

Nottinghamshire County Council
Working in partnership with all schools and academies to deliver the
Nottinghamshire Policy Statement for Schools.

Partnership protocol

Ambition

We want Nottinghamshire to be a place where children are safe, happy and healthy, where everyone enjoys a good quality of life and where everyone can achieve their potential.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Successful partnerships are created within a context of openness, trust and honesty around shared values and a shared moral purpose.

We aim to continue to create ways of working that will provide high quality education in Nottinghamshire to ensure that children develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required for future emotional and economic success.

Nottinghamshire County Council values diverse partnerships within a rapidly changing educational landscape which are underpinned by a vision and mission to serve all children and families, particularly the most vulnerable. The Council recognises the importance of schools and academies working collaboratively, both locally and nationally, through working with partners, including national academy sponsors, academy chains and the private and voluntary sectors.

The ambition of the County Council is that all children and families access excellent provision in learning environments which are safe and which secure high quality outcomes for all children and young people.

Context

Local authorities are required to be a champion of children and their families and to develop a school improvement strategy that ensures high quality education for all children, with vulnerable children being a priority, as set out in the Importance of Teaching (2010).

In line with the Nottinghamshire Policy Statement for Schools (September 2010, updated September 2013), this partnership aims to ensure that every school in Nottinghamshire is at least a good school.

This Policy Statement commits the County Council to the achievement of this aim through the promotion of a variety of models of leadership, governance and partnership to match local needs and circumstances.

Roles and Responsibilities

The County Council respects every child's religion, culture and ethnicity. The development of diverse partnerships and educational provision should provide effectively for all children and particularly those in identified vulnerable groups. Reducing the impact of poverty on educational outcomes continues to be a key objective for all educational partners and providers.

Successful partnership requires protocols and practices that will promote the education of all children and will safeguard the most vulnerable. This can be achieved through ensuring:

- an admissions policy, including strategic place planning across all phases, which is open, fair and transparent to all in the most appropriate settings, including special schools, enabling, where possible, good and outstanding schools to expand
- an exclusions policy which protects the child and identifies those at risk of exclusion, allowing all members of the partnership to align any available resources around the needs of the child, particularly those in identified vulnerable groups
- a commitment to the continued education of all children including those who are at risk of exclusion, have been excluded or whose attendance would raise concerns
- a commitment to sharing information and data around admissions, exclusions, educational outcomes and student destinations to safeguard children, secure appropriate learning pathways and promote collaborative professional learning
- agreed protocols and procedures for data sharing to enable the County Council and external agencies to work directly with vulnerable students and groups where the law requires (such as those in the Youth Justice system)
- a commitment to developing and sharing innovative practice within a context of professional trust with all local schools and academies regardless of status
- a commitment to identify those children in need of support or protection and ensure that the appropriate processes are in place.

Our role as Champion of Children and Families

All schools and academies, as well as the County Council, recognise the need to embrace the responsibility to be champion of children and their families. Whilst the County Council will retain statutory responsibilities for aspects of education, particularly around place planning, SEND (special educational needs and disability) and LAC (looked after children), there is a need for all settings providing education for Nottinghamshire children to accept their moral responsibility, particularly for identified vulnerable groups, and to play a part in keeping children safe.

There is a need for all educational providers and partners to continually review their roles, responsibilities and accountability. The increase in competition in a fast changing educational environment creates tensions and dilemmas for all.

Collaborative working with a shared moral purpose has the potential to safeguard children and young people and ensure high quality provision and outcomes within Nottinghamshire for all our children and young people.

Partnership Protocols and agreed actions

Data Sharing for Vulnerable Groups

Context

In line with the Policy Statement for Schools (September 2010, updated September 2013), this agreement on data sharing aims to provide services to help schools and academies access necessary support for the attainment and achievement of every child and young person or guide schools and academies to where such services are available.

Currently, all schools and academies share whole school and group level data annually with Nottinghamshire County Council.

Some data, particularly in relation to individual children at risk of exclusion or who are persistently absent, is often not reported early enough to relevant agencies, including the County Council. This results in vulnerable children and young people being placed at risk due to their absence or exclusion from schools and academies.

For vulnerable children and young people such as LAC, SEND, FSM (Free School Meals), CME (Children Missing Education) and those from vulnerable ethnic groups, the importance of the regular reporting of key data, including progress data, is vital if life chances for the most disadvantaged are to be improved.

Agreed action

All partners who work with Nottinghamshire children and young people are committed to the timely reporting of transparent data to ensure early intervention for the most vulnerable including:

- timely progress and attainment data in reading, writing, and mathematics at Key Stages 1-2 and English and mathematics in KS4 for LAC
- timely behaviour and attendance data for LAC
- One-to-One Tuition progress data for LAC
- the immediate notification to the Coordinator of the Virtual School of any Looked After Child at risk of exclusion

Further actions

Consideration is to be given to the development of appropriate processes for other vulnerable groups as necessary, particularly in relation to excluded pupils and those on the verge of exclusion.

