

**Bath and North East Somerset Draft Academies Policy 2018**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 National Government Education policies since the Education Reform Act 1988 have promoted greater school autonomy and self-improvement as a means to raise educational standards, improve pupils outcomes with the ability to deploy resources more flexibly. The Academies Act of 2010 widened the range of schools able to become academies and the 2011 Education Act amended and repealed several pieces of earlier education legislation resulting in significant change in the responsibilities of the Local Authority for local schools. The Act states the local authority's role should focus on "championing the interest of parents and children who most need support" and defined its statutory duties for place planning, admissions, alternative provision, excluded pupils and pupils not in school and school governance.
- 1.2 In Bath and North East Somerset, the vast majority of local maintained schools have converted to academies in the last 2 years and over 80% of children are now being educated in academy schools. There has been a growth in local Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) and they are increasingly providing and/or commissioning services previously provided by the local authority. MATs now provide their own HR, Pay roll, finance and school improvement services for their schools. In addition, from September 2018 there will be three local Teaching Schools whose remit is to provide high quality professional development for school staff including governance; strengthening school to school support and building capacity within the school system.
- 1.3 Government Grant to support school Improvement and intervention in schools causing concerns has diminished and this has had a direct impact on these services and associated officer posts. Staff reductions and budget efficiencies means that the local authority is no longer able to sustain a viable education service to schools and it is no longer best placed to commission affordable services resulting from economies of scale.
- 1.4 The local authority fully accepts that its role will need to change to reflect the new school landscape and will assume its new strategic role as an enabler and champion for all children and young people, especially for the most vulnerable, in a positive and constructive manner. The effectiveness of strong local relationships established over many years will support this change through the newly established School Standards Board with representation from all the key partners. (The Terms of Reference and membership of the School Standards

Board in attached as Appendix 2). It is envisioned that the School Standards Board will provide a positive vehicle for delivering our duty to promote education excellence for all our children and young people. The local authority will work in partnership and collaboratively with all the maintained schools to support and enable them to move in a timely manner to a local Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and ensure that all our children and young people have equal access to schools that are good or outstanding.

- 1.5 The local authority will monitor all school performance and where there are concerns about the performance of individual schools, MATs or SATs, will write to the Regional School Commissioner and the Regional Director of Ofsted to inform them of their concerns and an explanation of action to address this. In addition the Local Authority will reserve the right and duty to call the Regional Schools Commissioner or her representative to the CYP Policy and Scrutiny Panel to answer its concerns.
- 1.6 The local authority directly and in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) will act robustly and decisively to ensure that all children and young people are appropriately cared for, safeguarded and to secure their wellbeing. The will include challenging schools and settings to ensure their systems are child-centred, recognise those who are vulnerable and in need of care and protection as well as those whose wellbeing is potentially compromised.
- 1.7 The local authority will ensure a fair and equitable admissions system is in place and will act with to secure co-ordination across the school system. The authority will also provide timely and accessible information to parents and carers that will enable them to exercise their preferences effectively and will act to address admissions practices that are inconsistent with the Admissions Code of Conduct.
- 1.8 The local authority retains a key strategic responsibility for the 'whole system' within which children and young people are cared for and educated. It will champion all children and young people and will act and challenge to secure the highest standards possible for them. This includes those who are most vulnerable and those potentially at risk of underachieving. The local authority has strong relationships with schools and wishes to retain these as this new relationship develops. There is a genuine commitment to the School Standards Board as a key driver for promoting high standards; schools challenging and holding each other to account for improvement; supporting each other and sharing moral purpose and responsibility for all the children in Bath and North East Somerset.

## **2. Policy statement**

The local authority will work as a strategic partner and ensure it exercises its statutory duties in line with education legislation. In doing this the local authority will:-

- Ensure a fair and equitable admissions system is in place and that parents and carers are able to exercise their preferences effectively and act to address admissions practices that are inconsistent with the Admissions Code of Practice.
- Ensure best safeguarding practice is adopted and that all children and young people are safe.
- Ensure there are sufficient school places for all children and young people, including those with SEND resident in B&NES.
- Take a lead role in championing and holding schools to account for the achievement of the most vulnerable children, young people and their families
- Encourage the remaining state maintained schools to join a MAT of their choice at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Work in partnership with the governing body of each maintained school, CEO of MATs, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Dioceses of Bath and Wells and the Diocese Clifton to ensure a smooth transition to a MAT and minimise the impact on school staff and children.
- Continue to monitor standards in maintained schools termly; commission and provide appropriate support during the transition period.
- Monitor the performance of all schools and take immediate action to alert the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Regional Director of Ofsted of concerns.
- Actively engage in the School Standards Board as a key vehicle for driving improvement across all schools and Trusts.