



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

Provisional test and examination results

Provisional test and examination results show that standards in Nottinghamshire schools have risen again this year. In primary schools, seven-year-olds in Nottinghamshire have achieved results that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics whilst eleven-year-olds in the County have also performed very well and are at or above the national average showing an improvement from last year in both English and mathematics. In English, 77% of pupils achieved the average level or above, whilst in mathematics, 75% achieved average levels and above. These results continue the trend of rising standards in Nottinghamshire primary schools over the last five years and teachers and head teachers have worked vigorously to sustain this improvement.

David Miliband, Minister of State for Schools Standards, has written to the Director of Education and myself congratulating Nottinghamshire on its Key Stage 2 results:

“It gives me great pleasure to write and say that schools in your authority have achieved excellent Key Stage 2 results this year.

The results for both English and maths combined mean that the children in your LEA are among those who have sustained the most consistent improvements in both English and maths since 2001. I would like to pass on my congratulations to pupils and teachers, and to colleagues at LEA level, for their continued achievement.”

In secondary schools Nottinghamshire pupils have also improved since last year. Standards for fourteen-year-olds have risen in English so that now 66.9% of pupils achieved the average level or above compared to 65% last year and 58.9% in 2000. This is a particularly welcome improvement, as traditionally, English has been the weakest of the core subjects in the County's secondary schools. In mathematics, 71% of pupils achieved average and above levels. Early results for GCSE examinations suggest that there has also been an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more

A*-C grade passes but the figures have yet to be confirmed and national data is not available until October 2004.

Bassetlaw PFI

At its meeting in September 2004, Cabinet approved a report to select the preferred bidder for the PFI Scheme. This is to be the Transform Schools' consortium led by Balfour Beatty, who have been invited to enter into further detailed negotiations with the County Council. The County Council will not enter into a contractual relationship with the preferred bidder until these detailed and complex negotiations are concluded – hopefully by the end of January 2005. In any event, the scheme must reach contractual completion by 31 March 2005 to secure the PFI credits that have been awarded and therefore negotiations must be concluded by that date.

The issues to be covered by the negotiations will include:

- the physical construction of the new buildings
- the type and level of services to be provided
- the control and regulation of the provider's construction and service obligations
- the position of employees who may transfer to the employment of the provider
- the performance and payment mechanism that will govern the conduct of the services being provided
- the financial arrangements for paying for the services being provided.

The County Council will also need to reach an agreed position with Bassetlaw District Council on the community leisure aspects of the scheme; with North Nottinghamshire College on the provision of post-16 education within the two post-16 centres; and to enter into agreements with the Governing Body of each school to recover part of each schools delegated budget towards ongoing service costs and to transfer control of the school premises outside of school hours to the provider to facilitate community use of the schools facilities. Finally, the Council will need to prepare and submit a Final Business Case for approval to the DfES and the Treasury Project Review Group towards the end of the final negotiation stage. The County Council's auditors will be asked to confirm that the proposed PFI contract conforms to the appropriate accounting standards and is certifiable as a PFI contract under the Local Government Contracts Act.

At this stage the preferred bidder remains within the overall affordability target previously agreed by the County Council, though the cost of the project will continue to fluctuate during the period of further negotiation with the preferred bidder. A further report will be brought to Cabinet for final approval before the final project agreements are entered into.

Schools that have failed to open for the new term

At the start of the new school year in September, there were three schools that failed to open on time. The schools involved were Arnbrook Primary, Jacksdale Primary and the Hucknall National C of E (Aided) Comprehensive schools.

Arnbrook Primary was created by the amalgamation of the former Roundwood Junior and St Alban's Infant schools. Part of the building works to create this new school was the refurbishment of two existing classrooms to form a nursery/foundation unit. As this work progressed asbestos was found which delayed the progress of the building work and resulted in the delay in opening.

Jacksdale Primary was closed on the first day of term as a result of delay in the building work.

Hucknall National C of E (Aided) Comprehensive school - this school has a major building programme of work which has created a new science block and subsequent internal refurbishment to the main school buildings. The new building work was due to be completed by the 27 August but the builders fell behind schedule and it was decided that in the interest of safety it would be better to reopen on the 6 September.

Fire at Arnold Hill School

On the evening of 7 September fire appliances from the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service attended a fire at Arnold Hill School; 15 fire appliances were used to fight the fire. The Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service managed to contain the fire, but 30 classrooms in the lower school are out of use, some because of smoke and water damage.

As ever, I am grateful for the work of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and for County Council staff, who immediately took a range of action to support the school. The task ahead is, of course, a difficult one and staff from across the County Council will continue to work with the head teacher and other senior staff to ensure all pupils are receiving full-time education as soon as possible.

Years 10-13 are already back at school. The goal is to ensure that all pupils can return to classes. The latter depends on finding and setting up mobile classrooms on site. Such classrooms required hard standing and services available before they can be used.

A project manager has been appointed to manage the disaster recovery programme. In the longer term we will be working with the insurance company to proceed with rebuilding of permanent accommodation.

