

25 March, 2014

School Improvement Framework

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R. Andrew – Children's Services

Report:

1. Context

Key national messages from the annual report 2013 of the Chief Inspector are that:

- ❖ children in England now have the best chance they have ever had of attending a good school
- ❖ the proportion of children attending good or outstanding primary schools has increased considerably this year
- ❖ regional variation is holding some children and young people back
- ❖ greater accountability and more focused inspection have contributed to improvement in many of our weaker schools
- ❖ English and mathematics are still not taught well enough in too many classrooms
- ❖ weak leadership must be challenged to improve; strong governance is therefore critical
- ❖ white children from low income backgrounds are being left behind
- ❖ raising the achievement of disadvantaged children is a moral and economic imperative

2. An overview of the West Midlands and a focus on Walsall.

In 2012/13 the number of good and outstanding primary schools increased in the West Midlands. Despite this a child attending primary school in the West Midlands is less likely to attend a good or better school than in most other areas in England.

- ❖ 72% of West Midlands secondary schools are good or better, and fewer

schools are deemed inadequate

- ❖ in Walsall the number of good or better schools has increased in Walsall. However recently this trend is changing
- ❖ for both primary and secondary schools Walsall ranks low in the national league tables. Primary schools were ranked 140th in 2012/13, with 66% good or better schools, secondary schools were ranked 111th in 2012/13, with 66% good or better schools
- ❖ Walsall has a higher percentage of children in inadequate or requiring improvement schools than the rest of the West Midlands or England.

3. What is school improvement doing to halt the decline of schools and how is Walsall SI offering support and challenge to improve number of children attending good and outstanding schools?

School Improvement strategy

Led and managed by heads and governors: commitment by schools across the local authority (LA) to improve outcomes for all children and focus on eight improvement challenges: underpinned by operational and delivery plans produced by school leaders. The priority areas are:

All schools in Walsall, whether local authority maintained or academies, have something to offer to others on these priorities or something to learn from others in the interests of all the children in Walsall.

- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- narrow the gap for those vulnerable to under-achievement and potential exclusion using early intervention, nurturing and inclusion
- improve transition to, within and from each phase of learning and training through curriculum challenge and cross phase curriculum continuity and progression
- work better together to improve children's behaviour, care, safeguarding and attendance to maximise their learning by involving schools, parents, educational services and agencies
- improve schools' and pupil achievement through high quality school to school improvement support
- strengthen school leadership and management, support new head teachers and succession planning at all levels
- strengthen school governance and promote succession planning for governing bodies; raise awareness in the community of the importance

of school governance in order to recruit more good governors

- work to ensure all our schools are good or outstanding and make best use of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), National Leaders of Governance (NLGs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) as important forces in driving improvement across all schools and as leaders of sector-led improvement

School Improvement Recovery programme

Connected into school improvement strategy, this is the LA's programme to address underperformance through five workstreams:

- towards a school led system:
- schools causing concern
- school leadership and governance
- school ready and
- achievement for Vulnerable learners.

Funding is being allocated to address and achieve priorities.

Core offer

All primary schools, including academies are allocated to one of four bands according to school performance:

Schools causing concern Intervention programme designed to bring about rapid improvements (primary schools: A = 46, B = 19; C = 9; D = 26)

Core offer process being extended to secondary and special schools

Halting decline

DCS and AD hold individual school meetings with all heads and chairs of governors (and sponsors if academy) going into Ofsted category: also planning similar meetings with schools causing concern.

Dedicated group of Improvement Advisers focused on schools causing concern (band C and D) to bring about rapid improvements through clarifying improvement priorities, brokering support, quality assuring delivery and monitoring improvements

Links established with all sponsors of academies - regular communications

External consultants engaged to work with Improvement Advisers (IAs) to add capacity and develop existing IA capacity, including two serving heads working as IAs in C/D schools – piloting this as model to add temporary capacity and bring about rapid improvement

Monitoring improvement and impact through Improvement Review process, to evaluate both the school's strategies and LA brokerage, overseen by Assistant Director

Register established for school-to-school support framework – coherent

centralised system used by IA for brokerage (band A schools invited to be on framework): support brokered from good / outstanding schools

Where judgement made leadership does not have capacity to improve, close monitoring and/or leadership changes take place

Reviews of governance – used to identify strong, sound and weak practice in governance

Where governance causing concern, Interim Executive Board (IEB) established; or pre-warning letter sent; or review of Governance: borough wide action plan established for improving governance

Following analysis of issues, targeted training for schools across borough to be organised, e.g. writing skills in early years; improving boys' writing; science at key stage 2, literacy skills in key stage 3 onwards.

Support and challenge to improve number of children attending good and outstanding schools

Raising aspirations of school leadership through, for example, school improvement conferences, supporting teaching school initiatives, research seminars and developing best practice portal

Building stronger links across schools e.g. federations, clusters, to improve capacity and capability

Building leadership capacity through developing a strategy for leadership development, talent management and succession planning:

Supporting creation of Walsall Governors Association - to be run by school governors

Implementing an improvement plan for governance focused primarily on band C and D schools

Series of workshops targeted on improving progress between key stage 1 and 2 (i.e. years 3, 4 5 and 6) in writing and maths

Early years leadership programme developed targeted at developing EYFS middle leaders and building EYFS leadership capacity in school causing concern

School ready is key priority in both Early Help strategy and School Improvement Recovery plan

Six nursery schools with focus on home learning environments and early literacy

Reviewed training programme to focus around evidence based priorities e.g. letters and sounds training, EAL, mathematics (working in numbers to

20) and developing best practice portfolio of case studies


Five to Thrive programme to be introduced to support early development 0-3 years

FAST programme to be run through 6 nursery schools with focus on home learning environments and early literacy

Recommendations:

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the report be noted.

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Walsall School Improvement Strategy 2014-2016



Better Together for Children



Walsall Council

Walsall School Improvement Strategy

2014-2016

Better Together for Children

- ***All our children and young people will experience a good or outstanding education***
- ***We will all work to raise aspirations, raise expectations and raise achievement throughout the learning community of Walsall***
- ***Every learner will develop world class aptitudes, qualifications and skills for employability and life***

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Foreword


This Strategy sets out the vision and priorities for school improvement across Walsall over the next three years. It is based upon the valuable and powerful contributions and engagement from Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors, local authority officers and many others who aspire to raise the attainment of our children and young people. It is built upon the experience of our previous plans, and our aspirations for the future.

We have big challenges in Walsall but the vision and work programme set out here show we are determined to confront those challenges and succeed in making a difference for all learners. We are committed to working together to meet all challenges.

The Strategy sets out how we want to work together to make best use of the good practice which exists and to discover and share excellence in teaching and good leadership. It commits us to share what is best and learn from this for children and young people.

'We' and 'our' are used throughout the text. They are used to denote the Head Teacher Working Group on behalf of the community of all those involved in education in Walsall. We hope you, reader, will identify strongly with this collective approach.

We commend the Strategy to all Head Teachers and their staff and to all Governing Bodies. We hope you will regard it as the common thread that joins us all in the single minded endeavour of raising expectations and championing the children of Walsall.



Rose Collinson, Interim Director Children's Services and **David Mountney**, Head Teacher Aldridge School and Co-Chair of the Head Teacher Working Group

On behalf of the Head Teacher Working Group

Part 1 Our Vision and Priorities

Our vision for school improvement

- *All our children and young people will experience a good or outstanding education*
- *We will all work to raise aspirations, raise expectations and raise achievement throughout the learning community of Walsall*
- *Every learner will develop world class aptitudes, qualifications and skills for employability and life*



In order to succeed and make this vision a reality, Walsall's schools, Head Teachers, Governors and the local authority own:

- a shared commitment to improving opportunities for **all** children and young people
- a challenge to each school to consider what it could do for the benefit of **all**
- a collective commitment that all schools will be good or outstanding by 2016, at the end of the timescale covered by this strategy

We see the audience and purpose for the Strategy as the following:

- **Audience:** schools and settings, Head Teachers, all staff, Governors, Elected Members, local authority officers, local, regional and national partners including alternative curriculum providers, learning and skills providers and the professional associations
- **Purpose:** by setting out our commitment and ambition for young people in Walsall and the agreed Priorities for Improvement we are planning strategically for **what** we will do over the next three years to improve outcomes. The Strategy is underpinned by an **Operational Plan**, which sets out **how** we will deliver the Strategy in order to impact on the achievement of children and young people.

