



TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT TITLE:	UPDATE ON THE GOVERNMENT WHITE 'OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL; STRONG SCHOOLS WITH GREAT TEACHERS FOR YOUR CHILD'
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the content of the Government's White Paper on Schools titled 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child' which was published in April 2022. One of the main changes outlined in this White Paper is the expectation that all schools will become part of a strong multi academy trust (MAT) by 2030.

The report also sets out the opportunities and challenges presented by these changes and a proposed approach and next steps to implementation

The report highlights the key other aspects of the white paper and the impact this could have on the school system.

The implications of the school white paper is aligned to the Children's Services Business Plan and vision to "*make Wirral great for children, young people and their families*" and to the Wirral Plan priority, Brighter Futures.

The report is not a key decision.

All wards are affected

RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note the changes proposed by the White paper and discuss the implications, opportunities, and challenges it presents to the school system on Wirral.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To ensure the children's committee are fully informed of the potential changes to the education system that have been developed by the Department for Education within the proposed White Paper.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do nothing: this option could leave Wirral schools at a disadvantage and not prepared for changes that could occur in relation to the White Paper.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In April 2022 the Government published a Schools' White Paper called Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child. This was the first White Paper on schools since April 2016. It has strong links to the levelling up paper published around the same time and also a Green Paper on the special educational needs system which was published a few days later. There are also links to the Care Review that was recently published
- 3.2 The White Paper has set out an ambition that by 2030:
- 90% children by the end of primary education will be at expected standard in both maths and reading.
 - By the end of secondary education the average grade in English language and maths will be a grade 5.
- 3.3 The White paper sets out a strategy for achieving this ambition. The strategy sets out plans for ensuring:
- 3.31 Excellent teachers in all areas for the country by increasing the teacher development programme with 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities and reforming the area. In addition, new National Professional Qualifications for Leading Literacy and EY Leadership. The expectation that starting salaries for teachers will be £30,000 by 2023.
- 3.32 Support for teachers to achieve high standards for all pupils including a focus on school attendance and behaviour. This will be achieved by more effective use of data, annual behaviour surveys and a national data system. In addition, the school week be longer, set at a minimum of 32.5 hours by 2023. It is also proposed that a Strengthened Relationship and Health education will be developed with statutory safeguarding guidance. Finally, improved safety and wellbeing will be available from Mental Health Support teams

3.33 A greater focus on an effective curriculum, through the provision of free ready-made resources, guidance, and lessons, designed in partnership with teachers and experts, to reduce workload. The Government will also create a new arms-length curriculum body that works with teachers to co-create free, optional, adaptable digital curriculum resources

3.4 All of these approaches will be underpinned by a stronger school system, with all schools being part of a multi academy trust by 2030 funded through a national funding system. The expectation is that all MATs will be either 10 schools or 7500 pupils. A new addition to the MAT framework in the White Paper is the ability to develop a Local Authority MAT, the details of this are still to be finalised, with a number of pilots taking place this academic year.

3.5 The White Paper also sets out the future role of Local Authorities within the system, the role of the Department for Education and OFSTED.

3.6 Wirral context

3.7 Wirral local authority has a total of 125 state funded schools (academies, free schools and local-authority-maintained schools). There are 90 primary, 21 secondary, 11 special and 3 Maintained Nursery Schools. Of these 76% (95) are local-authority-maintained with 77 of these being primary, 4 secondary and 11 special.

3.8 The remaining 24% (30) are academies or free schools, this includes 13 primaries and 15 secondaries, an all through and a 16-19 sixth form provision.

3.9 There are 19 trusts with academies in the local authority, 10 of which are standalone single academy trusts (SATs) and an empty multi academy trust (MAT).

3.10 Of the 8 further MATs with a presence in the Wirral, 5 serve or are on a trajectory to serve 7500 pupils or 10 schools by 2030. In terms of Wirral presence, of those on a sound trajectory, only 2 have at least 50% of their academies within the local authority.

3.11 The Diocese of Chester has 14 schools, of which one is in a MAT, one is a SAT, and 12 are local-authority-maintained. The Diocese of Shrewsbury has a slightly larger presence with 22 schools, of which 4 are in MATs, 2 are SATs, and 16 are local authority maintained.

3.12 Currently the Wirral has 68 schools that could join a trust other than the faith MATs available. Of these, 3 schools will become academies by the end of the financial year. The government White Paper sets a direction that the remaining 65 schools would join a trust by the end of 2030.

3.13 There are several challenges linked to the proposals set out in the White Paper. It is clear in the White Paper that the Local Authority will no longer have a role in school improvement of schools on Wirral and will also not have the resources to have the oversight and information that it currently has on all schools. However, it is unclear who will be accountable for outcomes and the performance of schools on Wirral as a

place other than the CEOs of the different MATS operating on Wirral, who will only be accountable for the performance of the individual schools in their Trusts and the DFE regional teams which will operate on a much larger footprint than Wirral eg covering the North West.

3.14 It is also clear that although the DFE will work with the Local Authority, the DFE ultimately is responsible for all decisions about which MATS will be allowed to expand to take on our maintained schools, which new MATS will be required, which smaller MATS will be required to join new MATS and the overall area-based commissioning plan for Wirral. It is not clear how this approach will fit in with the areas priorities or be able to respond quickly to changing needs.

3.15 A further issue is the capacity with the Local Authority to transfer the remaining 95 schools to MATs. This is significant piece of work which requires support from legal, Human resources, finance and property teams and is time consuming.

3.16 Next steps

There are a number of next steps which the Local Authority will take to progress this work if the White Paper becomes legislation:

- Ongoing discussion with primary, secondary and special school sector.
- Ongoing discussion with Chairs of governors.
- Planned discussions with MAT leaders regarding their growth plans.
- Work with regional DFE to input into their Local Area Commissioning Plan.
- Sequenced plan and timeline for schools into MATS and ensure capacity in place to achieve this.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. If the White Paper becomes legislation this will have an implication on the grants received by the local authority to support its current function to support school improvement.

4.2 The directorate, with the support of the finance department will model this impact over the next 7-year period.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to “promote high standards so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential” as set out within the Education Act 1996. Statutory guidance which relates to school improvement includes: *‘Schools Causing Concern: Statutory Guidance’*, *“Schools: Statutory Guidance”*.

5.2 The change in approach by the DFE within the White Paper doesn’t articulate if the LA will hold this statutory duty if all schools become academies .

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no implications for staffing, ICT or assets at the current time. This will be reviewed if the White Paper becomes legislation.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 This will be a change to the current model of education oversight across Wirral. It is unclear who will be accountable for outcomes and the performance of schools in Wirral.

7.2 The scale of change within a small timescale will have implications for both LA and school resources. Over the last 10 years 30 schools on Wirral have academised. The expectation within the paper is that 95 schools will complete the process within the next 7 years.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 No relevant engagement or consultation has been required for this report.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An equality impact assessment has not been completed, this will take place once the White Paper becomes legislation

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Through the education system children are informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon; promoting safe and healthy lives. Ensuring all residents have access to a local good and inclusive school will also enable children to engage in active travel to school.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The report sets out the Government's future proposals for the school system including the aim that all schools join a multi academy trust (MAT). The Government plans to set out standards for MATS which include that they are inclusive of all children and recognise how best to educate and meet the needs of disadvantaged children and those with protected characteristics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 DFE White Paper

BACKGROUND PAPERS

'Every Child Matters'

Ofsted, State – funded schools’ inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2020
Office of the Children’s Commissioner – The Big Answer 2021

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People & Education Committee in accordance with Section B of its Terms of Reference, the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
children, young people and education committee – Wirral School Improvement Strategy 2021-2024	13th September 2021