

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 7 September 2022

Subject: Information and Update on Schools White Paper
'Opportunity for all; Strong schools with great teachers for your child'

Report of: Director of Education

Summary

This report covers a presentation summarising the content of the Government's White Paper on Schools titled 'Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child' which was published in April 2022. One of the main changes outlined in this White Paper is the expectation that all schools will become part of a strong multi academy trust (MAT) by 2030.

The presentation includes contextual information on Manchester current school system. It also sets out the opportunities and challenges presented by these changes and a proposed approach and next steps to implementation.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to note the changes proposed by the White paper and discuss the implications, opportunities and challenges it presents to the school system in the City. The committee is asked to comment on the proposed approach and next steps.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Through the learning and education system children are informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon; promoting safe and healthy lives. Ensuring all residents have access to a local good and inclusive school will also enable children to engage in active travel to school. Schools working together as part of a strong family of schools or MATS can also work together to procure more efficiently, share practice and learn from each other about how to reduce their carbon emissions.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitment

The report sets out the Government's future proposals for the school system including the aim that all schools join a multi academy trust (MAT). The Government plans to

set out standards for MATS which include that they are inclusive of all children and recognise how best to educate and meet the needs of disadvantaged children and those with protected characteristics. The Local Authority will have a role to support the implementation of this and a significant role to champion the most vulnerable children in the City in a MAT led education system.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In April 2022 the Government published a Schools' White Paper called Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child. This was the first white paper on schools since April 2016. It has strong links to the levelling up paper published around the same time and also a Green Paper on the special educational needs system which was published a few days later. There are also links to the Care Review of children's social care.

1.2 The White Paper has set out an ambition that by 2030:

- 90% children by the end of primary education will be at expected standard in both maths and reading.
- By the end of secondary education the average grade in English language and maths will be a grade 5.

1.3 The White paper sets out a strategy for achieving this ambition. The strategy sets out plans for ensuring:

- Excellent teachers in all areas for the country;
- Support for teachers to achieve high standards for all pupils including a focus on school attendance and behaviour;
- Access to targeted support for those children who need it the most including those who are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged.

1.4 All of these approaches will be underpinned by a stronger school system, with all schools being part of a multi academy trust by 2030 funded through a national funding system. The paper also sets out the future role of Local Authorities within the system, the role of the Department for Education and OFSTED.

1.5 The presentation in appendix 1 provides an overview of the main changes set out under each of the sections of the White paper.

2.0 Manchester Context

2.1 Manchester currently has a strong family of schools which all work in partnership with the Local Authority and with each other through the membership of the Manchester Schools' Alliance, attendance at different headteacher groups, behaviour and attendance partnerships, representation of various partnership boards etc. At the end of the academic year 2021/22, 88.3% of Manchester's schools were judged to be good or better which is higher than national and regional averages. By phase, 91% of primary schools are judged to be good or better and 75% of secondary schools.

2.2 Currently overall 40.5% of Manchester schools are academies (75/185) and these academies are members of 35 different academy trusts (MATS) which operate in the City. These MATS range considerably in size with 17 MATS comprising of just 1 school. There are a number of national and larger MATs which have a high number of schools outside of the City such as

United Learning Trust, Oasis Community Learning, Dixons, Star Academies etc. However, the MAT with the largest number of schools in the City is Prospere Learning Trust which is a Manchester based Trust.

3.0 Approach in Manchester

- 3.1 The implementation of the proposals set out in the White Paper provides an opportunity to work with our school leaders to reset our shared values and priorities for education in the City and set out expectations of how the different MATS and Local Authority will work together in the City to ensure high quality inclusive education for all Manchester children. As part of this, the Local Authority will work with schools to determine what the future offer will be from the Local Authority and also the future role of the Manchester Schools' Alliance which is a formal partnership between schools in the city and the Local Authority.
- 3.2 The Local Authority will aim to work in partnership with the DFE to develop an area based commissioning plan which maps out the Trusts operating in the City and their potential for expansion and identifies whether any new Trusts will be required to meet the ambition of all schools belonging to a strong trust by 2030. In preparation for this, the Local Authority has set out some principles including that any MAT operating in the City should support the Council's vision, values and priorities and that there should be no dominant MATs in any sector, phase or within a community or location in the City to ensure that residents have choices.

4.0 Challenges

- 4.1 There are a number of challenges linked to the proposals set out in the White Paper. It is clear in the White Paper that the Local Authority will no longer have a role in quality assuring schools in the City and will also not have the resources to have the oversight and information that it currently has on all schools. However, it is unclear who will be accountable for outcomes and the performance of schools in Manchester as a place other than the CEOs of the different MATS operating in the City who will only be accountable for the performance of the individual schools in their Trusts and the DFE regional teams which will operate on a much larger footprint than Manchester eg covering the North West.
- 4.2 It is also clear that although the DFE will work with the Local Authority, the DFE ultimately is responsible for all decisions about which MATS will be allowed to expand to take on our maintained schools, which new MATS will be required, which smaller MATS will be required to join new MATS and the overall area based commissioning plan for Manchester. It is not clear how this approach will fit in the City's priorities or be able to respond quickly to changing needs.
- 4.3 A further issue is the capacity with the Local Authority to transfer the remaining 110 schools MATs. This is significant piece of work which requires

support from legal, Human resources, finance and property teams and is time consuming.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 There are a number of next steps which the Local Authority will take to progress this work:

- Ongoing discussion with primary sector and special school sector.
- Ongoing discussion with Chairs of governors.
- Planned discussions with MAT leaders regarding their growth plans.
- Work with regional DFE to input into their Local Area Commissioning Plan.
- Education website bringing together Education, MSA, Schools and One Education.
- Development of a Schools Strategy for City to 2030 including future role of Local Authority.
- Sequenced plan and timeline for schools into MATS and ensure capacity in place to achieve this.
- Offer from Local Authority to support maintained schools with conversations about MATS.
- Ongoing communication and development of resources to support schools with discussions and decisions e.g. checklist for maintained schools to support discussions with Governors, FAQs etc.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The committee is asked to note the changes proposed by the White paper and discuss the implications, opportunities and challenges it presents to the school system in the City. The committee is asked to comment on the proposed approach and next steps.