

**STAMFORD SCHOLARSHIP TAPERING:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
MARCH 2011**

APPENDIX 1:

STAMFORD ENDOWED SCHOOLS SCHOLARSHIP TAPERING- INTERIM (4TH YEAR) REVIEW

**STAMFORD ENDOWED
SCHOOLS SCHOLARSHIP
TAPERING:**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
OF THE FINDINGS OF THE
INTERIM REVIEW**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The principal objective of this review is ascertain the extent to which suitable education is provided for academically able students in the Stamford area as the number of Lincolnshire County Council Scholarships to the Stamford Endowed Schools is reduced.
- 1.2. Importantly, it also considers the extent to which a genuinely comprehensive intake at Stamford Queen Eleanor School has been facilitated by the tapering of the scholarship scheme as this was a key expectation when the decision to taper was made in 2006. Stamford Queen Eleanor School is the only secondary school maintained by Lincolnshire County Council in the town.
- 1.3. By its 'interim' nature, this is not intended to be a comprehensive review of educational provision in Stamford. Rather, it is an opportunity to sample views and to take the opportunity to examine readily available data to give a 'snapshot' of the impact of the tapering of the scholarship scheme so that the County Council can be alerted if expectations are not being met.

2. Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Discussions

- 2.1. Pupils at the Stamford Endowed Schools are appreciative of rounded academic education of very high quality and benefit greatly from a wide range of additional opportunities. They are highly focussed on academic achievement and have well-developed aspirations for higher education. Support systems ensure progress although pupils value the wider experience of attending the Stamford Endowed Schools as much as they do the opportunity for academic success. They fear that the removal of the scholarship scheme will deny access to such opportunities to successors from less wealthy families. There is little sense among Stamford Endowed Schools that similar opportunities exist within the state schools accessible to Stamford pupils.
- 2.2. Pupils from Stamford Queen Eleanor School who had been unsuccessful in gaining a scholarship still valued greatly their experiences at the school. They feel that they have made good progress and have been given the opportunity to develop new talents. There is a clear sense that there is now a well-embedded achievement culture in the school. They feel that Stamford Queen Eleanor has been a good school for them yet they still believe that the most able should be able to access education at the Stamford Endowed Schools through a scholarship.
- 2.3. Parents and Governors associated with both the Stamford Endowed Schools through the Scholarship Scheme and with Stamford Queen Eleanor School are extremely supportive of the provision made by the respective schools.

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However, Stamford Queen Eleanor School does not have a sufficiently high profile in the community to attract a comprehensive intake. As a result, its raw outcomes are depressed and its curriculum offer, though well managed and broad for the size of the school, will continue to be limited by the number of pupils it can attract. This will impede its capacity to raise its profile compared with larger schools. The lack of on-site post-16 education is a major disadvantage to many parents.

- 2.4. Despite tremendous efforts and considerable measurable improvements in many aspects, the perception of Stamford Queen Eleanor School by the community does not appear to have improved as much as is needed to secure a genuinely comprehensive intake. Without this, it will struggle to win over parents who insist on using raw results, rather than progress, as measures of success.
- 2.5. As a result, many parents continue to dismiss Stamford Queen Eleanor School as a viable option and look elsewhere for their child's secondary education. Other than the Stamford Endowed Schools and Casterton Business and Enterprise College in nearby Rutland, this involves exploring options that involve unreasonable travel times and complexities. There is no consistently reliable grammar school option for able pupils available within easy reach. While more can still be done to support Stamford Queen Eleanor School to challenge negative perceptions, parental anxiety remains a serious concern.
- 2.6. In conjunction with Lincolnshire County Council, a scheme providing up to ten places per year in the sixth-form of the Stamford Endowed Schools is being piloted for able pupils at Stamford Queen Eleanor School. Seven places were part-funded by the County Council in 2010-11. It is too early to tell whether the 'Stamford Educational Alliance' will help improve the number of parents and pupils choosing Stamford Queen Eleanor School as their first choice of secondary school. The financial sustainability of the scheme is also uncertain as the Young People's Learning Agency will not fund post-16 places in the independent sector.
- 2.7. The Headteacher and governors at Stamford Queen Eleanor School are keen to work closely with the County Council to raise further the profile of the school in the community.
- 2.8. The tapering of the scholarship scheme does not appear to have had the desired effect of widening the ability profile of entrants to Stamford's maintained secondary schools, including both Stamford Queen Eleanor School in Stamford and Casterton Business and Enterprise College in Rutland. Nor have able pupils been able to find places consistently and in significantly increased numbers at the nearest maintained grammar school in Bourne unless parents have been prepared to move home. Rather, it appears that many parents have chosen to seek places for their children at a range of schools, both state and independent, not all of which are particularly accessible from Stamford. This has created a feeling among many parents that there is not the same reliable and realistic range of schooling options available to them as there might be if they lived elsewhere in the county. A number of primary headteachers report considerable anxiety and frustration among both pupils and parents.

