

Redcar and Cleveland School Improvement Adviser Team

Governors' Association Termly Meeting on 9 November 2015

"All our schools, including academies, are part of the Redcar and Cleveland family and our team of three Local Authority Senior Advisers are dedicated to working with them to ensure school improvement," said David Major at the Autumn term meeting of the Governors' Association.

David, Lynne Stabler and David Baldwin were invited to introduce themselves to Association members and to give an update on their roles, schools allocated to them, their processes for monitoring school effectiveness and categorising schools, how they are working with governors and reports provided for governors during the year.

David Major reminded us that he began his career as a History teacher at Norton and has gained promotion locally in the last twenty-five years culminating in his current position. David Baldwin joined Redcar and Cleveland after Easter in 2015, having recently served in Norfolk as a Primary Headteacher. He has substantial experience of working in Further Education Colleges too and as a volleyball coach, once brought a team up to play (unsuccessfully!) against Redcar College. He was attracted to his present role by the remarkable recent achievements of the primary schools in Redcar and Cleveland.

In Norfolk, David was a member of the same cluster as Lynne Stabler, also a former Headteacher in the county. She was Executive Head of two primary schools and became interested in her present post, when her attention was drawn to the excellent test results at Key Stage 2 here. "I wanted to come and work with people at the top of their game," she explained.

Michael Wilshaw, OFSTED Chief Inspector, remarked on this too in October 2015: "Only a tiny number of the most affluent London boroughs did better than Redcar and Cleveland in this year's SATS. It rose from 73rd in the country 3 years ago, to 26th in 2013 and 18th last year." Furthermore, in 2015, our borough was 4th in the country!

He continued: "...its schools have a culture of no excuses, demanding high standards from all children, no matter what their background. Results have vastly improved since all Headteachers began working in clusters, poring over results, sharing expertise, having frank discussions about each other's strengths and weaknesses and taking responsibility for all children in the borough."

John Anthony, Head of Learning and Achievement and the Advisers' Line Manager has taken a strong lead on the Local Authority getting involved in school improvement, working with school leaders as partners. David Major was confident about this continuing, even in the case of further budget cuts, as OFSTED inspects Local Authorities and expects them to know their schools.

The Advisers see working with governors as very important, as we are the people who regularly challenge the schools. The Redcar and Cleveland Plan 2014 - 2017 states that school categorisation will take place three times a year and this will include an assessment of governance and leadership.

The Local Authority is focusing on supporting work with children with special needs, looked after children and those who are eligible for the Pupil Premium. There is a determination to

reduce the gap in achievement between non-disadvantaged children and disadvantaged children.

An interesting discussion developed about ways in which the success of our primary children can be extended into our secondary schools, which are not as high up in the league tables. Some children are not secondary school ready when they transfer. Although they've done well in their SATS, they may not be able to cope with the size of their new school or the breadth of the curriculum. Schools are planning an extended transition stage at the end of Summer term 2016 and the Year 6 teachers may be able to spend time with their children in the secondary environment.

David Major drew attention to the several learning networks in Redcar and Cleveland, such as the Landmark Teaching Alliance; Aspire Learning Trust and the East Cleveland Co-operative Learning Trust. School staff can contribute to and take ideas from these networks, which are growing increasingly good at supporting pupil progress.

The Advisers provided each governor with a booklet 'Framework for School Improvement' and details of the responsibilities of each of the three of them. They are working with schools in both geographical and phase structures, gaining the advantage of their experience and expertise. The slides of the presentation have also been emailed to all governors who were present and these provide further detail.

David Major urged governors with further thoughts to get in touch and left us with a great feeling of confidence in the Redcar and Cleveland Advisory Service.

Rosemary Nicholls