



Department  
for Education

**Department for Education**

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Headteachers and Governors of schools in Norfolk

14 July 2015

Dear Headteachers and Governors

I am grateful to Gordon Boyd for the offer to include a note from me about the Department for Education's intentions for Norfolk. I am pleased to have the opportunity to work closely with Norfolk local authority.

I started in what was a new role of Regional Schools Commissioner for the East of England and North East London last summer. My responsibility has been for academies and free schools and for applications to become academies and free schools.

I have greatly enjoyed beginning to get to know the region. It has been my responsibility to approve new academies, to introduce new sponsors schools that have not been successful and to change the academy trusts of academies where there has not been the improvement required. I have met some delightful and dedicated school leaders, both heads and governors, and have been very grateful for warm relationships with dioceses, local authorities, teaching school alliances and others who have helped me get to know the region better.

The Government has recently published the Education and Adoption Bill. The ambition is that all schools are good or outstanding schools. The Bill provides for powers for the Secretary of State to intervene to secure swift action in schools that are not providing children with a high quality of education or supporting them to meet their potential.

Where academies are not providing children with a high quality of education, I am responsible for making clear the need for improvement and taking action where this is not achieved.

The Bill will lead to an expectation that I will speed up the process for addressing maintained schools that are judged inadequate, and extend my powers to 'coasting' schools - those schools which have shown a prolonged period of underperformance and are not supporting their pupils to make the progress they should.

The new powers will not affect those schools that are performing well, and whose pupils are reaching their full potential. It will remain the decision of the governing body of a maintained school whether or not it wishes to apply to become an academy, and if so, whether to do so on its own or with a group of schools.

Where a school is judged to be Inadequate, the legislation will mean that I am required to make a directive academy order. Barriers will be removed to ensure progress towards the conversion is as swift as possible. The aim is to remove unhelpful delays in the process to ensure that children benefit from an improved education as soon as possible.

This directive academy order could also be imposed on a coasting school, but I will have the discretion to give these schools the opportunity to demonstrate the capacity to improve first and look to provide support such as by a National Leader in Education.

The legislation will also introduce a new, strengthened warning notice process. This will allow Regional School Commissioners to issue a warning to underperforming schools, and to suggest necessary improvements and a timescale for doing so. If the school fails to comply with that warning notice, the Regional School Commissioner will be able to take action. These new powers will typically apply to schools Ofsted has rated as 'Requires Improvement', but this does not lead to a scenario where all schools judged to require Improvement are automatically eligible for intervention.


In schools where headteachers have the capacity to improve, that have a credible plan, and are working effectively with their governors to make progress, we want to give them the time to do that.

The parliamentary process will take a few months before any legislation is enacted and the accompanying guidance comes into place.

As well as taking the opportunity to explain these changes, I am keen to use this note as an encouragement to say that I see these changes as a great opportunity for improvements across the region. In particular, I am keen to encourage more locally grown sponsors, where those who have been successful in leading schools take a wider role in transforming the education system. This is not easy and won't be for everyone. We are inviting any interested to opportunities to discuss this further. If this is something that would interest you, please let [RSC.EASTNELONDON@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RSC.EASTNELONDON@education.gsi.gov.uk) know. I am delighted to see the leadership of this possibility being provided by Norfolk's Headteacher and Governor associations.

There may be questions or comments about any or all of what I have included in this note. I would be delighted to hear from you at [tim.coulson@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tim.coulson@education.gsi.gov.uk) if you would like to have any comments registered about the Bill or anything else in this note.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Coulson

**Regional Schools Commissioner**  
**East of England and North East London**