



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Children and Young People's Services

NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOLS: PROPOSED NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENGAGING SCHOOLS

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to propose a revised model of engaging schools in the strategic development of education and services for children and young people.

Our vision and aspiration

2. Our overall vision and aspiration is to improve outcomes for children and young people by ensuring the effective engagement of schools in the strategic development of education and support services for children and young people.

Context – national

3. The County Council's relationship with schools has evolved over time, informed by a number of key statutory requirements and related guidance. These include:
 - *A new relationship with schools*, issued by the then Department for Education and Skills in 2005. This document has an emphasis on school improvement and envisages building the capacity of schools to improve, through rigorous self-improvement, stronger collaboration and effective planning for improvement. It also emphasises the need to secure better alignment between schools' priorities and the priorities of local and central government.
 - *Every Child Matters*, published in 2004 and reflecting the requirements of the Children Act 2004. This established local area partnerships, known as Children's Trusts, led by the local authority, responsible for improving children's well-being through integrated services, focused on delivering the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes.
 - *The Children's Plan*, issued by the government in 2007, which amongst other things set out a vision for 21st century schools involving excellent standards and high quality personalised education for pupils, with access to targeted and specialist support for those with additional needs; and strong links with parents and their local community. This was

subsequently, in 2008, supplemented by the document *21st century schools: A world-class Education for Every Child*.

4. More recently, updated statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, issued by the DCSF in 2008, clarified the government's vision of 21st century schools as operating at the centre of their local Children's Trust and their communities, and at the front-line of an early intervention and preventative system; committed to multi-agency and partnership working to meet children's needs, including working in partnership with schools and colleges and with parents; and fully engaged with the Children's Trust. The guidance indicates that the government intends to legislate in the next Parliamentary session to extend the definition of "relevant partners" under a duty to cooperate with the Children's Trust to all include all schools, sixth form colleges and colleges of further education. This would mean that schools will operate as part of a local system of schools and service providers, in partnership with the Children's Trust, to promote the well-being of all children, young people and families in their area. Schools will also have joint responsibility in the preparation and ownership of the Children and Young People's Plan for their area.
5. Additionally, Lord Laming's recent report on safeguarding arrangements recommended that the statutory membership of Local Safeguarding Children Boards should be extended to include schools. The government has indicated that it accepts all Lord Laming's recommendations and will reflect this particular recommendation in revised *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidance which it intends to publish by December 2009.

Context – local

6. Nottinghamshire County Council has long recognised the need for a collaborative, partnership approach to the provision of services for children and young people and regards schools as key partners in that respect.
7. In 2008 the County Council, after consultation with schools, issued 10 principles to underpin its new relationship with schools, following the establishment of the Council's new children and young people's services department. A copy of the 10 principles is attached as **Annex 1**. The senior leadership of the department now feels that it is necessary to review the current mechanisms for engaging schools, to ensure that they offer an effective means of involving schools in the strategic development of services. Many of the existing vehicles for involving schools are not widely understood and do not cover the full range of areas where full engagement would add value.
8. Principle 7 in Annex 1 commits the County Council to strengthen its consultation procedures with schools and to seek greater and direct involvement by schools and other partners in local authority strategic decision making.

How we know about schools' views at present

9. Schools' views are currently obtained by the County Council through a range of means, including:
 - correspondence and face to face interactions with individual schools, often on a specific case or issue
 - head teacher and other (e.g. SENCO) conferences
 - termly area head teacher meetings
 - responses to the annual Audit Commission school survey
 - feedback from existing groups, e.g. the Schools Forum, Admissions Forum and the 14-19 Partnership
 - consultation exercises on specific issues e.g. the SEN Review.
10. The feedback we have received suggests that schools value a strategic relationship with the County Council which balances county-wide developments with local need, is accessible, based on the 10 principles and which enables them to contribute at an early stage to the development of local authority strategy.

Our current arrangements for engaging schools

11. The County Council's current arrangements for engaging schools in the development of strategy have developed on an ad hoc basis over recent years. As such, the current arrangements, summarised at **Annex 2**, lack coherency and require further consideration to ensure they:
 - are understood and owned by all schools
 - are relevant, and cover all the areas on which schools' views should be routinely sought
 - provide the opportunity for early engagement with issues and in helping to shape strategy – as such, they must feed into the Children and Young People's Partnership
 - recognise the different perspective of schools serving the different phases of education may have in relation to particular issues.
12. The arrangements summarised at Annex 2 only include groups which involve engagement with head teachers. There are also other groups that involve school representatives, including:
 - the teaching assistant steering group

- the higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) mentor group
- the school administrators steering group.