Priorities for improvement

Based on consultations with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors and evidence such as what we know about performance as outlined later in this Strategy, we identify the most pressing priorities for Walsall during the life of this Strategy (2014-2016) as set out below.

All schools in Walsall, whether local authority maintained or academies, have something to offer to others on these priorities or something to learn from others in the interests of all the children in Walsall.

- *improve the quality of teaching and learning*
- *narrow the gap for those vulnerable to under-achievement and potential exclusion using early intervention, nurturing and inclusion*
- *improve transition to, within and from each phase of learning and training through curriculum challenge and cross phase curriculum continuity and progression*
- *work better together to improve children's behaviour, care, safeguarding and attendance to maximise their learning by involving schools, parents, educational services and agencies*
- *improve schools' and pupil achievement through high quality school to school improvement support*
- *strengthen school leadership and management, support new head teachers and succession planning at all levels*
- *strengthen school governance and promote succession planning for governing bodies; raise awareness in the community of the importance of school governance in order to recruit more good governors*
- *work to ensure all our schools are good or outstanding and make best use of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), National Leaders of Governance (NLGs), Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) and Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) as important forces in driving improvement across all schools and as leaders of sector-led improvement*

Delivery Plans for the Priorities

We are completing a set of Delivery Plans to show how we will achieve each priority over the course of the three years covered by this Strategy. These plans provide the detail of what individual schools, clusters of schools, good and outstanding schools and the local authority school improvement service **will deliver** and be held accountable for delivering on behalf of all Walsall children. The Cluster groups will meet on 28 February 2014 and will discuss and agree their contributions to the plans. The details of delivery will be a focus of the DCS briefing to be held on 14 March.

The Delivery Plans are set out in the **Operational Plan** which underpins this Strategy. More information about the Operational Plan is given in Part 4 below.

Part 2 Monitoring, support, challenge and evaluation:

- (i) Shared values and behaviours underpinning school improvement activity
- (ii) The local authority leadership role
- (iii) What we know about schools' performance at January 2014
- (iv) Recovery Plan for the School Improvement Function
- (v) The Core Offer
- (vi) Monitoring, challenge and support of schools
- (vii) Leadership and governance: indicators for concern
- (viii) Evaluation of progress: Improvement Review Meetings
- (ix) Use of Statutory powers



(i) Shared values and behaviours underpinning school improvement activity: the LA and the HTWG have adopted these on behalf of all those involved

- Every school is ambitious for its pupils and has a robust development plan which shows how it will become or remain “good” or “outstanding”
- All professionals, Head Teachers, staff, Governors, collectively demonstrate relentless ambition for **all** learners and schools in Walsall

- LA judgements on school performance are backed up by sound intelligence and a range of evidence
- Interaction between all professionals is characterised by open, honest, transparent and sensitive professional dialogue
- We all deliver what we promise and do not promise more than we can deliver, we are well prepared and we demonstrate mutual respect
- The culture for school improvers is consistent with high quality support for schools under-pinned by timely responsiveness
- Notes of school visits will be clear and focused on adding value to the school and on the impact of actions taken and normally available to the head teacher 48 hours after a visit
- Values and behaviours will be under-pinned by Head Teachers, Governors and local authority officers actively delivering their accountabilities
- Accountabilities for improvement are explicit as set out in the Operational Plan
- Challenging ourselves and each other to be the best

(ii) The local authority leadership role

Walsall Council values the views and commitment which have emerged during the Strategy review. It recognises that it has a leadership role and responsibilities that it must exercise in an open and transparent way within a community of autonomous self-managing and self-improving schools. This is part of the Council's pivotal role in local democratic accountability.

The principle that underpins all aspects of local authority leadership is that the Council exists to champion and challenge all providers to deliver the best possible learning experience for every child in Walsall whatever his/her individual needs may be and whatever family circumstance, socio economic background or learning potential the child brings to his/her learning.

We recognise HMCI's assertion that poverty is not and will not be accepted as a barrier to high performance and we will challenge all schools to have the highest possible ambition for its pupils. Officers and elected members will work in close partnership with Head Teachers and Governors to ensure that all of our children are "lucky" (as defined by HMCI; see page 24) in the education they receive and by 2016 we expect all of our schools and settings to be judged by Ofsted as good or better.

(iii) What we know about school performance at January 2014

Walsall pupil performance - January 2014

It should be noted that where detail of Walsall's national ranking is given, this is out of 152 LAs for primary phase and 151 for secondary.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- The percentage of children making a Good Level of Development stands at 46%, which is below our statistical neighbours (47%) and national (52%). Walsall is in the 4th (bottom) quartile for this measure. Walsall is ranked 112th in the country, compared to 124th last year. This is a new measure, so measuring improvement from last year's figures is not possible.

Key Stage One Level 2+

- Reading currently stands at 89% which is above our statistical neighbours and the same as national. Our lowest performance for an ethnic heritage group is 'Other' at 85%, followed by Black Caribbean and White British at 89%.
- Writing at Level 2+ is currently 84% and is above statistical neighbours, but below national. The lowest performance for an ethnic heritage group is 'Other' pupils at 78%, followed by Black Caribbean at 82%.
- Maths is at 91%, which is above statistical neighbours and at national. The lowest performance for an ethnic heritage group is 'Other' pupils at 86% and Pakistani pupils at 87%.

Key Stage Two Level 4+

- Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined is at 71% per cent, statistical neighbours at 73.3% and national at 75%. Walsall is in attainment quartile 4 and ranked 134th. The lowest performing ethnic heritage group is White with 70%.
- The non-free school meals and free school meals gap is greater than national for Reading and Maths as separate subjects as well as Reading, Writing and Maths combined. The gap is smaller than national for Writing.
- The non-special educational needs and special educational needs gap is greater than national for Reading, Writing and Maths as separate subjects as well as for these subjects combined.

Key Stage Four (KS4)

- 2013 performance for 5+ A*-C including English & maths: Walsall 58.7%, statistical neighbours 58.3%, national 59.2%. Walsall LA is ranked 103rd.
- 2013 performance for GCSE 5+ A*-C: Walsall 87.1%, statistical neighbours 84.6%, national 81.8%. Walsall LA is ranked 33rd.

Key Stage Five (KS5)

- Students attaining 2 or more passes of A Level equivalent size in Walsall for 2013: 89.1%, above statistical neighbours at 88.3%, but below national at 92.3%. Ranked 112th.
- Average points score per candidate in Walsall for 2013: 701.3, above statistical neighbours at 669.9, but below national at 724.3. Ranked 64th.
- Average points score per entry in Walsall for 2013: 208.5, which is above statistical neighbours at 206.1, but below national at 213.7. Ranked 86th.

Attainment

	Walsall	SN	National	Quartile	Improvement Quartile	Rank	Lowest performing ethnic group
EYFS Good level of development	46.0%	47.0%	52.0%	D	N/A	112	
KS1 Level 2+ Reading	89.0%	86.6%	89.0%	C	D	54	Other (85%), Black Caribbean & White British (89%)
KS1 Level 2+ Writing	84.0%	82.6%	85.0%	C	D	87	Other (78%), Black Caribbean (82%)
KS1 Level 2+ Maths	91.0%	89.5%	91.0%	C	C	71	Other (86%), Pakistani (87%)
KS2 Level 4+ RWM	71.0%	73.3%	75.0%	D		134	White (70%)
KS4 GCSE 5 A*-C inc Eng & Maths	58.7%	58.3%	59.2%			103	
KS4 GCSE 5 A*-C	87.1%	84.6%	81.8%			33	
A Level 2+ passes	89.1%	88.3%	92.3%			112	
A Level APS per candidate	701.3	669.9	724.3			64	
A Level APS per entry	208.5	206.1	213.7			86	

Ofsted Inspections: as at 24.01.2014

Outcomes	School Phase						
	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	All Through	Special	Pru	Overall
Outstanding / Good	100% (8)	63.3% (50)	68.8% (11)	-	85.7% (6)	100% (2)	68.1% (77)
Outstanding	100% (8)	15.2% (12)	25% (4)	-	42.9% (3)	-	23.9% (27)
Good	-	48.1% (38)	43.8% (7)	-	42.9% (3)	100% (2)	44.2% (50)
Satisfactory	-	6.3% (5)	-	-	14.3% (1)	-	5.3% (6)
Requires Improvement	-	22.8% (18)	25% (4)	-	-	-	19.5% (22)
Total Grade 3	-	29.1% (23)	25% (4)	-	14.3% (1)	-	24.8% (28)
Inadequate	-	7.6% (6)	6.3% (1)	100% (1)	-	-	7.1% (8)
Total No. Inspections	8	79	16	1	7	2	113
No Data	-	6	2	-	-	-	8
Total No. Schools	8	85	18	1	7	2	121

KS2 , KS4 and KS5 results sourced from validated SFRs, 24.01.2014

(iv) Recovery Plan for the School Improvement Function

There is currently a need for significant on-going work to improve some fundamental aspects of school improvement services. The LA is producing a School Improvement Recovery Plan – details of which will be agreed with the HTWG in spring 2014. In particular, this plan will give details of how the following aspects of LA intervention in schools will be managed, specifically:

- Delivering much needed work to strengthen improvement plans in schools causing concern
- Ensuring clarity and transparency in all aspects of LA intervention in schools causing concern. This will include bringing greater rigour and consistency to the process and outcomes of Improvement Review Meetings (formerly PRGs) which will be held for all vulnerable schools. These meetings will include more forensic analysis of the progress a school is making with particular reference to tracking pupils' performance. Meetings will also objectively assess the improvement support that a school is receiving from whatever source to ensure that this is having a rapid and sustainable impact on the learning experience of pupils.

