

Portsmouth Education Partnership Pulling Together: Achieving More



Consultation on a new Education Partnership for Portsmouth

Foreword

Schools and academies in Portsmouth work very hard to help children and young people develop the understanding, skills and character they need to succeed and live fulfilled lives. School leaders take seriously their responsibility for the quality of their individual institutions and there are good examples of schools and academies working together on different initiatives and in clusters supporting each other's improvement. There are clearly some significant strengths within the current education system in the city.

There is also significant change ahead for Portsmouth. The White Paper '*Educational Excellence Everywhere*' confirmed the Government's commitment to a school-led, self-improving system, and every school to become an academy by 2022. Whilst it signaled an end to the local authority's current responsibilities in terms of school improvement, the White Paper also set out a clearly defined continuing and important role for local authorities: ensuring every child has a school place; ensuring the needs of vulnerable children and young people are met; and acting as a champion for parents and families.

The Government will shortly be announcing the first wave of *Achieving Excellence Areas* and we are hopeful that Portsmouth will be part of that initiative, bringing new efforts and focus to the development of leadership capacity and school improvement in the city. Expansion of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) driving improvement across groups of schools, in some cases with links to schools outside the city, will involve changes to school governance. The local authority will have a continuing and important role, but there will be differences.

Strong leadership of, and commitment to excellence within individual schools/academies is essential. Support through MATs has also been shown within the city to have the potential to make a valuable contribution. However, to achieve the outcomes we want to see for all young people in the city, we believe that a further development is needed. There also needs to be leadership of the system as a whole: promoting a strong open, trusting, learning culture across the city; ensuring that support for improvement is directed where it is most needed and will have maximum impact; and making sure that all possible opportunities are taken for effective collective action where that action will add value.

This consultation document sets out proposals for a new Education Partnership for Portsmouth, led by schools but with the full participation of a range of stakeholders. The Partnership will have a clear focus on raising standards and improving educational outcomes for children and young people in Portsmouth. But it also offers opportunities for collective action on a range of areas of work that will support this objective. We hope that you will engage with the proposals set out here, and let us have your views, so that arrangements can be put in place as soon as possible and which have the confidence and support of colleagues.


The proposals here focus initially on collective action to strengthen school education. We envisage active participation in the work of the Partnership, however, by colleagues in further and higher education, and indeed in early years education, and it would be possible for the Partnership's work programme to include activities which draw on, and impact on, strengths and developments in those sectors.

We are keen to get arrangements in place quickly, if current indications of support are confirmed. The consultation will therefore end formally on Friday 21st October 2016, when we will assess the position in the light of responses. There will be lots of opportunities to shape this agenda during 2016/17 and we look forward to working with you to develop the partnership over the course of next year.

Cllr Neill Young, Lead Member for Education, Portsmouth City Council



Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Services, Portsmouth City Council



Steve Labeledz, Executive Head, Salterns Academy Trust and Chair of Secondary School Heads



Polly Honeychurch, Headteacher, Cottage Grove Primary School and Chair of Primary Heads



Alison Beane, Executive Head, Solent Academies Trust and Chair of the Special Schools



Executive summary

Introduction

Early discussions with headteachers, governors, teaching schools and Academy Trust leaders have indicated a strong appetite for collective arrangements in the City, led by schools, to take forward joint projects and programmes that matter to Portsmouth and which can make a difference in terms of raising standards and improving outcomes for children and young people. Furthermore, there is a developing consensus around a number of key priority areas.

This is set against a changing educational landscape and the Government's commitment to a school-led, self-improving system, in which all schools are encouraged to become academies.

The time is right to consider the development of a new Education Partnership for Portsmouth, to build on the historic and strong relationships between schools and between schools and the local authority and ensure that rather than seeing a fragmentation of the educational system in Portsmouth we see greater levels of collaboration and partnership working.

Principles

The consultation documents set out some guiding principles which include shared accountability and collective responsibility for all pupils in Portsmouth, promoting a culture of openness and trust and ensuring that all available resources are well used and duplication is avoided.

Priorities

A number of priority areas have been identified but others are likely to emerge. Priority areas include:

- Creating more options for schools and academies to receive the highest quality challenge and appraisal

- Co-ordinating school improvement support and making effective use of system leaders
- Teacher recruitment and retention, including career pathway development
- Leadership development at all levels
- Curriculum development and subject networks
- Inclusion
- Recruiting and supporting volunteers working in schools
- Collective interface for Multi Academy Trusts that operate in the City

Structures

It is proposed that a **Strategic Board** be established to steer the work of the Partnership and develop and agree the strategic vision and priorities, chaired by an independent Chair.