Our proposals

13. Building on the 10 principles, we wish to develop the concept of all schools as active partners in strategic planning and decision making. This will include ensuring appropriate links are made with the Children's Trust (known in Nottinghamshire as the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership) as proposed by the government's revised statutory guidance on Children's Trusts mentioned earlier in this document.
14. The arrangements for engaging schools in this context will cover all maintained schools, irrespective of their particular governance arrangements, recognising the need for an approach based on mutual respect and a willingness to listen to each others' views.
15. In developing the new arrangements for engaging schools, we recognise the need to avoid additional bureaucracy by, for example, limiting the number of meetings schools have to attend.
16. The new arrangements will also need to recognise that the County Council, as the children's services authority for the area, has the lead responsibility for the Children's Trust and will work in partnership with a number of other agencies (such as primary care trusts and district councils) in developing strategy. The local authority also has a duty, in law, to act as the advocate for children and young people and their parents.
17. With this background in mind it is proposed to develop a revised model of engagement with schools, as portrayed at **Annex 3**. The suggested approach is based on the following principles:
 - it should utilise, wherever possible, existing arrangements for engaging with schools, thus avoiding additional meetings
 - it should respect the different perspectives that schools serving different educational phases will have on particular issues
 - it should be representative of all schools and should provide for head teacher representatives to feedback to their constituent head teacher colleagues
 - it should link schools appropriately to the Children's Trust, consistent with the impending new statutory duty for schools to cooperate.
18. It should be noted that the proposed approach is additional to and does not replace existing arrangements for consulting the recognised trade unions on issues, such as those involving staff terms and conditions of service, through the established Joint Consultative Negotiating Panel arrangements.

19. The key features of the proposed model of engagement portrayed at Annex 3 are:

a) the creation of an Education Trust Board

This would be a cross-phase executive board, with head teacher membership drawn from the three phase specific boards which would sit beneath it. The board would provide the link with the Children's Trust required by the revised statutory guidance on children's trusts.

The terms of reference and remit for the board would need to be defined but could include responsibility for influencing the role and functions of the LA's school related support services, with an overall focus on school improvement and the development of integrated services.

The arrangements for agreeing the membership of the Board would also have to be determined.

b) phase specific school boards

There would be three such boards – one each for the secondary, primary and special phases – sitting beneath and feeding into the Education Trust Board.

The secondary schools board would replace the existing learning and achievement group.

The primary schools board would replace the existing primary head teachers' forum and the special schools board would replace the existing special schools head teacher meetings.

c) district head teacher groups

Further consideration will need to be given to this but the existing arrangements based around local authority district boundaries may not necessarily be appropriate in each district of the county. School affiliations might also be reflected in the model. That might mean, for example, a mixed economy with some groups reflecting district authority boundaries and others reflecting recognised school affiliations eg North Broxtowe/South Ashfield.

d) focus specific groups

Focus specific groups will also be part of the proposed model including those which have a statutory basis – eg: the Schools Forum, Admissions Forum, 14-19 Partnership etc. The reporting arrangements for these groups within the context of the proposed model will need further consideration.

Conclusion

20. The views of head teachers are requested on the model of engagement summarised at Annex 3. Comments are requested **by Friday, 19 September 2009** and should be sent by letter to the Children and Young People's Services Department, Nottinghamshire County Council Council, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP (quote reference: PTM/consultation) or by email to philip.martin@nottscc.gov.uk.

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Nottinghamshire County Council - the new relationship with Schools

Ten Operational Principles

Together we will:

1. Share a vision for improvement which is sustained, purposeful and rooted in the needs of children and young people, supported by rigorous self evaluation and underpinned by a clear moral purpose. Improve communication with stakeholders about priorities and plans for improvement.
2. Respect, encourage and promote the independence and autonomy of Nottinghamshire primary, secondary and special schools but hold on to the principle of interdependence.
3. Give recognition to schools and school leaders for outstanding success, service, performance or achievement and use this success to make a wider contribution to schools in Nottinghamshire and beyond. Strengthen our use of successful school leaders to inform strategic thinking.
4. Develop integrated services and collaborative working with County Council and other partners which promote the five outcomes. Seek greater involvement by children, young people and their parents/carers in shaping and improving these services.
5. Strengthen our procedures for consultation with schools including head teachers and governing bodies, professional associations, the Diocese and other partners. Seek greater and direct involvement by schools and other partners in LA strategic decision making.
6. Be proactive in promoting choice and diversity in schools including Trust, Academy or Specialist status and other arrangements for example 3-18 schools and encourage entrepreneurial approaches. There will be no one preferred option. This will depend on local circumstances, interdependence and based on the best interests of pupils and their parents or carers.
7. Understand that the responsibility for the management of the solution of educational or human resource problems in schools rests with the head teacher and governing body unless they are unable to fulfil this function. Intervene earlier and more effectively in schools causing concerns so that a Notice to Improve or the requirement for Special Measures becomes unnecessary. Ensure that schools and their communities are informed about these concerns. Build the capacity of successful schools to provide school improvement support to other schools which have been identified by the LA or by Ofsted as schools causing concern.

8. Give consideration to the use of the full range of its statutory powers where a school is judged by Ofsted as a school causing concern before making a final decision including arrangements for leadership and governance.
9. Promote school learning communities or Networks. Use successful outcomes to promote good practice. Use available LA funding to support communities/networks in areas which push the boundaries of available knowledge.
10. Be proactive in considering Education Improvement Partnerships run by local schools where this would improve and secure services particularly to vulnerable children and young people. Go beyond the borders of Nottinghamshire to seek best practice and work flexibly to extend services beyond boundaries where this is in the best interest of the local community.

Current school engagement arrangements

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Schools Forum	<p>Statutory body – required by the Education Act 2002. Its functions and membership are prescribed by regulations. The LA has to <u>consult</u> the Forum annually on financial issues relating to arrangements for pupils with SEN, the use of PRUs and EOTAS, early years education, insurance, the allocation of central government grant and free school meals. The Forum <u>decides</u> issues relating to breaches of the central expenditure limit, changes to the minimum funding guarantee, increases in central spend on prudential borrowing, termination of employment costs, combined services, schools specific contingency and SEN transport. The Forum also <u>approves</u> changes to the scheme of financial management for schools.</p>	<p>Balance of membership is prescribed by regulations. Head teachers (16 – 7 primary phase; 7 secondary and 2 special) elected through district voting arrangements; 8 governors (4 primary; 4 secondary) elected through governing body nominations; 14 – 19 Partnership (one rep); Early years and childcare private, voluntary and independent providers (one rep); Trade unions (two reps); Diocesan reps (two – C of E and RC); LA officers attend but not as members. LSC and Nottinghamshire bursar group attend as observers.</p>	<p>Three times pa (usually termly) – but to be increased to four pa.</p>	<p>LA provides admin support and organises the meetings on behalf of the Chair of the Forum.</p>	<p>None.</p>

