

LGA Responds to Education White Paper

Responding to the Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper, Cllr Richard Watts, Vice-Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said:

"The White Paper rightly highlights impressive improvements in the attainment of primary school pupils. The fact is that 85 per cent of primary schools are still council maintained. Only 15 per cent of the largest multi-academy trusts perform above the national average when it comes to how much progress pupils make, compared to 44 per cent of councils.

"Schools have, until now, valued the opportunity to convert to academies voluntarily, where and when this is appropriate for pupils and the community, and councils have supported them to do so. The LGA opposes forced academisation and the Government needs to consider the wishes of parents, communities, teachers and councils before imposing any new education structures.

"Under these new plans, councils will remain legally responsible for making sure that all children have a school place, but it is wrong that neither they nor the Government will have any powers to force local schools to expand if they don't want to. Land currently owned by councils for schools will be transferred to the Government and then to the academy trust, and although schools will be funded to meet the costs of academy conversion, there is no funding for the costs to councils of the 18,000 conversions that will be needed. Academy conversions have already cost local authorities millions of pounds. At a time when councils are having to make further savings to plug funding gaps over the next few years, local taxpayers should not be expected to foot the bill for this process.

"We have serious concerns that Regional Schools Commissioners still lack the capacity and local knowledge to have oversight of such a large, diverse and remote range of schools. Placing significant powers over education in the hands of unelected civil servants, and asking parents to take complaints to either their Regional Schools Commissioner or the Secretary of State rather than their local elected councillors, presents a lack of accountability and a risk to the quality of education that our children deserve in the future. A more limited role for councils in education could also make it more difficult for vulnerable children to receive the support that they need to get the best education."

[LGA Briefing: Educational Excellence Everywhere White Paper, March 2016](#)