

Submission received from Landau Forte College

Building Schools for the Future – Choice and Diversity

The following points are made in response to an invitation to make written comment to the Children and Young People Commission concerning the matter of Building Schools for the Future – Choice and Diversity. Unfortunately I am not available to attend that meeting in person.

Context

My comments are made in the context that the amount of information shared with Landau Forte College concerning the Council's plans extends to:

1. My attendance at the BSF launch day held at Pride Park Stadium.
2. The contents of the two reports related to Item 10 at the Council Cabinet Meeting 2 October 2007 namely a) Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and b) Report of the Corporate Director for Children and Young People.

Beyond being given the web address for those two documents we have not had any further communication or been involved in any discussions concerning the BSF programme.

Response

1. We note the comments in reference to the possible developments of additional Academies within the city and that the officers have been in discussions with other local organisations that have local connections to explore any further opportunities. I welcome this development and particularly that the Council are looking positively at diversity of provision and recognising that this may present real opportunity for transformation.
2. Clearly, over time there remain stubborn areas of educational underperformance within the city. The BSF programme presents an opportunity to address those problems. My observation would be that for the BSF programme to succeed both in terms of central government support and more importantly in delivering educational transformation then radical solutions are needed. More of the same is unlikely to be successful in either respect.
3. In the report is a reference to Landau Forte College's participation in the 14 – 19 partnership. Whilst this has been a more recent development, it should be noted that the College has always recognised its wider responsibilities and has been a willing contributor to the education of children across the city since its opening in 1992.

4. The College has enjoyed excellent relationships with a number of primary schools for many years providing opportunities in literacy, numeracy, ICT, technology, and cultural activities for their children. Although the door has not always been open we do welcome the more recent and emerging opportunities for meaningful collaboration since our conversion to an Academy in September 2006.
5. Furthermore, at various points in the last four years and prior to the launch of the BSF programme Landau Forte College has held informal discussions with both members and officers of the Council concerning the possibility of Landau Forte College developing an Academy within the city. This suggestion has, in the past, been considered to be 'politically' too difficult/unacceptable with the concern that such a development may de-stabilise or fracture existing education collaboration (see paragraph 4.12). In the meantime the Landau Charitable Foundation became the key sponsor of the West Park School, Spondon. The sponsorship provided being fundamental in supporting the gaining of Specialist School status for West Park School.
6. The opening of one or more additional academies in the city should be seen as an opportunity for the young people and their families – this should be the over riding factor in any decision taken. Whilst legitimate question and concerns are raised in respect of personnel matters, academy development presents a real opportunity for professional challenge, growth, reward and development for both teachers and support staff.
7. In my view Academy development presents an imaginative opportunity to bring about organisational and educational transformation for one or more schools in the city by:
 - a Establishing a 'can do' culture that places the needs and entitlement of students first preparing them well for the next phase of their lives in further, higher education and employment.
 - b Ensuring strong governance, leadership and management in all aspects of the school's operational framework.
 - c Building strong partnerships between the school, its students and the home.
 - d Maintaining a relentless focus upon teaching, learning, attainment and achievement.
 - e Getting to know students well - their strength, weaknesses, abilities and aptitudes through the use of data and other intelligence gathered through teaching, guidance and student support systems e.g. a Personal Tutorial system.

- f Effective and rigorous self review, monitoring and evaluation.
- g Appropriate design of systems, structures, the curriculum and school buildings that promote wide ranging opportunities, effective learning and remove barriers to learning.
- h Efficient and effective deployment of staff, physical and financial resources.
- i Understanding the opportunities and advantages afforded by being a state funded independent school, this includes embracing both the freedoms and responsibility that this greater independence brings.
- j Building robust relationships with employers and the wider community; the DCSF, Local Authority and other partners including local primary and secondary schools, FE Colleges and universities.

Conclusion:

In principle we support the Council's underlying aim of BSF for real transformation of secondary education. As we have already indicated on previous occasions we would welcome the opportunity to contribute to that transformation and would hope that the 'Strategy for Change' builds upon successes whilst demonstrating the courage to bring about the necessary radical change.

As the Local Authority is aware, this College has a fully comprehensive ability admissions policy with 50% of students entering Year 7 being drawn from the 5 electoral wards of Abbey, Arboretum, Derwent, Normanton and Sinfin. Therefore, bearing in mind the well known results that have been attained it appears to us that the Local Authority in the past has been short sighted in not seeking more in depth support from the College for education within the city. This has appeared to the Board of Governors to be for political reasons rather than the improvement of educational standards for children within the city.

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