The SI Improvement Recovery Plan will also:

- Set out how schools, settings and the LA will work together to promote school readiness amongst our young children
- Identify the way in which all groups of vulnerable children will be supported to achieve their full potential
- Articulate the ways in which school leadership and governance (an urgent priority identified in many recent Ofsted reports) will be supported by the LA, good and outstanding schools, teaching schools and other centres of excellence from beyond Walsall
- Explore new directions for LA school improvement services- ensuring that future systems and infrastructure match the changing local and national landscape for school improvement.

(v) The Core Offer for school improvement

All schools, including academies, are offered an opportunity to work with a nominated Improvement Adviser (IA) on the core offer. The core offer involves an annual desk top analysis of a school's data and information held by the School Improvement Service and supplemented with other sources from across Children's Services.

All information held will already be known to the school, either because information is in the public domain or is part of previous work/discussions with Walsall Children's Services teams. The analysis will be discussed with the school. Schools also undertake their own analysis, so the discussion focuses on the sharing of these analyses, discussion of key perspectives and identification of improvement priorities. A telephone discussion is held with academies and LA schools receive a visit. The Head Teacher and IA will agree on the "school band". The band

determines level of support a school receives from the local authority. This process takes place in the autumn term, in line with publication of Raiseonline (RoL) data and will be conducted in an open, transparent and professional way. Outcomes of the telephone conversation/visit will be recorded through the “school contact” process on the Walsall Pendulum System.

The process is confidential to the school and the School Improvement Service. Depending on improvement priorities other teams within Children’s Services may be brought into the process (e.g. discussion of attendance data could involve a member of the Access Team).

Core offer plus:

In the spring and summer terms, a further data update (by exception) is undertaken for all local authority schools. The ‘core offer plus’ checks progress and adjusts, if necessary, the allocated support band and level of support provided.

Targeted support:

Following core offer diagnosis, in discussion with the school, all schools are placed in a band:

- Band A* No support required: if schools are judged to have sufficient capacity, they will be invited to join school-to-school support framework to provide improvement support to schools in bands B, C and D
- Band B* School is improving but in danger of “flat lining” due to a particular and specific change, situation or challenge. Band B schools would be offered tightly targeted support related to the specific identified issue.
- Band C* School is making insufficient progress. Along with its own school improvement programme, a school in Band C would be offered LA brokered support and LA monitoring: funded for LA schools
- Band D* School in an Ofsted category (3 or 4) placed in Band D
All schools in Ofsted category 4 will have School / LA Improvement - Recovery Plan: LA elements of plan brokered / co-ordinated / monitored by IA

Agreeing the Band: the process:

The “band” is agreed through discussion with the Head Teacher and governing body during stage two of the core offer process. If agreement cannot be reached, the IA will involve the Head of Service.

The local authority meets the cost of the IA’s time as follows for each school:

- Core offer and core offer plus: 3 – 4 days a year
- Core offer only: 1 – 2 days a year

Band B schools: up to 3 days a year (in addition to above)

Band C and D schools: up to 6 days a year (in addition to above)

Additional days for LA schools for Band B, C and D will be funded by the LA.

As part of the LA's duty to promote a good education for all children in the borough, if an academy is in Band D additional support can be negotiated.

The LA meets the cost of activity from other parts of Children's Services covered by LA statutory requirements. Schools in Bands B, C and D are responsible for meeting the cost of other support which is not covered, either by SLA or the above statement.

Statutory Requirements:

The core offer also includes certain statutory duties which are undertaken by suitably experienced members of the School Improvement team, including:

- statutory duties re: assessment, including phonics and KS1 moderation
- key stage two – moderation (including supporting transition)
- Head Teacher selection - advising governing body on appointments
- Ofsted inspection: supporting school, meeting lead inspector; feedback sessions
- Ofsted outcome (3 or 4) - contributing to improvement / recovery plan and statement of action
- statutory responsibilities relating to governance, e.g. changes to articles of governance
- Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education(SACRE)

The School Improvement service will also facilitate the sharing of practice across schools, including through the Learning Consortium, disseminate research findings and link all schools into regional / national initiatives.

Further detail of the Core Offer is provided in the Operational Plan which underpins this Strategy.

(vi) Monitoring, support and challenge of schools

The local authority will monitor, support and challenge school performance through the core offer and core offer plus process which is delivered by the school improvement service. This process is described in full from page 14 and allows for three regular contacts with local authority schools during each academic year—one in each term. Using a forensic analysis of all relevant data and information and evidence informed judgments, the school and the local authority should reach a shared understanding of the strengths and improvement priorities of

the school. The role of the Improvement Adviser in the process is to appropriately challenge the school to ensure the school's ambitions for children are sufficiently high, data is used comprehensively and their improvement priorities are robust and appropriate.

The performance of academies is monitored through an annual analysis of data and a follow up discussion with the school. Additional support and challenge is available to academies through negotiation. The school improvement service is responsible for keeping the Director of Children's Services (DCS) informed about the progress an academy is making.

Termly meetings are also held with the DCS, Assistant Director and DfE officials when the performance of both local authority and academy schools is discussed.

All schools receiving additional support from the local authority (bands C and D) are subject to monitoring through the Improvement Review process.

If a school is judged, on the basis of available evidence, to be making insufficient progress the IA will inform the school that a written report will be sent to the Assistant Director. The Assistant Director will contact the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors informing them of the action the local authority plans to take.

(vii) Leadership and governance: indicators for concern

During the core offer process, as part of the evidence base, the Improvement Adviser (IA) will take account of a school's leadership and governance. The IA will share and discuss the evidence with the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors during the core offer discussion. This will contribute towards the decision on the level of support the school requires and, therefore, the most appropriate "band" for the school.

Concerns about leadership and governance will be raised with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors during the core offer discussion. With regard to whole school leadership, these concerns could be about middle or senior leadership and/or the Head Teacher.

Where the performance of the school is causing concern the key factor to be considered is whether the school's leadership and governance has the capacity to improve the school. Questions the IA will consider include:

- Is the vision for the school sufficiently ambitious and does the school's leadership have high expectations of staff and pupils for sustained improvement?
- Is the school's self-evaluation evidence accurate and does it lead to effective strategic and operational planning?
- Is any underperformance being addressed in a timely and effective way so that teaching is at least good?
- Is the school a safe and positive welcoming environment where behaviour for learning enables **all** pupils to make at least good progress?

With regard to the Head Teacher's own leadership, indicators include:

- Standards failing to rise, quickly and sustainably, despite the school receiving significant support
- Pupil attendance shows downward trend and/or high exclusion figures
- Inaccurate assessment and progress tracking data
- If applicable, inadequate progress seen through Improvement Review meetings
- Frequent HR issues needing resolution, including high turnover of staff
- Written complaints or allegations made about the Head Teacher's leadership
- Poor or ineffective working relationships with Chair of Governors and/or governing body
- Reluctance/refusal to engage with the LA over leadership issues
- Lack of evidence of building leadership capacity across the school, including within senior leadership team
- Safeguarding concerns have not been resolved within agreed timeframes
 - Audit report highlights failings in leadership and management
 - Qualifying complaints received by Ofsted

Governance

Along with key strategic responsibilities, the governing body is responsible for challenging and holding the Head Teacher and other senior leaders to account for the performance of the school. It should also ensure the financial stability of the school with resources allocated efficiently and effectively to address the school's improvement priorities.

