

York Schools Forum

3rd July 2025

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

Update on the proposal to develop locality inclusion clusters and options for use of the 0.5% disapplication from the Schools Block.

Summary

- 1 This paper provides an update for for the members of Schools Forum on the proposal to develop locality inclusion clusters. This proposal was shared with Schools Forum in May as 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. The paper also outlines additional options for us of funding from the 0.5% disapplication from the Schools Block to support inclusive mainstream education.

Background

2. The May Schools Forum meeting received a paper which introduced a proposal to build on learning from the team around the school pilot to support inclusive mainstream education, safeguarding and to promote opportunities for integrated working across education, health and care. Following that meeting it was agreed that the proposal should be further considered by a sub-group of Schools Forum members.
3. The May paper suggested the re-introduction of the six geographical school clusters which had existed prior to the development of the York Schools and Academies Board.
4. After the May meeting a re-mapping of the original clusters into the 4 neighbourhood areas which are being used by communities and health took place and this is presented in the table below:

North	East	West	Central
Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary	Badger Hill Primary	Archbishop of York's CE Junior	Acomb Primary
Headlands Primary	Dunnington Primary CE	Bishopthorpe Infant	Burton Green Primary
Huntington Primary	Elvington Primary CE	Carr Infant	Clifton Green Primary
Lakeside Primary	Fishergate Primary	Carr Junior	Haxby Road Primary
New Earswick Primary	Hempland Primary	Copmanthorpe Primary	Knavesmire Primary
Ralph Butterfield Primary	Heworth CE Primary	Dringhouses Primary	Our Lady Queen of Martyrs RC Primary

Robert Wilkinson Primary	Lord Deramore's Primary	Hob Moor Primary	Park Grove Primary
Stockton-on-the-Forest Primary	Naburn CE Primary	Poppleton Ousebank Primary	Poppleton Road Primary
Wigginton Primary	Osballdwick Primary	Rufforth Primary	Scarcroft Primary
Yearsley Grove Primary	St Aelred's RC Primary	Skelton Primary	St Barnabas' CE Primary
Vale of York Secondary	St George's RC Primary	St Mary's CE Primary	St Paul's CE Primary
Huntington Secondary	St Lawrence's CE Primary	Westfield Primary	St Wilfrid's RC Primary
Joseph Rowntree Secondary	St Oswald's CE Primary	Woodthorpe Primary	All Saints RC Secondary
	Tang Hall Primary	Manor Secondary	Millthorpe Secondary
	Wheldrake with Thorganby CE Primary	York High	
	Archbishop Holgate's Secondary		
	Fulford Secondary		

5. In addition to discussing the proposal with the Schools Forum sub-group. The proposal was also shared with Maintained Chairs at their briefing on 17th June and with headteachers at the York Education Leaders briefing on 16th June.
6. There has also been a recent evaluation of the Team Around the School pilot conducted by Rob Newton (see Annex A), which has highlighted the benefits of the approach but has also recognised that the future sustainability of the model would be better placed through a team around the cluster approach.
7. There were a number of questions raised by the groups that have looked at the model. The sub-group of Schools Forum felt that the move to clusters was not dependent on the disapplication of funding from the Schools Block and so this should not drive the rationale for the move the neighbourhood cluster groups. Questions from the York Education leaders briefing were about how the logistics of organising clusters would work e.g. who would chair the cluster groups, who would help to co-ordinate the meetings and use of the data dashboards to ensure transparency and consistency. There was also a question about access to information from other clusters to support primary/secondary transition. Would the current cluster arrangements e.g. Primary Fair Access meets (PFAMs) change and who would make up the area teams? How will capacity be managed, as there are already a lot of meetings to attend.

