
York Schools Forum**8th May 2025**

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Post Safety Valve Planning: Developing locality inclusion clusters

Summary

- 1 This paper is a discussion paper for the members of Schools Forum. It provides an option for the use of the 0.5% disapplication from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to support post Safety Valve planning.

Background

2. York's Safety Valve Agreement is now entering its final financial year. The purpose of the Safety Valve Agreement has been to tackle the cumulative deficit in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Without the additional support from the Safety Valve Agreement York would be facing a cumulative deficit of £35 million in 2025-26 in the High Needs block of the DSG.
3. Throughout the delivery of the Agreement the council has recognised the funding pressures that settings and schools face due to being an f40 local authority, this combined with increased operational costs and increased demand for specialist support means that all parts of the education, health and care system in York face continuing financial constraints. This means that no one part of the system is able to work in isolation if these pressures are going to be mitigated.
4. Prior to the development of the York Schools and Academies Board in 2017, all schools in the city were part of geographical clusters. These clusters focused on school improvement priorities which were specific to the schools in each of the geographical areas of the city they served. The cluster model has continued to be used to support the deployment of the School Wellbeing Worker Service and also the Primary Fair Access (PFAMs) meets have continued to use the cluster model.
5. Over the last year the team around the school approach has been piloted. This has provided a useful model to support locality working and has brought together schools, council services and the community and voluntary sector to focus on improvement priorities for an individual school e.g. improving attendance, parental engagement etc.
6. It is also clear that national policy as outlined in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the proposed changes to the Ofsted education inspection framework are supporting the move towards place- based working and the importance of schools being representative of the areas they serve. This is also being replicated in the model of place-based working promoted through the Family Hubs and the work of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).

7. Nationally there is a clear priority about the importance of belonging and place. In York, the sense of belonging to an area of the city remains strong and the development of the cluster model would be focused on supporting the journey of the child as they move from the early years through, primary and secondary and on to adulthood.

The proposal

8. The proposal is that building on learning from the team around the school pilot, the geographical cluster model is used to build a team around the cluster approach to support inclusive mainstream education, safeguarding and to promote opportunities for integrated working across education, health and care.
9. The re-introduction of the geographical clusters recognises the importance of joined up working by services working in specific areas of the city, but this does not impact of the other structures that schools belong to e.g. their multi-academy trusts or being a local authority maintained school. It is recognised that over time the multi-academy trusts have developed partnerships beyond the City of York, with 6 of the seven MATs having schools in other local authority areas. However, for academies that are based in the city it is important for headteachers, their leadership teams and wider staff teams to understand the communities to work in and also to build strong place based networks which support their day to day operational work in the city. The advantages of developing the existing historic school clusters as inclusion clusters which are based around a locality is that it provides the opportunity to strengthen and support the relationships between schools working in communities with their immediate neighbours and also to support effective transitions from the early years through to adulthood and the effective use of resources based on the needs of particular clusters. The development of the cluster model would also ensure that a more sustainable model of team around the school can be built as services and partners can focus resources on the needs of the geographical neighbours rather than an individual school. This would build a more impactful way to use finite resources.
9. It is proposed that each cluster will be supported through providing cluster data dashboards. These dashboards would allow groups of headteachers in each geographical cluster to understand the resources available in their area and also to have a snapshot of the improvement priorities for the area e.g. by sharing attendance data at cluster level headteachers will be able to see patterns at area level and identify priorities for support. The dashboard will also include the number of EHCPs for each school in the cluster, most prevalent primary SEND needs, numbers SEN support. The development of the dashboards offer an opportunity for co-production with each cluster and would encourage transparency and collective problem solving at locality level.
10. It is proposed that the development of the clusters would launch the City of York Inclusive Education Challenge. This would support each cluster to identify and set priorities for work as a cluster to address the priorities for inclusion in their area of the city. This would allow the cluster to develop collective and collaborative ways of working to get the most out of the resources available in each locality. The work in clusters would support the move to inspection scorecards and also to building a greater understanding of the work taking place across schools in each cluster group. For example it could support the consistent roll out of Adaptive Teaching across a cluster, it could also lead to cluster commissioning of specialist provision e.g. SEMH enhanced resource provision.
11. The six geographical clusters are shown in the table below:

| East | North | North -East | South York | Southbank | West |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Tang Hall Osbalwick Badger Hill Heworth St Lawrence's Hempland St Aelred's Archbishop Holgate's Applefields | Clifton with Rawcliffe Lakeside Clifton Green Burton Green Skelton Poppleton Ousebank Vale of York Manor | Stockton on Forest Huntington Primary Yearsley Grove Robert Wilkinson Park Grove Haxby Road New Earswick Primary Headlands Ralph Butterfield Wigginton Huntington Secondary Joseph Rowntree | St. Oswald's Lord Deramore's Fishergate Wheldrake Elvington Dunnington Naburn St George's Danesgate Fulford | Bishopthorpe Infants AYJS Copmanthorpe Carr Infants Dringhouses Knavesmire St Wilfrid's St Paul's Primary St Paul's Nursery St Mary's Scarcroft Millthorpe All Saints | Woodthorpe Hob Moor Federation(1) Westfield St. Barnabas Poppleton Road Carr Infant Carr Junior Acomb Primary OLQM Rufforth York High School |

12. All the geographical clusters contain a mix of academies and LA maintained schools, this encourages cross sector working and the effective sharing of best practice which benefits the city's children and families. This approach builds on the effective collaboration already demonstrated across the York school system.
13. The development of the Inclusion Clusters is designed to support York's post Safety Valve planning and also supports the further development of locality/neighbourhood working in the city which is a feature of national reforms across education, health and care.
14. The work of the Inclusion Clusters would be supported by each cluster managing a cluster budget, created from the 0.5% disapplication from the Schools Block. Each cluster would have an allocated School Wellbeing Worker (the focus of their work would be determined by the analysis of cluster level data), cluster funding could also be used to access SEMH outreach or special school outreach support. Each cluster would use its data to identify other priorities for support e.g. to commission additional support/training from an educational psychologist or to commission cluster training for a specific identified need e.g. trauma informed practice
15. In addition to the cluster funding (suggested amount: £100K per cluster) each cluster would be able to submit a request for capital funding to support inclusive mainstream education. This could be used for example to develop cluster based alternative provision or cluster provision for children with speech, language and communication needs.

The City of York Inclusive Education Challenge

16. The vision for the City of York Inclusive Education Challenge is that it will coherently knit together the work that has been taking place to ensure that every child in York is able to live their dreams. Working with them and their families, we will make York the best place in Britain in which to grow up. We already have lots of the elements in place and the vision for the Inclusive Education Challenge is to work together to ensure that every child knows that they matter. As partners across education, health and care we stretch, support and nurture every child so that they feel the benefits of knowing that York is their home, regardless of their abilities and starting points.
17. The structure of the Inclusive Education Challenge is shown below:



17. The Inclusive Education Challenge is a partnership between all those who seek more for York's children and young people. York can dare to be different, the vast majority of children in the city achieve well and thrive in a city which is rich in assets and is overall a great place to live and grow up in. But we know that not every child or family is thriving in our city. This partnership recognises that and is designed to focus on strengthening the partnerships around and between schools to deliver lasting change.
18. The desired outcomes of the Inclusive Education Challenge are:
- All York's schools and settings have consistently high expectations for **all** children and young people;

- We have significantly improved educational outcomes for socially and economically disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs;
- We focus on promoting the wellbeing of children and young people through being trauma informed and a focus on belonging;
- We intervene early and effectively to ensure that children's needs are met;
- Transitions between schools and settings are seamless ensuring that children and their family's experiences of education in York are highly supportive and do not create gaps in progress on a child's journey between 0-19 or 0-25;
- We work in genuine partnership with children and their families connecting schools and settings with the community in which children and young people live to ensure that barriers to engagement with education are removed;
- Our children and young people develop the skills they need to live a happy and fulfilled life in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations

17. The members of Schools Forum are asked to comment on the proposal and to work with the Assistant Director to co-produce and implement the School Inclusion Cluster Model.

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