Induction and retention of new headteachers

Over the past decade the turnover of headteachers in Nottinghamshire has remained fairly constant at about 10%. In the academic year 2003 – 2004 this rose to 13%. This is not a significant rise as the numbers reflect the short term acting headships which were not accounted for in the past. 52 headteachers took up posts either as substantive headteachers or in an acting capacity. Of these, nine were in their second or subsequent headship and sixteen operating in a short-term acting capacity. The remainder were in their first substantive headship. Induction opportunities were provided for them all.

The LEA programme for the induction of new headteachers relates to local issues and runs parallel to the nationally provided programme which is accessed through a range of contracted providers, but only available to first time substantive head teachers. The local programme focuses on the vision of the LEA, the functions of the Education Department and its relationship with schools through its Services.

The programme is annually based with **all** new head teachers (including second/third timers, acting heads etc.) having access to a range of short modules (for example, special educational needs, budget setting, child protection, recruitment and selection) organised on a termly basis. The programme is provided at nil cost to participants. Over a year any new headteacher will be able to access all of the modules, but in a different sequence dependent on their term of appointment. The exception to this is

the welcome meeting and the session on visions and functions of the LEA, which happens on a termly basis.

The national programme for first time headteachers is delivered through organisations under contract to NCSL. The LEA is a lead partner with the East Midlands (North) Headteacher Induction Programme Partnership which includes Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottingham City, Derby City, three universities (Nottingham, Derby, Lincoln) and the Secondary Heads Association. The Partnership covers the region represented by the LEAs involved and links together the experience, expertise and personnel necessary to deliver the programme in a very effective way.

A grant of £2,500 (possibly augmented by £500 agreed by the school's governing body) is available to each head during their first three years in post. The grant enables them to access training and development courses and resources offered by registered providers to develop and improve their leadership and management skills.

Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

The introduction of the statutory induction period for newly qualified teachers in 1999 meant that all NQTs had to satisfactorily meet a range of Induction Standards by the end of their first year of teaching in order to be registered to teach in a maintained school in England. During the induction period NQTs have a range of entitlements upon which the programme of support in their first year of teaching is based. These entitlements include a 90% teaching time table to enable NQTs to engage in professional development activities. Nottinghamshire County Council has maintained a high level of financial support to enable schools to fund an appropriate induction programme for NQTs. This reflects the priority that Nottinghamshire places on retaining a well motivated and skilled teaching profession.

Historically Nottinghamshire has always attracted high numbers of NQTs many of whom trained at local universities. In 2003/2004 148 primary and 252 secondary NQTs were appointed to the county. This was the largest cohort for a number of years but total numbers of NQTs average about 300 per year. In 2002/2003 statistics show that out of the 293 NQTs appointed the overwhelming majority remained in Nottinghamshire schools.

Nottinghamshire has a very good record of providing high quality support for newly qualified teachers. This includes a tailor made training programme for NQTs which starts with the "Welcome Meetings". These full day events are designed to make NQTs feel they have started their teaching careers in an Authority that cares about its workforce and is one which constantly seeks to build relevant partnerships in order to provide the very best opportunities for the young people of Nottinghamshire. All the Welcome meetings are introduced by the Director of Education.

Training and support is also provided for the induction tutors in schools. This is a key means of ensuring that NQTs receive an appropriate induction

programme. Each year, on average, between 60 and 80 induction tutors are trained. In 2004 this figure increased to over 100. This means that over the past five years a skilled resource of experienced teachers who could act as mentors to new teachers has been built up in schools across the county.

The Local Education Authority acts as the appropriate body in all matters related to NQTs. Part of this statutory function is to ensure that a quality assurance system is in place to monitor schools' judgements on NQTs and to support schools to deliver an effective induction programme. Where an NQT is failing to make satisfactory progress towards achieving the Induction Standards then significant additional support is provided for the NQT and the school through the Advisory and Inspection Service. Nottinghamshire's quality assurance systems have been used as an exemplar by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) both in presentations at regional seminars and on the TTA website.

Update on student loan applications in Nottinghamshire

Members will be aware that students attending universities and other higher education institutions finance their studies by taking out a student loan. Student Loan applications are now processed through Student Finance Direct which is a partnership of the DfES, LEAs and the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The application forms are processed by the LEA using a new national computer system which has been developed and is maintained by the SLC. Payments of the loans are made by the SLC to the student. Nottinghamshire was one of six LEAs selected to pilot and help develop the new system which was rolled out nationally during September 2003 to March 2004. All LEAs are now using the new system for the 2004/2005 academic year.

Despite what you may have heard about an impending "crisis" in the national media, the situation in Nottinghamshire is more positive. All applications received on time, where we have all the necessary information to complete an assessment, have been processed in line with Government requirements. Late applications have been processed within the Government's target time of six weeks. Those received since the 'A' level results have normally been processed within three weeks of receipt. This is good news for the students living in Nottinghamshire and has been achieved through the hard work and commitment of the staff in the Student Finance Service and the benefits that we gained from being part of the pilot project.

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Cabinet Member for Education

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