



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

**COUNCIL CABINET**  
**30 October 2007**

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and  
Young People

# ITEM 9

## **Building Schools for the Future - Choice and Diversity**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 At the beginning of October, Council Cabinet received a report about the principles and broad options relating to the 'choice and diversity' provisions of Building Schools for the Future (BSF). This report follows up the resolutions and makes specific proposals about academy status.
- 1.2 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), in assessing BSF Strategies for Change, expects that radical solutions, including academy status, will be considered for any schools which do not meet the threshold of 30% of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C, including English and Maths, at GCSE.
- 1.3 Four schools come into this category in Derby; all of them face a number of challenges relating to the prior attainment of pupils, turnover and disadvantage in their communities. In all, there are solid foundations of good practice and areas of improvement on which to build. Proposals for academy status should be seen as a positive development to take improvement work on to the next stage rather than addressing failure, as this is not a characteristic of these schools.
- 1.4 Discussions have continued with Derby College, which has expressed a commitment to academy sponsorship, and other potential partners who may support the work under BSF.
- 1.5 Subject to any issues raised at the meeting, I support the following recommendations.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To propose Bemrose Community School and Sinfin Community School for academy status, subject to the progress of an expression of interest with the DCSF and the details of the planning work.
- 2.2 To address positively the concerns expressed by staff.

### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The aim of any proposals under choice and diversity should be to take the achievement of and opportunities for Derby's pupils to higher levels through the engagement of a range of partners and building on the existing work and achievements of our schools. Overall, the aim of BSF is to secure transformation in the learning opportunities in the city.

- 3.2 The DCSF expects that a full range of choice and diversity options will be included in Local Authorities' BSF Strategies for Change and this will be an important part of the signing off of those strategies.



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**ITEM XX**

Report of the Corporate Director for Children  
and Young People

**Building Schools for the Future - Choice and Diversity**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 At the meeting on 2 October 2007 Council Cabinet agreed that, in preparing Derby's BSF Strategy for Change, 'choice and diversity' options should be pursued and that any specific proposals relating to this should be brought to a further meeting.
- 4.2 Work on the BSF Strategy for Change has been progressing, including an analysis of the options for choice and diversity in the light of the interest of Derby College in sponsoring academies developments (see also Financial Implications). This could be for two academies, depending on the outcome of work on an 'expression of interest' with the DCSF.
- 4.3 Over the last year the 14-19 Partnership has been established in the city and a 14-19 Strategy agreed. This will be delivered through four clusters of schools working with the college and it is important that future structural options are based on these clusters.
- 4.4 Any specific proposals for the establishment of academies in the city need to be seen in this context and should aim to make a step change in the quality of provision for pupils. The endowment that is now established from sponsorship funding is a positive development and should be one way of addressing the educational disadvantage faced by many pupils.
- 4.5 It is also important to take account of the potential turbulence of the planning period for academies. Following a specific proposal it is likely that there will be two years' planning before the school concerned has been closed and the academy is established. This can have an adverse effect on pupils' education. The concerns of the unions about the establishment of academies can contribute to this, and these concerns are noted in appendix 1.
- 4.6 Each academy requires a sponsor and there is benefit if other partners are engaged in support. As well as the College's commitment to sponsoring one or two academies, there has been discussion with the University of Derby and local businesses. There is support for engagement with academies and other schools as partners, but not at present as sponsors. The Government has recently announced that all secondary schools will be linked to a university. The University of Derby welcomes these proposals, though the specific provisions are not yet known.

