

# Brighton and Hove City Council

## Compact with Secondary Schools Partnership

### Introduction

Relationships between secondary schools in the city of Brighton and Hove, and between the schools and the local authority are strong. All partners are committed to the greatest possible autonomy of schools, but as a community of schools working in collaboration with each other, and in partnership with the local authority. This commitment to collaboration is most fully expressed in the vision statement of the Secondary Schools Partnership.

The local authority has delegated significant responsibilities to the Secondary Schools Partnership for school improvement and other related matters. However, it still has major statutory duties which cannot be delegated, and these are described more fully on page 2.

This Compact describes how the local authority and the secondary schools will work together to fulfil their respective responsibilities in relation to school improvement and achievement. The aim is to secure clarity, understanding and shared agreement about our respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, so that together the local authority and the Secondary Schools Partnership can work for the best possible outcomes for our secondary age pupils.

The names of the schools and academies that have signed up to the Compact are given in Appendix 1. Throughout this paper, references to 'schools' mean the nine secondary schools and academies in the city.

### Compact with Secondary Schools: A New Relationship

This Compact defines the:

- Respective responsibilities of the local authority and the schools in relation to school improvement and achievement;
- Future working together between schools and the local authority;
- Development of school-to-school collaboration to improve schools and standards;
- Contractual relationship by which the respective responsibilities of the local authority and the schools will be managed, monitored and kept under review.

The Compact encourages:

- A self-improving and self-managing school system, maximising school-to-school support;
- Co-leadership of improvement strategies and services;
- Joint accountability and a greater quality assurance role for schools;
- All schools using their resources together with the Local Authority to maximise efficiency and value for money in service delivery;

- Wider collaboration beyond the Secondary Schools Partnership with the primary and post 16 sectors, and with the local authority.

In order to fulfil its functions, the members of the Secondary Schools Partnership are to enter into a formal, legally binding arrangement (e.g. a Trust or company), which among other things will enable the Partnership to employ staff and provide services, both internally to its members and externally, where this is considered appropriate. This Compact is therefore between the local authority and this formal Partnership arrangement.

### **The Responsibilities of the City Council as Local Authority**

The City Council, through the Director of Children's Services, remains the ultimate accountable body for the progress of maintained schools, and for the safety of children in all schools, including academies and independent schools. The Council holds the statutory duty to ensure sufficient school and college places to meet the needs of its area, and to promote high standards in schools. It may intervene where standards are considered to be unsatisfactory. The Council itself is held to account by the Department for Education and Ofsted for its fulfilment of these statutory duties, and the Director of Children's Services is accountable to the Members of the City Council for the achievement of agreed policies and objectives for the education service.

The Council holds specific duties in relation to all children resident within its area, in respect of, for example, assessing special educational needs and determining how those needs should be met, attendance at school, exclusions, children missing education and equalities. In addition, the Council has various other duties, including, for example, advising on the appointment of head teachers, support for governing bodies and the appointment of local authority governors.

In addition, the Council holds statutory duties relating to the safety and well being of all children in its area. These duties are fulfilled by the Children and Families Delivery Unit in partnership with other parts of the Council and other agencies, and all schools are under a duty to cooperate with the Council in matters relating to the safety and well being of children.

All these responsibilities are given in law and cannot be delegated. They are subject to annual assessment by Ofsted, and this assessment is published. In 2010 and 2011, the overall assessment for Brighton & Hove has been 'adequate', with the performance of the city's secondary school students at 16 being cited as one of a small number of reasons for this assessment.

The Council must, then, reserve the right to intervene in any school where children are at risk, either in terms of their educational progress or of their well being. It is intended that through this Compact, this type of intervention will not be necessary.

### **Transfer of Funding and Responsibilities**

The local authority reviews each year with the Schools Forum retained DSG monies, including funding for school improvement and raising achievement. The trend of recent years, in line with national and local policies, has been to delegate an increasing amount of centrally retained funding relating to school improvement to schools, especially in the secondary sector. At the same time, there have been reductions in the local authority's core funding for school improvement, as part of the wider reductions in local authority funding.

