

Hastings and Rother Strategic Area Review Paper: LEA Position Paper (June 2004)

Purpose: **To provide background information and a proposed strategy in relation to the development of the joint East Sussex and Sussex Learning and Skills Council Strategic Area Review of Hastings and Rother.**

A. This paper aims to identify how East Sussex LEA can best support high quality education for young people in Hastings through the provision of strong, vibrant and effective educational institutions in Hastings.

B. A consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum development in 11-16 schools in Hastings:

Strengths:

- Smaller size 11-16 schools, according to current research are found to be more effective in raising standards in areas facing challenging circumstances.
- Smaller size 11-16 schools will have more available room, and will not be using resources to support expensive and non viable 6th form groups. Thus it may be possible to exploit this potential in offering:
 - smaller class sizes in both Key Stage 3 and 4
 - resourcing for small group working
 - effective professional relationship building
 - the development of specialist accommodation for expanding vocationally related course options in KS4
- Greater opportunities should exist for collaborative and federated practices against a less competitive backdrop, to support the development of a coherent 14-19 phase across Hastings
- Possibilities are opened up for six form entry for each year group together with transition groups in Year 7 for those students that need targeted support most.
- With more resources being focussed solely on 11-16 education, together with additional joint funded LEA and SLSC projects, greater opportunities exist for curriculum development, especially in the areas of:
 - developing a robust 14-19 curriculum
 - meeting the needs of the 20% of lowest attainers
 - meeting the needs of gifted and of talented children
 - providing an appropriate Young Apprenticeship and vocationally related course options
- 11-16 schools in Hastings have the capacity, with support from the LEA finance team to be financially viable given the planned strategic support from the Sussex LSC, the LEA

and its School Improvement Service as well as the established practices of the Excellence Cluster and the Leadership Incentive Grant Collaborative partnership. In particular, the five 11-16 secondary schools would be well placed, with additional Excellence Cluster and Leadership Incentive Grant funds to:

- a) strengthen the quality of teaching and learning
 - b) ensure the characteristics of good teaching pervade every lesson and raise standards
- Through partnership working of all agencies, greater capacity exists to deal with strategic issues concerning student behaviour, attendance and inclusion
 - Existing partnership working with Thomas Peacocke Community College will be strengthened with all Hastings secondary schools working from a common platform, developments will be supported by the work of the Hastings and Rother Strategic Travel to Learn Area Group through which all schools, HCAT, Bexhill College, Plumpton Agricultural College, the EAZ and representatives of Training Providers, Connexions, Sussex LSC, the LEA and local education business partnerships are represented. A sub-group representing rural Rother is developing links between HCAT, Thomas Peacocke, Robertsbridge and Claverham.

Weaknesses:

- Smaller institutions, even with a planned 6 to 7 form entry may not attract enough pupil numbers and therefore have less revenue
- Some teachers may prefer to opt to work in 11-18 schools rather than 11-16 schools, which could perhaps pose recruitment difficulties.
- An artificial barrier may emerge at age 16 between 11-16 schools and a post-16 college

These issues could be overcome by

- Establishing an agreed admission protocol for the Hastings area, together with an agreed marketing strategy for potential students and their parents/carers that takes into account different specialisms and school characteristics.
- Recognising that teachers of 11-16 schools can deliver a range of courses including AS level to Y10 and Y11 students who have 'fast tracked' through GCSE, as well as teaching part of their weekly timetable at the post-16 college (on one of the post-16 sites).
- Using previous sixth form classrooms as 'satellite' venues for post-16 courses, which teachers of 11-16 schools could deliver. This would also enable 11-16 schools to support the full dimensions of the 14-19 curriculum.

The LEA approach in supporting a change to 11-16 schooling in Hastings and Rye: a common strategy for 11-16 schooling in Hastings and Rye

Definition

This strategy relates to six secondary schools:

- William Parker
- Thomas Peacocke
- Hillcrest
- Helenswood
- The Grove
- Filsham Valley

Medium Term Vision

We wish to see all six secondary schools to be in at least MSSR Category 2 within 24 months of being 11-16 schools.

Strategic Intent

At the present time, three of the six secondary schools require additional support.

A significant number of schools are currently working hard to develop their capacity for improvement through an explicit focus on developing leadership at all levels, teaching and learning and standards. We need to move towards a situation whereby all six secondary schools are seen as strong, effective, popular and sustainable.

Above all, the LEA is committed to ensuring that the young people of Hastings and Rye receive the best possible educational provision.

The Importance of Investment

We recognise that we are under a wholly proper moral obligation to ensure that needs of all stakeholders are given full consideration and attention during this period of transition. This will require additional transitional funding over a minimum three year period starting in 2007-08 to support the implementation of new staffing structures and curriculum development plans, as well as continuing developmental support, in particular from the School Improvement Service and the Excellence Cluster.

In order to ensure that each secondary school operates effectively as an 11-16 institution, the LEA and its partners and stakeholders will support the following areas of investment:

- **Delivering high quality teaching and learning**

At the present time, the LEA, together with the EAZ, is working with each of the Hastings secondary schools in the area of 'making teaching and learning a whole school issue'. Our approach is based on the agreed premise that there is not enough 'good quality teaching' in each school. Using resources provided by the Leadership Incentive Grant, activities are being implemented to provide effective approaches to mentoring, coaching and modelling. This work will be supported by the Teaching and Learning strand of the Excellence Cluster as well as whole school in service training, which will be supported by:

- input from the Key Stage 3 consultants;
 - school self review processes within the MSSR framework.
 - developing links with Awarding Bodies, training agencies (e.g. LASDA –note CfBT is now involved in this) and Training Providers to develop expertise in vocational education and training
- **Building the capacity of each school to manage good student behaviour, attendance levels and inclusion**

An immediate concern of many senior staff in Hastings secondary schools is that levels of poor student behaviour, sporadic attendance patterns and a lack of esteem for educational processes held by many students, impedes student progress and hinders the delivery of good teaching.