- 4.7 Other possible links with public service agencies and local businesses will be pursued where that might be in the interests of supporting our schools. The Royal Society of Arts is already linked to Bemrose Community School as part of a learning network and would be interested in developing this within the academy framework.
- 4.8 As previously noted, there are four schools that fall into the category for consideration of transfer to academy status i.e. they do not meet the threshold of 30% of students achieving 5 A\*-C passes including English and Maths at GCSE. These are Bemrose Community School, da Vinci Community College, Merrill College and Sinfin Community School.
- 4.9 All four schools have low pupil attainment on entry and experience large numbers of new arrivals mid-year, many of them with significant English language needs. These issues need to be addressed if there is to be any radical improvement in performance.
- 4.10 In addition to the existing hard work and commitment in addressing these issues, each of the schools has brought about a rising trend of achievement in recent years and has had positive outcomes in Ofsted inspections. It is vital that any proposals build on this firm foundation and support further improvement, rather than being regarded as correcting school failure. The latter has been a characteristic of the establishment of earlier academies.
- 4.11 Some analysis has been carried out into the performance and circumstances of each of the four schools in order to inform any proposals for academy status. This analysis is set out briefly in appendix 2.
- 4.12 In the light of that analysis it is proposed that Bemrose and Sinfin Community Schools should be nominated for academy status. In so doing it is important to value the work of those schools up to now and build upon that, and to do everything possible to avoid turbulence and ensure continuity of education.
- 4.13 The next stages of the process involve work on the College's 'expression of interest' with the DCSF. This will mean extensive discussion with the schools, college and DCSF, as well as further potential partners. Experience in other authorities suggests that this demands significant capacity, which is not immediately available in the department.
- 4.14 As part of the BSF strategy it is also important to ensure that da Vinci Community College and Merrill College draw on the opportunities available so that their students also benefit from the contribution of a range of partners. Following the resolution from the previous Cabinet meeting, work continues on the draft contents of the Strategy for Change for all schools, including other choice and diversity options. Any proposals will be brought forward as part of the BSF Strategy for Change report. Consideration will be given to the involvement of other partners where they can support the BSF strategy.

- 4.15 It is, of course expected that external partners will add value to the current work of the schools concerned. Their contributions may, for example, relate to:
- increasing partner input to the curriculum, school specialism, leadership and management
  - learning continuity (from first entry to school through to higher education, potentially), particularly improving post-16 progression rates
  - raising aspirations of young people and the community
  - motivation through 'real world' links
  - raising attainment on entry – work with primary schools
  - community engagement
  - voluntary programmes to improve basic skills
  - challenge/critical friendship
  - resources
  - support to new arrivals.

Partnering could also offer an economic/workforce development focus relating to that business/public sector.

## OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 A range of structural options under the choice and diversity provisions have been considered for each school and will continue to be considered as part of the BSF project work.

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<b>Background papers:</b>	Position statements from the trades unions Published evaluations of Academies School performance data	
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – implications Appendix 2 – analysis	

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 The financial arrangements for academies were set out in the previous report to Cabinet. Derby College is interested in making a major investment in these developments by being the sole sponsor of up to two academies, working with other partners. The funding package for the sponsorship will be one of the issues addressed during the planning stage. Should another partner be involved in sponsoring for any reason, it could have implications for the relationship between the Council, such a sponsor and the school.
- 1.2 There will be transitional costs for the Council and the sponsor, some significant, based on experience elsewhere, though this cannot be quantified yet.

**Legal**

- 2.1 As set out in the previous report to Cabinet. In particular, it should be noted that the opening of an academy to replace an existing maintained school has to be preceded by the formal closure of the current school, requiring consultation and a formal statutory notice process.
- 2.2 In addition, there will be various legal issues to settle in relation to the change of status and the implications for staff, premises and land. The transfer of land provides an opportunity to establish future agreements about the relationship between the academy, the Council and other schools. The Funding Agreement is the critical document setting out the arrangements for the Academy. That agreement will set out how things are to develop.

**Personnel**

- 3.1 These have been set out in the previous report to Cabinet. The unions have submitted concerns about a number of personnel issues relating to academies. These include the transfer of a school to private ownership and the potential consequences for pay and conditions and pensions. They are also concerned that any academy should give recognition to the unions and engage in collective bargaining.
- 3.2 The Council may wish to urge any potential sponsors to give assurances about these issues, though decisions will ultimately lie with an academy's governing body. Advice from the DCSF is that staff transferring to and joining an academy stay in the teachers' and local government pensions schemes.