Below that Strategic Board, an **Operational Group** could sit which would meet every half term and which would be accountable to the Strategic Board. The Operational Group would be the engine of the Partnership, responsible for analyzing the data and proposing priorities / areas of action.

Membership of the Partnership would be open to all schools and a range of partners.

Resources

In the first two years the local authority will be investing resources both in terms of staff time and funding. This includes the contract with the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance to deliver school improvement on behalf of the local authority for its maintained schools but embedded as part of the Partnership. Schools will not be asked to help resource the work of the Partnership overall. Individual projects may require full or part funding from participating schools. As and when local authority funding ceases to be available, it will be for schools to decide whether the Partnership is a structure which they wish to underpin financially and if so how.

1. A Vision for Portsmouth: what could a new Partnership achieve?

Following the Ofsted inspection of school improvement in the city, the publication of the Government's White Paper, '*Educational Excellence Everywhere*', and the Queen's Speech on 18th May which paves the way for the Education for All Bill later this year, discussions have been held with headteachers, governors and MAT leaders, led by an experienced education consultant (Rebecca Matthews), engaged specifically to explore with stakeholders their views and ideas around partnership working in the city. These discussions to date have indicated two things:

- a) There is a strong appetite to develop new collective arrangements, led by schools, which provide a vehicle through which schools, academies, MATs, colleges, the university, teaching schools and wider stakeholders can take forward well founded joint projects and programmes and ensure that system resources, including NLEs, SLEs, LLEs and NLGs, can be effectively deployed across the city. There is an anxiety that without some form of collective arrangements, academisation, whatever advantages it may bring, could lead to a fragmentation of the education system in Portsmouth. There is also a desire to maintain and build on historic strong relationships between schools and between schools and the local authority.
- b) There is developing consensus around a number of key priority areas where collective action could add value, over and above the efforts of individual schools, academies and MATs. If a Partnership is established, its priorities and annual work programme will of course need to be agreed formally through the governance arrangements established for the Partnership. Examples of these priority areas are set out in section 3 below, however, to illustrate the contribution a Partnership could offer to raise the bar in the city.

2. Principles

The work of the Partnership could be guided by agreed principles which could include some or all of the following:

- a) All partnership work will have a collective focus on improving standards city wide, with accountability shared across the city
- b) All pupils learning within a Portsmouth school or academy are regarded as Portsmouth learners for whom there is a collective responsibility
- c) The Partnership will promote a culture of openness and trust in order to achieve maximum acceleration of improvement
- d) All schools should be good or better and the partnership will focus its attention to achieving this goal
- e) No school should be left isolated
- f) Support should be brokered from a variety of sources, focusing on pre-emptive and preventative action
- g) Resources should be used well and duplication avoided

- h) Robust quality assurance measures should be used to ensure value for money
- i) Local strategic priorities should be set by the Strategic Board following consultation
- j) The Partnership should be a forum for communication and improvement, with schools and stakeholders held to account.

3. Potential partnership priorities and actions

There are many possible areas in which a new Partnership could make a tangible difference in terms of raising standards and improving the educational outcomes for children and young people in Portsmouth. The potential priority areas below are just a selection of ideas which have been discussed with colleagues.

a) Creating more options for schools and academies to receive the highest quality challenge and appraisal on a regular basis, in a culture of trust and openness.

Against the background of daily challenges, anxiety about accountability and competition between schools for students, it has not always been easy for schools to acknowledge openly where they need support and engage fully with the support which has been available. The position has improved in recent years, but a Partnership explicitly committed to honest challenge and support, offering a wider range of opportunities for support self evaluation and review, could open up more opportunities for improvement across the city and ensure that resources available across the system are well exploited and well targeted. One option currently being explored for example, may be a new arrangement between a school led Portsmouth Partnership and the national Challenge Partners organisation, providing cost effective, tailored challenge processes and access to high quality expertise from outside as well as within the city. The Partnership could also explore the development of other triad or pairing relationships within and beyond the city, developing shared rigorous processes and expectations around the use of review findings. In all review and challenge work the Partnership would be able to draw on the well regarded data analysis capacity and expertise in the council's Education Service which was praised in the 2016 Ofsted inspection. A particular focus of challenge activities could be around how schools promote improved achievement by disadvantaged and potentially vulnerable children and young people, to narrow the current achievement gaps. Equally, challenge activities could explore how all young people, including the most able, are supported to achieve their full potential.

b) Coordinating school improvement support so that there is no duplication, and the most effective use is made of all the available expertise in the city including NLEs, SLEs, LLEs and NLGs

The Partnership has the potential to be the vehicle through which the current teaching school, and possible future teaching school(s) based in the city, MATs and local authority resources could be brought together so that a fully planned and prioritised school improvement offer is made across the city.

