

Director of Children's Service Report to Governors

Summer Term 2011

*Developing the
effectiveness of
your Governing Body*

For more information please
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1.

Investment in school places

Summary

As you will be aware, there has been a substantial increase in the number of births in Barnet and there is not sufficient permanent capacity in Barnet's primary schools to meet current and projected demand. The demand we are experiencing for primary school places will feed through into increased demand for secondary school places, where additional capacity will be required from about 2015/16 onwards.

Projections show that at least ten additional forms of entry are likely to be required in Barnet primary schools for the foreseeable future to cater for the increasing number of children being born in the borough. Barnet's regeneration plans are also likely to generate additional demand for school places over time and we are building this into our planning. The local authority has identified the need to increase capacity within the primary phase as a key pressure and capital monies have been committed in the Council Budget for 2011/12 to 2013/13 to provide some permanent capacity within the primary sector. Providing sufficient school places has to be our top priority for any investment in the school estate going forward. As permanent provision is being put in place, temporary capacity will still be required each year to meet the demand. We would like to thank all the schools that have accommodated additional pupils to date and we are still looking for more opportunities, particularly for September 2012.

Meanwhile, we are progressing our plans to permanently expand some schools. The top investment priorities for permanent expansions, based on the areas of greatest demand for school places, were outlined in a report that went to Cabinet in September 2010. They were:

- Colindale area
- Jewish provision
- Edgware area – through an expansion at Broadfields, which is currently subject to the planning process
- Finchley area
- East Barnet area

We are now in the process of further refining this programme using a range of data including demand for school places in the local area, percentage of pupils on roll who are Barnet residents, parental choice and a school's capacity. We will continue to engage with schools and governors as the programme progresses.

Governors' Role

To note the information above.

For action by

All Governors

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2.

Academies and Free Schools update

Summary

As you will be aware, the Council is supportive of Barnet schools that wish to convert to academy status and welcomes their inclusion in the wider schools partnership.

As at 1 April 2011 there were six academies in Barnet: two pre-existing academies, The Wren and the London Academy, and four that have successfully converted since September 2010. The schools that have so far converted to academy status are Queen Elizabeth's School, Ashmole, The Compton, and East Barnet. We are aware of a further five schools which have received academy orders from the Secretary of State - Henrietta Barnett, The Ravenscroft, Whitefield, Queen Elizabeth Girls' School, and Independent Jewish Day. Several other secondary schools have applied to convert, and a number of other schools (including one primary school) are considering academy status. Within Barnet there is also one primary Free School, Etz Chaim, on track to open in September 2011.

It is a time of significant change, both for schools and local authority colleagues, and as a number of schools choose the greater autonomy offered by academy status these relationships will continue to evolve. As we move towards this new relationship together, it is more important than ever that we continue to maintain the strong partnership of schools that we all benefit from in Barnet. Through a continued focus on strong partnership working and close collaboration, we can help collectively to improve outcomes for Barnet's children and young people.

Governors' Role For consideration by

- To note the above information

All Governors

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Summary

The previous government had transferred the responsibility for the allocation of post-16 funding to Local Authorities. The coalition reversed this in a letter from Michael Gove on 19th July 2010, when he reintroduced lagged funding. Under this system the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) determines the level of funding allocated to post-16 providers based on the previous year's numbers. If an institution exceeds its allocated numbers of learners during 2010/11, it will bear the cost of the extra learners but the higher numbers will be consolidated into the following year's budget. Under-recruitment will be similarly taken into account.

Michael Gove did however emphasise the responsibility of the local authority for 'strategic commissioning and influencing roles by maintaining the strategic overview of provision and needs in their area-identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market'.

Local authorities retain a number of statutory duties. These include:

- A duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area.
- Having regard to, amongst other things, the quality of the education and training and may challenge where this is poor or inadequate.
- Championing the education and training needs of young people in their area
- Preparing for the raising of the participation age

Meeting these responsibilities

Barnet is developing a well-evidenced and robust strategic overview of the needs of local young people and will promote this strategic overview through education leaders in the local area through the already well established 14-19 partnerships and economic development roles. We will use this evidence to undertake their strategic role as champions for parents and families, and particularly vulnerable young people. We are also assessing the additional provision that will be required in order meet the changes that will require all young people to participate in education and training until 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015.

Governors' Role

- To note the information

For information Contact

All Governors

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4.

