Building Schools for the Future
...the pathway to progress

Our Vision for a Learning City

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The Building Schools for the Future programme is a unique, once in a lifetime opportunity to help transform the lives of this and future generations of young people. It’s about making a real difference, running alongside the regeneration of our city as we move towards improving the lives of everyone in Stoke-on-Trent.”

Mayor Meredith
Stoke-on-Trent City Council

“I want to see a huge sense of pride in Stoke-on-Trent's schools, and call upon every member of staff, and every parent, to support our young people and encourage them to make the most of their schooling. That spirit will pay dividends for the whole city in the future.”

Councillor Roger Ibbs
Portfolio holder for Children and Young People's Services
Introduction

Context

Stoke-on-Trent’s vision to transform our schools for the future is based firmly in our goal to create a city where young people have the skills, qualifications and aspirations to take advantage of the new employment opportunities arising from the City’s regeneration. It reflects our intentions to meet the challenges of ‘Every Child Matters’ and the Children’s Trust vision for children and young people living in Stoke-on-Trent to:

- Have a good life
- Be protected from harm; and
- Be inspired to achieve their potential.

We will create new schools and academies to give young people a sense of ownership, increased confidence and recognition that a new school is an investment in their future. We want to see dramatic improvements in attendance, inclusion, attainment and enjoyment at school in Stoke-on-Trent.

Developing the Vision

This Vision is about how we aim to meet the needs of all our young people in the 21st century. We know we have tremendous assets in friendly people and a skilled and loyal workforce. We now need to build schools which will provide better skilled, better qualified people, and ensure that all children and young people are on the pathway to success. This in turn will attract better quality jobs to the city.

Now, through our £250million Building Schools for the Future investment programme, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to make our dream a reality.

This is not a short term vision, but one that has been developed by councillors and officers within the local authority, who - accepting the fact that doing nothing is not an option - have been working over the past five years with a wide range of stakeholders (including head-teachers, governors, representatives of the Catholic and Anglican dioceses, unions, LSC and colleges, children and young people), towards transforming education in Stoke-on-Trent.
Vision to reality

Birches Head and Sandon High Schools are already up and running, and providing pupils with high quality facilities. Detailed plans are now being developed to deliver the Council’s proposals for a rationalised secondary school estate. In total, 13 secondary schools are planned to be rebuilt or refurbished in the City from 2011-14. Five of these will be ground-breaking academies, three voluntary aided schools and the remaining five either community or foundation/trust schools. We expect to see the new schools opening from 2010 onward.

Two new special schools are also planned to be built: one for children with behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties, and the other to meet a range of special educational needs. A review has been carried out to determine the pattern of provision that is required across the city to provide sufficient diversity and choice. This will include the possible refurbishment of existing special schools and the development of additionally resourced provision across mainstream settings. We expect to see the new schools opening during the 2011/12 academic year.

We are also working with the Learning and Skills Council and 14-19 Strategic Partnership to establish a city-wide and coherent model of post 16 education and training within the context of a 14-19 phase that continues to put the learner first rather than the institution. Our aim is to develop effective links between the five new 11-16 academies and existing schools, colleges, training providers, employers, local universities and specialist settings. All will work together to raise standards, offer choice and diversity, increase progression rates and provide transformational opportunities for learners.

The Vision reflects the aspirations of the Local Authority for learners in all of the City’s schools and academies. It has been developed not only to inform new education buildings, but also to guide all schools and academies in reviewing their own educational vision. The intention is that individual schools and academies use the Vision as a core on which to build.

The City Vision is specific enough to brief designers of any new building on the overall concept required. The details will vary for each school and academy. In order to support colleagues in existing schools, we will provide a set of questions to prompt thinking about the application of the City Vision to the development of the school’s local vision and the design of the new building or refurbishment, for example, specialism, number, size and use of spaces.
Key principles

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a major catalyst to transform lives in Stoke-on-Trent, by developing high quality teaching and learning delivered in 21st century facilities. It enables the City Council and its partners to take a strategic approach to investment, and consider not only how we want education to be delivered and received in the City, but also taking account of population shifts, where does it make most sense to build our schools?

Our aim is to create a ‘family’ of schools, academies and post-16 providers that, by working together to plan a coherent offer across the City, will establish an effective learning community that is greater than its component parts. We want to extend across the city the successful ‘travel to learn’ partnership working established for several years between the schools and colleges in the north of the City, providing increased curriculum opportunities by offering specialist teaching and facilities to each others’ pupils.

