

ITEM 7



EDUCATION COMMISSION 17 January 2005

Report of the Chair of the Education Commission

Scoping Report for the Education Commission's proposed 2005 work plan topic review of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Commission consider the report setting out the scope of a possible review of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 29 November 2004, the Education Commission requested a scoping report on a possible review of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners.
- 2.2 Appendix 2 contains the scoping report.
- 2.3 If Commission members approve the scoping report, it is planned to start the review in late January or early February with the aim of completing it by the end of April 2005.
- 2.4 The Terms of Reference and the provisional timetable for the review are included in the scoping report.

For more information contact:	David Romaine 01332 255598 e-mail david.romaine@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Draft scoping report on a review of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. The review will incur some costs but these can be contained within the Commission's research budget.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. The review will be of benefit to Derby schools, the pupils of those schools and the parents of those pupils, and the City Council.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

5. This report links to the following of the Council's corporate objectives and priorities for change:
Corporate Objectives: Education.
Priorities for Change: Tackling under-achievement in schools, responding to people's needs.

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Education Commission

Scoping Report on the Commission's review of the Department for Education and Skills Five Year Strategy for Education and Learners

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 29 November 2004 the Education Commission selected the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES) 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners' as one of its topics for review in the coming year.

The Five Year Strategy covers all aspects of education, from Early Years provision to Adult and Higher Education. Given the time available for the review it is not considered practicable for the Commission to review aspects of the Strategy. It is therefore suggested that the review should concentrate on examining the implications for Derby, its schools, and the Education Service, of the Strategy's proposals for schools in the Secondary Sector.

The proposals for secondary education are contained in Chapter 4 of the Strategy document. Chapter 9 of the Strategy explains how the DfES proposes that the necessary changes in the delivery of education services will be implemented by the local authorities. A copy of the Strategy is available from the Department for Education and Skills website:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/5yearstrategy/docs/DfES5Yearstrategy1.rtf>

Through conducting this review the Commission will acquire an understanding of the implications of the Strategy for secondary education in Derby. Commission members will then be in a position to make well-reasoned recommendations to Council Cabinet on specific points relating to the delivery of the Strategy

2. Background to the Review

The Summary to the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners contains the following statement about the provision of secondary education:

'In secondary education, our central purpose for every pupil over the next five years is to raise the quality of education, teaching and learning, and to widen the range of real choices which are available. We will build on the achievements of the last seven years, to increase freedoms and independence; to accelerate the pace of reform in teaching and learning; and to extend choice and flexibility in the curriculum. Underpinning each of these is sustained and rising investment in schools.'

To achieve these objectives the Strategy says that the DfES will put in place eight key reforms which will be *‘underpinned by a new role for Local Authorities, as champions of parents and pupils acting as strategic leaders of education in their own area’*. The eight key reforms are listed as:

1. Guaranteed three-year budgets for every school from 2006, geared to pupil numbers, with every school also guaranteed a minimum per pupil increase each year. *A dedicated Schools Budget, guaranteed by national Government and delivered through Local Authorities, will give headteachers and governors unprecedented financial security and confidence, and the ability to plan for the future.*

2. Universal specialist schools – and better specialist schools. *Every school will be able to become a specialist school with a mission to build a centre of curriculum excellence. Specialist schools will be able to take on a second specialism to develop their mission further. High-performing specialist schools will have the chance to become training schools or leaders of partnerships; those without sixth forms will have new opportunities to develop sixth form provision.*

3. Freedom for all secondary schools to own their land and buildings, manage their assets, employ their staff, improve their governing bodies, and forge partnerships with outside sponsors and educational foundations. *At present one in three schools enjoys some or most of these powers, including aided schools and ‘foundation’ schools. In future all schools – except those which are failing – will have a right to take on all these powers by a simple vote of their governing body, following a brief period of consultation. A strict national requirement for fair admissions will remain; and we will not allow any extension of selection by ability, which denies parents the right to choose.*

4. More places in popular schools. *There is no ‘surplus places rule’. All successful and popular schools may propose to expand. We have introduced dedicated capital funding to encourage this, and rules to allow it in all but exceptional circumstances. We will introduce a fast-track to expansion so there are more places in popular schools. We will mandate competitions for new schools which will enable parents’ groups and others to promote schools, including smaller schools. This will enable successful schools to establish and manage entirely new schools and federations.*

5. A ‘new relationship with schools’ to cut the red tape involved in accountability, without cutting schools adrift. *Inspection, accountability and intervention to tackle failure are essential for independence to thrive properly. But they need to be of high quality and involve minimal bureaucracy. We will halve the existing inspection burden on schools, without scrapping the expectation that schools must constantly improve. We will replace the existing system of local authority ‘link advisers’ with a single annual review carried out by a ‘school improvement partner’, usually a serving head teacher from a successful school. In cases of failure, intervention will follow as necessary.*

High-performing schools will only undergo the formal review once every three years.

