

COUNTY COUNCIL**Thursday 24 March 2016****Question by Martin Vye to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Will the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform advise what steps he will take to ensure that Kent pupils will continue to benefit from a good education at those schools which have previously chosen and performed well enough to remain under Kent County Council's control and which will soon be forced to become Academies?

Answer

There has been a good rate of improvement in the quality and performance of Kent schools. Currently 85.1% of schools have been judged by Ofsted to be good or better. Of these 72% (337) are LA maintained schools and 28% (131) are academies.

There are 391 LA maintained schools with an Ofsted judgement, of these:

- 86.2% (337 schools) were judged to be good or better
- 12% (47 schools) were judged to be requiring improvement
- 1.8% (7 schools) have been placed in a category of concern

There are 159 academies with an Ofsted judgement, of these:

- 82.4% (131 schools) were judged to be good or better
- 17% (27 schools) were judged to be requiring improvement
- 0.6% (1 school) has been placed in a category of concern

The recently published White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (March 2016) makes it clear that the role of local authorities will change given an expectation that all schools will become academies by 2022. Local authorities will continue to play an important role in ensuring that every child has a school place, and that the needs of all children are met. They will also continue to act as champions for all parents and families. However, over time local authorities will step back from school improvement as that responsibility will be devolved to a school-led system and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) overseen by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

In Kent, we continue to monitor, support and challenge all maintained schools to ensure that all Kent children benefit from a good education. We also monitor standards in academies and, where there are concerns, raise these with the Regional Schools Commissioner. This role will continue to be pursued robustly in the future.

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**Question by Pam Brivio to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Can the Cabinet Member for Education tell the Council how it is proposed to implement the Chancellor's policy of converting every local authority school into an academy including what this will mean for staff currently employed by this Council?

Answer

Since July 2010 KCC has worked with schools, academy trusts, the DfE and latterly the Regional Schools Commissioner to enable maintained schools to convert to academy status, where they wished to do so. This process has been managed by a dedicated team of officers working closely with many other functions across the authority. In that time a total of 165 conversions have taken place in addition to other associated activity relating to post conversion changes including transfers between trusts.

The White Paper, Educational Excellence Everywhere, published on 17 March one day after the Budget, sets out the government's legislative proposal to require all schools to become academies by 2022. This would be the largest forced structural re-organisation of the education system since the 1944 Education Act.

The DfE acknowledges that both the Local Authority and its own civil servants have a limited capacity to undertake conversion work to academy status, and the plan for all schools to convert will require additional capacity and will be costly, not least to the local authority. Across the last three years the conversion rate has averaged at 23 conversions per year. A total of 31 conversions took place in the financial year 14/15.

Currently approximately three quarters of secondary schools and a quarter of primary schools in Kent have already converted to academy status. This leaves 28 secondary schools, 335 primary schools and 22 special schools which are still maintained by KCC. By way of comparison Essex has over 340 remaining maintained schools and Lancashire over 500. Nationally approximately 75% of schools remain under Local Authority control.

KCC will continue to work with schools to provide advice and guidance on the conversion process, and will support and facilitate Kent schools to form small multi academy trusts.

Once converted, academy schools continue to rely on a range of local authority services, both statutory and traded. Many academies purchase KCC provided services through EduKent. While the local authority's responsibility for school

improvement would be removed by new legislation, KCC will retain statutory responsibilities in respect of SEN, Admissions, Attendance, Early Years, School Place planning, and 14-19 Skills and Employability. The staff currently engaged in delivering these services will continue to do so. At this stage it is too early to be able to identify the full impact on KCC staff. The proposal currently being developed to see these services delivered by a trust or company on a commissioned basis is designed to relate to the new and rapidly evolving educational landscape.