In making a judgement about a school's governance arrangements, indicators include the following:

- Governing body business insufficiently focused on school improvement
- External review shows governance is weak
- Evidence demonstrates the governing body is not holding the Head Teacher to account sufficiently to drive effective school improvement
- The governing body is not meeting key statutory requirements
- The governing body refuses to follow advice on statutory obligations
- Safeguarding concerns have not been resolved within agreed timeframes
- Appropriate action to deal with governor vacancies has not been taken, e.g. recruitment drive; reconstitute the governing body
- Relationships between the governing body and the school's leadership are a cause for concern
- Audit report highlights failings in governance
- Qualifying complaints received by Ofsted.

Ofsted Inspection

Where leadership and/or governance is judged to 'require improvement' or be 'inadequate' following an Ofsted inspection, the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors will be asked to meet with the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director. The meeting will:

- Discuss the findings of the Ofsted report in relation to leadership and governance
- Consider the evidence identified by the inspection team to reach this judgement
- Consider any additional evidence from the local authority and/ or school

The Director of Children's Services will be seeking assurance that the school's governing body and the school's leadership have the capacity to address the shortcomings identified by Ofsted.

(viii) Evaluation of Progress: Improvement Review Meetings

A review in the autumn term 2013 of documentation describing outcomes of a sample of recent Partnership Review Group (PRG) meetings highlighted a number of weaknesses which need to be addressed to ensure that, in future, similar meetings are more robust: ensuring an honest and deep understanding of progress and achievements as well as blocks and barriers to these. As a result, these meetings should result in judgements that more closely match findings in subsequent Ofsted inspections.



Improvement Review Meetings

Improvement Review meetings are established to support and challenge schools when one or more performance indicators suggest that:

- preventative action and support is necessary to prevent the school from becoming a cause for concern
- the LA has placed the school on the register of schools causing concern
- an Ofsted inspection has placed a school in any category of concern.

The LA will expect the latter to be increasingly rare as our procedures for identifying deteriorating performance or school leadership become more robust. These revised procedures are part of the overall LA strategy for improving challenge and support for schools causing concern.

A decision will be made during the core offer process whether a school allocated to Band C or D will be subject to the Improvement Review process.

The purpose of an Improvement Review Meeting is to:

- support and challenge the school in improving outcomes for pupils
- take robust action where the pace of improvement is inadequate
- focus on improvements in learning and leadership
- review progress since last meeting in terms of outcomes and impact and to challenge under performance

- review the judgements and evaluation of classroom observations, particularly with regards to the quality of teaching and learning, and to challenge under performance
- evaluate the quality of leadership and management through reviewing the leadership of the Head Teacher and the senior leadership team
- evaluate the quality of governance through reviewing the leadership of the chair, individual governors and their impact
- evaluate the quality of the challenge and support provided by all those involved
- identify the needs of the school and to match these needs with appropriate providers, including support from the LA, external consultancy, school to school network and the learning consortium.

Who will attend?

A task group will be formed consisting of the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, attached LA Improvement Adviser, the LA Assistant Director Access and Achievement and representatives of the Diocese and/or academy sponsor (where appropriate). This group will decide who else to invite, whether for all or specific meetings. Other participants can include other governors such as those with a brief for finance, behaviour or the curriculum, one or more members of the school's senior leadership team, a consortium/partnership representative where applicable and LA officers such as those with responsibility for finance or HR.

Frequency of meetings

In the initial stages, meetings will be at least half termly. In some circumstances, they may be more frequent - weekly or monthly, for example. Support and challenge will be proportionate and, as a school grows in capacity and delivery of its targets, so Improvement Review Meetings will be less frequent. Frequency and dates will set at the first meeting. Should members of the group find it difficult to agree on how often to meet, the final decision will rest with the Chair of the group.

Accountability of each participant at the meeting:

The Head Teacher is accountable for:

Evaluation of progress against milestones and success criteria with particular reference to pupil outcomes by evaluating:

- the delivery of the improvement plan, including the implementation of action points arising from the last meeting
- outcomes and impact of actions
- evaluating the impact of any external providers of support to the school
- findings and judgements from classroom observations of teaching and learning
- improvements in the quality of learning
- leadership and management of the school
- managing interventions where necessary

The Chair of Governors is accountable for:

- the quality of governance of the school
- delivery of briefs by individual governors e.g. for finance
- challenging and quality assuring judgements made by the school in respect of the school's evaluation of progress against milestones and success criteria with particular reference to pupil outcomes
- monitoring progress against the action plan and ensuring it is properly resourced
- financial health of the school
- conduct of highly effective governors' meetings
- quality of school leadership and management by the head and senior staff

The LA Improvement Adviser (IA) is accountable for:

- challenging and quality assuring judgements made by the school in respect of the school's evaluation of progress against milestones and success criteria with particular reference to pupil outcomes
- the quality of support and challenge provided to the school by the local authority
- helping to identify any additional needs the school may have and brokering resources to meet these needs
- maintaining a clear judgement on the robustness and performance of the school
- maintaining an informed judgement on the quality of leadership and management including governance
- acting as a conduit for and maintaining an audit trail of all LA and partnership support and challenge provided to the school
- evaluating the impact of any agreed interventions

The Assistant Director Access and Achievement is accountable for:

- setting out the purpose of the group and the role of each member of the group
- ensuring the group is focused on the school's improvement
- reviewing the school's overall progress judged against the school's action plan for improvement
- holding members of the group to account for their responsibilities including LA officers
- challenging the school's overall performance, outcomes and impact
- challenging the leadership and management of the school to account for its overall effectiveness
- challenging the governors about the quality of governance of the school
- challenging the pace of improvement
- setting the pace of the improvement agenda
- proposing further intervention as appropriate where progress is judged inadequate
- reporting to the Director of Children's Services and advising on further action

Preparation for the meeting:

Before the meeting

To support school self-evaluation judgements about progress and attainment; quality of learning and teaching and the appropriateness of the curriculum provision; the Head Teacher and senior leaders should ensure appropriate time is provided prior to the review meeting to allow key staff to:

- prepare, analyse and review the evidence base from the monitoring and evaluation outlined within the single plan, for example,
- update and analyse the pupil tracking system with moderated periodic teacher assessments,
- collate specific outcomes from the pupils' progress meetings (particularly those that relate to named pupils identified as not making good progress or vulnerable to underachievement)
- gather qualitative evidence to support overall judgements and identify key areas for further development
- where appropriate, facilitate or conduct pre-meetings with staff to enable more efficient summaries of key outcomes and judgements to support the quality assurance of overall judgements made in the review meeting
- provide support, coaching and mentoring as appropriate for the Chair of Governors and governors so that they can be effective in undertaking their responsibilities

The Head Teacher and LA Improvement Advisor (IA) should meet at least one week before the meeting to review evidence summaries and judgements. The IA will have a specific role here in quality assuring the robustness of the evidence base, including moderation and 'triangulation' of the evidence.

(ix) Use of Statutory powers

The Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to promote high standards for **all** pupils. The 2010 White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching' described the role of the local authority in education:

"Local authorities will stand up for the interests of parents and children and promote high standards. We want LAs to continue to play a key role as champions for pupils and parents.....Local authorities will continue both to challenge schools causing concern and to focus on issues needing attention which cut across more than one school".

This duty to promote high standards for **all** pupils is linked to the quality assurance role of authorities and the expectation that authorities will challenge schools when standards are low. In 2013 HMCI stated:

“The best authorities confront the crucial issues of standards head-on. They don’t adopt a narrowly ideological position on schools outside their formal control. They see it as their duty to make sure all schools are part of the same family delivering high-quality provision for all children. They’re working with the grain of greater autonomy for both maintained schools and academies.”

Legislation makes available to local authorities a range of powers to address under-performance in schools. These powers include:

- ✓ issuing a performance standards and safety warning notice: this should be used as an early form of intervention, particularly where standards are unacceptably low and other tools and strategies have not secured improvement
- ✓ intervention powers where a performance standards and safety warning notice has been given and not been complied with
- ✓ the school is eligible for intervention as it has been judged as requiring significant improvement or special measures
- ✓ power of Secretary of State to direct a local authority to consider issuing a warning notice

Walsall schools causing concern will be identified through the on-going analysis set out within details of the core offer that every school has received. We expect all such schools to be identified by LA processes. Any Ofsted judgement that identifies serious weaknesses that have not already been recorded and acted upon by the LA will result in a reassessment of LA evaluation and processes and all necessary support will be provided to the school promptly.

