



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Wokingham Local Authority

**Refocussing School Improvement Services
2023/24**

**A Framework for Engagement with Community Schools
and Academies**

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Vision and priorities.....	3
Statutory functions and responsibilities	4
School Performance Duties.....	4
Wider duty themes and summary statutory responsibilities	4
Our Approach from September 2023	5
Wokingham Foci.....	5
Visible Engagement Activity	6

Introduction

This paper sets out the new approach that Wokingham Borough Council's School Improvement will adopt from September 2023 to refocus on local authority's legal duties and the associated priorities.

The drivers for the change include:

- On 11 January 2022, DfE announced in the consultation response, '[Reforming how local authority school improvement functions are funded](#)', that in future these functions will be funded from maintained school budgets, with the grant to be reduced by 50% in 2022 to 2023 ahead of full removal in 2023 to 2024.
- There has been a significance increase in the demands of SEND and vulnerable learners support and the expectation of local authorities' fulfilment of their legal duties to be a system leader in area Special Education Needs and vulnerable learner support.
- The government's drive for a school system reform leads to a significantly increase in schools converting to be an Academy. It requires the local authority to pivot or increase the resource to facilitate the conversion projects.

In line with central government policy direction, and the placement of the above traditional local authority grant into the wider school system, Wokingham Local Authority intends to refocus the work of the School Improvement Team on the LA statutory duties and the priorities of SEND and supporting vulnerable learners from September 2023.

Central policy direction places expectation on the school system to finesse its peer-to-peer school led system of support going forward. Wokingham Borough Council support a school-led system.

In the changing education landscape, the work of the School Improvement Team has been changing over time and will now be refocussed in line with local authority legal duty for education, SEND and the priority to support vulnerable learners under this policy direction. Officers will have a more strategic and partnering role with schools moving forward, enabling and facilitating system effectiveness. It may be helpful to view the team as Strategic Partners rather than School Improvement delivery agents. For this reason, we will rename the team as Education Partnership Service.

Vision and priorities

Wokingham has an ambition for outstanding education for all its children and young people in the Borough. This is achieved through a focus on challenging every school to be good or outstanding so that the gap between children who achieve the highest and lowest attainment scores, reduces. Moving forward, Wokingham Borough Council will focus on promoting and enabling sector-led improvements and ensuring the best start in life for all children with effective preparation for adulthood by adopting a multi-agency approach and partnership working. In the meantime, the Local Authority will continue to have responsibility under its statutory duties for the performance of schools. Officers will therefore work to focus on discharging those statutory functions through engaging in activities that enable statutory

obligations to be met while being an active partner of all other non-statutory school improvement activities led by schools.

Through continued professional dialogue, facilitation and enablement of support and challenge, the school improvement service ensures schools are ambitious for the children of the Borough, delivering excellent standards of education and supporting the well-being of all their pupils.

Statutory functions and responsibilities

School Performance Duties

The current Schools Causing Concern Statutory Guidance (DfE 2022) sets out the duties for local authorities in relation to school performance as follows:

Local authorities should act as champions of high standards of education across their schools, and in doing so should:

- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress;
- Work closely with the relevant Regional Director and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve;
- Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant Regional Director, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and
- Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to: take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.

Local Authorities should also take an active interest in the quality of governance in maintained schools, promoting and supporting high standards of governance. This requires recognising where a school could improve and encouraging governing bodies to do so.

Wider duty themes and summary statutory responsibilities

The Local Authority is bound by around 200 responsibilities and a guide to some of these can be found in more detail at the end of this document in the appendix.

The LA must act as the champion for the needs of the vulnerable in the borough and advocate on behalf of all children.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the LA must always think about how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the “best possible educational and other outcomes”.

Whilst specific school quality elements might be summarised in the Schools Causing Concern guidance as above, further responsibilities specifically relating to school performance include:

Curriculum and Assessment

- SACRE to support RE provision
- Broad balanced curriculum available to all
- KS2 Assessment, moderation and test monitoring
- Phonics check monitoring

Leadership and Management

- Ensuring governor appointments and provision of training and support
- Supporting local strategic leadership of the diverse local system
- Facilitating engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in supporting effective provision for children
- Ensuring effective attendance for all
- Working to reduce child poverty
- Ensuring equality matters are addressed
- Supporting academy conversions
- Supporting schools address community/ parental feedback or complaints direct or via Ofsted

Safeguarding

- S175 audits
- Prevent duty
- Supporting effective safeguarding and working with the LADO
- Responding to safeguarding concerns or complaints received by Ofsted

Ensuring Fair access

- Supporting early intervention and effective transitions
- Meeting local needs, place and transport planning at all ages
- Promoting positive attendance and reducing exclusions and suspensions

Our Approach from September 2023

The school improvement team will work with a facilitative approach.