There is agreement that the current arrangements are not making optimal use of the available resources in terms of funding or expertise. As a potential Achieving Excellence Area, the co-ordination of additional support will be essential. Through the Partnership, the commissioning and dissemination of support opportunities could be coordinated. It would also be possible for this to include oversight of the allocation and quality assurance of support provided to schools causing concern. Collective planning of CPD opportunities could reduce the need for staff to travel out of the city and/or achieve better economies of scale. It would also provide a vehicle for collective curriculum planning where this is helpful and can add value.

The council will be commissioning the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance to deliver some of its statutory school improvement functions in 2016/17, particularly with respect to schools causing concern, but would like to see this embedded as part of the work of the Portsmouth Education Partnership.

c) Collective action on teacher recruitment and retention, including career pathway development

There is clear agreement on the value of a city-wide approach to bringing new teachers into the city, building on existing structures and activities including the two successful recruitment fairs held earlier this year. In addition to promotional literature, options around housing (currently being considered by the council) and the local CPD offer, this could also include exploring options for planning career pathways across city schools rather than within individual schools or MATs, in order to retain and develop talent.

d) Collective approaches to leadership development at all levels

New development programmes could potentially be designed and resourced through the Partnership for leaders at all levels, from middle level leaders to potential executive headteachers/MAT leaders/CEOs of Academy Trusts. Putting in place a strong leadership pipeline, while also encouraging movement in and out of the city, is important for future system leadership capacity.

e) Curriculum development and subject networks

The Partnership could oversee curriculum development projects and host subject networks through which subject expertise and resources could be developed and sourced. The University Technical College, opening in September 2017, has the potential to stimulate and strengthen science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education across the city, and the Partnership would be an appropriate vehicle through which to secure that positive impact.

f) Collective approaches to key inclusion issues

Successful strategies for inclusion in the city depend on schools operating in consistent ways, with shared values and principles. The future funding of Alternative Provision is a good example of an area in which a consistent, coherent strategy could make the difference between a successful, viable programme and fragmented, expensive and disjointed provision. The Partnership could be a vehicle for agreeing a city wide approach, which could include, for example, shared training in restorative approaches to supporting behaviour, linked to the proposed city wide restorative approach to social care and family support through the Portsmouth “Stronger Futures” strategy for sustainable children and family services.

City-wide approaches to engaging parents and wider stakeholders could also be potentially powerful and need school and MAT engagement. An early example of collaboration here will be the recently agreed Get-Involved campaign to be delivered by Capital Radio in the Autumn 2016, aimed at encouraging teenagers to attend school regularly.

The Partnership will seek to support not replace existing inclusion strategies and actions that are in place, notably the special educational needs and disability (SEND) strategy which aims to further develop a range of high quality support services that contribute to removing the barriers to achievement. Our ambition is for Portsmouth to be a leading example of good, inclusive practice, with the vast majority of children and young people with SEND able to have their needs identified early and met within what is 'ordinarily available' (universal and targeted services) across education, health and care. Where additional support is required, this needs to be accessed in a timely way and should be of a high quality.

g) A collective scheme for recruiting and supporting volunteers working in schools

This could include, for example, a programme for placing increased numbers of student volunteers to support delivery of key parts of the curriculum, linked to the University's plans for stepping up significantly student volunteering in the city.

This will build on volunteering programmes already in place, notably the volunteering work of Portsmouth College's students in schools.

h) A collective interface for Multi Academy Trusts that operate in the city

Discussions to date with leaders of MATs operating in Portsmouth have indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to meet together on a regular basis, with or through a new Partnership so that shared issues can be discussed and options explored for drawing most effectively on strategic and operational capacity within MATs for the benefit of the city.