LA’s judgements of a school’s performance will always be shared with the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors as soon as they become apparent. Evidence for why officers have come to this judgement will be open and schools will have an opportunity to contest the judgement and present new and/or different evidence. However, where there is doubt or disagreement, the LA will always put the needs of children first.

The school’s attached Improvement Adviser, supported by a senior colleague will share concerns with the school in a face to face meeting. This will be followed by a written communication, clearly stating the concerns, the evidence that has informed these judgements and the expectations that the LA has for the school’s improvement. The school improvement service will offer support in the creation of the Improvement Plan and will work with the school to broker the most appropriate support from:

- good or better schools
- LLEs, NLEs, SLEs and NLGs within and beyond Walsall
- school improvement specialists beyond Walsall and
- centres of excellence such as the National College for Teaching and Leadership, university education departments, Ofsted and HMI

In some instances, other members of the SI service may be nominated to provide improvement support but this will happen only when the school and the LA agree that the individual being considered is the very best person to provide the precise support needed.

The Director of Children's Services will meet with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors of every school causing concern. This meeting will reinforce exchanges with the IA and will ensure that the school leaders are fully aware of their responsibilities, the timescale needed for improvement and the statutory powers that the LA has and will use if improvement within the required timescale is not evident.

On what we expect will be very rare occasions the LA will use its statutory powers to appoint additional governors, create an IEB or issue a formal notice to the school. The success of the joint work of schools and the LA to identify the most vulnerable schools and bring about rapid improvement will be measured by the infrequency with which such statutory powers are used.

It should be noted that although powers of LA intervention are more limited in academies, the LA will use all opportunities that the law and national guidance allows to ensure that the needs and rights of children in academies causing concern are championed and challenged with the same rigour as that given to their peers in maintained schools.

(x) Ofsted inspection of the LA's duty to promote high standards for children and young people

In his Annual Report published December 2013, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) talked about the 'lucky child' and the 'unlucky child'. Firstly, he described where the 'lucky child' might live:

"The lucky child is fortunate in his geography: he attends a school run by a local authority or an academy chain that knows its schools well and knows the people who run them. They know what progress is being achieved and challenge head teachers if there is none. They are not passive caretakers of the status quo. 'Responsibility' for these bodies is not a paper exercise. They are not faceless bureaucrats. They have a vision for their schools and they communicate it well. They use their existing powers well..... They don't wait for an Ofsted report to tell them how their schools are doing".

HMCI then portrayed the 'unlucky' child:

"The unlucky child has the misfortune to attend a school run by an inept local authority. These authorities have no idea what goes on in their schools because they rarely visit. They have no concept of performance because they never ask. They prefer to issue meaningless directives and to make vapid pronouncements about 'opportunity' and 'excellence' without really understanding how to achieve them..... They do not understand

that they are now commissioners of improvement in a more autonomous system. They wait for Ofsted to point out their failings and then complain when it does”.

"Too many local authorities don't seem to believe that education is their problem. Well, it is. May I remind them that, according to the 2006 Education Act, they have a statutory duty to promote 'high standards and the fulfilment of every child's educational potential'".

Walsall Council understands HMCI's powerful message and is determined to fulfil its responsibilities and to work towards the eradication of “unlucky children”. Ofsted has powers to inspect the LA's performance of its education duties and to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the education functions of the LA where schools are not yet good or not improving quickly enough.

The local authority will be held to account for a wide range of duties and Head Teachers will be interviewed by inspectors in order to find out how well the LA knows its schools and how effectively it supports their school improvement needs. As Walsall Council is likely to be inspected as part of this evaluation of local authority effectiveness and impact it is important that the School Improvement Strategy is well understood by all Head Teachers and governors and that the strategy's vision ambition, behaviours, support and challenge are modelled by us all. A proportion of schools may also be inspected at the same time as the local authority.

You can find out about the indicators Ofsted will use to decide whether an inspection of the LA is needed and the aspects of the LA's work it will evaluate by referring to the Framework for the Inspection of Local Authorities on the Ofsted website.

Inviting feedback on LA performance – starting in January 2014, as part of the DCS Briefings, Head Teachers are being asked to feedback on the LA self-evaluation and invited to assess its accuracy. Using Ofsted criteria for evaluating LA performance will become standard practice and Ofsted criteria of the time will be used.

Part 3 Bringing about Improvement:

School to school support (sector-led improvement), Brokering, Protocol for school to school support, Clusters, Primary, Nursery and Special Forum and Walsall Association of Head Teachers, DCS briefings, dissemination of research and 'horizon scanning', the Learning Consortium, support and challenge for leadership development and governance, accountabilities for improvement



The autonomous, self-improving school commissions improvement support from a range of providers. Vulnerable schools in Walsall will always be supported on this by the LA and by others within the community of schools although we acknowledge the vital importance of school's being the architects of their own improvement – examining and developing their current practices, improving their own capacity and taking responsibility for their own outcomes. Many schools, particularly the most vulnerable, cannot do such major improvements alone and in Walsall many other sources of external support will be available including:

- LLEs, NLEs, SLEs, NLGs, Teaching schools
- National centres of excellence such as the National College for Teaching and Leadership, university departments, Ofsted and HMI
- Individuals known locally or nationally for their particular expertise
- Other LAs that have the capacity and a proven track record in good practice

(i) School to school support

It is clear from the Strategy review that many schools are involved in receiving or giving support. However, many Head Teachers stated that this is not systematic and can be quite random. New Head Teachers may be particularly disadvantaged in not being aware of how to access school to school support.

There was a strong consensus in support of a broader role for the local authority particularly around brokering:

“We see this as very much what the local authority should be doing. The local authority has got to support its Head Teachers to manage the quality of teaching” (Primary HT)

“We can get stuck in school and find it difficult to find out about good schools/good practice. The local authority should be a broker; provide a focus on specialist skills” (Infants HT)

“We know our school well but you need to be in other schools too. The local authority has a huge role in promoting good practice”. (HT of an outstanding primary)

(ii) Brokering school to school support

In response to the clear messages from Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors, illustrated above, requesting an active role in brokering by the LA, the DCS, in partnership with the HTWG, will develop an action plan during the first three months of this Strategy to set out how the LA will develop the brokering role in order to:

- ✓ Audit which schools are able and willing to give support to others and detailing their strengths
- ✓ Audit the areas in which schools need support or advice

- ✓ Facilitate matching between the two groups through a transparent, professional and sensitive process
- ✓ Quality assure participants to ensure all support is robust and appropriate
- ✓ Establish timely and efficient evaluation of support to assess impact for children's learning
- ✓ Complement the protocols for school to school support set out below

(iii) Protocol for school to school support

A draft protocol for school to school support was established, in the first instance, by a group of Head Teachers of Walsall Nursery schools. It has been shared more widely with a working group of Heads of good and outstanding schools and other schools. A final Protocol will be produced and included in the Operational Plan that underpins this Strategy.

The main purpose of having such a Protocol is the need to:

- develop a robust and effective system for school to school support
- develop a stronger climate of collaboration and exchange of good practice between schools through the learning consortium
- strengthen leadership capacity through a succession planning and leadership development strategy
- review the central approach to school improvement

This draft protocol acknowledges the progress made to date and stresses the importance of building on the good practice that has already developed. It sets out a rationale for school to school support and the key strategic/operational principles to underpin the work.

The document builds on the following strategic and operational principles:

- schools can achieve more for children and young people by supporting each other
- commitment to working together transcends competition between schools
- schools remain autonomous and responsible for their own improvement
- the role of the local authority is to offer proportionate support and challenge
- collaboration is a powerful force for change
- schools will determine the nature and extent of their participation in collaboration, having regard for the potential impact on their own pupils and the wider community
- within their delegated budgets, schools remain independent purchasers of services

The protocol suggests a range of situations when one school can benefit from support from another ranging from those in a formal category of concern to a school that may require additional short term capacity/advice from experienced senior managers from other schools.

