

Wednesday 18 May 2016

Dear Colleagues

Academisation National Agenda – Further Update

This letter follows on from the letter I sent last month on this topic, which was accompanied by a short article by Marc Rowland from the National Education Trust. These documents can be found on the Learn Sheffield [website](#).

RSC Presentation

The first thing to share with you is date for your diary. As previously discussed we have invited Jenny Bexon-Smith (Regional Schools Commissioner for our region) to talk to Sheffield school leaders, including Chairs of Governors. This event will be hosted by Sheffield Hallam University's Institute of Education, in the Charles Street Building on Tuesday 5th July. The venue will be accessible from 3:30pm, with the presentation starting at 4pm. The session is expected to be concluded by 5pm, with the venue open until 6pm for colleagues to talk informally.

Further communication about this event will be out shortly, but if you would like to book a place at this event then please contact enquiries@learnsheffield.co.uk to let him know who will be attending. We will limit each school to two places initially, but expect to be able to release additional places after half term.

Government Announcement

The second thing to discuss is the recent Government announcement, which was widely reported as a policy 'u-turn'. Colleagues will reach their own conclusions, naturally, about the implications of this development, but in my opinion there was a considerable difference between some of the reporting of the announcement and the actual content.

The [press release](#) from the Department of Education on Friday 6th May, which prompted the press coverage, and the [statement](#) by the Secretary of State for Education on the 9th May make it clear that Government's overall aim, of all schools becoming academies, remains the same. Colleagues will want to see greater detail, especially about the performance threshold the Government will set for local authority areas and other important points of detail, such as how they would define a LA to be 'not viable'.

Learn Sheffield, as previously stated, does not have an ideological position on academisation and intends to continue to take actions to support schools in reaching their own conclusions about the best course of action for their situation and their school community.

I recognise that some will see the recent announcement as evidence that the policy may become subject to change, even if it hasn't significantly changed yet. My personal view hasn't changed as a result of these developments: I think that most schools need to be considering their options and finding out more, whilst not feeling that there is an urgency to reach a decision (of any description) before they are ready to do so. This will not apply to some schools, who fall within the wider powers of intervention taken by the Government already.

Learn Sheffield - Next Steps

As previously discussed, in addition to the event involving the Regional Schools Commissioner, we are developing a questionnaire for existing Multi-Academy Trusts, to support schools wishing to make comparisons between MATs that currently exist. We are also researching some possible sources of logistical support for schools who decide to enter an academisation process, with the hope that this supports them in limiting the impact of any process on school leaders being able to focus on teaching and learning. We are also happy to share information between schools about events, discussions or research they are doing in the weeks and months ahead.

It remains our hope that we can, as a collection of Sheffield schools working closely with Sheffield City Council, act strategically to grapple with the reality we have been given in the best interests of Sheffield children and families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Betts', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Betts
Interim Chief Executive of Learn Sheffield