

Report No.
ED16023

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 8 March 2016

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: SUMMARY OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

Contact Officer: Jane Bailey, Assistant Director: Education
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Chief Officer: Assistant Director: Education (ECHS)

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

For Members of the PDS Committee of the report

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

For members of the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of this report.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People: his report relates to schools and their role in supporting Bromley's children to attain and achieve to their potential.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Education
 4. Total current budget for this head: £n/a
 5. Source of funding: n/a
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: n/a
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1. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): n/a
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 On January 13th 2016 the Parliamentary Commons Select Education Committee published a report 'The Role of the Regional Schools Commissioner'¹ [RSC]. Building on relevant aspects of the previous Committee's inquiry into Academies and Free Schools, this inquiry was established in 2015 to explore the expanding role of RSCs, their resources, impact and accountability. The inquiry set out to address the following key points:
- What the role of Regional Schools Commissioners currently is, how this might change as the academies landscape evolves, and what the role of RSCs should be
 - Whether there are sufficient RSCs and Headteacher Boards to fulfil their expanding role, and whether they have adequate resources
 - What evidence exists on the early operation of RSCs in terms of their impact, and how this impact should be measured
 - What relationship RSCs should have with Ofsted, local authorities, the DfE, individual schools and local communities
 - How RSCs should be held to account in their role
- 3.2 The committee considered evidence from a range of witnesses, written submissions and existing reports and data.
- 3.3 The report raises some interesting issues and findings in the context of the Borough of Bromley moving towards all state funded schools being academies. The report asserts that the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner in securing school improvement for Academies in the place of the local authority needs to evolve and become clearer and give more confidence to the sector.
- 3.4 The report states that in the schools landscape the RSCs *now form part of an increasingly complicated system of oversight, accountability and inspection. A more fundamental reassessment of accountability and oversight for all schools will be required in the future to provide coherence (p3)*. The report highlights that *the relationships that RSCs build with other components of this system, including local authorities, Ofsted, teaching schools, and parents and local communities, are crucial to securing impact on school improvement. An emphasis on working with and through these key partners will help ensure that RSCs have the capacity to cope with planned expansion of their role. (p3)*. Due to the expanding workload of the RSCs the report suggests that *there should be an increased emphasis on working through others to secure school improvement....possibly multi-academy trusts rather than individual schools (p.30)*.
- 3.5 The report concludes that *further work is needed to improve their transparency, accountability and working relationships in order to continue with progress towards appropriate intermediate structures between Whitehall and individual schools. Without attention to these issues, RSCs will be seen as undemocratic and opaque, and the Government must ensure that such concerns are acted on. (p.49)*
- 3.6 The committee concludes that the RSCs are a pragmatic solution to the policy agenda related to Academisation at this stage in the roll out, but indicates a more fundamental reassessment of accountability and oversight of all schools will be required going forward to support coherence in the school landscape.

¹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmeduc/401/401.pdf>

3.7 Recommendations in the report for improving the role and accountability of the RSCs include:

- Clarifying the relationship between the RSCs and
 - the National Schools Commissioner
 - other components in the system involved in oversight, intervention, inspection and accountability of schools and the division of responsibilities with Ofsted and local authorities, including in relation to safeguarding
- Making its role clear to parents and schools
- Exploring regional variations in work of RSCs so a common set of standards is more transparent
- Reconfiguring the regions, creating an RSC for London
- Reviewing the role of the Headteacher Boards
- Focusing KPIs for RSCs on improvements in young people’s education and outcomes, not just volume of conversions
- Improving the direct accountability of RSCs for their work
- For the government to publish a protocol for interaction between RSCs and local authorities to ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and to secure clearer expectations for information sharing between them and with multi academy trusts
- Improve engagement by the RSC with local communities, including parents.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial Implications Personnel implications Legal Implications, Policy implications
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