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- 2.9. The prevalent, though not universal, view among headteachers is that the scholarship scheme provides an excellent educational opportunity for the most academically able who have been able to access it regardless of family means.
- 2.10. Headteachers of the maintained schools in the Stamford area do appear to be unanimous in their desire to see radical and thorough revision of the arrangements for secondary education in Stamford and the surrounding area. Their desire is grounded not only within their own educational values, but in their perception of the exasperation of many parents and, above all, in the best interests of the children of Stamford.
- 2.11. There is a wide range of views regarding the most appropriate solutions to issues surrounding access to secondary education for Stamford residents. However, from the sample of views represented by in this report, there are indications of a widespread consensus that a radical change in provision is long overdue. There is a clear need for transparency in the process of transforming secondary education and the opportunity for all stakeholders to feel that their views have been heard and either challenged or implemented where appropriate.
- 2.12. In the meantime there is an immediate need for clarity around the existing arrangements for access to maintained grammar school places; to the scholarship scheme and to other support available through the Stamford Endowed Schools for parents and pupils living in the Stamford area.

3. Summary of Findings from the Analysis of Performance Data

- 3.1. Over the past three years, around one quarter of pupils leaving Stamford Primary Schools have transferred to the Stamford Endowed Schools at 11, some through the scholarship scheme and some as fee-paying pupils, a number of whom have been awarded bursaries by the Stamford Endowed Schools. Around one half of all Stamford primary school pupils have continued their education at Stamford Queen Eleanor School. However, almost a quarter have transferred to other schools outside Stamford. This impacts on the growth of Stamford Queen Eleanor School and hence its income, its staffing establishment and the breadth of the curriculum it can offer.
- 3.2. The destinations of pupils at age eleven vary widely from one primary school to another. Pupils from the Bluecoat School and St George's Church of England Primary School transfer to Stamford Queen Eleanor School in large numbers. However, pupils from Bythams Primary School and St Augustine's Catholic Primary School who do not move to the Stamford Endowed Schools tend to travel to schools outside the town. A large proportion of pupils from the Malcolm Sargent Primary School transfer to the Stamford Endowed Schools whether with or without a scholarship. These patterns are also reflected in the observations of parental perceptions reported by the primary headteachers and governors that were interviewed.

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- 3.3. Overall attainment at Key Stage 4 at the Stamford Endowed Schools is broadly in line with attainment at maintained grammar schools across the county.
- 3.4. However, taking data based on the past three years, the progress made by scholarship pupils in the Stamford Endowed Schools is very much greater than the progress made in Lincolnshire maintained secondary schools as a whole.
- 3.5. In same period, able pupils with a scholarship achieved a significantly greater Key Stage 4 Average Point Score in the Stamford Endowed Schools than able pupils that transferred to Lincolnshire maintained secondary schools.
- 3.6. There is no evidence from available data that the ability profile on entry to Stamford Queen Eleanor School has changed since the tapering of the scholarship scheme began. The intake can still not be regarded as comprehensive.
- 3.7. Even when starting points are taken into account, pupils with a scholarship at the Stamford Endowed Schools make considerably greater progress in English and Mathematics than do able pupils at Stamford Queen Eleanor School
- 3.8. Moreover, the proportions of *able pupils* achieving grades A or A* at GCSE are much lower at Stamford Queen Eleanor School than for scholars at the Stamford Endowed Schools.
- 3.9. When context is included, Stamford Queen Eleanor School achieves value-added within the average band while some of the other schools serving Stamford pupils frequently achieve significantly above-average progress.
- 3.10. In each of the maintained schools receiving pupils from Stamford, pupils make progress that is similar to the progress they would in make in a similar school elsewhere in the country. The difficulty is that the contexts in which the schools receiving Stamford pupils are operating are different. What appears to be good progress in a school such as Stamford Queen Eleanor School with a more deprived intake and a lower level of attainment on entry, may not be as good as that which could be achieved in a school with a less deprived catchment. It is understandable that some parents fail to take this into account when choosing schools: they tend to look for schools where absolute progress and absolute standards are good. This naturally leads them away from schools serving more deprived areas such as that in which Stamford Queen Eleanor School is located.