- i) Finally, there is the opportunity to use the Partnership to develop a **comprehensive strategy for strengthening education in the city**, around which a wide range of stakeholders could mobilise. It is envisaged that consultation on that strategy could take place during the Autumn. The strategy could be wide ranging, from early parental engagement supported through maternity and health visiting services, to effective school and MAT organisation addressing transition and other issues, school led system improvement, multi agency support for vulnerable children and young people and their families, efforts to increase the proportion of young people attending university and focused work to equip more young people to take advantage of high level apprenticeships

4. How might an Education Partnership work?

Structures

It is important that there are clear decision making arrangements for the Partnership, and a clear set of principles and values guiding its work.

On decision making, it is proposed that a **Strategic Board** should steer the work of the Partnership and develop and agree the strategic vision and priorities. It is also important, however, that there is significant dispersed leadership and active engagement by leaders and staff across schools. The Partnership would be looking for system leadership across the schools community not leadership by a few schools.

One option might be small group leadership of individual priority areas overseen by the Board. It would not be appropriate for the council to chair the Board. The council's role would be to facilitate transition to a school led system, with the Partnership acting with increasing independence. The Strategic Board could be chaired either by a Headteacher, or by an independent Chair, as in some other areas of the country.

Below that Strategic Board, and similar to structures found in other partnerships, an **Operational Group** could sit which would meet every half term and which would be accountable to the Strategic Board. This could be the engine of the partnership,

responsible for analysing the data and proposing priorities / areas of action. The LA's current school assessment process and categorization of schools to determine levels of support and intervention (minimum, moderation and maximum) would transfer to this group to provide a more open and transparent dialogue and analysis. A new forward looking annual challenge process would be implemented, focusing on schools where pupils are making below expected levels of progress, underpinned by an annual needs based analysis to determine priorities and use of resources.

Developing the details of how the Partnership works will require co-ordination and commitment among schools. Schools will need space to construct and modify arrangements themselves. This can be a more time consuming process than providing a blueprint, but it is ultimately more likely to lead to a consensus which is more binding on schools as participants rather than recipients. Whatever is achieved there has to be a collective effort, not reliant on a few key individuals, but rather, rooted in system leadership.

Membership of the Partnership would be open to all schools and a range of partners including post-16 and Higher Education and early years settings. A possible membership of the Strategic Board could contain the following:

- Independent chair (or from the general membership, by election)
- 3 x secondary HT
- 1x special HT
- 4 x primary HT
- 2 x academy trusts
- 2 x post-16 Principal
- 1 x HE
- Director of Children's Services, PCC
- Deputy Director of Children's Services - Education, PCC
- Director, Teaching School(s)
- Deputy Director of the Regional Schools Commissioner
- 2 x Diocese

Resources

In the two years the local authority will be investing resources both in terms of time and funding. This will include the contract with the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance to deliver school improvement on behalf of the local authority but embedded as part of the Partnership. The local authority will also provide dedicated support in terms of data analysis, administrative support and senior officer time to facilitate and contribute to the work of the Partnership. Ultimately, however, the success of the Partnership will be dependent on support from schools both in terms of a time commitment and potentially some funding. A funding contribution from schools would reinforce the commitment and secure a sustainable future. In the first instance,

however, it is proposed that the Partnership establishes itself and proves its worth, with support from the local authority, prior to putting forward such a request.

The potential of Portsmouth becoming an *Achieving Excellence Area* may lead to additional resources being made available which may be channeled through the Teaching School(s) and overseen through the Partnership. The Deputy Regional Schools Commissioner with responsibility for Portsmouth has also indicated that RSC resources could potentially be brought to the Partnership table too.

5. Consultation

We would be grateful for your views and comments about the proposed Education Partnership for Portsmouth. Questions to consider could include:

- Do you agree with the vision as described in Section 1 and the purpose of the Partnership?
- Do you agree with the principles set out in Section 2 of this document? Are there others that should be included?
- Do you have any comments on the possible priorities identified in Section 3? Do you have other ideas?
- Do you think the proposed structure set out in Section 4 makes sense? Do you agree with the suggested composition of the Strategic Board?
- Do you feel your school / institution can contribute to the work of the Partnership? Would you be interested in being a member of the Strategic Board and/or Operational Group?

Please could you insert any comments in the box on the next page and return it to the address shown below by Friday 21st October 2016.

By post:

Mike Stoneman
Deputy Director of Children's Services - Education
Education
Portsmouth City Council
Floor 2, Core 5/6
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth PO1 2EA

By email: mike.stoneman@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Comments / Feedback on the proposed Portsmouth Education Partnership

