



Education and Accountability – going to school in Hastings in 2014

Thursday, 19th June 2014

Position statement

Introduction:

Each quarter the Hastings Community Network run a themed event on an issue of importance to the sector. The HCN event of 19th June 2014 focused Education and Accountability. The education landscape has changed rapidly in Hastings over the last few years with a rapid growth in academies compared with the rest of East Sussex. Hastings has 8 academies (4 secondary and 4 primary) out of a total of 21 schools, not including the special schools. Of these there are 4 secondary's and 17 primaries. Within the academies framework the accountabilities of schools and councils have been transformed.

Jointly planned with Brighton University's CUPP (Community University Partnership Programme) and the Education Futures Trust, the network event aimed to:-

- raise awareness of the growth of academies in Hastings, the changing accountability framework within education;
- to explore how partners may work together to maximise this opportunity to improve outcomes for Hastings children;
- promote networking, share information, practice and ideas in order to develop strong partnerships in education related issues.

Over sixty people attended the event and there were representation from the voluntary and community sector, schools, the Youth Council and the University of Brighton.

The event

Presentations were made by Martin Kaliszewski, Centre for British Teachers provided an overview of Hastings academic performance. Theresa Phillips, Principal of The Hastings Academies, Mark Phillips, from the William Parker academy (Ark group) and Francis Robinson from West St Leonards Primary talked about their experience of becoming academies. The wider voluntary and community perspective was outlined by Steve Manwaring (HVA) and Carole Dixon (Education Futures Trust). Academics Yvonne Hillier and Mandy Curtis presented their on-going research commissioned by ESCC which highlights the importance of engaging effectively with parents as researchers to influence school policy.

Two key themes ran through the forum discussion:-

- § Examination of the development of academies as a model and the changes in accountability
- § How we maximise community participation within education

The points made raised by the HCN event included:

- 1. A joined up approach at a strategic level and a joint vision for the town.** All organisations with an involvement with education and family / child related services in Hastings should be involved in formulating a joined up vision rather than working in isolation. It was felt that it was important to view education as a wide partnership around the school. Some aspects of this have been lost with the end of the Local Partnerships for Children. How would this be coordinated?
- 2. Operational within schools.** All schools are challenges with adapting to a changing set of requirements from the DFE. Education is constantly changing. For example, the impact of moving to 8 GCSEs. Schools would like to have more lead in time; Headteacher's need to be skilled at filtering out what changes are for the long haul and those not.
- 3. Better co-ordination.** There are a range of agencies and organisations working to support children and their families. It was felt that their impact could be maximised by better communication between schools and other services supporting children and families. There may be opportunities for joint training for staff and volunteers etc.
- 4. Changing educational landscape in Hastings and St Leonard's.**
Communication and discussion about the changing landscape across partnership agencies is required, including:
 - a. Understanding the accountabilities of ESCC and the Academies – sharing this with parents and VCO's..
 - b. How schools can become more involved with the VCS? How do we share intelligence about needs and opportunities to work together?
 - c. Understanding admissions policy of schools and the responsibility of ESCC.
 - d. Understand how children with Special Educational Needs or a Disability will be supported within the new accountability framework..
 - e. How schools pupil premium money is being spent?
 - f. Understanding monitoring, evaluation and research to improve pupil attainment the end of reception and KS1. What interventions are most effective?

5. Meeting the needs of Families in poverty

The significant issues affecting families in Hastings were highlighted together with the need to access a wider network of advice and support around debt, welfare benefits and basic support.

Future Actions

As a result of the event Hastings Community Network will be:-

1. Working with Education Futures Trust and local VCOs to strengthen partnerships between VCS and schools. For example through setting up a VCS slot on the half- termly Headteacher meetings, co-ordinated by Education Futures Trust and through the Local Authority weekly email to heads circulated through Czone.
2. Strengthening representation on advisory bodies through HCN.
3. Meeting with ESCC Children's Centres to review what early years interventions have most impact to children's attainment in reception and KS1.
4. Facilitate discussions on the most effective use of Pupil Premium across Hastings and ST Leonards (LSP, CSPG?) and sharing and celebrating good practice.
5. Promoting understanding about the admissions process – there is a process to explain and some myths to “bust” so that parents and those who support them can understand the process and where accountability lies.

Future HCN Discussion Topics

- Cultural regeneration - improving health and wellbeing,
- Poverty and Community Cohesion – migration, trafficking,
- Question time with prospective candidates,
- Play Strategy

Appendix A: Summary of the Presentations:

Carole Dixon from Education Futures Trust

Steve Manwaring representing Hastings Community Network

Martin Kaliszewski, Centre for British Teachers, presented what the data tells us about school life in Hastings. The 2013 data early years foundation stage profile 'Good level of development' (measured a couple of terms into schooling) was reached by 52% nationally but in Hastings the figure was 38%. This illustrates the point about levels of disadvantage as a baseline for schooling in Hastings. In secondary key stage 4 Hastings schools are lagging in English and Maths, but ahead on other measures and demonstrate an impressive degree of catch up from the picture at primary school entry. New Government changes will mean that pupils will need to take 8 subjects to GCSE level. A concern is that children with special educational needs may struggle even more, without dedicated multi agency support, under this new system.

The local Secondary and Primary academies were represented by 3 Headteachers.

Theresa Phillips, Principal of The Hastings Academies Group reported that before academy status the schools were in special measures and had a poor media profile. The schools are now out of special measures and she considers that partnerships are key to this success. Over half of pupil get pupil premium so are considered disadvantaged. The poorest performing group are white students from poor backgrounds. Lots of partnerships have been built on or developed - horizontal with other schools and vertical with the college and university. Things are improving in lots of areas but pupil attainment still needs attention.

Mark Phillips, from the William Parker academy (Ark group), talked through his early experience of developing the school. A major concern for him is that overall support for the most vulnerable students can be poor and needs to be improved.

Francis Robinson from West St Leonards Primary considers that there is lots of good practice going on but challenges remain significant. Senior staff have a high level of accountability and pressure on them to ensure that schools perform well.

Yvonne Hillier and Mandy Curtis, University of Brighton Yvonne Hillier Mandy Curtis, University of Brighton then talked us through their local research. In 2010 large numbers of children were not attaining levels that should have been and there was an expressed danger of a lost generation of 'neets' (young people not in education, employment or training). The Turning Point project successfully utilised parents to be researchers to influence school policy. The researchers confirmed that it is not a myth that it is hard to engage parents. A range of approaches is needed, with an emphasis on the use of social media key. The Parent Researcher Projects funded by East Sussex County Council helped identify some critical Interventions. The project used parent researchers targeting pupils in receipt of school meals. Examining the issue of the confidence of parents to help children with reading came up with useful new approaches e.g. new mechanisms for communication with parents. The researchers found that parents liked working with parents and the

project improved the quality of feedback and enabled improvements in reading levels.