As strategic partners they will work to enable inter-team connectivity and broker LA officer engagement and advice where appropriate across a range of LA teams.

Officers will work together with the school system and wider council and partner agency colleagues in co-constructing local solutions and signposting good practice and support as appropriate.

The service will work closely with school leaders to support local school-led collaborations and partnership.

As the development of the BEP takes place over time this will serve to build a helpful forum for the progress of the local system.

Wokingham Foci

At a local level, priorities for 2023/24 focus on specific workstreams emerging from the above responsibilities and have specific foci and activity that enable the Local Authority to discharge its statutory functions and the priorities for vulnerable learner support, ceasing any non-statutory service offer:

Priority/Workstream

- SEND SEF and QA
- Promoting Whole School SEND
- SEND leadership support
- Cross-cutting work with SEND services
- QA of alternative provision and hospital school
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Supporting the vulnerable and improving the attainment gap
- Safety Valve Programme delivery and ASEND
- Effective EYFS provision
- Supporting inclusion
- Leadership and sharing of good practice in and between schools
- Attendance, Exclusion and CME

Enabling service activities from September 2023 to support LA priority and statutory function fulfilment:

- Cross-cutting working with SEND team to QA and self-assess service and provisions
- Cross-cutting working with EWS and Inclusion to facilitate leadership support and partnership in promoting inclusion approach across the education community
- Cross-cutting working to support vulnerable learners' post-16 participation
- Facilitating the LA's academy conversion projects
- Monitoring AP and hospital school's SLAs and attending their management committee meetings and headteacher appraisals
- Annual engagement and prioritisation conversation with each school associated with local authority legal duties
- Review of performance data at national, local and school level for benchmarking purposes
- Regular conversation with linked HMI for challenge and support to the system
- Regular discussion with DfE and Regional Director for strategic development and system effectiveness
- Co-ordination of interagency and cross department working for academy conversions
- Professional input and challenge to task and finish groups working on local strategic priorities and advising on best practice and effective delivery.
- Intelligence analysis of system performance based on a range of indicators including customer satisfaction, Ofsted outcomes, complaints and standards.
- Investigating and responding to concerns regarding safeguarding or failures in leadership and management
- Reviewing attendance and exclusions information to champion effective attendance for all
- Support for KS2 assessment, and test monitoring
- Facilitation of SACRE requirements
- Governance challenge and support
- S175 safeguarding audit reviews
- Co-ordination of multi-agency support for New Arrivals and Refugees
- Ensuring racial equity and diversity
- Ensuring a comprehensive Universal Offer enabling success for all pupils

Visible Engagement Activity

Examples of the visible activities to enable delivery of the strategy are set out below:

Activities enabling delivery against WBC priorities 2023-24				
Curriculum and Assessment	Leadership and system partnership	Championing the vulnerable	SEND, Access and Inclusion	Early Years
Monitoring of KS2 tests and Phonics screening	Facilitating system development and academisation programmes	Training for supporting New Arrivals, refugees and asylum seekers	EAL Network	SEND EYs Partnership
Moderation support and guidance	Annual engagement conversation with schools/MATs	Pupil Premium Network	New arrivals and refugee support	Early Years roundtable support
Teacher Assessment moderation meetings	Bespoke Ofsted preparation support	Therapeutic Thinking Universal Offer with training / coaching	Supporting SEND Hub provision	Developing partnership work on Early Years transitions
Assessment leads network	Ofsted Window preparation workshop series	MHWB support with Charlie Waller Trust	Reviewing exclusions and attendance information to champion effective attendance	
RE networks and training provided by SACRE	Monthly Leadership Drop In on a range of hot topics	Supporting Mental Health In Schools developments	Promoting racial equity and diversity with access to expertise and training	
LA outcomes overview for local benchmarking for the most vulnerable	Governance support and guidance including headteacher recruitment for community maintained schools		SENDCO integrated support with EPS and other services	
	Monitoring AP and PRU SLA		ASEND SEF and QA Advice – integrated working	
	Analysis and reporting on data sets		ASEND Inspection Advice – integrated working	
	S175 Audit feedback			
	Prevent audit support			
	Transition network			
	Responding to complaints – liaising with leaders and Ofsted			
	Providing telephone support, email advice and guidance on issues			