Exclusions and Alternative Provision

Context

In line with the Policy Statement for Schools (September 2010, updated September 2013), this agreement on exclusions and alternative provision aims to provide services to help schools and academies access necessary support for the attainment and achievement of every child and young person or guide schools and academies to where such services are available.

All maintained Nottinghamshire schools currently adhere to the NCC Admissions Policy. Many Foundation and Voluntary Aided schools also adhere to this policy. Within this fast changing educational environment and the increase of diverse providers and sponsors, there is a need to agree protocols for admissions, including the readmission and provision for excluded children and young people.

There is a need for schools and academies in geographical areas to either build on existing partnerships such as SBAPs (school behaviour and attendance partnerships) and/or Alternative Provision to ensure that vulnerable children and young people at risk of exclusion have access to appropriate alternative provision during crisis periods.

There is a need for all schools and academies to engage with each other and Nottinghamshire County Council to develop their understanding and use of short term alternative provision to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people and avoid the need for permanent exclusion.

Agreed action

To continue to work with the schools and academies to agree protocols and guidance to support all schools and academies to work in partnership to provide good education for all pupils, particularly those who have been excluded or are on the verge of exclusion. The implementation of the principal recommendations of the SEBD review, which involve transferring centrally retained Council funding to schools in return for the commitment of schools to retain more children and young people within mainstream education, will be central to this development.

Further action

- develop clear protocols on exclusion and alternative provision with a view of securing consistent practice across all providers
- increase the availability of alternative provision, particularly at primary and KS3 through collaborative arrangements across the range of providers within each locality
- improve communication across key stages and phases to identify children and young people who may be more at risk at points of transition. This may include some vulnerable children identified with SEND
- develop a protocol in relation to how Alternative Provision should be quality assured and the criteria against which the provision should be evaluated

- agree a shared protocol to ensure that all schools and academies accept their responsibility to improve provision to meet the needs of all children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, thereby reducing exclusions and the need for alternative out of school provision.

Place Planning and Admissions

Context

In line with the Policy Statement for Schools (September 2010, updated September 2013), this agreement on place planning and admissions aims to provide services to ensure that all pupils can attend a good or outstanding school, by enabling where possible, good schools and academies to expand. The County Council is committed to seeking out and responding to parents' views on school choices available in their area.

There is tension around the need to ensure parental preference can be met in all localities. As successful schools expand to meet parental demand for high quality education, there will be a need to manage a reduction of pupil places in other schools.

The strategic planning of pupil places remains a statutory responsibility of the County Council which will require collaboration with new partners to enable, where possible, good schools and academies to expand in line with County Council Policy. The development of the Place, Planning and Admissions Board will provide strategic leadership and ensure that NCC meets its statutory responsibilities in relation to place planning and admissions, formulating a shared understanding of appropriate place planning.

Agreed action

- all educational providers in Nottinghamshire should be encouraged to adopt the Nottinghamshire County Council Admissions Policy
- task the Pupil Place Planning and Admissions Board to continue to develop protocols around the admission of children from vulnerable groups, particularly SEND and LAC
- develop further the role that Nottinghamshire County Council officers can play in improving parents' understanding of the quality of provision in all schools and academies in each locality
- increase the number of places available in special schools for first admissions and post 16 through more collaborative working across secondary and special school providers
- continue to coordinate in year admissions for all community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools and offer this service to Own Admissions Authorities (OAAs) to join on a voluntary basis

Further action

To ensure high quality places, consideration should be given to the consequences of schools and academies remaining in the Ofsted category of satisfactory, now known as “requiring improvement” and the resulting tension with this policy as good schools and academies expand their capacity.

SEND

Context

In line with the Policy Statement for Schools (September 2010, updated September 2013), this agreement on SEND aims to help schools access necessary support for the attainment and achievement of every child and young person, especially those with SEND to guide schools to where such services are available.

Currently all schools, including academies, receive additional financial resources and specialist support from specialist teams provided by the County Council targeted at children with SEND.

In addition, Family SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) networks provide an effective structure to allocate support and resources for pupils with SEND. The benefits include transparency of provision and resource allocation within a family of schools and effective transition arrangements across phases.

Schools in Newark town are currently piloting the employment of a ‘Town SENCO’ which is beginning to improve transparency across the locality in terms of the level of need in each school and the appropriate and fair allocation of SEN funding, including ‘Additional Family Needs’ funding.

Agreed action

- further develop the partnership arrangements around SEND that exist in families of schools, towns or districts.
- set out the SEN support services that are currently provided to schools by the County Council and finalise costing for these services.
- ensure high quality provision, attainment and achievement for pupils with SEND by all families of schools by considering the development of the role of the family SENCO.

Further action

- review and evaluate the effectiveness of a range of partnership arrangements currently in place in order to preserve those which work and add value
- develop a shared agenda regarding BESD (behavioural, emotional and social difficulties) and SEND to reduce significantly the number of children with SEND who are excluded from schools.