8. Learning from the Team Around the School Evaluation suggests that the model is very valuable but does require co-ordination. The Schools Forum sub- group felt that the cluster model would require a brokerage role to ensure that the work can be co-ordinated and this as echoed by the Team Around the School evaluation. It is proposed that this brokerage role could be achieved by having a funded cluster co-ordinator role (not necessarily a headteacher) but someone from the school system. This would ensure effective brokerage of Team Around the Cluster resources and would provide the capacity for co-ordination and project management.

Other options

9. Members of the sub-group expressed concerns about the impact of the disapplication from the Schools Block on already pressured school budgets. However, in considering the need to move forward with the disapplication it is very important for Schools Forum to understand the continuing pressure on the High Needs block needs to be mitigated by the system as a whole. Some of the pressures are being created by inconsistencies in the application of the graduated response by schools. Since 2020 York has experienced a the rapid increase in the demand for education, health and care plans leading to increasing placement costs due to a growing number of school age children and young people who are being educated outside of the York school system. There have also been increased costs of providing medical and home tuition for children who are unable to attend school.
10. York does have a need to grow alternative provision in mainstream settings to ensure that children are able to be educated close to home. The development of the Huntington School ERP has demonstrated the success of this model. We now need to prioritise the development of more provision which supports children to be able to successfully make the transition to secondary school by a focus on addressing their social, emotional and mental health needs. The average cost of placements in independent special schools and alternative provisions ranges from £20K to over £100K. This is funding that is going out of the York School system and could be better invested in developing provision which better meets the needs of children closer to home.
11. There are two ways that this can be better supported through the disapplication from the Schools Block. Firstly, we need to develop the SEMH outreach offer to ensure that more effective tier 1 support is in place to provide early intervention to keep children in their catchment school. This supports children to remain connected and supports their sense of belonging. There are a number of successful models nationally which we can learn from. All of these have outreach teams that can work alongside schools to develop their capacity to meet need. It is clear from these models that there is investment from the school system in these models to ensure that they are sustainable. Since 2017, York's schools have had considerable investment to support sector-led improvement through the allocation of funding from the Central services block of the DSG. This model has delivered improvements however, it has meant that the city's schools have been reluctant to contribute to the services that support them e.g. specialist teaching and behaviour support. This is very different to the situation in other local authorities where services are traded or are supported by de-delegation from the DSG. Members of Schools Forum have recognised the importance of having an SEMH outreach service but have been reluctant to fund this adequately. To improve the support for teachers, children and their families requires whole system investment and cannot be achieved without disapplication from the Schools Block. This would allow up to £300K to be used to develop a more effective and sustainable model of SEMH

outreach which would use a trauma informed approach to build the capacity in mainstream to keep children in the city. This invest to save model will reduce the need for expensive out of city provision and will result in better outcomes for children and young people through an early intervention approach.

12. The second aspect is to develop more nurturing small group provision which is locality based. To do this we have SEND capital but would use the disapplication to support host schools with revenue costs. This would ensure that a more equitable and sustainable approach to meeting needs was available in the city, reducing the need to access expensive out of city independent specialist provision.
13. Finally, the local authority is currently incurring increased costs due to the increase in EHCPs as more Educational Psychology assessments are needed. Since September this has meant that more agency assessments have had to be commissioned which is creating financial pressures. This also impacts on the capacity of the Educational Psychologists (EP) to support schools with early identification and intervention as part of the graduated response. A contribution towards the costs of additional agency assessments would be used to ensure that the Council's retained EP team can give more time to schools to improve the quality of SEN support ensuring that more children's needs can be met through inclusive mainstream practice.
14. It is recognised that the 0.5% disapplication from the Schools Block creates a pressure for some schools, however there has to be a collective ownership of the solutions to managing the current pressures on the High Needs Block. In developing these proposals the focus is on reinvesting in inclusive mainstream schools through providing support both to teachers and children and young people to develop provision which allows both to thrive.

Recommendations

15. The members of Schools Forum are asked note the importance of disapplication from the Schools Block in order to ensure that in-city inclusive mainstream provision is better able to meet the needs of children and young people.

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Annex A: Team Around the School Evaluation