

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21st January 2019

SUBJECT: The changing educational landscape - Governance Arrangements & Performance

REPORT FROM: Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

CONTACT OFFICER:

1.0 BACKGROUND

The report provides background and context to the evolving governance of school improvement in a changing educational landscape where the traditional role of local authorities is narrowing, and schools are operating in an increasingly autonomous way.

The origins of the self improving schools system came from "2010 – The Importance of Teaching", in which the Government set out its ambitions for a school led system of school improvement, with governors, head teachers and teachers all having responsibility for improvement, to be accompanied by a changing role for local authorities.

From this emerged a more clearly defined role for LAs, with a remit to concentrate on delivering their core functions:

- 1. Ensuring every child has a school place*
- 2. Ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met*
- 3. Acting as champions for all parents & families*

This was accompanied by an expectation that LAs would step back from maintaining schools, with a shifting responsibility for school improvement to schools, with the best school leaders playing a wider role across the system, as responsibility for school improvement increasingly sits with teaching schools, NLEs and other designated system leaders.

This envisaged the role of the LA as **champion** of educational transformation, moral purpose, with the democratic mandate to ensure good outcomes, and vision; **convener**, bringing together leaders, connecting to best practice within and beyond the system, facilitating partnerships; and **commissioner**, bringing the strategic picture, intelligence and data, enabling and commissioning support and development.

For Bury, the school led model has continued to evolve since 2010, bringing together bringing together the key stakeholders with an interest in the education system across Bury, to provide a coherent structure within which all stakeholders can contribute to an improving school system.

Alongside this strategic level governance arrangement, the governance arrangements at school level have continued to evolve with the establishment of Multi Academy Trusts and the sponsorship of a number of schools subject to an Academy Order. At December 2018, from a school estate of 1 Nursery School, 63 Primary Schools, 13 Secondary Schools, and 4 Special Schools, the school landscape looks like:

Trust	Convertor Academies	Sponsored Academies
Bury College Education Trust		Elton Primary; Radcliffe Primary
Christ Church CE Multi Academy Trust	Christ Church CE Primary School, Walshaw	St John's CE Primary, Radcliffe; Radcliffe Hall CE/Methodist Primary (Provisional)
Forward as One CE Trust (Bolton)		Gorsefield Primary School
Oak Learning Trust (Provisional)	Elms Bank Specialist Arts College (provisional); Unsworth Primary School (provisional)	Broad Oak Sports College (provisional)
Roch Valley Trust	St Thomas' CE Primary School	Holy Trinity CE Primary School <small>Table 1</small>
Shaw Education Trust (Newcastle under Lyme)	Tottington High School	Castlebrook High School
St Anne's Trust (to be confirmed)	St Gabriel's RC High School (to be confirmed)	St Monica's RC High School (provisional)
Vision Trust	East Ward Primary School; Higher Lane Primary School; Sunny Bank Primary School	
Wesley Trust (provisional) (National)	Wesley Methodist Primary School (provisional)	
Yesoiday HaTorah	Yesoiday HaTorah School	
No of Bury Schools	11	9

This school landscape will continue to evolve, introducing an increasingly diverse range of leadership and governance arrangements in and across schools, and introducing new challenges to the strategic governance arrangements across the system, with a proportion of school level governance and capacity for school improvement support coming from outside the local authority area.

Accountability

In May 2018 the Secretary of State published a consultation document on the **Principles for a clear and simple accountability system** and linked to this, on the 9th November, the DfE set out its initial plans to support underperforming schools.

Together, these highlight a shift, or at least a clarification, of the respective roles of key players across the system, and particularly those in the increasingly congested 'middle tier' which was once the sole domain of local authorities.

The local authority continues to have an instrumental role in education, but the clarification brings into much sharper focus its role in terms of leadership of place, and its role as champion, convener and commissioner in relation to the educational system, but with a significantly diminishing role in the direct delivery of school improvement services, as this aspect is taken up by Teaching Schools, Multi Academy Trusts and others.

At the same time Government has also sought to clarify the respective roles of Regional School Commissioners, Department for Education, Ofsted, Multi Academy Trusts, and Teaching Schools in terms of accountability.

Effective Governance of the School System

The evolving landscape, and the increasingly diverse nature of the school system requires stronger and more effective governance arrangements, recognizing that accountability within and across the system may sometimes rest outside the local authority area, and that school improvement capacity may also come from a number of sources both within and outside of the borough.

This suggest that current governance arrangements must now evolve to respond to the changing landscape, and to ensure that there is clear local accountability that works in the context of the broader range of players in the 'Middle Tier'. Further, these arrangements need to respond to the broader skills and employment agenda to ensure that the educational system is delivering the workforce of the future for Bury.

A revised **Bury Strategic Education Board**, will provide strategic direction, governance and accountability across the local system, and connecting to wider regional and sub-regional systems and partners.



