

**Report Title**

*Report of Educational Standards in Thetford*

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(EPIPS)*

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**Summary**

**Educational Standards**

*To share key information with schools in light of the anticipated growth in the Town.*

*To identify what needs to happen so that a sustainable and stable education landscape can be developed to support children and young people's learning.*

*To identify the key challenges and any opportunities for change*

There have been some significant changes in the education landscape in Thetford in terms of Academy Trusts and the schools within them. We feel that this change will result in positive educational outcomes for children.

The EPIPS Service along with other NCC colleagues will work with the Thetford schools cluster to ensure that a sustainable and stable education landscape continues to develop to support children and young people's learning. We propose to develop a project in collaboration with all education settings – Children's Centres, other pre-school settings and schools that will support this key objective and at the same time prepare for them for the growth in pupil numbers in the short to medium term and in the longer term, be ready for the development of the new school and its integration into the cluster.

**Recommendations**

We ask the Board to support the development of a project that will prepare local schools for growth in pupil numbers including the introduction of the proposed new school.

**1. Introduction**

Thetford has seen significant change in relation to its schools and the governance structures managing those schools. There are nine schools in the Thetford cluster and six of these are now academies. Academy schools are state-funded schools which are directly funded by the Department for Education. They are independent of local authority control. The terms of the arrangements are set out in individual Academy Funding Agreements. Academies are overseen by the Regional Schools Commissioner who reports directly to ministers. The Local Authority continues to work with academy

schools and has a statutory duty to ensure that there is a place for every child and that they have access to transport where needed, that vulnerable children are equitably included and that every school delivers a good or better education. It is important that all schools regardless of their status continue to work together through their cluster and with other educational settings to ensure that the children in their care have a successful educational journey.

The High School is part of the Inspiration Trust. Of the other schools, Bishops Church of England School is part of DNEAT (Diocese of Norwich Education Academies Trust), Norwich Road Academy, Diamond Academy, Admirals Academy have recently become Academies with Eastern Multi Academy Trust - EMAT (previously they were with Academy Transformation Trust – ATT), along with Queensway Infant Academy and Nursery. Only Raleigh Infant School and Nursery, Redcastle Family School and Drake Primary School remain LA maintained schools.

In addition there is Pinetree School that provides education for children that have special or additional educational needs. This schools is part of the Engage Trust.

2. Educational standards in Thetford are inconsistent and are of a significant concern to the Local Authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Outcomes for children up until the end of Key Stage 1 (7 years of age) are broadly in line with the National average. However, outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 (eleven years of age before transition to High School) are well below average. We expect this picture to improve with EMAT and DNEAT overseeing the primary phase schools that are academies. The focus of the academy trust to bring about swift and sustainable improvement.

At Key Stage 4 (16 years of age) there is an improving picture with the Inspiration Trust becoming more established.

3. However, the Local Authority recognises that the new growth proposed for the area could put significant pressure on schools and could impact on the acceleration of the improvement of standards if it is not managed and supported well. The Local Authority is beginning conversations with academy trusts and schools to consider how the children in the first phase of building development will be accommodated within existing schools up until the new school is operational. Our Early Years colleagues will also be working with pre-school settings to ensure that Early Years providers are prepared too.

There will be an analysis of existing provision and early engagement with providers will ensure a place for every child in line with the LAs statutory responsibilities.

4. The Education Participation, Infrastructure and Partnerships Services together with other NCC colleagues and partners will facilitate a project that will enable schools to prepare for growth whilst also focussing on the continued improvement of outcomes at all key stages. We will continue to promote close collaboration between establishments as well as ensuring access to sources of additional funding to enable this work.

## **5. Contribution to Board Objectives**

Contributes to Objective 6 enhance education and learning to ensure that residents can access jobs and skills near where they live.

## **6. Recommendations**

We ask the Board to support the development of a project that will prepare local schools for growth in pupil numbers including the introduction of the proposed new school. The project will also enable them to continue deliver improved educational outcomes for children.

## **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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