6. 200 academies by 2010 – and more new schools. *We will provide for 200 independently managed academies to be open or in the pipeline by 2010 in areas with inadequate existing secondary schools. Some will replace under-performing schools; others will be entirely new, particularly in London where there is a demand for new school places. We expect there to be around 60 new academies in London by 2010.*

7. Every secondary school to be refurbished or rebuilt to a modern standard over the next 10 to 15 years. *The 'Building Schools for the Future' programme, made possible by a sevenfold increase in the schools capital budget since 1997, will give every school the buildings, facilities and information technology it needs to succeed. It will also drive reform in each locality, including the expansion of popular schools, the closure of failing schools, and the establishment of new schools and sixth forms.*

8. 'Foundation partnerships' *to enable schools to group together to raise standards and to work together to take on wider responsibilities – in areas such as provision for special educational needs or hard-to-place pupils.*

Chapter 4 of the Strategy explains how the eight reforms will be implemented and explains their outcome. The Chapter identifies what are seen as Issues and Challenges and contains the following offer to pupils and parents:

'Every parent and pupil to have the choice of an excellent independent specialist school in a system where there are:

- *Guaranteed three-year budgets for every school from 2006, geared to pupil numbers, linked to a minimum per pupil increase each year for every school*
- *Universal specialist schools – and new rights and opportunities to make all specialist schools even better*
- *Freedom for all secondary schools to own their land and buildings, manage their assets, employ their staff, improve their governing bodies, and forge partnerships with outside sponsors and educational foundations*
- *More places in popular schools*
- *A 'new relationship with schools' to cut the red tape involved in accountability, without cutting schools adrift*
- *200 academies by 2010 – and more new schools*
- *Every secondary school to be refurbished or rebuilt to a modern standard over the next 10 to 15 years*
- *'Foundation partnerships' enabling groups of schools to work together to do better for the children in their area*

These eight reforms will be underpinned by a transformed Local Authority role, with Authorities as the champions of pupils and parents.'

Chapter 4, paragraph 8, of the Strategy states that *'Taken together these eight reforms will promote a new generation of independent specialist schools serving their students and communities with significantly extended freedom, diversity and capacity'*.

Commission members will appreciate that in the time available to them they are unlikely to be able to consider in detail all eight of the DfES key reforms for secondary education. Members will in any case also appreciate that certain of the reforms relate to issues, such as budget provision or the refurbishment of school buildings, where any input by the Commission is likely to have only limited effect and value.

There are however a number of areas relating to these reforms where a review by the Commission is likely to be of value to pupils, parents and the Education Service. Two particular areas that the Commission might wish to consider are:

- 1. How the proposals for universal specialist schools will be implemented, and;**
- 2. The 'modernisation' of the Local Authority role in Education**

These two areas were both suggested by members at the Commission's meeting on 29 November 2004 when the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners was discussed as a possible topic for review.

Chapter 4 of the Strategy contains the following information about these areas:

(Note: the paragraph numbers in the following two sections relate to Strategy document and not to this report)

2.1 Universal specialist schools – and better specialist schools

14. *Almost two thirds of secondary schools have already achieved specialist status. All are committed to raising standards, are developing their own centre of excellence in one area of the curriculum, and are using their specialism to improve quality across the whole school. All have sponsors from business and strong links with the community. In all these respects their individual mission and capacity for self-governance are improved, and often transformed. As the numbers and types of specialism grow, schools with particular strengths will increasingly support each other in developing teaching and learning across the curriculum, and offer extra support and choice to pupils with particular aptitudes and interests.*

Number of specialist schools by specialism, from September 2004	
<i>Technology (maths, science & design technology)</i>	545
<i>Arts</i>	305
<i>Sports</i>	283
<i>Science</i>	224
<i>Languages</i>	203
<i>Mathematics and Computing</i>	153
<i>Business and Enterprise</i>	146
<i>Combined</i>	38
<i>Engineering</i>	35
<i>Humanities</i>	18
<i>Music</i>	5
TOTAL	1955

15. *Specialist schools have improved faster than the average, and add more value for pupils regardless of their prior attainment:*

