



meeting	EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE		
date	11 January 2005	agenda item number	4

Report of the Cabinet Member for Education: September - November 2004

1. This report highlights major activities undertaken as part of my work as Cabinet Member for Education for the period September to November 2004

The DfES Five-Year Strategy

2. Committee members are aware of the DfES five-year strategy and the major implications this will have for local schools, particularly secondary schools, and for the work of the LEA. In September I attended a high level meeting organised by the Government Office about the strategy and the proposed changes. Since that time the details of the strategy have become clearer and several of the key proposals have been set down in the latest Education Bill.
3. The Cabinet has endorsed the response submitted by Pam Tulley, the Director of Education, to the DfES setting out Nottinghamshire's views about the strategy and expressing concern over some of the proposals. We are particularly concerned about:
 - the introduction of a fast tracked system for secondary schools to become foundation schools and how this works with the local authority's duty to get the best for all vulnerable children. We are also concerned about the impact of one school gaining foundation status on other neighbouring schools
 - proposals for changes to admissions procedures and the potential for discriminatory practice against particular groups of pupils
 - the potential clash between the expansion of popular schools and the sustainability agenda in relation to transport and traffic congestion

- the freedom for secondary schools to own their own land.

The Children Act and the integrated children's services agenda

4. This term has also seen increased activity both locally and nationally on implementing the changes set out in the recent Children Act to bring about integrated children's services. Along with officers from education, social services and culture and community services, and partners in health, district councils and the voluntary sector, I attended a major, high profile conference on 16 November. The conference was addressed by Tom Jeffery, Director General of Children and Families at the DfES, and was very successful in raising awareness amongst all partners about the integrated children's services agenda and how it focuses on improved outcomes for children and young people.
5. Members will be receiving a briefing about the Children Act and what it will mean for Nottinghamshire and there is already significant development work going on between partners, including the work of the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and at officer level the Developing Children's Services Executive Group is working to identify the practical steps needed to deliver the children's services agenda in line with government timelines.
6. The conference highlighted for me how we are in a time of major national and local change in relation to the children's agenda and key documents such as Every Child Matters: Change for Children and the 10-year Strategy for Early Years and Childcare show very clearly that all aspects of the Government's reform programme link together.

The annual stocktaking meeting between the LEA and the DfES

7. Each year I attend the annual meeting with representatives from the DfES at which the LEA is evaluated on its progress to raise school standards. This year's meeting was held on 24 November and was exceptionally positive. The LEA and its services were praised by the DfES with the overall judgement being that "the LEA has a strong, cohesive intervention programme backed up by action and is providing coherent and strategic leadership". The meeting was also attended by headteachers who offered their perspective on LEA support and effectiveness in relation to school improvement.
8. At the meeting, the DfES recognised the very real achievements in raising standards in Nottinghamshire primary schools and the positive progress being made in secondary schools to raise standards at key stage 3. In scrutinising the work that the LEA is doing to lift performance at GCSE, the DfES acknowledged that the LEA was doing the right things and providing the most appropriate level of challenge and support, although there was common agreement between the LEA and the DfES that standards still need to improve at a faster rate. In future, these meetings will change to become an evaluation of the achievements of the local authority in improving outcomes for children and young people and in delivering the requirements of the Education Act.

Work with Nottinghamshire Governors

9. I attended the annual conference for governors, held this year on 6 November. The focus of the conference was workforce remodelling and it was well attended by governors from across the county.

Work with schools

10. My work with schools over the past three months has included visits to:
- Manor School, which is a specialist sports school, to launch the new all-weather pitch
 - Stevenson Junior School to present awards to pupils
 - Eastwood Comprehensive School, specialist arts college, to celebrate the opening of the school as a single site school in newly built and refurbished facilities.
11. In previous reports I have commented on school council visits to County Hall. During the past three months I have joined the school councils from Woodborough Woods Foundation School, Beckingham Primary School and Priory Junior School in their citizenship work.

International links

12. On 5 November I joined a group of Nottinghamshire headteachers and partner headteachers from several European countries when they visited county hall. The group of visiting head teachers were involved in an exchange visit to Nottinghamshire schools and were very interested in the differences between how education services are run in their home countries and in England. A particular interest was the role of the LEA and how children with special educational needs are supported. All the headteachers were surprised at the positive support given for pupils with special educational needs through additional County Council funding.

Appointment of a new assistant director for inclusion

13. At the beginning of November I was involved, with several other elected members, in the selection process and interviews for the post of assistant director for inclusion. Members may remember that this post has been advertised on four previous occasions but without an appointment being made. On this occasion I am pleased to report that the panels made an appointment and David Marriott, currently a secondary headteacher in Staffordshire, was appointed. David will bring a wealth of very relevant experience and knowledge from a large headship and he will start in the authority in the second half of the spring term. This means that the senior team in the Education Department is complete for the first time in over a year.

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