The key principles of our strategy are:

- Placing the learner at the centre
- Supporting high quality leadership, management and staff development
- Placing the school at the heart of the community
- Creating an environment for learning
- Developing the City-wide dimension
The Academy building programme forms an integral part of BSF. We share the Government’s enthusiasm to attract sponsors from a range of backgrounds, including universities, businesses, the charitable sector, existing educational foundations and the faith communities. We are keen that they should have a passion for educational excellence and opportunity and the capacity to bring it about. We want them to challenge traditional thinking on how schools are run and what they should be like for students. We want the academies in the City to be successful, to help regenerate and revive our local communities, and to work together with all schools to transform learning in the City.

We are therefore proposing that all sponsors of academies undertake to sign a charter which outlines the principles on which the academy is to be based. These principles would include, for example, a statement on inclusion, on community involvement and use of premises, the proposed admissions policy, a statement relating to staff pay and conditions, and a statement on the curriculum.

We are determined that during the transformation children attending our schools over the next few years will not lose out in any way. For pupils at those schools which close the transfer to new schools and academies will be carefully planned and properly managed. We will also work closely with school staff and their unions to retain, develop and recruit a high quality workforce in all schools and academies.
Placing the learner at the centre

At the heart of our plans is an entitlement for each young person to receive the very best education available. Flexible use of space, extensive and innovative use of facilities and technology will help make learning effective, more personal and accessible. All our schools will offer a core of high quality teaching and learning, but also provide a particular contribution to the city-wide curriculum - through existing and new specialisms. They will work together and with colleges and other learning providers for the benefit of all young people in the City, whatever their learning need.

- Shaping the system to the learner, not the learner to the system:
  - Starting from where each learner is and identifying with them the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of their future learning
  - Genuinely responding to ‘pupil voice’ - particularly in relation to teaching and learning issues
  - Ensuring that young people's access to learning is not limited by the length of a school day or access to facilities, real or online
  - Celebrating all forms of success

- Providing a flexible and broader curriculum to meet individual needs, interests and aspirations:
  - Identifying where learning can most effectively take place
  - Providing opportunities for learning together and from each other
  - Making the best use of new technology to improve learning
  - Promoting active engagement of parents and carers in their child’s education
  - Continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning so that young people acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal qualities necessary to achieve well and succeed in adult life
  - Seeking specialist status for all schools and working with partners to promote high achievement in their specialist area(s)
  - Working collaboratively across schools and colleges so that specialised accreditation can be accessed at every level
  - Developing vocational learning to high employment standards
Supporting high quality leadership, management and staff development

We will place a strong emphasis on developing the leadership and management skills of staff so that they play a full role in further improving educational outcomes in Stoke-on-Trent. We want our schools’ workforce to be outward-looking, provide a national and global perspective and adopt best practice from Stoke-on-Trent and beyond. These developments are dependent on effective ongoing professional development and the retention of high quality school and academy-based staff in the City.

• Providing exciting programmes of continuous professional development (CPD):
  • Incorporating a shift of emphasis from teacher to learner
  • Promoting new approaches to, and definitions of, inspirational teaching
  • Promoting an ethos where learning is enjoyable and valued
  • Providing innovative, high-quality teaching and learning for all
  • Fostering independent and collaborative learning and encouraging a diverse range of teaching/learning styles

• Ensuring appropriate challenge to address areas of underperformance and raise standards of achievement overall

• Making appropriate use of specialist external expertise and learning experiences beyond the classroom

• Facilitating the development of school designs that support a changing workforce and changing patterns of learning:
  • team working and inter-team working
  • emphasis and value for research and development work
  • new models of leadership (e.g. commissioned, distributed, federated)
Placing the school at the heart of the community

We want to establish cohesive communities across the City that will promote the five outcomes of the national Every Child Matters programme:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

The secondary school reorganisation is intended to establish schools and academies of between 900-1200 pupils aged 11-16; they will have a mixed intake and be able to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, strong pastoral support and community leadership. The new schools and academies will be located on sites to serve communities throughout the city, with safe and accessible routes and at reasonable travel distances.

By developing a range of special school and additionally resourced provision across the city, we will ensure that parents and young people can choose the right provision to meet their needs.