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

Summary

The Department for Education (DfE) has undertaken consultation on this new Standard to replace the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) which ended on 30 April 2011. This paper informs governors of the main features of the new Standard on the basis that it will be introduced largely in the format consulted upon. The DfE has also consulted on the replacement to the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) FMSiS Assurance statement.

The Standard is aimed at governors in the first place. It takes the form of a series of questions, which school governing bodies should formally discuss with the Headteacher and other senior staff. The following paragraphs in inverted commas are taken directly from DfE documents.

“The governing body may wish to delegate the consideration of the questions to a finance committee or similar; but the chair of governors must sign the completed form. There should be at least a minuted report to the full governing body.”

The draft Standard consists of 25 questions in 5 sections –

- The Governing Body
- The School Staff
- Setting the Budget
- Value for Money
- Protecting Public Money

“There is no prescription of the level of evidence or assurance that the governing body should require: the important thing is that they should be in a position to feel confident about their answers. The DfE website includes advice and tools for governing bodies in relation to each question, which they can use if they wish to. The advice and tools provide clarification of what the question implies, examples of good practice, and access to materials which will assist action on that issue where it is necessary.”

“Each question requires an answer of Yes, In Part, or No. Where the answer is In Part or No, the column for comments, evidence and proposed actions should be used to enter a very brief summary of the position and proposed remedial action. Where the answer is Yes, the column should be used to indicate the main evidence on which the governing body based its conclusions. At the foot of the list of questions is a section which requires a summary of remedial actions and the timetable for reporting back.”

It is proposed that the SFVS should be done annually, with the first run before September 2012; except in case of schools not having passed FMSiS before the end of Mar 2012 (Barnet has none).

“The standard will not be formally assessed like FMSiS. However, a copy of each signed record must be sent to the local authority’s finance department, where it will be used to inform the programme of financial assessment and audit. Local authority and other auditors will have access to it, and when they conduct an audit will be able to check whether the self-assessment is in line with their own judgement. They should make the governing body and the local authority aware of any discrepancies in judgement.”

Local authority (LA) accountability for Dedicated Schools Grant – replacement of FMSiS

The Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS) was withdrawn by the Secretary of State with effect from 15 November 2010.

Consequently, LAs’ CFOs (section 151 officers) will not be asked to give any assurance in relation to the attainment by schools of FMSiS during the financial year 2010-11.

With effect from the financial year 2011-12, the DfE intend to include SFVS in the outturn statement in regard to DSG which is signed by CFOs. CFOs would be expected to say each year how many SFVS reports from schools they had received, and give an assurance that they are taking the contents of these reports into account in planning their future programme of audit. They would also be expected to give a general assurance that they have a system of audit in place which gives them adequate assurance over schools’ standards of financial management and the regularity and propriety of their spending.

Further information will be provided when the Standard is finalised and the implementation programme announced. Training sessions will be offered to governors.

Governors’ Role Governors are asked to note the introduction of the new Standard.

For action by All Governors

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5.

Update on Headteacher Performance Management

Summary

Governors will be aware that for the past three years School Improvement Partners (SIPs) have been assisting governing bodies in the process of headteacher performance management (HTPM). The national SIP programme ceased at the end of March this year and so SIPs will no longer be funded to offer this support.

However, the regulations for HTPM still stand and Barnet has been in contact with the Department for Education (DFE) for clarification. They have made it clear that the expectation is that governing bodies will remain responsible for arranging a group of governor reviewers to undertake this task on their behalf. Furthermore, governing bodies will be expected to make arrangements for an appropriate person to assist them as an external advisor in this process, now that the SIP role has ceased. The DFE has said that, "...it is up to governing bodies to use their judgement as to who might be most appropriate."

The advice goes on to say:

- There is no longer a time limit on how long an individual could act as an external adviser;
- Where schools need to appoint an external adviser, the governing body should adopt a process of selection that is open, transparent, relevant and appropriate. Persons appointed as external advisers should not have any personal or pecuniary interest.

Governing bodies may recruit someone suitable and might consider external advice from education consultants, link advisers or people previously employed as external advisers, amongst others. In all cases, schools will need to fund this work from their budgets.

Schools might also wish to know that the Barnet Partnership for School Improvement will have access to local consultants who were former SIPs who might be able to offer this service as part of this traded service.

Richard Griggs is the Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI) Manager and can be contacted at Richard.griggs@barnet.gov.uk or on 020 8359 6334 for more information.

There is likely to be national consultation in due course over the amendments that the government is seeking to make over the future of teacher and headteacher performance management.

Governors' Role

- To note the information

For information Contact

All Governors

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