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4. Financial Considerations

- 4.1. Even with the tapering of the scholarship scheme so that no new scholars are admitted after 2012, there are significant contractual and financial risks to the County Council for a further seven years for which contingencies should be explored.
- 4.2. There are considerable uncertainties around the future role of local authorities in funding schools and a very significant chance that the Council may, in future years, receive no income from central government with which to fund schools. The potential unfunded financial liabilities in this scenario could amount to between £1.7m and £2.3m *per cohort* of fifty scholars under projections for the next ten years. Contingency measures should be cognizant of this scenario.
- 4.3. 16-18 year-olds' scholarship places are being entirely funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant that is strictly intended to fund school-places and related services for 5-16 year-olds. This may be regarded as a technical issue. When the DSG was first created in 2006/07, the LA could have explored the opportunity to split the budget for the pre and post 16 provision so that the pre 16 element of the contract was funded by DSG and the post 16 element was funded by the Council's core budget. Had that approach been pursued, the current level of DSG would have been lower, as would the corresponding expenditure, and the impact would therefore have been broadly neutral.
- 4.4. The possibility of a legal challenge to the scholarship arrangements reported in 2006 remains and should not be overlooked.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Progress, attainment, opportunity and aspirations are significantly higher amongst scholars compared with able young people in Stamford Queen Eleanor School although the latter is improving in these respects and this improvement is reliably expected to accelerate in the next few years. When context and the prior achievement of its cohort are taken into account, Stamford Queen Eleanor School performs as well as the average school of a similar nature nationally.
- 5.2. The perception of Stamford Queen Eleanor School by many parents continues to be significantly less favourable than hoped despite transformational change and ongoing improvement. It appears that many parents are choosing to send their children to a wide range of secondary schools that have greater attainment levels than Stamford Queen Eleanor School and that have above average performance by other measures.
- 5.3. The fact that Stamford Queen Eleanor School does not have a sixth form further impacts upon how it is perceived in the community and hence limits its capacity to recruit although the outcomes for young people who transfer to New College, Stamford are good.

