

Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 16-June 2005

Report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

A New Relationship with Schools

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee about the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) initiative 'A New Relationship with Schools'.

Background

2. The 'New Relationship with Schools' is intended to:
 - build the capacity of schools to improve, with rigorous self-evaluation, stronger collaboration and effective planning for improvement;
 - enable talented school leaders to play a wider part in system-wide reform;
 - operate an intelligent accountability framework that is rigorous and has a lighter touch, giving schools, parents and pupils the information they need;
 - reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, making it easier for schools to engage the support they require without duplicative bidding, planning and reporting requirements;
 - improve data systems to put the most useful data on pupils' progress into the hands of schools and those who work with them;
 - secure better alignment between schools' priorities and the priorities of local and central government.
3. **Parents** should have greater confidence that their children are being educated and developed in ways that suit their personal abilities and needs. They will have better information, through more frequent inspections and the school Profile, about the quality of the schools their children attend.
4. **Teachers** will work in schools that have more autonomy to shape their teaching approach to the learning needs of pupils. They will have better data about their pupils and more opportunity to choose to

engage with support programmes of most relevance to their need. Some of the burdens of the old accountability regime, like lengthy preparations for inspection, will be lightened.

5. The statutory responsibilities of school **Governors** for schools' strategies, targets, budgets and key policies are not altered. Governors will find it easier to set the strategy for their schools, with the ability to plan finances over three years and with better external support.
6. **School leaders** will have more scope to assess the improvement priorities for their schools, and to concentrate on those, with less distraction caused by multiple bidding and accountabilities. They will each benefit from a "single conversation" about whole-school reform with an accredited, professional partner. They will have more opportunities to be involved in leading the reform of the whole school system.
7. **Local Authorities** will have the opportunity to build stronger local capacity for school improvement, and to align the improvement priorities of their schools with local priorities. They remain statutorily responsible for school improvement and for a wide range of children's services.
8. These practical changes are under way:
 - alignment of 3-year **budgets** for schools with 3-year plans;
 - shorter, sharper **inspections** that give schools a clearer idea of whether they are pursuing the right priorities for raising pupil attainment;
 - better information for parents through a school **Profile**, and more frequent inspections;
 - challenge and support for school heads from high-quality, professional, nationally accredited **School Improvement Partners**, most of whom will be experienced heads;
 - a "**single conversation**" between each school and its School Improvement Partner about the school's priorities for improvement, instead of multiple accountabilities to various stakeholders;
 - more weight on the **school's self-evaluation** as the starting point for planning, inspection and the "single conversation";

- better **data and information systems**, making use of the latest information on individual pupils' progress and of electronic systems;
- easy to access **communications** that give schools the choice of what to draw on and when.

9. The main changes are:

KEY FEATURES	Old	New
Inspection	6-10 weeks notice before an inspection Maximum 6-year interval between inspections Relatively large inspection teams visiting for a week	2-5 days' notice Maximum 3-year interval Small team visiting for no more than 2 days – around a quarter of current inspection weight
Public accountability	Governors' annual report Annual parents' meeting	Profile
School funding	1-year funding aligned with financial year Over 20 separate grants	Proposed 3-year funding aligned with academic years Fewer than 5 separate grants
External support	Link advisers	Nationally accredited School Improvement Partners working to local authorities
School self-evaluation and planning	Most schools undertake some form of evaluation, but not all, and not linked to planning and inspection Multiple accountabilities and support programmes	Self-evaluation as the starting point for inspection, planning, external relations "Single conversation"

KEY FEATURES	Old	New
Data	Multiple surveys Data on school performance not aligned across inspection, monitoring, planning	School Census: data collected once, used many times Data aligned
Communications	Monthly batch of paper to all schools	Online ordering

10. The proposed key implementation dates are:

before September 2005

- training in effective school self-evaluation available;
- local authorities plan for School Improvement Partners;
- accreditation for secondary School Improvement Partners to work in about 30 local authorities.

from September 2005

- new short-notice inspection system starts (subject to Parliamentary decision);
- schools can start filling in Profile (subject to Parliamentary decision);
- about 30 local authorities introduce School Improvement Partners for secondary schools.

from January 2006

- data will be collected from schools through an enhanced School Census.

from April 2006

- proposed (subject to consultation) first school budgets on academic year basis to cover 2006/2007 and 2007/2008;
- new simplified grant structure;
- training and accreditation for the first 700 primary School Improvement Partners begins.

September 2006

- all secondary schools have School Improvement Partners;
- 30-40 local authorities introduce School Improvement Partners for primary schools.

from April 2007

- proposed (subject to consultation) first 3-year school budgets on academic year basis to cover 2007/2008 to 2009/2010.

September 2007

- all primary schools have School Improvement Partners.

Finance

11. Financial implications arising from the new legislation will be subject to further consideration as details are released by the Department for Education and Skills.

Legal

12. The legislation to develop the New Relationship with Schools initiative is in the Education Acts including the Education Act 2005.

Equal Opportunities

13. There are no specific considerations to be made with regard to equal opportunities in noting and receiving this report.

Recommendations

14. That the Committee considers the report.



John Freeman
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact Officer: Jane Porter – Assistant Director – Ext 4250