

Wiltshire Council

Children's Services Select Committee

22 July 2011

Coalition Changes – DCE update June to July 2011

Reform of early learning and children's centres

1. A new, slimmed down early years curriculum for 0-5-year-olds, more focused on making sure children start school ready and able to learn, will be introduced next year. The revised [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) (EYFS) has been published for consultation, closing date 30 September 2011.
2. As part of wider reforms to Sure Start Children's Centres and early learning, the Government is looking at ways to get parents and communities more involved in running children's centres. [Core purpose of Sure Start Children's Centres](#) discussion document is available for comment.
3. The key proposals outlined include:
 - A new focus on three prime areas of learning in the EYFS so children are ready and able to learn at school. These areas are: personal, social and emotional development, physical development and communication and language.
 - A slimmed down EYFS, cutting the number of learning goals from 69-17. The learning goals will be more closely aligned with Key Stage 1 to smooth the transition from reception class to Year 1.
 - Assessment at age five will remain but instead of the current complicated scale point assessment children will be judged against 17 learning goals.
 - A new check for every two-year-old in pre-school settings to pick up early any problems in a child's development or special educational needs.
 - New plans, to be consulted on in the autumn, to enable parents to access their free entitlement hours from 7am-7pm, and take the full 15 hours over two days rather than a minimum of three days.
 - A new core purpose for children's centres, with a stronger focus on school readiness and supporting families.
 - Exploring new ways of running children's centres, such as mutuals and co-operative approaches, so parents and communities can be more involved in local decision making and services.
 - New requirement on all local authorities to publish data on how much they are spending on children's centres in their area to improve local accountability.

Consultation on New Admissions Code

4. A [consultation](#) to make the school admissions process simpler, fairer and more transparent for all parents is open until 19 August with changes expected from September 2013. The proposed changes would contain around half as many requirements as the current admissions code.
5. The proposals are intended to:
 - increase the number of good school places available by making it easier for popular schools to take more pupils
 - improve the current in-year applications scheme so fewer children face delays in finding a new school. (In-year applications happen when a child moves to a new area during the academic year)
 - give priority to children of school staff when a school is over-subscribed, if the school wishes, making it easier for schools to recruit teachers and other staff
 - strengthen the military covenant by allowing children of armed forces personnel to be admitted to infant classes even if it takes the class over the 30-pupil limit
 - allow twins and other multiple-birth children to be admitted to infant classes even if it takes the class over the 30-child limit
 - ban local authorities from using area-wide “lotteries” (not used in Wiltshire).
 - reduce bureaucracy by requiring admissions authorities to consult on admissions arrangements every seven years (rather than every three years) if no changes are proposed. (They would still need to consult when they wanted to change their admissions arrangements).
6. The consultation also asks whether Academies and Free Schools should prioritise children receiving the pupil premium and streamlines the appeals process.

Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and accountability review

7. The panel reviewing the testing, assessment and accountability system at the end of primary school has published its final report. The [report](#) recommends that:
 - The current writing test should be replaced by teacher assessment of writing composition. This will ensure pupils can be more creative and will overcome the dangers of teaching to the test. This teacher assessment should always make up the larger part of any overall writing judgment.
 - As part of writing, there should be a spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary test. The panel believes a test will raise attainment in these areas and is appropriate because there are clear right or wrong answers.
 - Maths should continue to be externally tested.
 - Reading tests should continue but should be refined over time.

- Science should continue to be teacher assessed with a sample test to monitor national standards.
 - Speaking and listening should continue to be teacher assessed.
 - Three-year rolling averages should be introduced to give a rounded picture of a school's performance.
 - There should be a greater emphasis on the progress of pupils:
 - Progress should be one of the two headline published measures, alongside attainment. Any overall judgement of a school by the Government, local authorities or Ofsted should give at least as much weighting to progress as attainment.
 - There should be a strong focus on the progress of every pupil, as well as greater emphasis on the progress of each Year 6 cohort. A new progress measure should be introduced to focus on the performance of lower-attaining pupils. Schools which work hard to accelerate the progress of those who started with low prior attainment should be recognised. This will help stop schools focusing on children on the Level 3/4 borderline.
 - New progress and attainment measures should be introduced for pupils who have completed all of Years 5 and 6 in a school. This would recognise that schools should not be held wholly responsible for the performance of pupils who have just joined them.
 - Teacher assessment judgements should continue in English, maths and science, and should be submitted before test results are announced. This will mean more weight is attached to them and allow longer for these results to inform Year 7 teaching and learning.
 - Transition to secondary school should be eased for pupils and their new teachers. There should be more detailed reporting to secondary schools so Year 7 teachers know right from the outset a pupil's attainment and the areas where extra work is needed.
 - Pupils who are ill on the day of a test should have a week to sit it, rather than two days.
8. The Government will now consider the report and its recommendations, and take into account the views of the teaching profession, before formally responding in July.