**Equalities impact**

- 4.1 As set out in the previous report to Cabinet

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 5.1 Proposals within the Council's BSF Strategy should contribute to the corporate priority of supporting everyone in learning and achieving, with the key outcomes of:
  - improving educational achievement in narrowing gaps in attainment and
  - providing learning opportunities to raise skill levels.
- 5.2 BSF strategies should also make a major contribution to the actions set out in the city's Children and Young People's plan, to improve the five outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing.

<b>ANALYSIS</b>
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A number of performance and structural issues have been analysed for each school. The headlines are set out below. It should be noted that full information about 2007 performance is not yet available.

**Bemrose**

Prior attainment	Lowest prior attainment on entry of any Derby school. Low prior attainment in the significant number of new arrivals and in-year admissions
KS3	At or around the 50% threshold at L5+, significant falls at L6+ in 2007
5+ A*-C with English and Maths	Improved in 2007 but still at 15%. The figure without English and Maths stands at 27%
KS2 – KS4 progression	There are some strong aspects in the progression between KS2 and KS4 but overall the contextual value added measure has fallen in 2007 and is currently the lowest of the schools (980.2).
Attendance	Ofsted judged attendance to be satisfactory given the school intake
Ofsted	Ofsted has judged the school to be good overall, with some outstanding features, including leadership and management

**da Vinci**

Prior attainment	Below average prior attainment on entry and high levels of in-year admissions
KS3	All three core subjects are just above the L5+ 50% threshold
5+ A*-C with English and Maths	Doubled from 12% in 2006 to 24% in 2007
KS2 – KS4 progression	The school has made good progress in recent years and Contextual Value Added in 2007 was above average (1011.6).
Attendance	Attendance judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory, with further improvement in the last year
Ofsted	Ofsted judged the school to be good to satisfactory and there have been improvements since the inspection; leadership was regarded as outstanding

**Merrill**

Prior attainment	Second lowest prior attainment on entry of any Derby school and significant issues with prior attainment of new arrivals and in-year admissions
KS3	L5+ results in English and science remain below the 50% threshold
5+ A*-C with English and Maths	Has risen from 15% in 2006 to 21% in 2007
KS2 – KS4 progression	The school has made good progress in recent years and recorded the third best Contextual Value Added score in Derby in 2007 (1017.9)



Attendance	Merrill has been identified as a school with attendance issues by National Strategies
Ofsted	Ofsted judged the school to be satisfactory overall in 2005 when management was rated as satisfactory. Management support will be provided by the National Strategies in 2007.

### **Sinfin**

Prior attainment	Low attainment on entry and significant issues with prior attainment of new arrivals and in-year admissions
KS3	L5+ has fallen in 2007 but Maths is above the 50% threshold. Significant falls in all three subjects at L6+ in 2007
5+ A*-C with English and Maths	Fell to 16% in 2007. The figure without English and Maths stands at 24%
KS2 – KS4 progression	Although Ofsted found many strengths in the KS4 curriculum, the KS2-4 Contextual Value Added measure was low in 2007 (981.2).
Attendance	The school has been identified for National Strategies support in relation to attendance and in 2007 there were high levels of permanent exclusions
Ofsted	An Ofsted inspection has recently judged the school as satisfactory.

The following structural points should be noted:

- in the last four years, da Vinci has emerged from a collaborative restart for High View School, working in partnership with Lees Brook Community Sports College and has come through this process successfully
- da Vinci Community College and Merrill College have had rebuilds under the PFI scheme and are subject to contracts for facilities management, presenting further issues which would need to be addressed if academy status were pursued
- Sinfin Community School is currently being rebuilt following a major fire
- Bemrose Community School is likely to be proposed for complete rebuild under BSF. It is likely that this will be proposed for the current site rather than a move to an alternative site, subject to further project work.