

Report of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

Report to Outer North East Area Committee

Date: 2nd December 2013

Subject: Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

Nine schools in the North East of Leeds within the EPOS cluster are in the process of consultation and arranging agreement from their governing bodies to form a new Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership (a Co-operative Educational Trust). The purpose of the trust is to secure sustainable schooling and high quality educational outcomes for children attending trust schools through shared expertise, peer challenge and collaborative advantage. The planned date for the start of the Trust is January 1st 2014.

Recommendations

1. To note the interest of the nine identified schools in forming a trust and the benefits proposed.
2. To note the public and governance consultation undertaken to date in relation to the proposals
3. To seek support from the Area Committee for the trust and its ambition for educational excellence in the area it will serve.

1. Purpose of this report

The purpose of the report is to share the rationale and benefits of the development of a Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership, the consultation that has resulted in its development and the current position in this process.

2. Background information

2.1 For over two years headteachers in the EPoSS Family of Schools (FoS) have been in consideration of suitable models to support the desire of schools to continue to improve and develop the quality of the education provided for local children. This has been prompted by the ongoing changes to the education policy and funding landscape alongside a desire to use the collective local school resource to best effect. Key challenges foreseen included:-

- 2.1.1 The importance of peer collaboration as a route to improvement which was resilient to likely changes in the role of the local authority and existing support structures which facilitate established models of collaboration
- 2.1.2 The risk of fragmentation of collaboration through the invasive influence of acquisitive academy chains which may remove the control of educational development from localities and communities
- 2.1.3 The local shared agenda of small primary schools, often “village schools”, maintaining their unique role at the centre of their communities against growing pressure on school finances and the need to maximise value for money through co-operation and collaboration.
- 2.1.4 The shrinking of central support from the Local Authority and nationally funded bodies for the advancement of school leadership, management and development leading to possible isolation for schools not based within the city.

2.2 Following these initial discussions a working party of heads from the FoS was set up to look at options and recommend a way to proceed. After investigations by this group it was strongly recommended that the development of a Co-operative Trust was the best way to proceed.

2.3 Development meetings were held with Heads and governor representatives of schools supported through an experienced trust facilitator, the Co-operative College. Development meetings included elected member representation and representatives of Education Leadership in the local authority Children’s Services Directorate. Church schools also engaged in discussions with their relevant Diocesan representatives.

2.4 All schools and their governing bodies were involved in the consultation. Governing Bodies decisions on participation in the development of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership (WVLP) are included below. Schools controlled by the Catholic Diocese were informed by the Diocese they were not allowed to take part. Further schools indicated they were interested in participating but their involvement would be delayed pending other organisational changes. The consultation concludes with nine schools have indicating that they are strongly interested in being involved. These schools are:

Member Schools of the WVLP - Deighton Gates Primary School, Primrose Lane Primary School, and Bardsey Primary School

Partner Schools of the WVLP - Boston Spa School, Collingham Lady Elizabeth Hastings' CE Primary School, Lady Elizabeth Hastings' CE VA Primary School Thorp

Arch, St Mary's CE Primary School, Harewood CE Primary School and St John's School for the Deaf.

(Please note that the distinction between Member schools and Partner Schools is simply because of the current Trust status of proposed Partner Schools. In practice all schools will be full, equal, participating members)

3. Main issues

3.1 Purpose of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

3.1.1 The WVLP will develop practice across the schools to enhance the provision and opportunities available to our children and young people, maintaining and improving their already high standards of attainment and achievement. It will collaborate closely with other organisations, such as Leeds City Council services, The Co-operative Movement, providers of higher education and others, so that we can serve our children, young people, families and communities most effectively.

3.2 Vision of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

3.2.1 The schools in The WVLP are each unique, equal and autonomous. We will work together to achieve our shared vision of securing the very best outcomes for the children and young people in our schools through: setting the highest expectations for achievement; innovating in practice and organisation; and inspiring and supporting each other in continual improvement from our strong base.

3.3 Values of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

This vision is underpinned by our shared values:

- 3.3.1 that every child and young person is of intrinsic value and importance;
- 3.3.2 that every child and young person should be enabled to achieve to their full potential in all aspects of their lives;
- 3.3.3 that effective education is broad, encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, development of understanding and skills, as well as personal, physical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- 3.3.4 that children and young people should be inspired to become skilled, self motivated learners, developing capacities such as curiosity, creativity, resilience, perseverance and the enjoyment of challenge;
- 3.3.5 that our children and young people should be happy, safe, secure and engaged throughout their education;
- 3.3.6 that education should encourage and enable children and young people to look outwards to their community, region, nation and the World, recognising the unique contribution they can make to the benefit of all;
- 3.3.7 that we are stronger and more effective working together within our schools, communities and across the Partnership.
- 3.3.8 Furthermore the Partnership will be based on the Co-operative Values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In our

dealings as a Partnership we will demonstrate the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

3.4 Initial Priorities of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

- 3.4.1 To build upon existing partnership work and good practice within the WVLP schools by developing sustainable structures to secure effective collaboration and co-operation for the future.
- 3.4.2 To work together as partners, pooling our knowledge, skills and resources, to continue to improve and enrich the quality of educational provision across the partnership, by bringing new learning experiences and development opportunities to our pupils, staff and communities.
- 3.4.3 To ensure our local focus remains sharp and responsive to the developing national educational landscape, seizing the opportunities that will most benefit our schools and communities.
- 3.4.4 To collaborate to maximise the funding available and, through the Trust's charitable status, attract further funding and investment opportunities for the benefit of our children and young people, schools and communities.