The following principles underpin the Protocol:

- a joint commitment to achieving the enjoyment and achievement, health, safety, participation and economic well-being of all children and young people

- maintain strict confidentiality - confidences must not be shared (except if a safeguarding issue is involved in which case the Council's procedures should be followed)
- treat peers and other colleagues with whom they work with respect
- consult with peers and other colleagues with whom they are assigned to work- modelling best practice and leadership behaviours at all times
- ensure clarity and agreement about the proposed improvement, use performance data and other intelligence to establish a well evidenced baseline picture against which impact can be evaluated at the end of a piece of work
- clearly define reporting lines and frequency of reporting at the start of the work
- mutual recognition of the legitimacy of the roles and responsibilities of the providing and receiving schools
- respect the autonomy and independence of schools
- encouragement of all schools to express their unique identity
- recognition of the key role of the local authority as the strategic champion of children
- active co-operation and compliance with the local procedures for safeguarding
- willingness to share performance data to inform improvement planning and priority setting

A clear role for the local authority includes:

- brokerage and oversight of targeted school to school support
- development of a directory of school to school support for the exchange of good practice
- cross authority action research networks to support improvement against identified local authority priorities
- promotion of joint school improvement projects to close the attainment gap for vulnerable children
- promotion of school improvement partnerships and programmes for schools facing common standards challenges
- access to professional development opportunities beyond Walsall to challenge and provide sharing and learning opportunities for all schools
- encouragement, promotion and support for good governance

The LA in collaboration with the HTWG will continue to develop the protocol for school to school support recognising the need to agree financial recompense for the school providing the support to ensure sector-led improvement does not impose financial penalty on the provider.

In schools causing concern the LA will have a key role in commissioning and evaluating the impact of high quality external improvement support, although the school will be expected to take the lead on identifying its needs and agreeing and scoping the support that is offered. The LA is determined to become a credible commissioner and accepts that it has to prove its expertise and grow its experience within this role.

Wherever possible, vulnerable schools will be supported by other, high performing Walsall schools. The specification for such support and the impact on learning that the support is designed to have, will be agreed as set out in the School to School Protocol.

The LA and the HTWG recognise that the professionals who know most about improving learning and pupil performance are in schools. The majority of schools will identify and commission their own external improvement support from whatever source the Head Teacher and governors choose to use.

(iv) Clusters

We believe that clusters have the potential to make a powerful impact on the development of school to school support as the cluster provides an ideal forum for the discussion of this type of support, brokered and supported by Walsall Council.

Clusters can be a powerful component in a range of strategies promoting school improvement. Clusters can enable schools to provide effective peer challenge and support as part of our vision for all children and young people in Walsall. This activity needs to take place alongside robust and objective quality assurance.

The Strategy Review showed that generally, clusters are valued but possibly more for their potential than their present output. Membership of clusters probably needs to become better organised because for them to play an effective role in school development they need to be accessible, demonstrate tangible results and ideally membership is taken up by all Head Teachers.

“There has got be some sort of development. Clusters should serve two purposes: 1) a support network for Head Teachers and 2) school improvement. This school is not part of a cluster and the membership issue is not dealt with systematically; heads should be invited into clusters” (New Head Teacher)

“Clusters have to be trusted; the local authority needs to disseminate information and knowledge at Chairs of Clusters meetings and Chairs should then disseminate further” (Head Teacher Outstanding school)

There is strong support for ensuring that every school is actively encouraged to be part of a cluster.

“Yes, the local authority should do this to prevent (a school’s) isolation”

“Yes. It would be nice as a new Head Teacher to receive an invitation to join a cluster.”

“Each school should have the right to be part of a cluster”

During 2014, we will get a more systematic knowledge about what clusters are working on and encourage sharing of best practice, through the cluster network group.

We recognise that there will inevitably be varying degrees of involvement in clusters but for those schools which don't actively engage in a cluster, they will still receive minutes and updates from their local cluster or they might decide to join another group.

(v) Primary, Nursery and Special Forum (PNSF), Walsall Association of Secondary Heads (WASH), Chairs of Governors' group and DCS Briefings

These four networks have an important part to play in keeping Heads and Chairs of Governors informed about school improvement matters, keeping the issue on the agenda and providing fora for continuing discussion of Walsall's overall performance. The chairs of the PNSF and WASH are members of the HTWG and have played a full role in the development of this Strategy.

Head Teachers are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings for information but also support. The support is often informal as colleagues get to know each other's strengths/areas of interest or specialism. It may involve practical help such as sharing of resources or may-be advice.

On every agenda of both PNS and WASH there are items around sharing good practice which allow Head Teachers to see how other schools complete similar tasks, for instance, reports to governors. All Heads know they are free to use resources that have been shared or get contact details of a member of staff with particular skills/knowledge, or it may simply lead to a worthwhile conversation.

Often visitors are invited to meetings to speak on the subject of school improvement, for instance, an Ofsted inspector for information on the new evaluation schedule or services brokered such as DRB Ignite briefings being arranged for Walsall.

As with clusters, the fora will work to encourage all colleagues to attend and feel welcome at PNS and WASH. The minutes of meetings are available and the aim is to share the benefits and learning with all Heads in the borough.

Both PNS and WASH are committed to partnership working and believe that school to school support is about building partnerships and working in collaboration to share and develop approaches that have demonstrated positive impact for learners, middle and senior leaders.

PNS and WASH support Walsall schools which are already providing school to school support with expertise in many areas from improving the quality of teaching to leadership coaching, behaviour management, policies and systems, data and tracking, curriculum design, timetabling, financial management and individual subject support.

Central to both organisations is the belief that all schools/academies have strengths to share and things to learn. We do not subscribe to the strong school/weak school model but, rather, we are interested in the collaboration between all schools that we know impacts on learners.

DCS Briefings

The Director of Children's Services (DCS) holds regular briefings for all Head Teachers. In the briefings the DCS aims to cover issues of national, regional and local policy in school improvement and other matters of importance to schools. The DCS aims to do this in a timely way so that all colleagues are kept up-to-date and can share good practice and recent research findings. The calendar of dates of briefings is sent to all colleagues at the beginning of each new school year. Everyone is warmly welcome.



(vi) Research, dissemination and 'horizon scanning': keeping us all abreast of developments in school improvement

The local authority undertakes to keep schools updated on national initiatives and research. Senior officers will attend significant national events and bring information back for dissemination to all schools. Leaders from national agencies and research institutes will be regular visitors to conferences and development sessions in the borough and all IAs will be expected to maintain an up to date knowledge of "what works" in school improvement. The established DCS briefings will be used as an important channel of communication.

We accept, however, that in an era of autonomous, self-improving schools, it is the responsibility of all schools and all professionals within them to continually learn from current school improvement research and to prepare for new external challenges.

(vii) The Learning Consortium

The Learning Consortium is an exciting initiative which is aimed at supporting all staff in schools in pursuing and achieving the ambition for "All Walsall children to attend good and outstanding schools". School Leaders firmly believe in, and are committed to, the principle "Better together for Children" and see the Consortium as a powerful mechanism for helping to realise this vision.

The Consortium will be led and owned by schools and will focus on achieving effective pupil learning. It will be resourced from schools' contributions which will be match-funded by the Council. Following needs analysis across schools, funding will be allocated to school led action research projects, joint practice development activities and learning seminars. Drawing on local, regional and national expertise and good practice, school leaders and staff will have opportunities to engage in innovative and creative professional learning.

The Consortium will benefit all schools, irrespective of their current status and improvement priorities. The learning from projects will be shared with all schools across Walsall.

(viii) Support and challenge for leadership development and governance

Working with school leaders, the local authority will create a leadership strategy designed to build leadership capacity and capability across Walsall schools in order to ensure all children in the borough attend a good or outstanding school.

The strategy will focus on:

- identifying, nurturing, developing and retaining talent in the school work force
- establishing principles of succession planning across all levels of leadership
- creating leadership development opportunities for middle leaders
- building collaborative culture amongst senior leaders across borough schools
- providing effective support to first time Head Teachers
- developing a cadre of system leaders from all levels of school workforce
- establishing links with leaders from other areas of Children's Services

Each one of the above strands has its own challenges and characteristics. There are, however, some common approaches that need to be considered in the strategy, namely:

National and international leadership

To capitalise on what is known about school leadership, and the opportunities available, we will establish stronger links with national organisations such as National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), Royal College for Teachers (when opened), Education Endowment Fund, educational charities and Higher Education organisations with well-established education research teams.

Activities could include:

- Delegated and representative attendance at national and international conferences
- Research seminars chaired by eminent academic
- Research newsletters distributed across all schools
- Access national high quality leadership development provision
- Using outcomes from TEN and KEY to create focused seminars
- Enhancing leaders' qualifications through NCTL or HEIs programmes

Regional Leadership

There is a range of national initiatives that are delivered regionally – for example, teaching school alliances, NCTL licensed provision and access to programme like Teach First and Future Leaders that can be accessed. The LA will support schools who seek teaching school status and link with the West Midlands HMI to access opportunities offered through that team.

