
**PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT
WITH SCHOOLS**

Responsible Cabinet Member – Cllr Chris McEwan, Children & Young People Portfolio
Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the development of Procedures and Protocols for Local Authority engagement with schools following the publication of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Information and Analysis

2. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 has brought in a range of statutory powers and requirements making it necessary to develop a protocol for working with schools which includes the Local Authority policy for schools causing concern. Without such a policy, the Local Authority will be unable to implement a strategy to raise standards in our schools.
3. The New Relationship with Schools (NRWS) has been shaped by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Ofsted with support from schools, local authorities, the Learning and Skills Council and other key partners.
4. Practical changes intended to support its implementation include:
 - (a) the development of shorter, sharper inspections that give schools a clearer idea of whether they are pursuing the right priorities for raising pupil attainment and the provision of better information for parents through a school profile and more frequent inspections;
 - (b) appropriate challenge and support for school headteachers from high quality, professional, nationally accredited School Improvement Partners (SIPs); and
 - (c) a greater reliance on the school's self evaluation as the starting point for planning, inspection and work with SIPs and the provision of better data and information systems making use of the latest information on individual pupils' progress.
5. There is no change to the statutory responsibilities on local authorities for school improvement, standards and a wide range of children's services. However, the new relationship entails changes to the way that local authorities manage their responsibilities.
6. A key role for all local authorities is to work in partnership with schools in order to raise educational standards and improve outcomes for children. In order to achieve this, the Local Authority is expected to monitor, support, challenge and where necessary,

intervene in the work of schools (refer to Education and Inspections Act 2006). The powers to intervene relate to schools identified as ‘causing concern’. This is a generic term for schools which are under-performing (i.e. where pupil’s attainment or progress is inadequate compared to others in similar contexts, whether identified by the local authority or Ofsted). This protocol document (attached at **Appendix A**) outlines how the Local Authority, in partnership with all schools, will contribute to a dynamic school improvement strategy for the Borough.

7. Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act builds on existing statutory powers and good practice relating to ‘Schools Causing Concern’ to ensure that every pupil is provided with the education and opportunities they deserve. It does this by enabling earlier action to tackle school under-performance so that it does not become entrenched and lead to formal school failure. It also ensures that effective support and challenge is provided immediately when unacceptable standards are identified, so that improvements can be made quickly, securing decisive action if a school in ‘special measures’ or with a ‘notice to improve’ fails to make sufficient improvement.
8. This protocol document sets out how Darlington Borough Council will work with all schools using innovative approaches to establish sustained school improvement strategies. It describes the systems in place for early identification, what actions will be taken, the deployment of local authority officers, and the brokering of support.
9. The protocol document also describes the levels of local authority engagement with schools, being one of the following:
 - (a) intensive (for schools causing concern)
 - (b) targeted; and
 - (c) universal.

Outcome of Consultation

10. Headteachers from all of the Borough’s schools have been consulted regarding this protocol document and the procedures it details. Consultation has also taken place with both Dioceses and with representation from the Darlington Association of Governors.

Legal Implications

11. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

12. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. The approval of this protocol is expected to contribute to a reduction in school exclusion and absence rates and to reduce the number of young

people leaving schools with no qualifications.

Council Policy Framework

13. The issues contained within this report represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

14. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

15. Members are asked to: -

- (a) Note the contents of the report; and
- (b) Adopt the protocol document (as at **Appendix A**) as Council policy.

Reasons

16. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons: -

- (a) The Local Authority needs to challenge and support schools appropriately; and
- (b) Failure to do this will have a detrimental effect on school improvement and subsequently on our rating in the Joint Area Review.

Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Education and Inspections Act 2006
New Relationship with Schools

Andy Dunn: Extension 2824