3.5 Benefits from the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership

- 3.5.1 Through collaboration within the WVLP standards of educational achievement will be maintained at their current high level and raised in areas where they are currently weaker. This will in turn raise standards across the area through other schools engaging with WVLP schools and through raising of expectations in line with those of the WVLP. This will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.5.2 The opportunity to develop innovative approaches in terms of practise, organisation and resourcing, for example shared SEN support for smaller schools, the development of curriculum models tailored to our communities etc
- 3.5.3 A sustainable model of collaboration in the face of competitive pressures through continual reinvestment of local educational resources in local school development. This will enable long term planning of learning development and improvement projects. It will also ensure that collaboration is not put in jeopardy through leadership changes as WVLP schools will have commitment to the partnership.
- 3.5.4 There will be benefits in terms of prestige and profile for the area as the WVLP becomes an exemplar of good practice in education and develops innovative solutions to the challenges of the current educational climate. This is likely to attract more engagement with educational provision from outside partners within our communities and beyond.
- 3.5.5 The maintenance of strong schools within each of our communities, with all the demonstrable benefits that this brings, particularly in village settings, for example enhanced local identity, enhanced local facilities and availability of services etc.
- 3.5.6 Better value for money in the sphere of education in our area, as every pound of education funding is made, through collaboration and collective negotiation, to stretch further. Through grant applications by the WVLP for

specific projects more funding will be drawn into education provision in the area.

3.6 Partnership Both Within the Trust and With Others

- 3.6.1 The WVLP will promote and lead to heightened collaboration between schools that have chosen to be part of the WVLP, there will be however continued relationships with those schools who have chosen not to be part of this collaboration. This will particularly be the case in broader partnerships with children's services through the cluster model, overseen by the current Joint Collaborative Committee, which will have representatives from WVLP and non WVLP schools.
- 3.6.2 The WVLP will enable a co-ordinated engagement with other partners, such as Leeds City Council, local elected members, local business, the voluntary sector etc to better achieve the shared goals of improving outcomes and opportunities in our communities.
- 3.6.3 It has been key to the development of the plans for the WVLP that it is a co-operative model in which schools maintain their independence and control over their own management and governance. WVLP schools have specifically rejected other Trust models that risk a single large controlling school and models that are specifically intended to develop a feeder relationship between primary and secondary settings. In the WVLP all the school will have equal voice, despite their size. The trust will support effective transitions from primary to both local secondary schools and support parents choice to these or other secondary provision.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation and engagement has followed an open and transparent approach and meets the governance requirements on schools changing their constitution. The process has been supported through both an experienced trust facilitator and advice from the local authority governance support service, as required.
- 4.1.2 Those schools converting from Community Schools to Foundations Schools, then joining the WVLP have had to undertake a full legal consultation process. This is currently in its final phase. Consultation meetings have been held with all stakeholders, including a well publicised public meeting, at which all issues raised were discussed. The overwhelming response from the first phase of consultation was positive and supportive to the plans. The final phase of consultation is nearing completion.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 All WVLP schools will remain fully inclusive schools.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The WVLP will have Leeds City Council as an external Partner, with representation on the Trust Board. It will support council and city priorities including attendance and attainment improvements for all schooling phases. Support the broader Children and Young People's Plan objectives through participation in partnership and cluster working. WVLP supports the overall school improvement strategy for the city through increased peer support and development between and by schools through mutual challenge. WVLP will support city priorities for overall school sufficiency by providing a robust educational partnership able to support individual schools in expansion or through support for new provision wishing to join the trust.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 Any funding of the WVLP will come initially from the schools involved, although it may well be the case that the schools will collaborate to access other streams of funding such as grants for specific projects. It is also strongly anticipated that there will be cost savings for schools through collaboration and collective negotiation. This will lead to improved value for money from the current educational funding coming into the area.
- 4.4.2 Staff will be employed by their schools, in the same way that Voluntary Controlled Church schools employ their staff. There will, however, be no changes to staff terms and conditions. A consultation meeting was held with education unions and the outcome of the meeting was their support for the proposals.
- 4.4.3 The land and buildings of the three member schools will be held in trust by the WVLP on behalf of the schools. No decisions with regards to land and buildings can be taken by the Trust Board without the full support of the specific school Governing Body.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There is no exempt or confidential information in this report.
- 4.5.2 The report is not eligible for call in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The EPOS Family of Schools have considered various options and associated risks before developing proposals for the WVLP.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The WVLP will bring benefits to WVLP schools and their local communities, through enhanced educational provision and through co-ordinated engagement with the wider range of community priorities. It will also benefit the wider area through the engagement of the WVLP with other schools, organisations and communities within the area and the increased reputation an effective and successful Trust will bring.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To note the interest of the nine identified schools in forming a trust and the benefits proposed.

- 6.2 To note the public and governance consultation undertaken to date in relation to the proposals
- 6.3 To seek support from the Area Committee for the trust and its ambition for educational excellence in the area it will serve.