

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**Thursday 22 October 2015****Question by Charlie Simkins to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Taking into account the progress of schools in Kent in raising standards in recent years, what relationship does this bear to their decision to become an academy or free school or remain as a local authority maintained school?

Answer

Academy schools are schools that are independent of direct accountability to local authorities, being directly funded by and accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through a funding agreement. There are two types of academy: converter academies (those deemed to be performing well that have converted to academy status) and sponsored academies (mostly underperforming schools changing to academy status and run by sponsors to bring about necessary improvement).

There are 185 Academies (31.3%) out of a total of 591 schools in Kent as at 1st September 2015. These Academies break down as follows: 112 Primary (24.67%), 72 Secondary (71.29%) and 1 Special (4.17%).

Percentage of Schools and Early Years Settings with Good and Outstanding Ofsted judgements

As at 15 October 2015, overall, 83% of schools and Early Years settings in Kent have been judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding. This figure breaks down as follows:

Primary	82%
Secondary	84%
Special	91%
PRU	86%
Early Years	88%

Percentage of Pupils attending good or outstanding schools in Kent 2012-2015

The percentage of pupils attending a good or outstanding school has increased significantly as more schools receive a good or better inspection judgement. Currently 83% of pupils attend a good or better school, compared to 62% in 2012, 70% in 2013 and 75% in 2014.

This means approximately 15,420 more pupils are receiving a better education in September 2015 compared to the same time the previous year.

In terms of overall pupil achievement, recent research commissioned by the LGA, undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)¹, found that there is no direct correlation between being an academy and improved attainment levels, reflected in Ofsted School Inspection judgements.

The critical characteristic to raising achievement in a school is the capacity of the school leadership. Many sponsored academies are improving the quality of education and pupil outcomes, as they have often replaced poorly performing schools and they have been able to bring greater leadership capacity to secure the improvement. Academy schools in multi-academy trusts and those that are part of academy chains can also usually rely on greater leadership capacity and strengthened governance. However this is not true in all cases, and some chains have been found to be failing to provide the necessary leadership capacity for change.

The NFER's research into GCSE results at both academies and maintained schools finds that academies do not outperform non-academies at GCSE. The report found that in analysing school-level GCSE data since 2007, there is no significant improvement in GCSE results for academies over and above the rate of improvement of all schools. The report stated that characteristics of a school, such as strong leadership and the quality of teaching, are more likely to be responsible for differences seen, rather than the school's organisational structure.

It is still too early to judge the full impact of converter academy status on school performance because almost all converter academies have been open for three years or less, but the analysis shows that there are no short-term benefits in improved school performance associated with converter academy status. In most cases converter academy schools were already well performing schools.

In Kent the local authority works with all schools, irrespective of status, to support school improvement. For example, based on the 2015 GCSE results, 26 Secondary schools performed below the floor standard (at least 40% of pupils achieving five good GCES grades with English and maths). 14 of these Secondary schools are academies and KCC will work with all the schools to secure improved performance in the future.

One of our top priorities is to narrow achievement gaps and ensure better attainment for disadvantaged learners supported by the pupil premium. There is limited progress to date, reflecting the national trend, and no evidence that academies and maintained schools demonstrate notable differences in narrowing the gaps for pupils eligible for free school meals. Once again the differences reside within individual schools and the quality of their practice.

In conclusion, there is little evidence that academy status on its own is the critical factor in achieving better school performance, apart from sponsored academy situations which are designed to improve inadequate and poorly performing schools. While the continuous improvement, year on year, of standards of attainment and school inspection outcomes is very welcome, these improvements have been achieved across KCC maintained schools and academies without notable differences. The cross-party Education Select Committee Report (published January 2015) came to much the same conclusions.

¹ Analysis of Academy School Performance in GCSEs 2014, National Foundation for Educational Research (June 2015)

**Question by Rob Bird to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

In recent years Kent County Council has been successful in reducing the demand for long-term residential care. However, as people live longer and dementia becomes more prevalent, the scope for further reductions may be limited.

Earlier this month BUPA has put up sale notices for 200 of its 290 care homes citing the sharp cuts in Government funding for the elderly. It was reported in the Financial Times (9th October 2015) that the UK's four biggest care home-owners, which are predominately focused on the state-funded market, that there is a risk of a "catastrophic collapse" in the sector.

Is the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health able to reassure members that there will continue to be adequate capacity in the independent sector to meet the needs of Kent?

Answer

Kent County Council and its partners launched an Accommodation Strategy in July 2014 that identified the future number of care home beds needed across Kent by location and type up to 2021. There will be less need for general frailty care homes and a greater need for care homes for people with dementia and for those who require nursing care. Both KCC and the Clinical Commissioning Groups are working to keep people in their own homes for as long as possible with the right level of support and the pilot projects have shown excellent results in demonstrating the success through the Adult Transformation Programme.

In terms of capacity in the independent sector, KCC is actively working with providers and developers for new provision of approx. 1000 units of extra care housing and approx. 500 care home beds. We are also working with existing providers to remodel services so that they are able to meet the needs of residents in the future.

In addition, the Care Act places a duty on the local authorities to maintain appropriate market oversight and we are closely monitoring the challenges in the sector. These include the need for a Workforce Strategy which brings more nurses into the sector and the impact of the introduction of the National Living Wage. It is these issues that have led BUPA, and other providers, to issue their warnings about the future in advance of November's Comprehensive Spending Review.

In recognition of the significant additional pressures facing the sector, particularly due to the National Living Wage, I have written to the Chief Secretary of the Treasury to highlight the importance of the right settlement for Adult Social Care in the CSR in order for there to continue to be adequate capacity in future.

**Question by Brian Clark to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

When the consultation was recently announced for the closure of 4 care homes in Kent, including the Dorothy Lucy Care Home in Maidstone, we were informed that the centre was no longer fit for purpose and that the council was working with care providers to find "alternative services".

Given the Care Quality Commission's glowing report of the centre just two years ago, where no concern was raised on the buildings suitability, can the cabinet member please explain which alternative local services have been found by KCC to ensure that residents continue to receive care to the standard observed at the Dorothy Lucy Centre.

Answer

I want to thank Mr Clark for his question and for the opportunity to state that the consultation on the future of KCC in house care homes is in no way a reflection of the quality of care that continues to be provided at all of the KCC homes including the Dorothy Lucy Centre. KCC provides a high standard of care to all of our residents and this is reflected in the positive feedback received from residents and their families, as well as the Care Quality Commission.

The building does currently meet all CQC standards. Looking to the future, it is likely that in the medium term without significant capital investment the building would not be able to meet the increasing health and social care needs of Older People. We are already experiencing occasions where we cannot meet some needs due to either additional equipment required or that simply the needs of people cannot be met and have to turn people away.

During the period of the public consultation on the future of the care homes which commenced on 28 September and closes on 20 December 2015, officers are completing a detailed needs analysis to fully understand the needs of Older People who have been using our services.

Selection of the alternative services will need to be managed through a formal procurement exercise and the provider appetite will be detailed in the recommendation report, which will be discussed at the Adult Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee in January prior to taking the key decision.

The recommendation report, that will include the feedback from the public consultation, will be accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment and I will consider both in taking the decision. My commitment has always been that people will not be left without a service and it is important for officers to fully detail how that will be achieved.