modest means on Ever 6 free school meals - i.e. income benefits. Continue to support pupils on free school meals through the Pupil Premium.

- Greater focus required on those children of people on modest incomes, who do not qualify for such benefits but who are nevertheless just about ‘managing’.
- No way to differentiate outcomes for child from a family which is ‘managing’ to get by but not in receipt of benefits and that of a child from the wealthiest 10% of families nationally – creation of a cliff edge.

How do we identify these children / families to understand how policy affects their outcomes? Tim asked for schools to share any current practice and ideas, within the consultation.

Four key areas in the consultation

Independent schools – charity status dependent on developing support for state schools and taking a higher percentage of children from families on low incomes

Universities - It is proposed that higher education institutions will be required to meet the following requirements as a condition of charging higher fees:

- Establish a new school in the state system, of which the capital and revenue costs will be met by the government, or;
- Sponsor an academy in the state system.

Selective schools DfE wants to retain and increase the academic success of selective education, while at the same time improving the educational outcomes for those that do not attend selective schools. In practice this means -

- Support for existing grammar schools to expand.
- Permitting the establishment of new selective schools.
- Permitting existing non-selective schools to become selective.

To ensure an increase the number of good and outstanding places in non-selective schools, we intend to apply conditions on new or expanding selective schools.

- Take a proportion of pupils from lower income households
- Establish a new non-selective secondary school, with the capital and revenue costs paid by government;
- Establish a primary feeder in an area with higher density of lower income households to widen access
- Partner with an existing non-selective school within a multi-academy trust or sponsor a currently underperforming and non-selective academy.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to join the selective school at different ages, such as 14 and 16, as well as 11. This might be facilitated through the partnership or sponsor arrangements with other schools.

Faith schools –removal of 50% cap. The government currently applies a 50% cap on the number of children admitted by faith for oversubscribed new free schools, in order to foster inclusivity. However, the evidence suggests that this rule does not achieve inclusivity and in fact prevents some high-performing faith schools from expanding or establishing new schools.

Questions during the session included:

How is the government’s proposal addressing alternative provision?

Tim noted that this paper doesn’t, but the free school applications include schools that provide alternative provision.

How does this paper provide education for the majority of children – as suggested by the title?

Tim suggested that the other government proposals, academisation etc address the general system.

He urged everyone to respond to the consultation, to express their own views and, importantly, what they believe would be the impact of these developments on the local area and on other schools in the system.

There are 30 questions in the consultation.