

## Enjoying and Achieving

This section is about ensuring that in York we really do aim high, and that every single child and young person really does matter. This means helping them to stay 'on track' where there are early signs of veering off it - minimising the numbers excluded from school and maximising the opportunities for them to find their path and reach their potential. It is about stretching the most able, while focusing special attention on the most vulnerable. It is also about having fun, which is an essential component of a child's well-being, development and happiness.

### Where are we now?

Educational standards for students of all ages in York have continued to rise and some schools gained their highest ever results in 2008. According to Ofsted, two-thirds of our schools are either 'good' or 'outstanding', and we benefit from the presence of strong Colleges of Further Education and two Universities. However, narrowing the academic achievement gap between children from different communities remains a priority for us, as does the well-being and achievement of all vulnerable<sup>3</sup> students.

Improved educational standards are dependent upon many things, but quality of teaching and learning, pupil behaviour in school and pupil attendance are all critically important factors. We are particularly pleased that co-ordinated work has significantly reduced the need to exclude young people on a permanent or fixed term basis from our schools. Where exclusions are still needed, the young people receive a far more intensive package of support than before. This progress has been possible through developing Learning Support Units in mainstream schools, through the new Skills Centre at the Danesgate site, which opened in January 2008, and through the development of Alternative Learning Programmes provided by Young People's Services and others. Primary attendance continues to improve and is amongst the very best nationally; secondary school attendance is also above national average and we are continuing to work towards reducing levels of persistent absence.

"Build more large, fun learning libraries, like vast caves jam-packed with treasure."

We believe that support for families is a crucial factor in children and young people enjoying and achieving. Since 2007 we have extended the Parenting Education and Support Strategy and introduced the 'Strengthening Families and Strengthening Communities' programme, targeted at parents of 8 – 13 year olds. One project in particular, delivered in partnership with a local voluntary group, has been very successful in engaging Traveller parents. We have helped parents to access up-to-date information about



All quotations with a yellow border are from children and young people across the City

<sup>3</sup> See the footnote on page six for examples of those who may be regarded as 'vulnerable'.

services for children and families through the Family Information Service and the YorOK website. All schools are now developing an extended range of opening hours and provision; the School's Out programme (our holiday activity programme) attendance has trebled over the last three years; and the city's Play Strategy has gained regional and national recognition.

"I'm a qualified Mum now! I don't always get it right, probably never will but I can think about each event in a wider context, draw from my new friends and dig into my tool box".

Schools have been making the most of the unique cultural heritage in York, with the city ranking amongst the top in the UK for 'Artsmark'<sup>4</sup> quality provision. We need to continue to expand this programme and implement the Government's 'Find Your Talent' cultural programme involving museums, galleries and heritage partners.

Educational outcomes overall for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to improve and whilst the academic performance of children in care tends to fluctuate, we are confident that an excellent package of tuition is available to them.

As a result our priorities are:

### **9. Aim for world-class standards of leadership and ensure that all children and young people enjoy and achieve by:**

- ▶ focusing on, and strengthening, leadership across schools, colleges and partnerships;
- ▶ supporting and challenging Headteachers, Principals and Governing Bodies to aim for world class standards in their schools/colleges, through clear improvement strategies;
- ▶ ensuring that teaching and learning is of the very highest quality, and recognising that enjoyable lessons contribute to achievement;
- ▶ focusing on the assessment and tracking of pupils so that we make best use of data by intervening early to make a difference;
- ▶ providing a stimulating curriculum and provision that meets the needs of all learners and that gives them many opportunities for success both in and out of school;
- ▶ developing the concept of 'sustainable schools/colleges' that recognises our responsibility to future generations and responds to children's specific concerns;
- ▶ using our Beacon Status for School Improvement to assist other local authorities and to learn from them.



*explore Acomb Library and Learning Centre*

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<sup>4</sup> For more details of the Artsmark scheme see [www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsmark/](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsmark/)

**10. Implement best practice to improve behaviour and attendance by:**

- ▶ reducing further the number of exclusions, especially from vulnerable groups, to keep all young people on the path to success;
- ▶ continuing to review the Behaviour Support Service, including the development of alternative provision for pupils at risk of exclusion;
- ▶ minimising the need for any child to pursue their learning outside York;
- ▶ focusing on the attendance and performance of Looked After Children to ensure that they too enjoy and achieve, recognising that they may need particular encouragement.



**11. Ensure that we 'narrow the gap' in outcomes for vulnerable groups by:**

- ▶ focusing additional, targeted support on vulnerable children and young people;
- ▶ ensuring high aspirations and expectations are part of the culture and ethos of schools;
- ▶ providing support and guidance to settings, schools and families on how they can work together to overcome barriers, with appropriate and tailored strategies drawn on best practice from within and beyond York;
- ▶ increasing further the numbers attending targeted Parenting Programmes, especially those designed to support fathers and parents of disabled children;
- ▶ ensuring that different services supporting vulnerable groups are working together, and that practitioners understand each other's professional language.

"I wish for all children to have their own separate desk so when we are learning we can concentrate on being the best we can be."

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## **12. Continue to ensure a high quality Early Years experience by:**

- ▶ ensuring greater evenness of quality in provision across all Early Years settings, with a common funding formula by 2010;
- ▶ ensuring staff in Early Years settings have the skills to work with disabled children, those with additional needs and their parents, and know how to contact relevant staff with specialist knowledge;
- ▶ providing training and support for staff in settings and schools, including advice and guidance on how to respond to the rising number of children learning English as an additional language at this age;
- ▶ ensuring that high quality, accessible, affordable childcare is available that matches the needs of families in York, including disabled parents;
- ▶ maximising the potential of Children's Centres by, for example, introducing qualified learning leaders in all of them.

## **13. Ensure that children and young people make best use of York's unique culture and heritage to participate fully in their cultural entitlement by:**

- ▶ ensuring that arts and sports play a key role in enjoyment and achievement opportunities;
- ▶ implementing the new five hours of cultural entitlement within schools through innovative programmes drawn up with partners across York;
- ▶ ensuring sports, arts and heritage learning opportunities are at the heart of extended schools provision;
- ▶ devising and promoting a wide-ranging programme of cultural activities for 0 - 5 year olds;
- ▶ encouraging increased active engagement in lifelong learning and culture through improved Explore Library Learning Centres;
- ▶ developing more opportunities to celebrate young people's talent and maximising the sporting and cultural opportunities from the London 2012 Olympics.

## **How will we know we are making a difference?**

The YorOK partnership collects a wide range of information about the performance of children and young people. As we make progress against the priorities set out above, we would expect to see improvements in:

- ▶ attainment and achievement for all pupils,
- ▶ a narrowing of the gap between children in areas of disadvantage and their peers at all key stages,
- ▶ persistent absenteeism in schools,
- ▶ permanent exclusions in our schools,
- ▶ early years settings inspections outcomes,
- ▶ York being a culturally exciting place to live for young people.