16. *We intend that by 2008 every secondary school which is up to standard should be a specialist school, and every community should have one or more specialist schools, offering choice and excellence to parents and children alike.*

17. *We will also provide significant new opportunities for existing specialist schools, to enable them to drive forward and assume greater independent responsibility. Every specialist school comes up for 'redesignation' once every four years, with the Specialist Schools Trust advising schools on the process, and the Department for Education and Skills deciding on their progress and whether they should retain specialist status (which almost all do). The Trust has proposed that specialist schools should be able to take on a second specialism at the point of redesignation, to give the schools themselves a new horizon, and to enhance the availability and choice of specialisms within and between schools in each area. We welcome this proposal, and will begin to offer second specialisms during this year's redesignations. Schools will receive additional funding for taking on a second specialism, provided that they also make its benefits more widely available to other schools and the community.*

18. *We will also use redesignation to identify specialist schools which are being particularly successful, and give them the opportunity to take on extra roles and gain additional freedoms.*

19. *Successful specialist schools without sixth forms will be able to have a stake in sixth form provision, by teaching 16-18 year olds in their specialism, often as part of a partnership with other local schools and colleges to provide a wider range of options between 14 and 19. We will also make it easier for successful and popular specialist schools to establish their own sixth forms,*

with a strong presumption in favour of their being allowed to do so in areas where there is little sixth form provision, or where there is overall low participation or attainment. Chapter 6 gives further details.

20. *High performing specialist schools will also be able, at redesignation, to take on leading roles in the system, including acting as:*

- *training schools, providing the best possible on-the-job training for new and existing teachers.*
- *Leading schools, working with partner schools to help them improve and to work together for all the children in their area. Foundation Partnerships (below) will be one important way for schools to do this.*

2.2 Modernising the Local Authority role in Education

48. *The best Local Authorities have long provided inspirational educational leadership and innovation in their localities, commanding the confidence of parents and schools alike. But some Local Authorities have been too defensive or ineffective in the face of low educational standards and high parental dissatisfaction. We expect Local Authorities to champion the interests of parents and pupils in their localities, particularly where radical change is needed to ensure that every parent has a choice of a good school and no pupil is failed by a poor education. At all levels – under-fives, primary, secondary and post-16 – Local Authorities should recast themselves as the commissioner and quality assurer of educational services, not the direct supplier, a role which enables them to promote the interests of parents and pupils far more confidently and powerfully than the old days of the Local Authority as direct manager of the local schools and colleges.*

49. *We will make faster progress where Authorities have enthusiastically set an educational vision, worked with employers, further education colleges, headteachers, parents, community leaders and others to get behind the vision, and have then supported and helped their schools to work independently to bring it about. For this, their partnership work with providers of children's services, local Learning and Skills Councils, employers and others with a contribution to make will be critical.*

50. *As part of their work to provide educational leadership and vision for the schools in their area, they will retain responsibility for important overarching roles, where local co-ordination is essential, including the development of capital strategies for their areas (including Building Schools for the Future), making sure every child has the best possible school place, school transport, and provision for Special Educational Needs.*

51. *This new role enhances the power of Local Authorities to develop education as part of their wider vision by making them more powerful and more supportive of the interests of parents and pupils. We believe that this role for Local Authorities presents real opportunities and will take this forward within the framework of the Government's overall strategy for local*

government. The introduction of a dedicated Schools Budget will have the same effect, ending the annual wrangle over the quantum of resources for schools between central and local government. With the funding for schools assured, Local Authorities can concentrate fully on their strategic and quality-assuring functions in education. It will also still be open to them to spend more on education locally than the national allocation, where they wish to do so in support of local schools and parents.

52. Rather than necessarily being the providers of school improvement themselves, we see Local Authorities helping to build up strong independent schools and networks of schools which can drive their own improvement. Through the school improvement partners, they will have an important role in holding schools to account, and retain the lead responsibility to intervene where schools are seriously under performing.

According to the 'Timetable for Change' in Chapter 4, the plan is that by 2008, 'all secondary schools that want to be specialist schools will have met the standard, with 95% of secondary schools specialists or academies', and 'there will be a reshaped and refocused role for local Authorities'.

