SCHOOLS FORUM

**11**

17th November 2015

**Strengthening School to school support through greater partnership and collaborative working**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lead Officer** | **Margaret Simmons-Bird** |
| **Contact details** |  |
| **Forum asked to decide / steer / be informed** | **To discuss and comment on the proposal and allocate funding as proposed.** |
| **Time Needed** |  |

**Introduction**

In recent years, with the growth in numbers of Academies and Free Schools, the education system across the country has become increasingly fragmented. The long-established paradigm of schools co-operating under the single umbrella of the Local Authority has been replaced by a competitive environment in which schools are answerable to a range of multi academy chains and trusts. The direction of travel in education policy is shifting towards greater school autonomy. In order to deliver a school led system that informs and enables sustainable school improvement, schools are encouraged to work more collaboratively and in partnership. It is clearly in the best interests of learners if all schools subscribe to a common moral purpose and shared responsibility for educational excellence within a family of schools that is ambitious and inclusive with no school isolated and vulnerable to failure. If all schools in B&NES work together this will ensure all learners benefit from a high quality educational provision.

The focus of this proposal is collaboration between all schools to optimise outcomes for all our children and young people in B&NES.

This paper is a product of the two consultation meetings held with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors of maintained schools within B&NES. The aim is to deliver a sharp and focused piece of work which informs all schools of the options for collaboration recognising the shift in educational policy, the tightening of schools’ budgets over the lifetime of this Parliament and the need to develop meaningful collaboration which includes all schools and therefore all children within B&NES.

**Recommendation**

That School Forum discusses and comments on the proposal as set out and allocates one-off

funds of £25k towards the project, which the LA will seek to match.

**Report**

The Strategic Director for People and Communities has had discussions with Secondary Head Teachers and briefings with the Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors of maintained primary and secondary schools on developing a coherent approach in response to the national agenda for greater school partnership and collaboration to strengthen school-to-school support.

Head Teachers and governors recognise that the LA may not be completely impartial in promoting a range of possible models of collaboration and partnerships. They have expressed a preference for an independent consultant to undertake a research project, which outlines the full range of models and which objectively lays out the advantages, disadvantages, benefits and implications of each of the models.

The project is outlined as follows:

**Methodology**

**Phase 1: Research – Data Analysis and Area Overview**

Initial analysis of performance data and other relevant information at area level to establish a ‘baseline’ of the current position in relation to standards and quality and of existing patterns of collaboration and partnership. This analysis will provide the basis of any relevant hypotheses to pursue during Phase 2.

**Phase 2: Research – (a) Field Work in Schools**

This phase will involve gathering first-hand evidence of different models of collaboration and partnerships in B&NES and beyond; expectations of key stakeholders; potential benefits of greater collaboration; range of approaches across and within primary and secondary schools. It will provide an opportunity to test any hypotheses identified in phase 1. It will also provide a robust evidence base to:

1. enable a thorough diagnosis of strengths and potential benefits of partnerships and collaborations, and
2. ensure that proposals for development of effective collaboration strategies are realistic and appropriate for the context and circumstances of local schools.

**Phase 2: Research – (b) Provision of Models of collaboration with “model” governance for each.**

Whilst gathering information on local collaborations the consultants will review the options available to schools from informal collaboration through to development of a MAT and will provide a range of model governance arrangements and core documentation for each form of collaboration. The aims being firstly to enable all schools to understand the implications for them of each model and to provide the basic documents needed to inform discussions that schools might wish to have with other schools, the LA, Diocesan Boards, relevant MATs, etc, so that there is (i) transparency and (ii) maximum collective efficiency in developing partnership working further without incurring extensive costs for each collaboration. Secondly to provide a “roadmap” which supports each school without the need to direct large amounts of leadership and governance time to individual exploration of the options.

**Phase 3: Reporting**

The formal written report and presentation of findings:

* an analysis of current collaboration and partnership arrangements in B&NES between schools; resulting strengths and benefits.
* possible models of collaboration including MATs, Trusts, Federations and model “core” documentation.
* a range of proposals for improving efficiency and effectiveness through collaboration and partnership working between schools within and across primary and secondary phases.