

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1	Meeting:	Cabinet
2	Date:	14th March, 2011
3	Title:	Academies and Free Schools
4	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet about the local developments relating to Academies and Free Schools.

An academy is a state funded school, independent of the Local Authority and established and maintained under a funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

In Rotherham we currently have four Academies - Maltby, Wales, Brinsworth and Aston.

St. Bernard's Catholic High School is currently undergoing conversion to an Academy.

Free Schools are new schools established by a range of different groups such as parent groups, universities, charities, teachers, businesses and other education providers. Free Schools are non profit making state funded independent schools.

Currently there are no free schools in Rotherham.

6. Recommendations

That:

- **Cabinet endorse the proposals relating to primary school academies and note that from September 2012 there will be 3.**
- **Cabinet endorses the position that any academy development should commit to transforming Rotherham Learning Principles.**

7. Proposals and Details

Both Academies and Free Schools are key components of the governments change agenda.

An Academy is a state-funded school, independent of the local authority and established and maintained under a funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

The Coalition Government has begun to increase the pressure on schools deemed to be of concern (below floor standards especially on the 200/500 'list' / special measures or notice to improve) to convert to Academy Status, partnering with an existing Academy that is 'performing well'. The existing Academy Trust would act as a 'sponsor to the school'.

In Rotherham currently three primary schools are in the process of becoming Academies, 2 schools will be sponsored by the Academy within the Teaching school Alliance, Heath Park and the third school will be sponsored by Aston Academy, still to be approved by the Secretary of State.

Context:

Rotherham has a strong and evolving record of school to school support and is committed to a partnership approach to improving performance in our most challenging and vulnerable schools. The alignment of the school led Rotherham School Improvement Partnership (RoSIP) to the Teaching School Alliance (TSA) and to the School Effectiveness Service leaves Rotherham and its wider partners well placed with both capacity and proven capability to meet the challenges ahead.

One of these key challenges is the need to rapidly improve, in fact transform, performance in the schools that have been identified by the DfE as 'Group 1 and Group 2 schools' (see below) and in those schools that are in danger of falling into these categories. The effectiveness of support to, and for, these schools will be the real test of our partnership work. In keeping with both Rotherham and DfE policy we will look first to the TSA and RoSIP partnership for support for these schools. This may take many forms, one of which may be what is termed a 'structural' solution. This is now invariably seen by the DfE as a school without its own internal capacity for transformation becoming a 'supported' Academy.

It is important that at the outset we put forward a set of principles that will govern both our approach and any ensuing process.

1. Any school or Academy providing support will sign up to the principles of Transforming Rotherham Learning:
 - We are all responsible for all Rotherham's children and young people.
 - All Rotherham learners will achieve; no one will be left behind.
 - Learning is the core business: investment, policy and strategy must be driven by opportunities for learners.
 - Learning communities will be rooted in and responsive to the needs of local people.

2. Any school/Academy that we engage in providing support must be able to clearly demonstrate outstanding performance within their own setting as judged by Ofsted and latest student outcomes. This will be tested and affirmed by our SES Consultant Headteachers and RoSIP Strategy Group members. Additionally, any school/Academy engaged to provide support will have needed to demonstrate their ability to accelerate student progress and outcomes in other schools with whom they work.
3. Any solution will involve those schools or Academies in signing up to the Rotherham Strategy for Inclusion, which means:-
 - (a) The welcoming of children with S.E.N. into its community.
 - (b) A commitment to avoiding the exclusion of pupils.
 - (c) Agreement to collaborate with all other schools so as to offer inclusive pathways to all Rotherham Students, from 0 to 19 and beyond
4. Any solution where a support school has a Children's Centre will be required to continue to offer the Children's Centre provision

Any new Governance arrangements within schools will follow both the national code for Admissions and sign up to the Rotherham agreement on Fair Access to Schools.
5. Any support school/Academy must engage with the Council and Children and Young People's Services' strategies.
6. Any new Governance arrangements must ensure the school/Academy is fully engaged with the national and Rotherham's Every Child Matters Agenda, especially working in partnership with the integrated locality based teams.
7. Any new Governance arrangements will commit to ensuring all staff benefit from the same terms and conditions they already enjoy in addition to further opportunities arising from innovative staffing structures.

Success Criteria

The engagement of any school or Academy to provide support of any type, including a structural solution will be tested by the ability of the new support arrangements to accelerate the effective delivery of the RoSIP Mission. We need to ensure that:

- All students making at least good progress
- No underperforming cohorts
- All teachers delivering at least good learning
- All schools moving to at least the next level of successful performance

Free Schools:

In Rotherham while two expressions of interest have been put forward we currently have no Free School proposals being planned

Free Schools are new schools established by a range of different groups such as parent groups, universities, charities, teachers, businesses and other education providers. Free Schools are non-profit making state-funded independent schools.

8. Finance

Funding for Academies

The principle of academies' funding is that academies should receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority (LA) as a maintained school. They also receive funding to meet their additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the LA. The Government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets, alongside the other freedoms.

In essence funding for academies taken from the Local Authority budgets comes from three sources:

- Recoupment of the budget share provided by the LA for the transferring school
- Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) - Recoupment of specific centrally managed budgets (funded by Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) on a school by school basis
- Top slice of LA formula funding regardless of number of Academies

In 2011/12 the budget share for the transferring Rotherham Schools was £25.106 million. The value of the recoupment from relevant centrally managed DSG funded budgets was £141K and £729K was top sliced from the Local Authority Formula Grant Allocation.

Funding for Free Schools

The annual revenue funding for Free Schools will be based on the average funding received by maintained schools and academies in the same local authority, using a simple and transparent formula. The key elements of funding are:

- a basic local funding unit for each pupil attending the school
- an additional local funding unit for each pupil attending the school who qualifies for free school meals
- the national pupil premium for each pupil attending the school who qualifies for free school meals
- a grant which compensates for the services that maintained schools receive free of charge from their local authority (known as local authority central spend equivalent grant or LACSEG)
- funding for sixth-form pupils, for Free Schools providing post-16 education
- a fixed sum of £95,000 for each primary or all-through school
- a grant to cover the cost of insurance
- additional funding, from the local authority, for pupils with statements of special educational needs.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The potential risks to a LA if its schools become Academies or where Free Schools are established may include:

- loss of strategic leadership and planning role
- autonomous schools less likely to operate in partnership
- no right to intervene in under-performing academies
- loss of Council-owned assets (land and buildings) to academy trusts
- in Academies existing employees undergo TUPE transfers to new employers
- loss of central funding, capacity and expertise to support schools
- lack of curriculum coherence between schools (pupil transfers)

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Any plans arising from an analysis of this report should be consistent with the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People's Single Plan. The improvement actions should address the Corporate Priorities for:

Regeneration	- improving the image of Rotherham; - providing sustainable neighbourhoods of quality, choice and aspiration.
Equalities	- promoting equality; - promoting good community relations.
Sustainability	- improving quality of life; - increasing employment opportunities for local people.

11. Background Papers and Consultation:

Contact Name: Karen Borthwick
Head of School Effectiveness
Children and Young People's Services

T: 01709 740226
E: karen.borthwick@rotherham.gov.uk