- Working with the community to develop a joint local vision and aspiration to achieve more together:
  - Developing facilities that enable the full resource of the community and local providers to be brought together to support and meet local needs
  - Enabling the joint use of accommodation where appropriate
  - Auditing local extended learning and community facilities to avoid duplication and competition, whilst ensuring that gaps in provision are addressed
- Establishing a coherent continuum of provision for special educational needs:
  - Increasing parental choice
  - Developing the role of special schools to support children and young people across a range of settings
- Ensuring that schools are relevant and accessible to their local communities:
  - Developing extended services and out-of-hours learning
  - Promoting extensive collaboration and parental involvement
  - Acting as hubs for lifelong learning and using display to celebrate lifelong learning and achievement
  - Enabling adults and young people to learn together
  - Maximising community access with unobtrusive, state of the art security
  - Creating a sense of belonging through appropriate school organization providing for learners with specific learning or behavioural needs
  - Clearly signposted and safe vehicular access and parking
  - Toilets and changing facilities of the highest standard - easy to maintain and respecting privacy
Creating an environment for learning

In future we will have fewer schools, each designed to be the right size for the number of pupils in the City, and with higher quality buildings and facilities. We are committed to ensuring that all available resources (including BSF funding) are used to provide learning environments which are inspirational, safe, stimulating, fit for purpose, fully support the flexible learning approaches promoted by our Vision, and are accessible to all.

- Developing a welcoming and inspirational centre for learning in which the community can take a pride during the lifetime of the building:
  - Aiming to improve standards and enjoyment of learning
  - Encouraging continued participation in education or training
  - Providing an entitlement to cultural opportunities for all and encouragement for learners to learn from, about and with other cultures
  - Ensuring that safeguarding, inclusion, and early identification of children’s additional/special needs are central to everyone’s work
  - Encouraging creativity, exploration and risk-taking
  - Promoting professional collaboration

- Promoting a collaborative design process, involving all stakeholders (including children and young people) to ensure that the buildings are flexible, adaptable and sustainable

- Providing an environment that is practical and attractive, and that will engage and stimulate the user in both its internal and external environments:
  - Large and small learning areas, breakaway rooms, study spaces and cyber café-type learning environments, linked to as to allow flexible use
  - State of the art sports, arts, technical, scientific and other specialist facilities
  - Specialist equipment to promote accessibility
  - Portable/flexible learning technology provision to make learning easier, more creative and accessible
  - Communal, multi-purpose spaces but avoidance of large, single-use spaces
  - Opportunities for socialisation, indoors and outdoors

- Developing school buildings and grounds that minimize their carbon footprint through their design, construction and operation:
  - Managing and monitoring energy use and adopting renewable energy technologies
  - Minimizing waste and fully utilizing recycling opportunities
  - Encouraging bio-diversity
  - Maximizing local/ethical sourcing
  - Minimizing water consumption
  - Promoting an appropriate emphasis on eco-learning and environmental education for the 21st century
  - Matching places to demand
Developing the City-wide dimension

“A Learning City where people are continually learning and developing their skills not only to take advantage of new, better paid jobs but also to improve their quality of life”.
(Stoke-on-Trent Community Strategy 2004-2014)

“A City where young people have the skills, qualifications and aspirations to take advantage of the new employment opportunities arising from the City’s regeneration.”
(Stoke-on-Trent Children & Young People’s Plan 2007/08)

The Vision to establish a family of schools, academies and post-16 providers (schools and colleges) forms a key part of the wider regeneration and economic plans for the City (including the ambition to establish Stoke-on-Trent as a centre for creative design). By closely linking the development of our schools to regeneration and other initiatives such as extended schools, community sports, culture, housing renewal, and the 14-19 strategy, we can make Stoke-on-Trent a vibrant and successful place for our future citizens to live and work.

Developing a coherent Vision for inclusion in the future which includes all the city’s special and mainstream schools and academies will ensure that our special schools and specialist accommodation will be fit for the 21st century, and located where they are needed. Only then will young people and their families be able to choose where and how they receive their education.

- Raising the aspirations, achievement and confidence of children and young people across the City
- Providing opportunities for learners to develop skills of participation and citizenship through engaging with school decision-making and the wider community
- Providing entrepreneurial opportunities - for fund raising, business and enterprise
- Working together to plan and deliver a range of learning pathways and increased curriculum opportunities, with clear progression routes at all transition points
- Increasing diversity of provision to meet parental choice and secure improved educational outcomes for all young people

Improving learning • Improving lives 11
More Information

If you have any comments or questions then please contact us:

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