

County Council

20 July 2018

Agenda Item 6(a) - Notice of Motion by Mr High

Academies – Briefing Note

Thomas Bennett Community College (TBCC) became an academy in September 2011 with The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT). TKAT are a large Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with over 40 primary and secondary schools in the south of England, several of which are in Crawley. TBCC was inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) (a full inspection) by Ofsted in November 2016 and graded as 'Requires Improvement'. This was the second time it had been judged as 'Requires Improvement'. The first time was October 2014. The quality of outcomes for pupils remains a concern to the County Council. The County Council has no intelligence which would cause us to have any concerns about the safety of any pupils.

TBCC has recently been inspected under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). The HMI led inspection was a Requires Improvement monitoring Visit 1 and took place on 3 July 2018. We have no information as to the outcome of this visit.

Under the Academies Act 2010 there is no mechanism for an academy to return to local authority control. Academies that are deemed failing or underperforming may be transferred to another MAT or sponsor (known as re-brokering) or subject to other intervention from the relevant Regional Schools Commissioner. However, recent announcements from the Minister for Education means powers of intervention into academies are to shift from Regional Schools Commissioners to the National Schools Commissioner.

The operation of academies is overseen by:

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA – a Department for Education executive agency);
- Schools' inspectorate, Ofsted;
- Regional Schools Commissioners (Department for Education appointees who each cover one of eight regions in England)

Local authorities have a very limited role with Academies and Free schools when it comes to standards and no powers of intervention. The local authority can build a relationship only by invitation from the academy or the trust they belong to. In West Sussex we are open to invitation to visit or have discussion, which we achieve in many academies.

Academies no longer are responsible to the local authority, but directly to the Department for Education. This means it is the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the South East to whom the Trust accounts. The local authority remains able to challenge the RSC to improve the academy where West Sussex children go to the school and standards are not good enough.

Kim Curry

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