Through teaching school alliances all Walsall schools can:

- Engage in development opportunities such as Outstanding Teachers programme
- Develop system leadership through specialist leaders of education scheme
- Undertake school based research, working collaboratively with other schools

Through West Midlands NCTL licensed providers Walsall school leaders can:

- Study for three different qualifications for middle, senior and aspiring heads and linked into higher degrees
- Use online diagnostics to clarify strengths and areas for development
- Access short modules on specific topics like leading teaching and improving teaching; working in partnership with others schools
- Use online resources to extend expertise
- Access training modules for chairs of governors

Through Future Leaders, schools can:

- Nominate a talented, fast track member of staff to join the programme
- Take on a Future Leader recruited from a national field

Local leadership

Across Walsall, a range of opportunities for our leaders to grow and develop can be created through:

- Secondments and role swaps across schools
- Work shadowing and placement schemes to enhance experience
- Mentoring and coaching schemes
- Collaborative joint practice development activity
- Middle leadership networks
- Deputy Head Teacher / senior leadership networks
- NQT opportunities – fast tracking

To achieve coherence the leadership development strategy should link across into other Walsall initiatives, for example, the learning consortium and school cluster work.

Support for Governance and school improvement

One of our eight priorities addresses the very important matter of school governance:

‘strengthen school governance and promote succession planning for governing bodies; raise awareness in the community of the importance of school governance in order to recruit more good governors’

Effective governor involvement in school improvement is good for schools and good for all children and young people in the borough. It is also worth noting that both the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted attach great importance to the role of governors in this activity.

The DfE describes the role of governors in its Governors’ Handbook and includes this point:

- ✓ Governing bodies should have a strong focus on holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils

The Governors' Handbook sets out key tasks and responsibilities for education and school performance, including those for the curriculum, the education of children with special educational needs and looked after children.

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook states that inspectors should consider the effectiveness of governance including how well governors:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Contribute to the school's self-evaluation and understand its strengths and weaknesses including the impact of their own work
- Support and strengthen school leadership including by developing their own skills
- Provide challenge and hold the head teacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and pupils' behaviour and safety including by using the data dashboard, other progress data, examination outcomes and test results
- Use the pupil premium for the most disadvantaged pupils and other resources to overcome barriers to learning, including reading, writing and maths

In the **Operational Plan** we set out the accountabilities of governing bodies alongside those of the LA and Head Teachers. We suggest that these are considered from time to time by school governing bodies to check that the accountabilities are being carried out by all three partners and to evaluate impact. Feedback from the governing body to the local authority on how this is working is very welcome.

Based on a reading of a number of Ofsted reports there are activities in which Walsall governors need to be more effective:

- Develop the skills needed to contribute more effectively to the strategic direction of the school
- Governors need to know their schools well
- They should develop skills in the use of performance data and access training in this area; they must understand the data on school performance and pupils' progress and use it to hold senior management teams to account
- Alongside senior leaders, focus the use of the pupil premium to ensure that it impacts on achievement for the most disadvantaged pupils
- Develop a clear and informed understanding of a school's strengths and priorities and an in-depth knowledge of the school in order to be able to hold teachers to account for school performance

- Develop a secure understanding of the quality of teaching so that governors have the capacity and judgement to hold teachers to account and to focus on the impact of teaching on pupil progress and achievement

Evidence gathered through the review of the SI Strategy and from one to one meetings with Chairs of Governors members of the HTWG suggest that a number of aspects of governance need to be enhanced.

Although there are some examples of excellent practice across the borough, there is also evidence that too many governing bodies are reluctant or unable to fulfil their accountabilities in respect of school improvement.

“The big issue is that school improvement is not currently on most governing bodies’ agenda. My view is that it is central to everything that governors do – my question on every item is always: “What does this have to do with school improvement?” (Chair of Governors Walsall secondary school)

There is currently no Walsall Association of Governors but we recognise the need for one. A well planned, well managed and well supported Association will help support governors in their school improvement role and could also help governors to become more “hands on” in managing their own recruitment, training and support. The LA will aim to facilitate individual governors (particularly newly appointed ones) to observe other governing body meetings in good/outstanding schools in order to share good practice.

The LA will also aim to promote recruitment, for example, by encouraging or incentivising local companies to support school governance as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Many schools have benefitted from LA review of governance and the ways in which this process will develop in coming months, perhaps by involving more National Leaders in Governance and other good practitioners, is an area that will be explored further.

The LA will provide training to governors to become confident in interpreting and challenging pupil level data to ensure that school priorities reflect those areas of pupil performance that must improve. The LA will also provide support for Clerks to Governing Bodies to enable them to be effective contributors to governance arrangements.

In January this year, the Director of Children’s Services announced that a working group is to be established to produce an improvement plan to enhance governance across all schools.

Finally, although we use terms like ‘challenge’ and ‘holding senior leaders to account’, a school works well when governors and senior leaders have developed a partnership for improvement where there is abundant trust within which governors act as critical friends always with the interests of the children and young people at the centre of their actions.

(ix) Accountabilities: how we will hold ourselves to account for improvement

We believe school and local authority leaders all have a number of accountabilities which will contribute to the success of this strategy. Head teachers, governors and the local authority have wide ranging and diverse responsibilities across education but they have in common a specific responsibility for raising achievement through school improvement.

Detailed in the **Operational Plan** are accountabilities for all three partners which focus on that task. We suggest that these are considered from time to time by school governing bodies to discuss the allocation of responsibilities and to check that they are being carried out by all three partners and to evaluate impact. Governing bodies are invited to contact the local authority to feedback on this exercise and to suggest ways in which accountabilities (especially the LA's) can be improved.

Part 4: The development, delivery and monitoring of the Strategy:

The Operational Plan, how this Strategy came about, role of the HTWG, keeping the Strategy under review, membership of HTWG, acknowledgement to Head Teachers and Governors of Walsall



The Operational Plan

Underpinning this Strategy are the Delivery Plans for the Priorities and a number of detailed action/policy papers which provide further detail of important aspects of school improvement found in this Strategy such as the Core Offer and Monitoring and Evaluation. All of these form the **Operational Plan** and references to this Plan appear throughout the Strategy. The HTWG will continue to work on this and the initial version of the Operational Plan will be available shortly after the publication of the Strategy. There will be regular updates over time. Also included will be further detail, announced in January 2014, about the expected central government guidance to local authorities clarifying their role in school improvement.

How this Strategy came about

In the autumn of 2013, the Head Teacher Working Group (HTWG) for the School Improvement Strategy embarked on a review of the Strategy as it had committed to do in the first edition published in April. An extensive consultation exercise in November and December included:

- Questionnaires sent to every Head Teacher and every Chair of Governors

- In-depth discussions with Head Teacher and Chair of Governors from a range of schools selected from across all phases on the basis of ensuring representative numbers of schools in Ofsted categories from 'special measures' to 'outstanding'
- The review of the Strategy was also discussed at various termly meetings of Clusters, the Primary, Nursery and Special Forum and Walsall Association of Secondary Heads
- Workshops held with the Director of Children's Services and the Senior Leadership team, the Chairs of Governors' group and the School Improvement team
- Clear messages emerged often with widespread & shared support and these have formed the basis of the revised Strategy

Summary of key messages from dialogue with schools

- Enthusiastic support for content and principles underpinning the April 2013 Strategy
- 100 per cent agreement that the 8 Priorities are the right ones
- Clear that schools value their part in the community of schools and want to maintain a positive relationship with the LA
- Senior LA Leaders were asked to articulate what the future leadership role of the LA will be and this is incorporated into this revised Strategy.
- Aspects of LA monitoring, challenge, support and intervention are being tightened to ensure all schools reach expected standards set by Ofsted - important developments on this will need to be added to the revised Strategy
- Sector-led (school to school) improvement welcomed but potential for Walsall and practicalities of what this will mean in practice not yet fully understood
- School to school support, its facilitation and LA brokering role need to be set out explicitly in the Strategy
- Dissemination of research and good practice and 'horizon scanning' is a much needed role that schools want the LA to provide

What the analysis showed about current school to school support:

- Significant consensus in support of an active LA brokering role in school to school support
- School to school support at present is not systematic and needs facilitating
- Future support must be scoped with outcomes and the means by which impact on pupils' learning will be measured agreed from the outset
- Finding good practice in Walsall is a haphazard affair and needs facilitating
- Overall, schools want LA to do a lot more brokering but say it has to demonstrate that it has the capacity to do this and can build the right relationship with self-improving schools

