



## Opportunity for All: Strong Schools with Great Teachers

## Key Messages

The White Paper is a statement of future policy as opposed to the SEND Green Paper which is a consultation with a series of questions and seeking the views of the sector in order to shape policy into the future. For clarification, we have attempted to address some of the ambiguities and key points for colleagues:

## **1. Timing of the School Day**

The White Paper states that all mainstream state-funded schools should open with a minimum expectation of 32.5 hours per week. Whilst many schools are already operating such a week, for those who need to adjust, any changes need to be in place by September 2023. The DfE suggest that this should be a minimum and include two substantive morning and afternoon sessions each day with appropriate flexibility for religious observance. This requirement is for mainstream schools only. For special schools and alternative provision units, the structures of the week may need to be more flexible but are encouraged to extend and enrich the school week where it would be beneficial for pupils.

From September 2022, all state-funded schools are **expected** to publish their opening times on their school website. From spring 2023, all state-funded schools are **expected** to submit the length of their school week via the spring collection of the school census. By September 2023 at the latest, all state-funded, mainstream schools will be **expected** to provide a compulsory school week of at least 32.5 hours. This does not relate to Early Years or 16-19 year-olds in 6th Forms. The 32.5 hour minimum expectation includes the time in each day from the official start of the school day (i.e. morning registration) to the official end to the compulsory school day (i.e. official home time). The 32.5 hour minimum includes breaks and lunch times as well as teaching time and any extra-curricular activities **that all pupils are expected to attend. It does not include optional before or after school provision.**<sup>1</sup>

Any changes to the timing of the school day or week need to be communicated to parents in sufficient time and cognisant of the possible impact any changes would have on parents' child-minding arrangements. It is important that parents applying for places in the admissions round 2022-23 are aware of any potential changes to the school day or week that would be implemented from September 2023. Similarly, where schools are reliant on local authority commissioned transport e.g. school buses etc., that communication of any changes is very early as bus contracts are negotiated well in advance and once negotiated, are difficult to alter to accommodate any individual school changes.

The Government is to publish guidance on best practice for mainstream schools on the minimum expectation and the wider ambition for all schools to consider increasing time in school where appropriate including how additional time can be used to support pupils' literacy and numeracy. Please watch out for this guidance.

<sup>1</sup> DfE Information Note (March 2022) Minimum Expectation on the length of the school week



## **2. Literacy and Numeracy**

The White Paper provides a very clear statement about raising standards in literacy and mathematics with new targets set for reaching end of Key Stage 2 national standards by 2030. The Paper speaks of the English and maths hubs supporting schools to drive up literacy and numeracy standards with a continued emphasis on mastery and synthetic phonics. In 2023 the DfE is to publish the second part of the Reading Framework for schools.

The Paper states that all schools should monitor pupils' progress in English and mathematics using robust assessment and that they should have a system for responding to what this shows. Whilst recognising that further clarity is required on what robust assessment systems are expected, it is important that we continue efforts to manage teacher workload and make use of the DfE's Reducing School Workload toolkit<sup>2</sup> and also the Reducing Teacher Workload in West Sussex Schools guidance produced in collaboration with headteachers and unions in 2019 (Annex 1).

## **3. Local Authority Multi Academy Trusts**

### **An early discussion on the future direction of the Local Authority**

The Local Authority has read through the detail of the Education and Schools White Paper. Although some detail still needs clarity including timeframes, timescale for the legislative changes that will be required to strengthen the local authority's strategic planning role and access to data and information, we are broadly positive of the direction signposted in the Paper. We do need to see how this aligns with possible outcomes of the SEND Green Paper, and also how it ties up with the recent legislative framework around Post 16 Provision.

There are some key areas within the White Paper that the local authority would like to explore with our broader school community including our maintained schools, Diocesan schools, Free Schools and Academies, and also with our family of Multi Academy Trusts. It is important that we begin to explore some of the issues and opportunities early so that the school community has a clear understanding of the direction West Sussex is heading towards, along with the options they have in the future. It is also important that we discuss this now to temper any knee jerk reaction from our schools and academies.

An element of the White Paper is the desire that all schools will be part of a family of schools and part of a strong Multi Academy Trust 'or with plans to join one' by 2030. A strong Multi Academy Trust is described as one that provides high quality inclusive education, is resilient, shares expertise, resources and support to help teachers and leaders deliver high quality education. The Paper indicates that the best Trusts will work where they are needed most, i.e. levelling up and transforming underperforming schools. There is a recognition that the current system does not necessarily support the strongest Trusts grow and indeed that many high performing schools are not in Trusts.

For the Local Authority, the White Paper indicates that we will be able to set up our own Multi Academy Trusts in the future and also broker and help manage the planning for schools to be part of a strong partnership over the coming years.

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<sup>2</sup> DfE: Reducing School Workload - Support and practical resources for schools to help reduce workload, including the school workload reduction toolkit (2020)



## **The role of West Sussex as a Multi Academy Trust provider and strengthening the partnerships and strong Trusts in the County.**

The County Council is actively seeking to engage with our community about the value and interest in setting up a number of local authority sponsored Multi Academy Trusts across the county over the next few years and also the possible consolidation of existing localities and partnerships between schools and our strong Multi Academy Trusts. Officers have already engaged with the DfE Regional Schools Commissioner's Office and have begun to engage with the Diocesan authorities and executive headteachers. We are starting a programme of engagement to test the appetite, to understand what schools and possibly existing academies may want from a local authority network of MATs and local authority led partnerships. We will also be exploring a number of possible operating models for partnerships and local authority sponsored MATs across the County. Operating models could include a blend of strategic and longer-term phased expansion of strong MATs, the consolidation of broader partnerships, and also the setting up of our own Multi Academy Trusts.

I wanted to raise awareness that, during the coming weeks, the Local Authority and its officers will be working up potential models, engaging with schools, Diocesan authorities, neighbouring local authorities, and MATs including those academies who are currently stand alone. We will be working to come forward with some models to then share with our schools and community of academies and MATs before the end of the summer term.

**It is important to note that any move down the path of setting up our own Multi Academy Trusts would also align with the White Paper's timelines of all schools being either part of a strong Multi Academy Trust or with plans to become such by 2030. This gives us an eight-year timeline and therefore we will be engaging in co-creation of a longer-term plan with our community of schools and reinforcing the point that schools do not need to act urgently on this.**

Principally, our work in the coming weeks would be looking at our role both as a broker, but also as a sponsor and will be exploring with schools what they would like a West Sussex MAT or MATs to look like. We would be looking at how would a local authority Trust be organised and governed? How would any 'top slice' of finance be used and invested directly into front line delivery? We would be exploring whether each local authority sponsored Trust would need a CEO or could we operate a different structure? We would be very keen to explore what USPs any local authority MAT or partnership would have? We would also be keen to look at how we could draw existing stand-alone academies or small Trusts in to such a collaborative to enable them to thrive, help shape the partnerships, and also what leadership role they may be able to take.

There are many ways in which the local authority's strategy could go. No firmed-up models or approaches have yet been defined.

The purpose of this paper is to give advanced information that we will be starting a process of engagement with our strategic partners including through the strong working partnership we have already established with our MATs, our schools and our partners. Please join us at the Engagement Sessions to discuss ideas and take soundings from schools and academies over the coming weeks to help us create workable models which we would help to embed in our future Education and Skills Strategy.



We really hope you will engage with us in helping shape our future direction.

Paul Wagstaff

Assistant Director: Education and Skills