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## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

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### THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE TO SECONDARY PROVISION IN LEEDS

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present Executive Board with recommendations for delivering the next phase in structuring secondary provision in Leeds, and in particular, the response to the Government's National Challenge.

##### 2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 As part of the National Challenge, the government has set a new floor target for secondary schools at Key Stage 4 of 30% of young people achieving 5 (A\*-C) including English and Mathematics at GCSE. Local Authorities are required to consider structural options for schools at high risk of not achieving the floor targets by 2011. The options include, continuing to support improvement, closure, mergers, federation, academy or trust status.

##### 3.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 Fourteen secondary schools, including the David Young Academy, were identified by the DCSF as part of the National Challenge. Subsequently, the 2009 GCSE resulted in the number of Leeds schools below the National Challenge target falling to six. Two of these, West Leeds and Wortley, closed in September and have been replaced by Swallow Hill Community College. In addition South Leeds High School has closed and been replaced by the Leeds South Academy.
- 3.2 Previous reports in October 2008 and March 2009 considered three schools where we are still required to develop long term strategies to tackle underachievement. Parklands Girls High School, City of Leeds School and Primrose High School still face major leadership challenges to improve teaching, attendance, behaviour and to raise standards and other outcomes.
- 3.3 In developing structural responses it has become clear that in order to respond to the needs of the national challenge schools and to address the demographic pressures emerging in East and Central Leeds, the availability of additional capital funding is critical. Leeds has learned that it will not receive additional funding for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) in 2009 and so we met the Secretary of State

in September 2009 to press our case for additional funding to deliver on this agenda.

3.4 Education Leeds has worked with key stakeholders over the last six months to consider the opportunities and address the challenges. This has been helpful in prioritising the steps that need to be taken. The report identifies the steps according to the available funding.

#### 4.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The Executive Board is recommended to adopt the proposals detailed in section 5 of the report.

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD: 14 October 2009**

**THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE TO SECONDARY PROVISION IN LEEDS**

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in (Details contained in the Report)

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present Executive Board with recommendations for delivering the next phase in structuring secondary provision in Leeds, and in particular, the response to the Government’s National Challenge.

**2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2.1 We have seen real improvements in secondary standards, attendance and behaviour over the last five years while, at the same time, much of the secondary school estate has been remodelled and rebuilt. Schools like John Smeaton Community College and the David Young Community Academy have transformed standards and outcomes in areas of Leeds where in the past poor standards and poor outcomes were simply accepted as the norm.

2.2 Through our school improvement policy we have developed a toolkit of strategies focused on driving up standards, improving outcomes, improving attendance and improving behaviour. Strong schools have been partnered with weaker ones, underperforming schools have been closed, poor leadership has been tackled, and the quality of teaching improved, to transform the culture and ethos in schools with a relentless and uncompromising commitment to securing excellent outcomes.

- 2.3 However, not all schools and young people have benefited to the same extent and, for a small number of schools, we need to accelerate improvement if every young person at school in Leeds is to achieve their potential.
- 2.4 The National Challenge is the Government's strategy where all secondary schools will achieve the national floor target of 30% GCSE at 5(A\*-C) including English and Mathematics by 2011. Local authorities are required to consider 'structural' change strategies for schools at high risk of not achieving the floor targets. These strategies include continuing to support improvement, closure, mergers, federation, academy or trust status. The Government is introducing new powers for local authorities and the Secretary of State to intervene where progress in National Challenge schools is deemed inadequate. There were three schools for which structural responses had yet to be agreed: City of Leeds, Primrose and Parklands. Appendix 3 contains a recent letter that stresses the importance the Secretary of State attaches to progress on this matter.
- 2.5 In addition to the National Challenge, the local authority has two other major programmes striving to transform provision and outcomes for its young people. Firstly, the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is intended to rebuild or remodel secondary schools across the country. We have already secured BSF funding for fourteen schools. The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) invited expressions of interest (EOIs) for new programmes for 2009 onwards, and Leeds submitted an outline bid for co-located provision with special educational needs provision and 14+ provision.
- 2.6 Secondly, 14-19 developments are changing funding arrangements and transferring responsibility from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities under the new duty associated with the "Machinery of Government" changes. New models of partnership working between schools and across schools, colleges, and alternative providers are emerging and are beginning to impact on curriculum planning and the offer to young adults. The integrated youth service strategy is being developed as part of a revised 13 – 19 plan to support the delivery of improved outcomes and reduce the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and support young people staying in learning longer.
- 2.7 A report to Executive Board in October 2008 explained the benefits of harnessing these three programmes (National Challenge, BSF and 14-19) in addressing the needs of the three National Challenge schools whilst transforming the quality of the learning estate and furthering ambitions for young people and their communities in East and North East Leeds. Five issues were identified:
- the future of the Central Leeds Learning Federation;
  - re-providing girls only provision at a more accessible location;
  - whether to develop Academy status for any of the schools;
  - whether additional new provision was needed in East Leeds; and
  - whether we could rationalise provision in the Outer North East of Leeds.
- 2.8 A follow up report in January 2009 set out the progress made towards the review of provision in East and North East Leeds, through the engagement of schools and other community stakeholders. In summary the following work was undertaken:
- informal consultation with the senior leadership teams and governing bodies of the schools, SILCs and PRUs involved;
  - discussions with elected members and community partners through the East and Outer North East Area Committees;
  - joint working with children services partners;

- discussions with LSC and other providers of learning provision to align planning and investment strategies;
- discussions with DCSF officials
- BSF EOI submission for further secondary investment; and alignment of key strategies shaping provision, especially for the inclusive learning strategy and the 14-19 review.

- 2.9 From this work, a broad consensus has developed around what must be achieved through any proposals:
- addressing and exceeding the National Challenge targets;
  - building on existing strong and successful provision, to ensure continuity of learning and stability for all engaged;
  - achieving transformation of the learning landscape by maximising the impact of the next wave of BSF funding and other capital resourcing opportunities such as FE and primary;
  - securing leadership and governance that will deliver our ambitions through focussed action;
  - securing provision where it is needed and with access to extended services;
  - building on the consensus and collaboration that is emerging to add strength and capacity to any new provision and the associated process of transition;
  - maintaining and building the confidence of young people, parents, communities, teachers and support staff;
  - aligning with regeneration activities to support local communities in terms of their social and economic well-being;
  - effective and accessible girls only provision.

- 2.10 Building on this consensus, a report to Executive Board in March 2009 identified options for further consultation. In summary, the report identified two options, depending on whether BSF funding was available. Both options suggested that:
- the federation be dissolved;
  - academy status be sought for each of the three schools;
  - girls provision should move to the centre of Leeds; and
  - co-ed provision should move from City of Leeds to an east Leeds site.

If BSF funding was available, provision would be rationalised in the North East and new extended co-educational provision established in east Leeds.

### 3 **PROGRESS ON THE NATIONAL CHALLENGE**

- 3.1 Fourteen secondary schools, including the David Young Academy, were identified by the DCSF as part of the National Challenge. Each of these schools formulated a National Challenge plan and Education Leeds configured its support to reflect the needs of each of these schools in line with the School Improvement Policy. Subsequently, the provisional 2009 GCSE resulted in the number of Leeds schools below the National Challenge target falling to six. Appendix 1 charts the progress of each of the 14 schools and re-assesses their capacity to improve up to and beyond the National Challenge floor target.

- 3.2 Of the six schools below the floor targets:
- West Leeds and Wortley, closed in September and have been replaced by Swallow Hill Community College. Despite mixed results in 2009, we are confident that, with support, the new school will secure its trajectory to the floor

target.

- South Leeds High School has closed and been replaced by the Leeds South Academy and we are confident this will secure its trajectory to the floor target.
- Carr Manor continues to be assessed as 'low risk' in relation to the floor target and we are confident that the strategies are in place to secure the trajectory to the floor target
- City of Leeds High School and Primrose High School, still face major leadership challenges to improve teaching, attendance, behaviour and to raise standards and improve other outcomes.

3.3 Parklands Girls High School has made good progress this year and exceeded the floor target. However, the declining role and difficult financial situation present a real challenge for sustaining progress over the medium to longer term.

3.4 Therefore, Parklands Girls High School, City of Leeds High School and Primrose High School remain high risk schools necessitating 'structural' responses.

#### **4.0 Funding issues: a narrowing of the options**

4.1 Since the March 2009 report, two factors have constrained the options available:

- a) Partnership For Schools have informed the local authority that Leeds would not receive additional capital for new BSF programmes to commence in 2009.
- b) The investigation into the feasibility of the proposed 'site swap' for girls provision and the co-educational provision of City of Leeds has concluded that the original BSF wave 1 capital allocation for Parklands would not be sufficient, in itself, to achieve an appropriate level and quality of accommodation.

There are two fundamental consequences. Firstly, the local authority needs to reconsider how it can ensure sufficient co-educational provision in East Leeds. Secondly, there is a serious impediment to the local authority's ambition to ensure sustainable high quality girls-only provision.

4.2 We met the Secretary of State in September 2009 to press our case for additional funding to deliver on this agenda and we await a response. The key messages from our consultation over the summer terms were:

- a) Securing a strong and relentless focus on school improvement activity which achieves the floor targets by 2011 regardless of the structural options decided upon;
- b) Securing sufficient secondary school places in the East and outer North East;
- c) Minimising the number of structural steps required so as not to distract the schools from their core purpose and to maintain the confidence of young people and their parents;
- d) Providing these schools with strong partners who can help drive improvements, model practice and lend leadership capacity;
- e) Securing extra funding required to make the necessary modifications to the learning fabric, particularly if provision is to be moved.

#### **5.0 THE PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 In our view, if additional capital funding could be secured from the DCSF, the best structural solutions would be as follows:-

The closure of City of Leeds, Primrose and Parklands to be replaced by:-

1. girls only Academy provision on a new site at the centre of Leeds;
2. co-educational Academy provision on a new site in East Leeds;
3. co-educational Academy provision at the Primrose site.

- 5.2 However, there is plainly a need to identify deliverable solutions as a matter of urgency if this complex and challenging agenda is to be taken forward. Accordingly, in the absence of any intimation from the Secretary of State that additional capital resources are likely to be made available, it is proposed that the Council should immediately:-

1. review and further develop our school improvement activity in all three schools, securing strong partners who can assist in supporting leaders and governors in driving improved outcomes and achieving the floor targets.
2. consult formally on:-
  - the closure of City of Leeds, Primrose and Parklands High Schools;
  - establishing a new co-educational Academy in east Leeds on the Parklands site by 2011;
  - establishing a 14-19 hub on the City of Leeds site by 2011;
  - establishing an Academy on the Primrose site by 2011.
3. establish transition plans to secure provision for young people currently in each of the three schools to reassure students, parents and carers.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

- 6.1 There would need to be a formal public consultation with all stakeholders in taking forward the proposal that Leeds should cease to provide girls only secondary school provision and on the establishment of National Challenge Trusts or Academies.

## 7.0 **LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There is funding for the refurbishment of Parklands Girls High school through the Wave 1 BSF programme.

## 8.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Executive Board is recommended to adopt the proposals detailed in section 5 of the report.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: National Challenge Schools in Leeds.
- Appendix 2: Letter from the Secretary of State

## **Background papers**

- Executive Board, October 2008 – The National Challenge and structural change to secondary provision in Leeds
- Executive Board, December 2008 – Building Schools for the Future: Expression of Interest for follow-on projects
- Exec Board, January 2009-The National Challenge and structural change to secondary provision in Leeds: Progress Report
- Exec Board, March 2009-The National Challenge and structural change to secondary provision in Leeds



## **Appendix 1: Overview of all 14 National Challenge Schools**

### **Bruntcliffe**

Bruntcliffe is a very low risk for National Challenge. The school made substantial improvements this year taking it to over 40% 5A\*-C including English and maths. This improvement was expected and a consequence of the focused leadership and careful planning in the school, with some very good teaching. The school continues to work hard at recruiting, developing and retaining staff in core subjects.

### **Carr Manor**

Carr Manor is a low risk National Challenge School. Having met the floor target in 2008 the school the school has achieved just below 30% in 2009. There is confidence that the school will be above the floor in 2011 even though it has a high proportion of students with very low prior attainment and with special needs, The school's Ofsted inspection in the autumn term last year confirmed that it is a good school with outstanding leadership from the head teacher. Leadership has developed at all levels and every member of staff, teaching and non-teaching takes personal responsibility for pupil outcomes.

### **City Of Leeds**

City of Leeds is a high risk National Challenge School. It is unlikely to meet the floor target by 2011 without radical change. Results in 2009 are very low and show little or no improvement. Pupil numbers are low and declining. Although it has reduced exclusions and kept vulnerable students in education, insufficient progress has been made with improving teaching and learning and with using opportunities to extend the curriculum..

### **Cockburn**

Cockburn is a very low risk school for National Challenge and continues to improve. The school figure improved by over 5% in 2009 to 37%. This represents good progress against value added benchmarks. The completion of the building programme and the appointment of a permanent headteacher should allow this school to make further improvements.

### **Farnley Park**

Farnley Park is a medium risk school for National Challenge. Although it achieves above the floor target in 2009 and should continue to achieve at that level through to 2011, there is a history of under achievement. The recent sudden death of the headteacher has left the school in need of substantial support. Improvement is needed to pupil data and monitoring, teaching and learning, and self evaluation.

### **Intake (Leeds West Academy)**

Intake achieved a substantial improvement in its final year and met the floor target of 30% (actual figure 29.6%). This was a good result and shows the impact of some intensive work with students in boosting their maths grades. The leadership of the acting headteacher helped the school to focus on priorities in the last two terms. This is a good foundation for the opening of the new academy

### **John Smeaton**

John Smeaton receives support from a National Challenge Adviser but is not at risk from the floor target, and no longer receives any additional funds through this route. The further improvement in 2009 of over 10% is a result of the relentless drive and focus of the leadership on gaining success for the students. In terms of progress from Key Stage Two starting points this school has the highest achievement in Leeds.

### **Parklands**

Parklands remains a high risk school for national challenge despite its outstanding result in 2009. The improvement of 14% brought the school above the floor target and well into the top quartile of achievement. The school's now excellent tracking systems for pupil progress show that it will be difficult to maintain this level through to 2011. Low pupil numbers and an increasingly difficult financial situation present a difficult circumstance for the temporary leadership.

### **Primrose**

Primrose is a high risk school for National Challenge. The very low result, although close to the top quartile benchmark, is a long way from the floor target. There is little prospect of substantial improvement in the current situation. The school has identified the need to add to leadership capacity to support rapid improvement in teaching and learning.

### **Rodillian School**

Rodillian is a very low risk for national challenge. In the first year of the new headteacher's leadership the school was removed from a notice to improve and has remained above the floor target of 30%. Improvement has been rapid and capacity for further improvement is strong.

### **South Leeds High (South Leeds Academy)**

Although South Leeds achieved the biggest increase in the City at 5A\*-C, results with English and maths showed a more modest improvement and were a long way below the floor target and expectations. This presents a clear challenge for the new academy.

### **Swallow Hill**

Swallow Hill has opened as a new school in September 2009 and is a medium risk school for national challenge. The predecessor schools of Wortley and West Leeds both achieved lower than predicted with only 24% and 16% of students achieving the standard. The new school has the benefit of a fully staffed teaching and leadership structure without the disruption and vacancies of the past few months. The national challenge adviser will be working with the school to verify very quickly the data and predictions for the students transferring to the new school.



**Rt Hon Ed Balls MP**  
Secretary of State

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Chris Edwards  
Chief Executive of Education Leeds  
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22 September 2009

Dear Chris,

I am writing to thank you for the dedicated support you have given this year to the National Challenge – our ambitious programme to transform secondary school standards and make every school a good school. Excellent progress has been made since the programme launch and this year's results confirm that we are on track to meet the National Challenge and ensure that at least 30% of pupils in every school secure 5 GCSEs at A\*-C, including English and maths by 2011.

Self-reported results for 2009 suggest there are likely to be around 270 schools below the 30% benchmark when figures are published in January – the biggest proportionate reduction ever. Almost 75% of the more than 750 schools being supported through the National and City Challenges and Academies programme improved between 2008 and 2009. Underpinning these headlines are some spectacular successes for individual schools, with almost 30% reporting improvements of 10 percentage points or more.

Despite this very good progress, the picture across authorities varies and there have been some schools where results have been disappointing. In these cases it is important that local authorities act quickly to understand and address the causes of this problem, making full use of the levers available to them. You should consider the following steps in each case:

- Asking National Challenge Advisers to investigate why results were lower than predicted and help the schools develop their improvement plans, which may include extra support from the local authority to raise attainment or tackle the barriers to achievement, including low aspirations and behaviour.
- Where a school's results are a significant cause for concern – e.g. they have dropped significantly or dropped in consecutive years – We

strongly suggest that you follow up the NCA investigation by issuing a warning notice, specifying the steps the school must take and the timetable for remedying its problems.

- Where you need further evidence about the reasons for the drop in results, or where you think that the situation is very serious, you should ask Ofsted to inspect the school. This is particularly appropriate in schools whose results have dropped below the floor target unexpectedly – i.e. schools which were not identified for National Challenge support to prevent them dropping below the floor.
- Where it is clear that the existing leadership and governance of the school needs to be strengthened or even replaced, you should establish a National Challenge Trust, hard federation or Academy and support the school through the development and implementation of that solution to ensure that momentum is maintained.

My officials and National Strategies' Senior School Improvement Advisers will continue to work closely with you to support all your schools and I would be grateful if you could inform them by the end of the month of the steps you plan to take in schools whose results are disappointing. Where these schools receive a monitoring visit or routine school inspection from Ofsted you will want to take full account of inspectors' recommendations in your plans to support the schools in improving. If local authorities fail to act, I will not hesitate to use the full range of powers available to me to trigger intervention or inspections.

Our expectations of Academies are just as high as those for maintained schools and we will be taking equivalent action to support and challenge them.

Last year the number of Leeds' schools below the floor was reduced significantly and some schools have made impressive gains again this year. John Smeaton and Bruntcliffe have continued to make good progress, rising to 45% and 42% respectively. I was particularly pleased to see Parklands Girls' rise above the floor and the improvements at Intake High which will provide a good platform for the new Academy.

However, despite the additional drive this year results in five schools declined and six schools remain below the floor, leaving Leeds off trajectory to meet its NI78 target. I remain deeply concerned about the lack of progress in some schools, particularly Leeds' lowest performing schools. The City of Leeds and Primrose federation again performed very poorly and we must now urgently deliver long term solutions for these vulnerable schools. I know that you have already discussed this with Vernon Coaker and have agreed to set out for us a plan for accelerating the delivery of these structural solutions. Given the urgency, it would be best if you could provide this report over the next four weeks. In the meantime, you will also wish to consider what steps you can take now, including issuing a warning notice or asking for an Ofsted

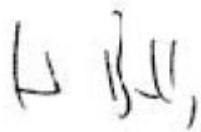


department for  
children, schools and families

inspection.

I was very worried to see the significant declines at Wortley and West Leeds. Since these schools have now closed and amalgamated we must ensure that the new school has the appropriate support to ensure it makes the best possible start and does not lose further ground.

As I have said in the past, we cannot achieve the ambitious goal of the National Challenge without the committed strategic leadership that you bring to support and challenge your schools, and to take bold steps where necessary to ensure the success of the children and young people in your area.



**Rt Hon Ed Balls MP**  
**Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families**

CC: Rosemary Archer, DCS, Leeds Council