Further action to help our school system become world class

9. Speaking to headteachers at the National College for School Leadership, Michael Gove set out plans to raise standards and tackle underperforming schools. The key measures include:
- The Government will open more sponsored academies (turning around underperforming schools)

- The weakest 200 primary schools in the country will become academies in 2012/13.
 - Local authorities with particularly large numbers of struggling primaries will be identified for urgent collaboration with the Department to tackle a further 500 primaries.
 - The current average performance will become the new 'floor' for secondaries - all schools should have at least 50 per cent of pupils getting five good GCSEs including English and Maths by 2015.
10. There are around 1,400 primary schools below the primary 'minimum floor standard' (less than 60 per cent of the children reaching level 4 in English and maths at 11 and progress measures of 87% in English and 86% in maths) based on 2010 results. Of these, about 500 have been below the floor for two or three of the last four years. A further 200 have been below the floor for the last five years (120 of these roughly 200 have been below the floor for more than a decade).
 11. The Education Secretary also confirmed that the minimum expected standard for secondary schools will rise. The current 35 per cent floor (five A* to C grade GCSEs inc English and maths) will increase. In 2012, it will rise to 40 per cent and by the end of the Parliament it will rise to 50 per cent.
 12. Based on 2010 results, Wiltshire has no secondary schools below the GCSE floor standards and 12 primary schools below the KS2 floor standards. Each of these primary schools has an action plan which was submitted to the DFE in April 2011. We are not expecting many of these to remain below floor standards when the 2011 results are confirmed.

Definition of Persistent Absence

13. The Department for Education is changing the definition of "persistent absence" to deal with the reality of pupil absenteeism in schools and its impact on their learning. The Department is reducing the threshold at which a pupil is defined as "persistently absent" to 15 per cent, down from 20 per cent now. Some schools tend to take action to intervene when pupils near the persistently absent threshold, but nearing 20 per cent is too late. Lowering the threshold aims to ensure that schools take action sooner to deal with absence. Ministers will continue to look at the possibility of further lowering the threshold over time.
14. The new threshold will be published in statistical releases from October 2011 onwards, with the old threshold being published alongside it. In addition, the Department for Education will also be releasing national figures showing the numbers of pupils who miss 12.5, 10 and five per cent of lessons, although it is recognised that pupils could reach this level with relatively minor illnesses.
15. Ofsted will continue to take into account the number of pupils over the 'persistently absent' threshold when looking at a school's performance on attendance. They will explore ways of taking this new threshold into account in the 2012 framework, which is due to come into effect from January 2012.

Behaviour in Schools

16. Previous behaviour and search guidance was more than 600 pages long. The Government's [new guidance](#) is 52 pages long and reflects feedback from

teachers, teacher unions and local authorities. It sets out the roles and responsibilities for governing bodies, headteachers and teachers regarding behaviour and discipline. It makes clear:

- Schools should not have a 'no touch' policy. It is often necessary or desirable for a teacher to touch a child (e.g. dealing with accidents or teaching musical instruments).
- Teachers have a legal power to use reasonable force. They can use force to remove a pupil who is disrupting a lesson or to prevent a child leaving a classroom.
- Heads can search without consent for an extended list of items including alcohol, illegal drugs and stolen property.
- Heads have the power to discipline pupils who misbehave outside the schools premises and outside schools hours.
- Schools must have measures in place to deal with bullying both in and outside of school.

17. The guidance also protects teachers from malicious allegations:

- Heads can temporarily or permanently exclude pupils who make false allegations. In extreme circumstances, they can involve the police if there are grounds for believing a criminal offence has been committed.
- Schools should not automatically suspend teachers accused of using force unreasonably where other alternatives exist.
- All but the tiny number of the most complex cases should be resolved within three months and the vast majority should be resolved in four weeks.
- Malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded allegations should not be included in employment references.