3. Objectives of the Review

It is suggested that the objectives of the Commission's review of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners should be:

- To familiarise Commission members with the implications for Derby secondary schools and the City Council's Education Service of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Education and Learners
- To consider the ways in which the Council and partners intend to meet the Strategy's aim for secondary education of 'raising the quality of education, teaching and learning' and of widening the 'real choices that are available'
- To consider the ways in which the Council intends to achieve the Strategy's aim of modernisation and the requirement to recast itself as the commissioner and quality assurer of educational services in Derby
- If appropriate, to offer recommendations, based on the evidence considered in the course of the review, for improving the way in which the Council intends to address the requirements of the Strategy

4. Stakeholders in the Review

The stakeholders in this review comprise:

- The Department for Education and Skills, who are the originators of the Strategy
- Derby City Council's Education Service, who have a responsibility to implement the Strategy
- The head teachers and school governors of Derby City Council's secondary Schools, who have responsibilities under the Strategy

- The pupils of Derby City Council's secondary schools and the parents of those pupils, who will be the recipients of the proposals contained in the Strategy.
- Wider Council Services and partners who have a role in the development of secondary education and provision for pupils, notably Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council and Connexions-Derbyshire.

5. Suggested Methodology for the Review

If the Commission is to complete this review within the available time and to develop realistic recommendations it is suggested that it will be advantageous for the methodology to include the following elements:

1. Interviews with:
 - A representative of the Department for Education and Skills (if this can be arranged)
 - The Council Cabinet member for Education
 - Relevant Officers of the Education Service
 - Representatives of head teachers and school governors
 - Representatives from the relevant partners
 - Representatives of secondary School pupils and their parents
2. Visits, if appropriate, to other similar local authorities to discuss their proposals for meeting the requirements of the Strategy.

6. Terms of Reference of the proposed Review

The terms of reference of the proposed review are set out in the table below:

Table 1

Terms of Reference		
	Requirement	Action to Achieve
1.	To familiarise Commission members with the implications for Derby secondary schools and the City Council's Education Service of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Education and Learners	1) A study of the Strategy document 2) Interviews with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a representative of the DfEs representatives of the Education Service

2.	An understanding of the way in which the Education Service intends to: a) Meet the DfES requirement for the delivery of secondary education b) Change its role to meet the requirements of the Strategy	Interviews with the service providers - the representatives of the Education Service. Interview with the Council Cabinet member for Education
3	An appreciation of the position of head teachers and school governors	Interviews with head teachers and school governors
4	An appreciation of the views of the 'relevant partners'	Interviews with representatives of the 'relevant partners'
5	An appreciation of the requirements and wishes of pupils and their parents	Interviews or workshop sessions with representatives of the pupils and their parents or a questionnaire survey if the former proves impracticable
6	A comparison of Derby City Council's proposals with those of another similar sized unitary authority	Either a visit to the other local authority or a an interview in Derby with one of their Education Service officers

7. Timetable and Member input into the Review

Table 2 sets out a provisional timetable for the review. The timetable assumes that the review will commence after the Commission meeting on 17 January 2005 and that the outcome will be reported to the Council Cabinet meeting on 17 May 2005. This allows around three months in which to carry out the review.

Table 2

	Date	Activity
1.	Late January to early February 2005	Interview with DfEs representative
2.	Early to mid February 2005	Preliminary interviews with representatives of the Education Service
3.	Mid to late February 2005	Interviews with head teachers and school governors Visits if appropriate to other unitary authorities, or interview(s) with their representatives
4.	21 February 2005	Update report to scheduled business meeting of the Education Commission

5.	Late February to early March 2005	Interviews or workshop meetings with pupils and their parents or circulation of a questionnaire
6.	Early to mid March 2005	Interviews with representatives of the 'relevant partners' Follow up interviews with representatives of the Education Service Interview with the Council Cabinet member for Education
7.	Mid to late March 2005	Preparation of the draft report and recommendations
8.	4 April 2005	Consideration of the draft report and recommendations at scheduled business meeting of the Education Commission
9.	Early to mid April 2005	Amendments to the draft report and circulation of the final version to the Commission
10.	28 April 2005	Deadline for draft reports to the Council Cabinet meeting on 17 May 2005

The review as laid out in Table 2 will provisionally involve Commission members in about eight additional interview meetings and possibly one or two visits.

Commission members should note that if they carry out this review there will be no time before the Annual meeting on 25 May 2005 in which to conduct the review of the 'Range and Provision for Pupils with Significant Behavioural Difficulties' that was the subject of the scoping report to the Commission's meeting on 29 November 2004.

Members should also be aware that the requirements of the new Licensing legislation may mean that the size of the Commission is effectively reduced. Consequently there will be fewer members available to carry out this review.

DRR 29 December 2004.