

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on 1st November 2011

Electoral Division affected:

All

Update on the current County Council position on Academies in Lancashire (Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

The report sets out the information on Academy status which has been shared with headteachers and governors in October 2011 and the County Council's current position in relation to Academies.

Recommendation

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to give its views on the information shared with Lancashire schools on Academy status.

Background and Advice

In the Summer of 2010 the Department of Education set out its plans to enable maintained schools to become Academies and the Secretary of State wrote to all schools judged outstanding by OfSTED to encourage them to apply for Academy Status. Since that time all maintained schools have been encouraged to consider becoming Academies. The Local Authority has, at the request of headteachers and governors, held a series of briefing sessions over the past twelve months to help governors to make informed choices when considering Academy status. The latest briefing was held on October 11th 2011 and forms the basis of the information set out below. (see Appendix 'A')

The current position

- All maintained primary, secondary and special schools can apply to become an Academy
- Nursery schools and pupil referral units cannot currently convert
- The local authority is directed to cease to maintain the school

County Council policy on Academies

- All categories of school are of equal value. There is no prejudice for or against a particular category

Transferred services and costs

- A wide range of services and their costs are transferred from the Local Authority to the Academy. (see appendix 'A')
- A smaller number of responsibilities are retained by the County Council (see Appendix 'A')
- Local Authorities can provide services to Academies on a traded basis but some services may not be available on this basis

Land and Buildings

- Land and buildings occupied by the school transfer to the Academy Trust so they are available for use by the Academy
- Transfer of publicly funded land normally by way of a 125 year lease from LA
- Land issues need to be resolved prior to conversion

School places and admissions

- Academies wishing to expand can only do so after consultation with the LA
- They can retain current admission criteria
- They must comply with the Admissions Code
- Academy Trust will become the Admission Authority
- Academy Trust will need to establish an independent appeals panel (VA & Foundation schools already have one)
- All academies must be part of the LA's Coordination Scheme

Sponsored Academies

June 2011 Secretary of State announced that:

- The weakest 200 primary schools to become sponsored academies
- 500 low performing primary schools in the Local Authorities with larger numbers of these schools to work with the DfE on structural solutions (including becoming sponsored academies)

Summer / Autumn 2011

- DfE contacts Local Authorities re the sponsored academy programme and identifies schools to be considered to become a sponsored academy

Academy Conversions to date

- 13 schools have now converted to become an academy
- A further 2 schools are in conversion discussions following receipt of an academy order

- The DfE no longer publish a list of schools that have expressed an interest in converting
- 2 sponsored academies
- 1 free school has opened (previously independent)

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Risk management

There are no implications for risk management arising from this report.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A