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- 5.4. It is too early to tell whether a pilot scheme to provide up to ten sixth-form places per year for Stamford Queen Eleanor School pupils in the Stamford Endowed Schools will help increase the number of parents and pupils choosing Stamford Queen Eleanor School as their first preference. The financial sustainability of the scheme is also uncertain as the Young People's Learning Agency will not fund post-16 places for mainstream pupils in the independent sector.
- 5.5. When the decision was taken to taper the scholarship scheme in Stamford, this measure was to be matched by a broadening of the intake of Stamford Queen Eleanor School to ensure genuinely comprehensive offer for the young people of Stamford and their parents. Over the past few years, significant efforts have been made by staff, parents and governors and by the Lincolnshire School Improvement Service to improve the quality of provision and the perception of Stamford Queen Eleanor School in the community. These have included capital investment. In many respects these have been successful. Nevertheless, they have failed in their primary objective of achieving a genuinely comprehensive intake. The improvements that have undoubtedly taken place have not influenced parents sufficiently to broaden the intake to include the most able in significant numbers. The governors and headteacher at Stamford Queen Eleanor School feel that there has been insufficient support from Lincolnshire County Council to help raise the school's profile. This has limited the school's capacity to achieve good or outstanding raw outcomes and hence to influence its standing in the community and its future recruitment.
- 5.6. The neighbouring Casterton Business and Enterprise College in nearby Rutland, was very recently graded as 'Outstanding' by OfSTED. Perceptions of the school by parents and other stakeholders are still mixed. Moreover, its new sixth-form offer is still in a development phase and does not yet satisfy fully the frequently articulated demand for all-through 11-18 education in a single institution in the eyes of many parents.
- 5.7. The choice of state-funded secondary schools available to young people and their parents in Stamford is limited to Stamford Queen Eleanor School and Casterton Business and Enterprise College. However, young people who attend Stamford primary schools progress to a wide range of secondary schools including the Stamford Endowed Schools, Bourne Robert Manning Technology College, The Deepings School, Charles Read School and other secondary Schools within and outside Lincolnshire. In view of the range and complexity of the required travel, many parents protest vociferously that, in their view, they are obliged to send their children elsewhere because of what they perceive as a lack of suitable provision in the town.
- 5.8. Access to grammar school education outside the town is limited by admissions policy and travel complexity. It is, at best, unpredictable. Consequently, many parents feel that the scholarship scheme provides their only realistic access to stretching education for able young people.
- 5.9. Many parents contemplate the primary-secondary transition with genuine dread. There is a tangible anxiety and frustration among parents that will continue to grow until the arrangements for secondary education in Stamford

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are addressed robustly. Many headteachers and governors substantiate this view.

- 5.10. The Stamford Endowed Schools are very keen to continue their traditional role of educating bright children from Stamford regardless of their ability to pay fees. This has led to a balanced intake of young people from a wide range of social backgrounds. The Schools point out the outstanding success of those individuals who have enjoyed the undeniable benefits of the scholarships scheme. The Stamford Endowed Schools are eager to pursue with the County Council, the possibilities for a jointly funded and means tested bursary scheme.
- 5.11. Even when no new scholars are being admitted to the scheme there remains a very considerable financial risk to Lincolnshire County Council that will persist until the last scholar leaves the Stamford Endowed Schools in 2018. The County Council's liability will be very significantly increased if central government policy shifts to a national funding formula and removes the role of local authorities in the funding of schools.
- 5.12. The Scholarship Scheme was conceived before the funding of sixth-form places transferred to the Learning and Skills Council and subsequently to the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). Lincolnshire County Council receives no income from the YPLA for sixth-form places at the Stamford Endowed Schools but pays for these places from the Dedicated Schools' Grant that is intended strictly for learners aged 5 to 16.
- 5.13. Among parents, pupils, governors, education professionals and members of the public, there is a tangible sense that Stamford is a neglected area of the county and a strong desire for prompt and transparent action that takes full account of their views.

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6. Recommendations

- 6.1. Particularly given the national impetus for academy status and centrally rather than locally funded state education, the local authority, working closely with the Young People's Learning Agency, should develop proposals for the transformation of secondary education provision for young people in the Stamford area aged 11 to 18.
- 6.2. The proposals should be cognizant of the findings of this review and should consider the provision made by all schools and colleges serving the Stamford area, including those in neighbouring local authorities. They should define the steps that will be taken to provide holistic high-quality educational routes for young people in Stamford that ensure breadth of provision and capitalise on the opportunities and requirements in the Schools White Paper and the recent Education Bill.
- 6.3. The proposals should ensure that state secondary education for Stamford:
 - i. puts the needs of pupils first;
 - ii. provides genuine high-quality educational choices for all young people;
 - iii. recognises the desires of parents and pupils and minimises their anxiety at transition;
 - iv. is genuinely accessible to the young people of Stamford and neighbouring villages;
 - v. takes place in institutions of sufficient size to sustain a wide curricular and extra-curricular offer;
 - vi. demonstrates outstanding raw outcomes as well as progress for all
 - vii. provides all-through 11-18 education (in partnership, rather than in competition, with Further Education);
 - viii. quickly builds a reputation for excellence to win the confidence of pupils, parents and stakeholders.
- 6.4. Contingency plans should be drawn-up that are cognizant of possible changes in the funding responsibilities of local authorities and that recognize that, under the tapering arrangement, some scholarship places will continue until the summer of 2018.