



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

# The National Challenge in Nottinghamshire

## What is the National Challenge?

The National Challenge is a government funded programme to ensure that by 2011 in every secondary school in England at least 30% of students will achieve 5 or more GCSE grades at A\*-C including English and mathematics. In previous years schools were judged by the number of students gaining five good GCSE passes at Grade C or above. These passes could be in any subject. The new measure has been introduced to ensure students gain the key literacy and numeracy skills to enter the workplace or continue in education or training successfully.

The National Challenge will concentrate on supporting schools where recent results were at or below the 30% level to ensure they reach this target. However some schools which have been included in the Nottinghamshire National Challenge are already performing above the 30% threshold but may previously have slipped below it. One school, The Grove, is included because it has recently expanded to accommodate students who formally attended Newark High School, a school that had it remained open, would have been included in the National Challenge. Support for these schools is intended to sustain performance above the 30% level.

Many of the schools supported are already doing a good job in the areas they serve and have received favourable judgements in their most recent Ofsted inspections. It is hoped that with increased resources and focused support, they can improve still further.

## Which schools are involved?

In Nottinghamshire 13 schools are involved in the National Challenge programme. These are:

- Alderman White
- Bramcote Park
- Dukeries
- Gedling
- Grove (incorporating Newark High School)
- Kirkby College
- Magnus
- Portland
- Quarrydale
- Queen Elizabeth's
- Sutton Centre
- Valley
- Wheldon

## What are they doing?

All schools in Nottinghamshire, including those schools in the National Challenge Programme, have been working hard to improve the outcomes for all their young people. National Challenge schools have worked with the Local Authority to write plans called Raising Achievement Plans (RAPs) which show the actions they are taking to secure the increase in the number of students gaining 5 A\*-C(EM). Each of these RAPs is supported by a separate Local Authority Plan.

Schools will now work with National Challenge Advisers to ensure the plans remain on track and contribute to successful outcomes for young people.

## Who are National Challenge Advisers?

National Challenge Advisers are experienced head teachers or school improvement professionals appointed by the LA from a national accreditation database to provide support and challenge to NC schools. They will work with head teachers and senior and middle leaders in the school for up to 20 days a year.

## What support do the schools receive?

In addition to having a National Challenge adviser, each school is receiving additional LA support from Teaching and Learning Consultants and Advanced Skills Teachers. They are also getting extra funding, at least £22,000 for each of the next three years to help schools appoint additional staff.

## What are they doing with this?

Nottinghamshire schools are using the additional support to:

- Appoint Teaching Assistants, Learning Mentors or Advanced Skills Teachers in or between schools
- Gain access to programmes such as Study Plus, an intervention programme for Key Stage 4 pupils that is designed to raise standards at GCSE, principally in English and mathematics
- Deliver Study Support, a programme of out of school hours learning which covers a wide range of learning activities outside normal lesson time in which young people participate voluntarily. This includes activities such as homework and study clubs, as well as sport and outdoor activities
- Set up internal coaching programmes to improve teaching and learning or leadership within the school
- Appoint additional Educational Welfare Officers to work with a family of schools to ensure that students' attendance is not a negative factor in them achieving their potential.

Some schools are also looking at developing their capacity further by working with a range of partners to ensure progress. This work may

lead, in some schools, to new arrangements such as the formation of academies, federations or National Challenge Trusts.

## How is their progress being checked?

National Challenge Advisers will visit schools regularly and discuss the progress the school is making and agree the next steps. National Challenge Advisers will feedback on progress to colleagues in the Local Authority and the National Strategies, acting on behalf of the Department of Children, Schools and Families, to ensure that what is happening in each school is appropriate and is contributing to positive outcomes for young people and increased 5 A\*-C grades including English and mathematics.

The National Challenge Advisers' feedback and the school RAPs will then be discussed formally at a Local National Challenge Board meeting of the National Challenge Advisers, Local Authority and National Strategies as part of a review of each school. These meetings will happen three times a year.

## What happens if they don't make the progress anticipated?

If schools do not meet, or look like meeting the National Challenge target of 30% 5 A\*-C including English and mathematics by 2011 the Local Authority will be asked to consider if structural changes are necessary to the school. Where a school has not already taken advantage of partnership arrangements or the opportunity to secure a new status, the Local Authority would work with the school to explore options that could include setting up an academy or a National Challenge Trust with a number of other partners that would include a school where significantly more than 30% of students were achieving 5 A\*-C including English and mathematics.

## Who can I contact to find out more about the National Challenge?

Chris Fallon is the senior school improvement adviser leading on the National Challenge in Nottinghamshire and he can be contacted on 01623 434131.