



## The Derbyshire Schools' Protocol

### A Compact to Support Collaboration and Interdependent Working

#### Introduction

Following consultation with schools on the *Draft Compact to Support Interdependent Working Between Schools and the Local Authority* in November 2010, this protocol sets out a broad framework for co-operation, collaboration and interdependent working between all types of school and the local authority in Derbyshire.

Since the autumn consultation, *The Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching*, has confirmed the general direction of travel towards a more autonomous, self-improving and diverse school system within which all partners will need to collaborate to make best provision for all children and young people.

This protocol acknowledges and reaffirms several **key principles** highlighted in the consultation and valued by schools and the local authority in Derbyshire:

- Schools are autonomous and responsible for their own improvement.
- The role of the local authority is to offer proportionate support and challenge as the strategic champion of children, families and communities and to take prompt action to prevent failure.
- Collaboration is a powerful force for change. Interdependent working, with schools learning from and supporting each other, will build capacity for improvement across the system.
- Schools will determine the nature and extent of their participation in collaboration, having regard for the potential impact on their own pupils and the wider community.
- Within their delegated budgets, schools remain independent purchasers of services and will take their own decisions based on principles of quality and best value.
- Where there is mutual benefit, capacity and affordability, the authority will continue to provide high quality, reliable services valued by schools.
- The authority recognises the strategic importance of schools to achieving the best outcomes for children and their families in communities and will continue to build strong links between children's services and schools in localities.
- The authority will continue to ensure a strong supply of good school places and coordinate arrangements for children with SEN and other vulnerable groups.

## Rationale

- Derbyshire is widely regarded as a successful Local Authority. Central to that success is the quality of relationship between schools and the authority, founded on a commitment to secure the best possible outcomes for all children and young people by working together across the partnership of the education community.
- Within this partnership, schools have collaborated to make sure young people are able to follow individual learning pathways; they have pooled resources and ideas to share and promote best practice; headteachers have actively contributed to all aspects of authority policy development through consultative groups and forums; and schools facing difficult challenges have benefitted from the collegiate support of their partner schools and local authority services.
- In all of this, our best endeavours have been characterised by collaboration, not competition, and by acknowledged interdependence, not independence. Working together, rather than working alone, has provided a collective strength across the whole system to benefit all young people and their families and communities.
- Our partnerships have embraced regional, national and international collaboration in working with specialist networks, national agencies and international schools and authorities in the pursuit of excellence, as well as our partner agencies in Derbyshire. In order to aspire to the highest of standards it is important that we continue to be outward facing, taking the best from national and international practice.
- It is against this background of successful, interdependent working that the authority is seeking to establish a working protocol that can embrace all types of school organisation in the state funded sector within an extended family of equal partners. We hope that through this protocol all maintained schools, and state funded independent academies will be able to commit to the principles of co-operation and collaboration that will underpin and sustain improvement for their own pupils and the broader community.

## Making Collaboration a Reality

The Local Authority and schools in Derbyshire have a rich experience of both formal and informal collaboration through school improvement clusters; local learning communities; excellence clusters; gaining ground partnerships; mentorships; teacher exchanges; outreach programmes, federations, trusts and cross-sector partnerships and networks.

Where collaboration has flourished it has had:

- the commitment of leadership;
- a strong sense of common purpose;
- clearly determined outcomes and evaluation mechanisms;
- shared resources or a common budget;
- a proportionate organisational framework with careful attention to monitoring progress and impact.

Partners have recognised that collaboration takes many forms, from individual teacher, department and whole-school partnerships through to clusters of schools working together through local and national collaborations in specialist networks.

Partners have skilfully balanced tensions between self-interest and securing the greater good of the broader community and have been generous in their allocation of time, resources and expertise in supporting each other. A clear sense of moral purpose has underpinned collaborations between schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children.

In all successful collaborations, the over-riding principle continues to be fitness for purpose. There is no one-size fits all model. Instead, we need to ensure that partnerships are clear in purpose, flexible in structure and rich in mutual benefits.

In consultations with headteachers, the following principles have been strongly endorsed to underpin the protocol.

### **Principles for Co-operation and Collaboration**

- Mutual recognition of the legitimacy of the roles and responsibilities of each partner organisation.
- Respect for the autonomy and independence of all state funded schools and academies in taking responsibility for their own curriculum and improvement.
- Encouragement for all schools and academies to express their unique identity in meeting the needs of their locality.
- Recognition of the key role of the local authority as the strategic champion of children in commissioning, quality assurance and responsibility for intervention to prevent failure, as well as for the provision of services.
- Joint commitment to achieving the enjoyment and achievement, health, safety, participation and economic well being of all children and young people.
- Joint commitment to the promotion of well-being, community cohesion, equalities and inclusion.
- Active co-operation and compliance with the local procedures for safeguarding.
- Willingness to share performance data to inform strategic planning.
- Willingness to share budgets, staffing and resources for joint projects and cost-effective provision where there is agreed mutual benefit.
- Joint participation in collaboration and strategic planning in order to share and make best use of the total resources of learning communities to support joint projects and individual learning pathways.
- Joint cooperation in the provision of managed moves to prevent exclusion.
- Joint access to a common local authority CPD programme for staff and governors.
- Support for transition across partner schools and colleges.
- Shared access to support services on a buy-in principle.
- Joint co-operation in the provision of support to designated partner schools.
- A parity of entitlement to high standards of service and customer care from all local authority and partner services for all sectors.

### **LA Support for Collaboration and Interdependent Working**

Whilst schools will determine the extent to which they participate in collaboration and decide the most appropriate organisational structures, the local authority will offer the following mechanisms for support.

- Brokerage of school to school support through Senior Advisers for localities.
- Access to a directory of school to school support for the exchange of good practice and development of school to school partnerships

- Support for school improvement cluster and local learning community activity by arrangement.
- Cross county networks to support the teaching of vulnerable groups.
- Promotion of joint school improvement projects to close the attainment gap for vulnerable children.
- Opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the provision of children's services by local multi-agency teams.
- Promotion of school improvement partnerships and programmes for schools facing common standards challenges.
- Access to CPD programmes, conferences and tailored consultancy support.
- Promotion of public, private, voluntary and independent sector partnerships through the Children's Trust to improve outcomes for children and young people.

### The Derbyshire Compact

Through this document, the local authority invites all schools and academies to enter this voluntary framework to collaborate with each other and the authority in our joint moral purpose to secure the best possible outcomes for all children and young people across communities.

Governing Bodies and Academy Trusts are invited to adopt this statement of principles to underpin this protocol for interdependent and partnership working within Derbyshire.

We hope that you will join us in this common enterprise.

*Mike Longden*

*Bruce Buckley*

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Cabinet Member for Education

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Deputy Chief Executive and  
Strategic Director, CAYA

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Please tick to indicate agreement to adoption of this protocol.