



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
18 May 2004

Report of the Director of Education

A Specialist School Strategy for Derby

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To note the development of a specialist school strategy in Derby and to receive further reports on progress.
- 1.2 To provide Council support for securing sponsors to schools applying for specialist school status.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Council Cabinet supported the establishment of further specialist schools in April 2002. This report provides an update on progress and the further development of a city-wide strategy, to increase the range of curriculum opportunities for pupils and promote specialist support across the secondary sector in Derby.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council Cabinet agreed to endorse the establishment of further specialist schools with the aim of achieving an appropriate spread across the city in April 2002. A more formal strategy that promotes collaboration and maximum gain from these developments would now be advantageous and has been discussed with secondary headteachers.
- 3.2 There are currently four specialist schools in Derby; Chellaston School (Technology), Saint Benedict Catholic School and Performing Arts College (Performing Arts), Lees Brook Community Sports College (Sport) and Littleover Community School (Science and Maths). Two schools have been designated from September 2004; Derby Moor Community School (Sport) and Noel-Baker Community School (Languages). Two other schools; Woodlands Community School (Technology) and West Park Community School (Maths and Computing) are in the process of applying for specialist school status. Bemrose, High View and Merrill are not currently eligible to apply for specialist status. Sinfin and Murray Park are still considering the issue. An outline of the role of specialist schools is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The DfES is aiming for three quarters of all secondary schools to gain specialist status by 2006. It is likely that this will be the case in Derby.
- 3.4 The benefits of a city-wide strategy include:
 - support for non-specialist schools to gain designation

- a collective agreement about requirements for additional specialisms to ensure a good range
- an enriched city-wide curriculum through the use of e-learning by specialist schools
- using the expertise of specialist schools to support other schools and their pupils
- promote further collaboration between city secondary schools to spread good practice and raise standards.

3.5 It is proposed to develop a city-wide strategy for the development and role of specialist secondary schools, including the secondary special schools, that includes the following:

- establishing a process for assessing the city-wide needs for specialisms such as business and enterprise or engineering and gaining agreement with headteachers for city priorities
- establishing a process for supporting new applications including gaining sponsorship, linking to the local business community
- determining with each specialist school the support it can offer as part of a city-wide strategy. This could include support for primary schools
- developing a plan for specialist schools as part of the broader planning for secondary education in the city. This plan could determine their role in further initiatives such as 'languages for all' and links to Derby University Teacher Training Department.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4. None.

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Background papers:

List of appendices: Appendix 1 - Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. Specialist schools receive a one-off capital grant of £100,000 to add to sponsorship (£50,000) pledged at the time of application. They also receive additional recurrent funding to implement their plan at the rate of £126 per pupil up to 1,000 pupils and £126 for every pupil over 1,200.

Legal

2. None.

Personnel

3. None.

Equalities Impact

4. The further development of a coherent strategy for specialist schools has the potential to promote increased curriculum opportunities and attainment for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Corporate Objectives and Priorities for Change

5. The proposal comes under the Council's objective related to education. It furthers the priority of tackling under-achievement in schools.

THE SPECIALIST SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The aims of the Specialist Schools Programme are to:

- ♦ raise standards of achievement for all pupils both in the specialist subjects and across the whole curriculum
- ♦ strengthen and develop the quality of teaching and learning strategies and increase enrichment opportunities for extended learning through the specialist subjects, including links with private sector sponsors, business, FE and HE institutions and other organisations
- ♦ develop characteristics within the school which signal its specialist identity and which are reflected in the school's aims
- ♦ collaborate with partner schools to provide or facilitate high quality learning opportunities in the specialist subjects by enhancing further the quality of teaching, and to develop and disseminate good practice
- ♦ provide or facilitate high quality learning opportunities through specialist subjects for the school's wider local community, including business.

Specialism works in four ways. First, the process of becoming a specialist school provides a structured framework for self review. Second, it acts as a spur for whole school improvement by using the developments in the specialist subjects to support and reinforce good practice and pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in other areas of the curriculum. Third, it creates an enhanced purpose and direction within the school and in its relationships with the local community and business. Finally, it encourages schools to share their expertise and resources with local schools and communities.

Specialist schools should explore how a specialism contributes to whole school improvement by enhancing their work in the Key Stage 3 strategy and other strategies relevant to the chosen specialism, e.g. sport and languages. They should help to build more coherent 14-19 pathways; be involved in initial teacher training; and should consider how designation boosts leadership development; impacts on the school workforce by allowing teachers more time for teaching; and helps address behaviour and attendance issues. Links with Excellence in Cities, the Leading Edge Partnership Programme and Federations also enhance the effect of specialist status.

Typically specialist schools should allocate around one third of the annual grant to implement their community development plan. Special schools are funded at the rate of £630 per secondary age pupil. Schools may apply for re-designation for further periods of four years. Schools are asked to report on progress in achieving targets halfway through this period.

All maintained secondary schools are eligible to apply except if they are in serious weaknesses or special measures. New schools are eligible. Maintained special schools are eligible to apply.

Schools applying for a specialism will be expected to demonstrate that they have rising standards of overall attainment. Schools facing challenging circumstances will not normally be designated unless recent examination results show an upward trend and the school can

demonstrate that the benefits of specialism in relation to teaching and learning strategies can be spread to other curriculum areas.

The ten specialisms

There are ten specialisms from which to choose – arts; business and enterprise; engineering; languages; humanities; sport; mathematics and computing; technology; science; and music. Schools may also incorporate a rural dimension into their specialism. Schools may also apply for combined specialism: there is one package of capital and recurrent funding for combined specialisms (at the same level as schools applying for designation in a single specialism) which covers both specialist areas.

School and community development plans

Schools applying for a specialism have to produce a school plan and a community plan. The school plan is based on the school's current position and has to identify strengths and areas for development.

The community plan needs to include proposals to work with at least five partner schools and how the school will engage with the wider community.

Sponsorship

Applications must be supported by evidence of at least £50,000 of unconditional private sector sponsorship given to support the application. There is an exception for small mainstream schools (defined as those with under 500 pupils on roll). Sponsorship must normally be available by the September in which a school begins operating as a specialist school.

Capital grant

The capital grant of £100,000 must be used with the sponsorship to enhance the school's facilities for the teaching of subjects required in the chosen specialism.