

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 SEPTEMBER 2008**

SPECIALISMS IN SCHOOLS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Scrutiny Members as to how a school becomes a ‘Specialist School’.
2. To update Scrutiny Members as to the position regards current specialist status in Darlington schools.

Summary

3. Specialist schools are an important part of the Government’s plans to raise standards in secondary education.

Recommendation

4. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

**Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services**

Background Papers

DCSF Guidance on Specialist Schools.

Andrew Dunn : Extension 2824

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder issues contained within this report.
Health and Well Being	There are no specific Health and Well Being Issues contained within this report.
Sustainability	There are no specific Sustainability Issues contained within this report.
Diversity	A wide ranging and balanced curriculum will benefit all young people in Darlington.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Learners in the 11 to 16 age group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This does not represent a change to the Council’s budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Improved levels of attainment will affect the Local Authority’s ability to deliver the Prosperous and Aspiring Darlington themes of the sustainable community strategy.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Specialist Schools Programme (SSP) helps schools, in partnership with private sector sponsors and supported by additional Government funding, to establish distinctive identities through their chosen specialisms and achieve their targets to raise standards.
6. Specialist schools have a special focus on those subjects relating to their chosen specialism but must also meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils.
7. Any maintained secondary school in England can apply for specialist status in one of ten specialisms: arts, business & enterprise, engineering, humanities, languages, mathematics & computing, music, science, sports and technology. Schools can also combine any two specialisms. Specialist schools can apply for an SEN specialism in one of the four areas of the SEN code of practice.
8. The SSP promotes school improvement by providing opportunities for schools to work to their strengths, enabling them to deliver effective teaching and learning in their area of expertise, as well as across the curriculum, and to drive innovation. Applicant schools engage in a thorough audit of their progress so far and set out plans and targets for specialist subject improvement as well as whole school targets.
9. Specialist schools work with named partner schools for the benefit of pupils beyond their own school boundaries and with other groups of people in the wider community. This ensures that the programme has an impact by helping to create a diverse network of secondary provision through the sharing of good practice and expertise.
10. The SSP has become increasingly popular since its inception in 1994. There are currently 2695 designated specialist schools. Specialist schools represent around 85% of all secondary schools. Over 2.5 million students are now taught in specialist schools - over half of all students attending secondary schools. There are specialists in all areas of England, and every local education authority that has secondary schools has at least one specialist school.
11. Specialist schools will have an important role to play in securing the delivery of Diplomas and will be encouraged schools to work in partnership with other schools and colleges to support high quality provision.
12. Specialist schools receive two sorts of additional funding:
 - (a) £100,000 (per application) for a capital project to enhance the facilities in the subjects related to the school's specialism; and
 - (b) recurrent funding of £129 per pupil per year up to 1000 pupils to implement their specialist school development plan.
13. In addition to the £100,000 capital grant the school itself must raise £50,000 in unconditional sponsorship (less for small schools with less than 500 pupils on roll, including special schools) towards the capital project. All specialist schools should target at least one third of their specialist school grant on sharing resources, facilities and expertise in

their specialism with non-specialist schools and their local community.

14. Specialist schools are designated initially for a period of three years. Continued designation depends on satisfactory performance and grading in individual school's Ofsted report. Schools may be re-designated for periods of three years up to the point of their next Ofsted inspection.

Specialist Schools in Darlington

Each school has to describe the provision it makes as a specialist school.

This is what Darlington schools say about themselves.

15. Beaumont Hill Technology College has an Applied Learning Specialism. In 2005, Beaumont Hill was awarded specialist status in Applied Learning (previously known as Vocational Learning). This was as a result of Beaumont Hill being identified as a high performing specialist school. This specialism provides enhanced funding to support the delivery of a much wider range of courses at 14-19, as well as engaging students of all ages in thinking about their future employment.
16. Technology College Specialism. Beaumont Hill is a well established, high performing specialist technology college. Funding for this specialism aims to raise standards in Maths, Science and Technology subjects. The school is also committed to working with the wider community to provide outreach services. This can involve working with other schools.
17. Haughton School was awarded Arts College specialist status in 2001. The school are committed to providing all students with wide ranging opportunities in the Arts. The school's community plan supports community arts based activities such as outreach service to other schools, and Steam Shed, an Inclusive Theatre company.
18. Carmel is a Voluntary Aided Catholic 11-18 College with specialisms in Technology (including D&T, Mathematics and Science) and Applied Learning. The school has achieved the status of a High Performing Specialist School and as both a Training School and a Leading Edge School. Carmel seeks to provide a service to other schools in the local area and the wider region.
19. As a Specialist Language College Hummersknott are committed to ensuring that all students have access to a wide range of languages. All students study either German, French or Spanish in Year 7. In Year 8 they take a second language chosen from these three along with Russian and Chinese. All students take a language to GCSE. Hummersknott have partner schools in France, Germany, Spain, Russia and China and students have opportunities to exchange with students in these countries and to take part in visits abroad.
20. Hurworth School serves the community predominantly to the south of Darlington and has specialisms in maths and computing. The school is high performing and was recognized by Ofsted as being outstanding in March 2008.
21. Longfield achieved National recognition in 2006. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) accredited the school with an ICT Excellence Award for the Best Whole School Use of ICT Across the Curriculum. Longfield School's achievements have also been more widely recognised. The school has been given: the School Achievement Award by the DfES; Sports Mark by Sport England; and most recently

Specialist College status.

22. Eastbourne Academy's specialisms are based around Business Studies and Enterprise. The aim of the school is to promote entrepreneurial skills in students as Darlington has few young people who display such skills.
23. Branksome Comprehensive will apply for specialist schools status in October of 2008 specialising in science.
24. All Darlington specialist schools exert a positive influence on the life of the communities they serve. A good example of this is the work of Hummersknott School and Language College as regards the promotion of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teaching across Darlington. Recent Key Stage 3 teacher's assessment of Year 9 pupils ability in MFL shows that Darlington schools had 78.6% of our pupils at Level 5+ against a national average of 58%. Further success was reported at Level 6+ with 45.1% of pupils achieving the higher grade against an average of 25% nationally.

Outcome of consultation

25. No consultation was required in the preparation of this report.
-