We are committed to investment in this area through strategic action. The work of the Excellence Cluster Learning Mentor and LSU strands, along with the LEA Behaviour and SEN and Inclusion strategies will provide:

- a) focussed support in the form of mentors, coaches, advisers and inclusion officers
- b) robust partnership working from the LEA Attendance Support team
- c) high quality curriculum and work based learning developments to meet learners' needs more effectively
- d) specific actions and resources from the Behaviour and Attendance consultants

All these actions will be closely integrated with the development of closer joint working between schools, the LEA and other agencies, in particular social services and health, as part of the fulfilment of Children's Services objectives. Projects including the Information, Retrieval and Tracking (IRT) initiative and Hollington Full Service Schools all contribute to a greater understanding in families and the community of how a commitment to successful schooling can lead to greatly improved life chances for children.

Our approach plans to strengthen an overall strategy in each school which will make school a place where students wish to be and where schooling is valued.

- **Creating the right curriculum for our students**

We recognise that the curriculum diet of our students is a major influence upon how school and teaching is perceived. Current curriculum models have the tendency to meet the needs of many students but recent research has shown that many of the least able and the most able do not benefit as much as they should from existing curriculum models. Vocationally related options and progression to apprenticeships are underdeveloped.

Through the work of the Excellence Cluster, the LEA's involvement in Personalised Learning and also in 'Curriculum Design for Learning', as well as with the work of the Hastings and Rother Strategic Travel to Learn area group, we will:

- plan and implement curriculum models which will give all students access, choice, participation and opportunities for achievement.
- develop coherent learning pathways 14-19 through the Hastings & Rother STtLAG strategic travel to learn area group

In turn, we will support the development of alternative curriculum models (be they vocational, work based learning or traditional) with high quality professional development for staff. This will be developed through EC structures, LEA support and School Improvement Service activities, links with external agencies as well as through collaborative and federation tasks.

- **Enhancing capital resources in schools**

Reduction in school rolls and pressure on facilities within an 11-16 context and the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme offers the opportunity to remodel capital resources in the medium to long term to enhance curriculum and learning opportunities post-14 to

- Reflect the demands of a more vocational curriculum e.g. in the provision of workshop and training spaces for catering, motor vehicle, engineering, construction and business related course options without jeopardising the raising standards agenda
- Reflect the developing specialisms of the schools
- Reduce travel requirements to post-16 colleges on link programmes for 14-16 year olds
- Enable a significant expansion in vocational and vocationally related programmes post-14 e.g. by enabling schools to undertake elements of apprenticeship programmes as part of a coherent approach to 14-19 education and training in the area.

If the full benefits of the proposed changes are to be gained for 11 – 16 learners, it will be vital for the authority to secure the necessary funding for capital investment. Building Schools for the Future provides the framework within which such ambitious plans may be realised, but some elements of the building programme, such as the relocation of Helenswood on to a single site, may need to be committed in advance of the BSF programme for East Sussex.

- **Enhancing the organisational capacity of 11-16 schools**

In line with the current DfES thinking, we recognise that no school can effectively exist in isolation. Partnership working is key to each school's success. Existing partnerships in Hastings (e.g. LIG, Hastings Area Heads and the EAZ) will not cease to be effective and will be strengthened through:

- Collaboration through the 14-19 Hastings & Rother STtLAG strategic travel to learn area group
- the co-ordinated work of the Excellence Cluster
- encouraging each school to seek complementary Specialist Status
- encouraging collaboration across subject areas in each school e.g. teaching of maths, and the delivery of vocational courses
- exploring the possibility of creating federations of schools.

Such innovative practice will impact upon the leadership capacity of each school. Using the East Sussex MSSR processes, schools in partnership with the LEA will develop their leaders and management capacity by:

- use of LIG funding
- use of consultant headteachers

- use of senior and middle level leader development training

In summary, our intention is to ensure each school in Hastings is effective and strong.

Our 11-16 strategy will be turned into a robust action plan which will be created and agreed by all stakeholders. Our success criteria and milestones will be realistic but will also aim to ensure that each school meets the requirements of the national OfSTED category targets within 24 months e.g.

- Attendance at 92% or above
- Teaching to be satisfactory or better in 90% of lessons
- Teaching to be good or better in 70% of lessons
- Leadership to be good or better
- Standards of student behaviour to be good or better
- 50% of students to achieve five GCSEs grades C and above or equivalent (or Level 2)
- 90% of students to achieve five graded GCSEs or equivalent (or Level 1)
- 100% of students to achieve one graded GCSE or equivalent

Above all, we are committed to ensuring each school knows itself well and is adept in self review and improvement processes.

Finally, without the opportunity of establishing 11-16 schools in Hastings, all parties recognise that considerable development work would be needed to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of 11-18 schools, given that existing sixth form provision in Hastings secondary schools is not guaranteed to be viable, and where at the present time there is evidence of:

- inappropriate progress of students to courses post 16
- limited achievement by students in level 2 and level 3 courses post 16
- inappropriate curriculum provision for 14-19 year olds

Considerable investment would thus be needed to secure ways of ensuring that curriculum provision post 16 widens participation, and thus maximises choice and access, so that all learners achieve as expected or better than expected.

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