18. The new Education Bill currently going through the House of Lords will also:

- Extend teachers' powers to search pupils for any items that have, or could be, used to cause harm or break the law, and for items banned by school rules.
- Stop appeals panels sending excluded children back to the school from which they were excluded.
- Give teachers anonymity when facing allegations.
- Remove the requirement on schools to give parents 24 hours notice of detention.

Managing Teacher Performance

19. The Department for Education has announced plans for significant reductions in the bureaucracy that controls how schools manage teacher performance and deal with poorly performing teachers.

20. The proposed changes will make it easier for schools to manage teachers and deal effectively with the small number of poorly performing teachers. They will:
- introduce simpler performance management regulations, which set a few basic requirements, remove many restrictions (including the so-called “three hour observation rule”), and leave other decisions to schools
 - introduce an optional new model policy for schools that deals with both performance and capability/disciplinary issues
 - allow poorly performing teachers to be removed in about a term, a process that now often takes a year or more
 - clarify that staff illness need not bring disciplinary processes to a halt
21. These [proposals](#) are subject to a 12 week statutory consultation ending on 16 August. It is expected that the new arrangements for dealing with underperforming teachers will come into effect from September 2011. Revised regulations for performance management will be published in September 2011 and take effect in 2012.

16-19 Bursary Scheme

22. The Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) has notified schools and colleges of the allocations they will receive under the new £180 million [16-19 bursary scheme](#).
23. The scheme will help 16- to 19-year-olds continue in full-time education, where they might otherwise struggle for financial reasons. It is made up of two parts – a bursary of £1200 a year to the most vulnerable young people and a discretionary fund for schools and colleges to distribute. Providers are responsible for identifying young people who are eligible for this payment.
24. Around 12,000 16- to 19-year-olds will be given guaranteed bursaries of £1200 a year. This group is made up of children in care, care leavers, those on income support and those in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance. This is more than they would have received through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
25. Schools and colleges can distribute the rest of the money to support any student who faces genuine financial barriers to participation, such as costs of transport, food or equipment. There will also be additional transitional arrangements to help those who are part-way through their studies and are currently receiving the EMA.

Academies Update

	Date opened
Sponsored academies:	
The Wellington Academy	Sep 2009
Sarum Academy	Sep 2010
Non-sponsored academies:	
Hardenhuish	Sep 2010

Lavington	Jan 2011
South Wilts	Jan 2011
Bishop Wordsworth's	March 2011
Corsham Primary School	April 2011
The Corsham School	April 2011
Sheldon School	April 2011
Pewsey Vale	July 2011
Wootton Bassett	July 2011

Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings

26. Graham Allen's first report [Early Intervention: the next steps](#) was published in January, it underlined that many of the costly and damaging social problems for individuals can be eliminated or reduced by giving children and parents the right type of evidence based programmes 0-18 and especially in their earliest years.
27. The [second report](#) sets out how necessary programmes can be paid for within existing resources and by attracting new non government money. The key recommendations are:
- Government sets out as a policy objective that all babies, children and young people should have the social and emotional bedrock essential for their future development and their ability to make effective life choices
 - Government leadership and co-ordination must improve, not least through an Early Intervention Task and Finish Group made up of experts from across Government departments which will establish, measure and progress-chase Early Intervention outcomes
 - The expected "Families and the Foundation Stage" statement must include regular and purposeful assessments for the 0-5s to help spot and correct dysfunction early
 - An independent Early Intervention Foundation is set up to promote Early Intervention, spread best evidence based policies and complement the work being done inside Government. The Prime Minister is called upon to challenge private, local and philanthropic sources to co-fund with government a £20 million endowment to sustain the Foundation
 - Be more creative in bringing additional non-government money to investment in Early Intervention and that payment by results through outcome based contracts is promoted and funded from within existing budgets.
 - As part of building a social finance market, establish an 'Early Intervention Fund' or Funds to raise around £200 million of private investment.
 - HM Treasury should commission a thorough review of Early Intervention growth incentives ahead of the 2012 Budget.

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Largely taken from the DFE website.

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