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Schools Admissions Forum	<p>Statutory body – required by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Brings together the LA and other admission authorities to discuss and monitor admissions policies and ensure both fairness and compliance with statutory requirements.</p> <p>Recent new regulations have changed the role and constitution of the Admissions Forums to improve their effectiveness, making them smaller more manageable advisory groups that concentrate on the fairness – rather than the legality – of proposed admissions arrangements within the local area, and to ensure they have an ongoing role as consultees with regard to local admissions arrangements.</p>	<p>Currently chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services. Membership is required by regulations to reflect the different types of schools in the area along with representatives from each faith group represented by schools in the area, parents and community representatives, local authority representatives, local employers, Armed Forces and Choice Advisers. The Forum is currently being reconstituted in line with the new legislation. Future school representation (which will be more limited under the new legislation) is to be considered at the Forum’s next meeting on 22 June 2009.</p>	Three times pa.	Supported administratively by LA staff.	Annual report to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Nottinghamshire 14 – 19 Partnership	To ensure coherent and co-ordinated education and training and related support services for 14 – 19 year olds. Responsible for producing the annual 14 – 19 plan setting out key priorities and activities. Oversight of the 14 – 19 reforms, preparing for the new national entitlement and providing leadership and direction to the work of the area strategy groups (see below).	Chairs of area strategy groups; college principals; training provider network; voluntary sector; LA/LSC officers and Chief Executives of NEBA, Connexions and Aim Higher.	Six times pa (twice per term).	Facilitated by LA staff; chaired by Director of Children’s Services.	Chairs of area strategy groups (ASGs) feedback to their ASG – standard agenda items. Minutes of meetings are shared with all ASGs and two county-wide groups (curriculum and finance; and diploma management).
14 – 19 Area Strategy Groups	7 local strategic partnerships (one in each district of the county) that plan provision to meet the needs of and take collective responsibility for all 14 – 19 learners across a travel to learn area. Not in essence a consultative group, but have been used in that way on the 14 – 19 Plan development and the MoG changes.	All secondary head teachers and principals of local FE colleges, training provider rep; LA/LSC/ NEBA/Connexions reps.	Three times pa (termly).	All ASGs, with the exception of Rushcliffe, have independent coordinators/admin support. LA makes a contribution to the salary and provides some support from its	All ASG chairs represent their partnership at the overarching 14 – 19 Partnership meetings.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
				14 – 19 team. LSC currently minutes the Rushcliffe ASG meeting.	
14 – 19 Transport Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing the ASG and Diploma consortium in relation to transport needs and issues arising from collaboration • Contributing to the development of a local 14 – 19 travel plan to ensure each learner can access the entitlement • Helping to identify and support innovative transport solutions for learners aged 14 – 19 (current guidance from the LSC is that innovation funding must be targeted at post-16 only – discussions are currently taking place with national LSC to try to include 14 – 16) • Contributing to and facilitating a home to education and training transport policy for learners 	Area Strategy Group co-ordinators; County Council Officers (Transport Officer, Nottinghamshire Transport Service, 14 – 19 team); Nottingham City Council rep; Connexions and LSC. Chaired by LA’s Transport Officer.	Three times pa (termly).	LA provides support for the Partnership through the Student Finance Service.	There is an explicit expectation that ASG co-ordinators will feed back to colleagues on their ASG. The Partnership also reports to the Children and Young People’s school transport strategy group (LA officer group).

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
	<p>16 – 19, linked to that for pupils of statutory school age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the distribution of the post-16 innovation fund • Identifying other sources of funding, which may be used to support 14 – 19 transport • Advising on 14 – 19 matters in relation to the Sustainable School Travel Strategies for both County and City • Reporting back to DCSF on monitoring access to the entitlement • Reporting to the 14 – 19 Partnership on matters of transport. 				
Special School Head Teachers meeting	<p>The purpose of the meeting is twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for special school heads to meet as a group • to invite guest speakers for specific interest areas <p>The LA is represented at each meeting albeit at the invite of the head teachers.</p>	All special school head teachers; Head of SEN Strategic Services.	Six times pa (half-termly).	The LA (SEN Strategic Services) co-ordinate the agenda for the meetings. The Chair of the meeting rotates between the special school head teachers.	None.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Learning and Achievement Group (Secondary heads group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering group for 11 – 19 strategy • To establish and embed the sharing of quality practice across the county • To advise on effective methods of communication and strategies for improvement • Forum for consultation on school improvement agenda • Forum to share services for school improvement. 	Volunteer group – representing all districts. Current membership includes the head teachers of Brunts, Tuxford, Queen Elizabeth’s, Portland, Manor, Grove, Sutton Centre, Redhill and Toot Hill schools.	Three times pa (termly).	The LA (through the Head of 11 – 19 Improvement).	Feedback is through head teachers termly conferences.
Primary Head Teachers Forum	Provides an opportunity for LA School Improvement Service colleagues to meet with representative primary school head teachers on the development of LA policy and primary national strategy developments. Also provides a Forum for heads to provide feedback to the LA on the impact of policies and procedures.	Two primary school head teacher representatives from each district, nominated through district head teacher meetings; Service Director for Learning and Achievement; Head of Improvement (0 – 12).	Three times pa (termly).	Co-ordinated and support administratively by the LA’s Head of Improvement (0 – 12) and the School Improvement Service administrative team.	Feedback to district head teacher meetings through the circulation of minutes.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Heads and Chairs briefings	<p>Briefings take place at the beginning of each term in each district of the county. The purpose of the briefings is to enable teachers and chairs to plan the business for the term ahead, to share best practice and raise any concerns they may have with the CYP Service Directors. Representatives from NAGs also attend each briefing so relevant issues can be taken through the National Governors' Association.</p> <p>Attendance by service directors gives a direct line of communication with local schools.</p> <p>The briefings not only act as a forum for dissemination of information but also focus on governance and strategic leadership issues.</p>	Open to all head teachers and chairs of governors, or their substitutes.	Three times pa (termly).	The Head of Governor Services and the Governor Services Support Manager lead the sessions.	Not applicable.
Area Head Teacher meetings – primary and secondary	Head teachers in each district of the county meet on a phase basis to discuss issues and to receive briefings from the LA (through the attendance of	Each school's head teacher is a member. Local Education Officers and Service Directors attend by invitation.	Three times pa (termly).	Some of the meetings are supported and chaired by the Local Education	Not applicable.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
	Service Directors).			Officer, but in some cases the head teachers make their own arrangements.	
Area admission panels (AAPs) – one per district	These groups fulfil part of the functions of the Fair Access Protocol in ensuring learning provision for all ‘hard to place’ or excluded pupils of secondary age within each of the seven districts within Nottinghamshire.	Each group comprises of representatives from each of the secondary schools within a district – usually the deputy head with delegated powers to agree admission of a pupil. The Nottinghamshire Learning Centre, the Local Education Officer and a range of other services at the discretion of the AAP (EPS, EWS, Connexions, YOS etc.). Each school nominates its own representative.	Approximately monthly during the school year.	The LA (through the Local Education Officer) convenes and chairs the group. Administrative support is provided by the LA.	The Senior Education Officer is required to produce an annual report on the effectiveness and operation of the seven area AAPs which historically has been presented to the Schools Forum.
Monitoring and Accountability Board (new)	To take forward concerns that were raised through the SEN review about the use of resources in Nottinghamshire, including the deployment of people, allocation and use of	Acting Head of SEN Strategic Services; Head of Inclusion Support Service; Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist and an Educational	Initially monthly, but may move to bi-monthly once the sub-groups are	LA provides support for the Board, through the SEN Training, Monitoring and	The Board will report to CYPS department’s leadership team in the first instance.