Strategic Delivery to the School System

School Improvement Clusters will continue to serve a valuable role in bringing schools together to provide support and challenge, to identify priorities and need, and to provide a conduit between local communities the schools serving those communities, and the Strategic Board, but with a much broader focus on inclusion, and inclusive communities.

School Improvement capacity will come from a range of sources, available to specific schools from within their own organizational arrangements (MATs), and to schools more generally from a range of providers across the system. This will include school to school support, from system leaders (NLE, LLE, NLG), through Teaching Schools, and through MATs providing support beyond their own schools.

Governance support for Governing Boards, Trusts and individual governors will also come from a range of sources but initially this may not be readily available, and of consistent quality to support all schools on their journey. Working with Bury Governor Association, the LA will facilitate the provision of support, advice and guidance, available to all schools, academies and individual governors. Over time, this activity will increasingly be delivered by and on behalf of schools.

Alongside this, there is the potential for new partnerships to emerge capable of providing a range of support services to those schools that require it. These partnerships may be informal, but could include some more formal arrangements that provide a vehicle for employing staff and delivering services, but which can function effectively in an increasingly autonomous school environment. There may be a range of such entities, some of which are driven by commercial principles, and others more focused on the principles of developing social capital. This latter approach is described as the Bury Educational Co-operative in the model for the Bury Strategic Education Board shown above.

The principle behind the **Bury Educational Co-operative**¹ which is included in the schematic above is to provide a vehicle, collectively 'owned' by the system through which a range of services and support can be provided to, or commissioned on behalf of schools, responding to the specific requirements of schools. This should not be seen as an exclusive provider of services, but one that sits alongside a range of other providers of services and support.

The services and support that could be included: School Improvement Services; CPD; Governor effectiveness & Governor support; EAL services; Therapeutic Interventions and support; Educational Psychology; Outdoor Education services; HR advice; Finance; Health & Safety advice; Education Welfare and Attendance; Safeguarding advice; IT systems and support.

This potentially sits within the space currently occupied by the LA, Multi Academy Trusts and Teaching Schools, each of which currently provide a range of support services from HR and Finance, to school improvement support and everything in between. This isn't meant to replace the activity delivered by others, but to complement what is available and to provide access to services and support for those schools that need it, and to provide links to a wide range of settings and providers that have the capacity to deliver other services and support.

At the same time Teaching Schools and MATs will continue to build capacity to provide support to schools within their own alliances and partnerships, and beyond.

Local Authority role

The Local Authority role will increasingly be a facilitation one, and focus on the quality assurance of the school to school support and intervention. The Local Authority does however remain statutorily responsible for overall performance of Bury schools, and specifically in relation to schools causing concern.

¹ Examples include: <https://www.oneeducation.co.uk/> <https://www.camdenlearning.org.uk/> <https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/>

In order to provide the Council with assurance about the effectiveness of the local system on an ongoing basis, it is proposed to present an annual report to the Scrutiny and Overview Panel of the Council, setting out the priorities and ambitions, and performance against these.

Linked to this the LA will produce strategies that together will set out the Council's ambitions and priorities in relation to:

- School Readiness
- Special educational Needs
- Inclusion
- Education
- Governance

In respect of school performance and accountability of schools, During the latter part of the autumn term the LA developed and introduced a new risk assessment process to assess each schools performance, and to enable appropriate support and intervention to be brokered for school leaders and governors.

A feature of this risk assessment process has been the creation of a 'School on a page' which sets out a comprehensive picture of each schools performance against a range of measures. This has been shared with all schools and, following positive feedback, minor revisions will lead to a formal launch later this month. This new data performance tool allows school governors and leaders to engage in a single conversation about the performance, standards, and quality and effectiveness of the educational experiences provided to children and young people. It can be used to celebrate the key strengths as well as to identify the key performance risks in order to act swiftly to broker effective support for schools where there are weaknesses.

Alongside this, we have provided each Councillor with a Ward Education profile, setting out clearly the performance of schools at electoral ward level.

An education position statement has been clearly communicated to all Councillors, school governors and head teachers, as we have shared our performance, standards and quality data.

From this there is very clear recognition we must act swiftly to ensure all children make continued accelerated progress in their day to day learning, growth and development, and in order that they can achieve the attainment levels they are capable of. This is particularly the case in respect of higher levels of attainment by our most able children, and those children with special educational needs and/or who are disadvantaged, who remain a high priority for support.

A presentation setting out performance against a range of measures, with comparison with national, North West and GM data is attached at Appendix One.

List of Background Papers:-

Appendix One – School Performance presentation

Contact Details:-

Paul Cooke – Strategic Lead (Schools, Academies & Colleges). 0161 253 5674.
P.cooke@bury.gov.uk

