

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Governance and Audit Committee to be held on 25th April 2017.

Subject:

AL

Report on the Role of the Regional Schools Commissioner and their relationship with the Local Authority

Summary statement:

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) is a role which has been implemented to monitor performance and intervene to ensure that underperforming academies improve. The function is also to decide on the creation of new academies and ensure that the sponsor market meets local need. The RSC is advised by a Headteacher Board and works closely with a range of different partners including local authorities.

RSCs act in the name of the Secretary of State for Education, and are accountable to her and to the National Schools Commissioner.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's



1. SUMMARY

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) is a role which has been implemented to monitor performance and intervene to ensure that underperforming academies improve. The function is also to decide on the creation of new academies and ensure that the sponsor market meets local need. The RSC is advised by a Headteacher Board and works closely with a range of different partners including local authorities.

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2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The establishment of Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) has shifted operational decision-making from DfE ministers and officials providing an infrastructure for leaders to play a wider role across the system.
- 2.2 Within an increasingly school-led system, the responsibility for taking action to improve outcomes lies with the governing board or academy trust. When an academy trust is failing to improve a school that has been identified as failing or coasting, it is important that Regional Schools Commissioners are able to take action. RSCs act in the name of the Secretary of State for Education, and are accountable to her and to the National Schools Commissioner.
- 2.3 Ministers receive regular reports from the RSCs in order to maintain oversight of the programmes and stay informed about significant operational matters across the regions.

RSCs escalate decisions to the National Schools Commissioner or the relevant minister that are: sensitive; raise issues of interpretation of government policy; relate to urgent safeguarding or extremism concerns

- 2.4 The RSCs are supported and held to account by a board of outstanding academy headteachers and sector leaders, many of whom are directly elected by the sector. Working with their Headteacher Board (HTB), RSCs are well placed, to identify and commission the most appropriate support and interventions for an underperforming school or academy. RSCs have tight parameters over when intervention is permitted. Academies will not be subject to intervention if their educational performance, financial management and governance are of a high standard.
- 2.5 The RSC has a number of core functions:
 1. Intervening with under-performing academies and free schools to ensure that high quality support is commissioned to improve them quickly through:

Tackling educational underperformance in academies and free schools
Intervening in academies where governance is inadequate



Taking action against poorly performing sponsors and multi-academy trusts

2. Tackling underperformance in maintained schools by providing them with support from a strong sponsor through:
3. Working with the regional Headteacher Boards to approve the conversion of new academies
4. Approving new sponsors and the creation of multi-academy trusts by:

Considering applications from sponsors to operate in a region or regions
Taking decisions on the creation and growth of multi-academy trusts
5. Ensuring that the pipeline of outstanding free school proposers is secure and capable of delivering new schools by:

Advising on free school applications
Proposals for new free schools under the LA free school presumption arrangements
6. Taking decisions on changes to academies and free schools by:

Deciding changes to admission arrangements
Considering exemptions from providing Christian collective worship

2.6 As a Local Authority we work very closely with the RSC and her officers specifically with regard to improving standards in all Bradford schools and new sponsors. The relationship is positive and essential in order to promote improved outcomes for young people across the District. The RSC is also a member of the Education Improvement Strategic Board for the District.

The LA will challenge the RSC when there are concerns regarding the standards of education in academies. Equally the challenge from the RSC is with regard to maintained schools.

The relationship with the RSC has to be strong for a number of different reasons including:

- a) All the young people education in a school in Bradford irrespective of the school status are Bradford young people.
- b) The Strategic Director of Children's Services has responsibility for safeguarding of young people across the District.
- c) School places and sufficiency are statutory functions of the LA yet the LA can no longer, through legislation, open new schools. Free Schools are the remit of the Department for Education.
- e) Special Educational Needs provision and how this is delivered across the District.
- f) An on-going dialogue regarding areas such as exclusions, children missing education and vulnerable groups.



A positive relationship with the RSC is essential in order to ensure there is no fragmentation of learning for young people across the District in this changing educational landscape.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

None

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

None

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None

7.6 TRADE UNION

None



7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

None

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Governance and Audit Committee receive this report for information.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