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
	<p>money and the use of physical resources (buildings, equipment etc). The Board is charged with establishing a strategy and mechanisms to ensure that existing resources are allocated more effectively and that there is a means for evaluating the impact of the resources on outcomes for children and young people. This will involve the formulation of an action plan mapping clearly achievable activities over a 12 – 18 month period to be undertaken by sub-groups. The Board is responsible for commissioning and steering the work of the sub-groups.</p>	<p>Psychologist; SEN Officer; Parent Partnership Officer; School Improvement Adviser (SEN); Acting Head of Performance Standards and Business Support; SEN Training, Monitoring and Accountability Officer; SENCO Support Officer; Head of Performance Review, Data and Communications; Principal Officer, LMS; Head of Governor Services; Head of The Brunts, Mansfield; Head of Yeoman Park Special School, Mansfield; Head of Keyworth Primary, Head of Rylands Junior School, Beeston; Family SENCO representative, Bassetlaw). Additionally, head teachers who participated in the SEN review or who expressed an interest in the area of monitoring and accountability have been invited to join the Board.</p>	<p>operating and undertaking activity to feed back to the Board.</p>	<p>Accountability officer.</p>	<p>Specific issues may then need to be referred to the County Council and/or the Schools Forum depending on the locus of decision making. It is envisaged that the Board will also report on its findings to heads, SENCOs, Family SENCOs and other stakeholder groups.</p>

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
		<p>Underneath the Board there will be wider school representation on a group comprising Family SENCOs from all seven districts. This group has been invited because of their involvement with the work of the Family SENCO working group, where monitoring and accountability issues arose. There is additional head teacher representation from Intake Farm Primary School, as that head teacher was part of the data reference group during the SEN review.</p>			

Name of group	Remit and terms of reference	Membership	Frequency of meetings	Co-ordination/ administration arrangements	Reporting arrangements
Heads Count Steering Group	Peer support group for head teachers, promoting confidential 1 : 1 support around issues of health and well-being. All newly appointed head teachers and acting head teachers are allocated a peer supporter.	10 link head teachers (7 primary – one for each district; two secondary and one special school); LA CPD lead (School Improvement Service); Governing Body Services representatives; LA administrative support. (Corporate Director for CYPS and Service Director for Strategic Services are honorary members of the group.)	Three times pa (termly).	Chaired by a primary head teacher. Administrative support is provided by the LA.	An annual report will be produced and will be shared with the Schools Workforce Development Group.

PROPOSED NEW MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS

