

22 June 2022

EDUCATION & LEARNING UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DCC EDUCATION AND LEARNING SERVICE

Introduction:

You will be aware that the SEND service had its Ofsted visit at the end of May. The Inspectors told us that the recent parents survey by the parent and carer forum reflected what they had seen. We have not received the final report yet so will provide further detail after that time.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Schools Forum:

- a) Notes the ongoing progress of the Schools White Paper;
- b) Notes the revised School Attendance Guidance
- c) Notes the current position of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme;
- d) Notes the decision to close Chittlehampton C of E Primary and wider demographics.

1. White Paper – Opportunity for All

- 1.1 The Schools Bill which underpins the deliver of the Opportunity for All is currently at Committee stage in the House of Lord, details can be found at:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

with the Bill policy statements at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-bill-policy-statements>

It is clear that the Government intends to bring forward the policies and principles in the White Paper relatively quickly.

- 1.2 Alongside the work of Parliament, The Department for Education is inviting local authorities (LAs) in England to register their interest in establishing a multi-academy trust (MAT) as part of a test and learn exercise. It is expected that only a small number of projects will be selected, a mix of high performing LAs which, together, reflect the geographic diversity of the country and a mix of school types and phases. The deadline for submitting an expression of interest is late July, it is unlikely Devon will submit an expression of interest but will be keen to understand the learning from the exercise.
- 1.3 Devon County Council officers have been approached by the Department for Education to discuss the longer- term role of Local Authorities as identified in the White Paper, specifically concerning school place sufficiency and coordinated admissions rounds.
- 1.4 It is anticipated that the Regional School Commissioner will meet with Local Authorities over the coming months to discuss the implications of the White Paper and it is

understood these discussions will be prioritised in Education Investment Areas.

2. School Attendance Guidance

- 2.1 New school attendance guidance has been published - Working together to improve school attendance which can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073616/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

Whilst this is currently non statutory guidance, there is an expectation this will be statutory at some point in time, no earlier than September 2023.

- 2.2 The guidance clearly places a greater emphasis on school attendance and sets out clear expectation of partners in this respect, with the foundations of **'Improving attendance is everyone's business'** and **'It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.'**
- 2.3 The Local Authority is currently reviewing the guidance and aligning it to services currently being offered. However, the new guidance clearly places greater responsibility and resource pressures on to LAs and partners.
- 2.4 A greater focus on school attendance and breaking the barriers down for school attendance should be welcomed and critical to meeting the aspirations as set out in the White Paper.

3 Homes for Ukraine

- 3.1 At the time of writing, there have been 283 application for school places from the Home for Ukraine scheme. Whilst there has been an indication of the potential funding to be allocated to Local Authority for education, there has been no confirmation.
- 3.2 In order to support schools, a £1k lump sum has been made available for every student that has started on roll and again at the time of writing, this amounts to 146 students.
- 3.3 Resources have been made available to school to support these students however, the students are spread across the whole County making targeted support virtually impossible unlike the Afghan resettlement that was concentrated around Exmouth and Exeter. Whilst there have been few issues with securing places for these learners, there will be an issue for year 6 students who require a secondary place for year 7 due to the many secondary schools being full and the DfE confirming there is no admissions priority for these learners who will be considered late application in the normal round. This has been raised with the Department for Education.

4. Chittlehampton C of E Primary

- 4.1 Following the decision of the Governing Body of Chittlehampton C of E Primary School to consult on the future of the school and subsequent statutory consultation, DCC Cabinet approved the closure of the school from September 2022 at their meeting 8 June 2022.

- 4.2 The closure demonstrates the impact of the falling demographics in early years across most areas, the potential for falling rolls and surplus places. DCC is planning to write to all schools providing them with data across their local learning community and offering a discussion regarding either temporary reduction of Published Admission Numbers and or potentially reduction in capacity.
- 4.3 DCC officers are also in discussion with the DfE regarding a more strategic approach to managing peaks and troughs in pupil numbers, especially in the secondary sector which will see falling numbers in the medium to long term.

Additional statement

You will be aware that Dawn Stabb has recently retired, after being with Devon County Council for twenty-two years. We are grateful for her many years of dedication to education, most notably during the pandemic, where she led our response work to make sure that children and young people across Devon continued their learning in very challenging times.

Dawn's message to her many friends at the Council and in Devon's schools and other settings is 'After many years of service, I have decided to retire as Head of Education and Learning. I would like to thank everyone who has given me their support during my 22 years working in Devon and wish you all the very best the future'.

Simon Niles
DCC Education and Learning