More recently, the local authority has devolved to the Secondary Schools Partnership significant further funding, in the order of £300 000 per year, reflecting the new approach to school improvement and raising achievement through the Partnership. This includes funding for the work of the Adviser for Secondary Teaching and Learning and the team of part time seconded teachers managed by her, part of the funding for the Behaviour and Attendance Manager post and funding to support other development activities of the Partnership. The Adviser for Secondary Teaching and Learning is currently seconded to the Partnership and her work is managed by one of the head teachers.

Within the overall constraints on its funding, the local authority will seek, in discussion with the Partnership, to devolve further funding in support of shared Partnership and local authority objectives. Any additional funding delegated to schools through this Compact will be confirmed in writing each year to the Secondary Schools Partnership. In return, the local authority will expect schools to work together collaboratively to raise outcomes across the city, and to be accountable for achieving agreed targets and outcomes.

## **Outcomes**

Through the work and report of the Secondary Commission (2011) and the development of the Secondary Schools Partnership's Raising Achievement Plan (RAP) there is shared agreement about the broad outcomes we all want for the city's young people. These include:

- being able to grow up and thrive in a healthy, sustainable city, and to be well prepared for life after school
- high achievement, which is important as a platform for progression into further learning or employment
- being proficient in the 'soft skills' demanded by employers and so necessary for a cohesive society, at ease with itself

It will be for schools to determine in the context of any national legislation how these achievements will be measured from time to time but specific outcomes sought through this Compact are:

1. Schools and academies should set outcome targets in line with the top quartile performers;
2. No school or academy should be below the floor targets that central government sets from time to time;
3. Every school and academy to be judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, with at least 80% of teaching judged to be good or outstanding;
4. That it should be the responsibility of all schools within this Compact to work together to eliminate poor performance.

These outcomes and progress towards them should be reviewed annually by the local authority and the Secondary Schools Partnership together, with regular monitoring agreed between the various parties and clear mechanisms for action where agreed outcomes are not achieved. It will be for schools collectively to decide how these outcomes will be secured.

## Performance management, monitoring and target setting

In order to fulfil its own responsibilities, the local authority must have a good and sufficient understanding of progress and development of the Partnership and of individual schools. The aim is to develop and maintain a culture of open communication and trust, within the Secondary Schools Partnership and between the Partnership and the local authority, in pursuit of shared aims and objectives for the quality of education and achievement across the city.

The arrangements listed here will help to sustain this culture, which will depend also on the quality of and commitment to the relationship between all the partners. These arrangements are designed to put the minimum additional reporting burden on schools – targets and plans to be shared are those that the Partnership and individual members would be preparing anyway. They are negotiated within the Partnership, and not with the local authority or SIP as before.

- The Partnership will share its strategy documents and action plans (including updates) with the local authority;
- A data sharing protocol will set out the performance and target setting information that will be exchanged between the local authority and the schools, with timescales and an explanation of the ways in which these data will be used by the local authority and the Partnership; in addition, the authority will support the work of the Partnership's Strategic Data Group as a key focus for developing a shared understanding of the progress of the Partnership and its member schools;
- Targets for the Partnership, showing how the Partnership's longer term targets will be achieved, will be agreed within the Partnership and shared with the local authority;
- There will be termly partnership meetings between the local authority (i.e. the Lead Commissioner, Learning and Partnerships or her nominee(s)) and the Partnership, and between the local authority and individual schools, with additional meetings as agreed – the purpose of these meetings being to update on progress, identify areas of common interest or concern and agreed any shared actions that might be taken to achieve shared objectives;
- There will be agreed arrangements for informal and formal intervention, where this appears to be necessary;
- An annual standards report, drafted by the local authority in discussion with the Partnership will be presented jointly by Headteachers and Officers to the Cabinet and to the Learning Partnership Board, and shared with Council Members, Governing Bodies within the Partnership, and other stakeholders.
- This compact will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.