What the analysis told us about Clusters and networking

- Generally, clusters are valued but sometimes more for their potential than actual delivery now
- Involvement in an effective cluster is often haphazard rather than systematic
- How to gain access to clusters is an issue for some heads
- New Head Teachers should be invited into clusters
- Little support for LA to attend all cluster meetings but feeling that LA needs to help clusters develop and to disseminate research etc. to clusters
- Strong support for a LA role in ensuring every school is actively encouraged to be part of a cluster
- Strategy needs to refer to purpose and role of Clusters and the way forward to making them a valuable resource for all HTs across Walsall

What Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors told us about leadership, governance and management:

- Overall agreement that LA should make judgements about the leadership of a school but this should not be solely data based but include wide range of other factors
- Almost unanimous support for the LA to provide direct support to senior leaders. Some reservations about the LA's capacity to do this but suggestions that it should broker support from leaders of good and outstanding schools
- Unanimous support for a service from the LA which informed schools of current or future national developments which could impact on your school; a LA which 'horizon scans'
- Very significant support for the LA to encourage and maintain networks for deputies and curriculum leaders with the view to helping them become the leaders of tomorrow
- Clear belief that the LA must do more to ensure improvement in governance...regarded as a key role for the LA

Where possible, needs emerging from these conversations have been addressed in this Strategy. However, some aspects will need further joint work with schools before a definitive statement of action can be made.

Role of the Head teacher Working Group (HTWG)

The working group is firmly established as a driving force in improving outcomes for all Walsall children. As part of its continuing role, it will oversee and contribute to the development and monitoring of the Delivery Plans for each of the priorities in the strategy. Delivery Plans will set ambitious outcomes to be achieved over the next 3 years and the contributions to be made to achieving these outcomes by head teachers, governors, partnerships of schools and the school improvement service.

The HTWG will also oversee regular review of the Strategy and will be involved in other strategic developments to raise the quality of school improvement.

Importantly, the HTWG will be asked to **develop a strategy for supporting leadership of schools**, this will include improvement to induction of Heads and governors.

Keeping the strategy under review

This life of this Strategy runs from 2014 until 2016. It will need regular review in order to be sure that:

- it works effectively and is making a difference
- it meets the needs of, and is supported by, schools, head teachers, governors
- it remains up to date in terms of taking account of local, regional and national developments
- there is 100 per cent ownership of our improvement journey in Walsall

Membership of the Head teacher Working Group

Tracey Coles	Blackwood Primary School
Rose Collinson	Interim Director, Children's Services
Cathy Draper	Short Heath Federation
Jenny Garratt	Walsall Wood Primary School
Elaine Maher	Reedwood E-ACT Academy
Jane Mason	Edgar Stammers Primary
David Mountney	Aldridge School-A Science College
Roland Roberts	Chair of Governors, The Streetly Academy
Nigel Smith	Old Hall Special School
Margaret Turley	Ogley Hay Nursery School
Keith Whittlestone	Joseph Leckie Academy
Margaret Yates	Chair of Governors, Blackwood Primary School

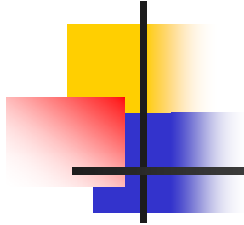
Plus representatives of the school improvement service

Acknowledgement to the Head Teachers and Governors of Walsall

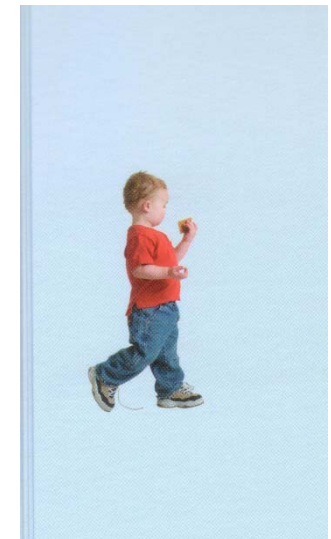
We would like to thank the many Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors and Governors who contributed to this Strategy through 1:1 meetings in their schools, completing the questionnaires and contributing to discussions at a range of meetings. Your voices and ideas are greatly valued and have shaped this Strategy.

Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Panel

25 March 2014

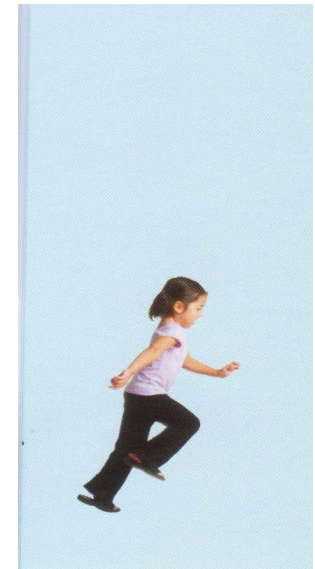


A view from the bridge – the
Annual Report of Her Majesty's
Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills



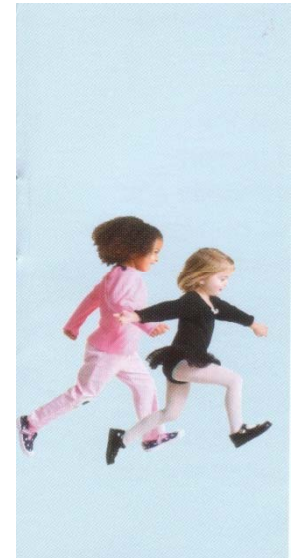
A view from the bridge

- second annual report by Sir Michael Wilshaw
- 4 parts:
 - ❖ overall state of the nation commentary
 - ❖ overview report on schools
 - ❖ overview report on FE and skills sector
 - ❖ 8 regional reports
- Dataview (www.dataview.ofsted.gov.uk) provides comparisons of regional and local performance of schools, colleges and childcare providers
- report on Early Years coming in early 2014



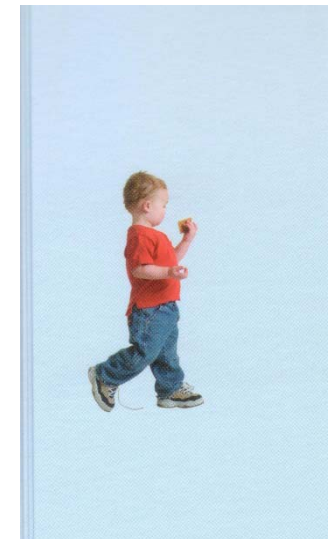
A view from the bridge – key messages

- schools are getting better – but more to do to close the gaps
- too much variation – between schools and across local authorities
- still not good enough for lower attainers and younger pupils in either primary or secondary schools or for poor white children
- concerns about match of college/skills provision with employers' needs



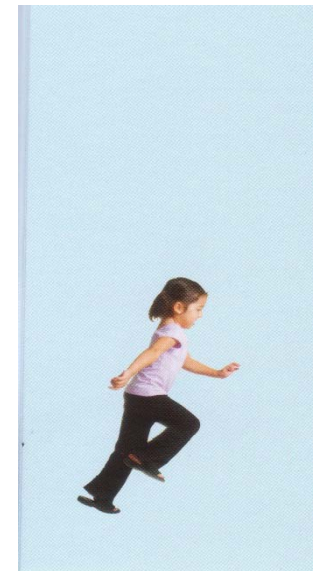
A view from the bridge – the school 'to do' list

- who teaches which groups?
- consistent expectations?
- forwards to fundamentals
- closing and narrowing gaps
- developing leadership
- good governance
- academy trust performance
- 'raising the game' in LAs



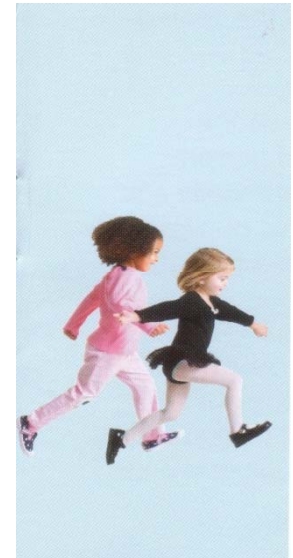
Our school photo: our 'to do' list

- seriously more children in 'good or better' schools:
 - on 12/13 data:
 - ❖ 60% of pupils in good or better primary (range 56% to 97%)
 - ❖ 78% of students in good or better secondary (range 14% to 100%)
- improve performance especially at Key Stage 2
- high expectations, no excuses – both for academic success and behaviour that supports learning, for every child
- great leadership, great governance



A view from the bridge – learning and skills

- reasons to be cheerful: providers are improving (Walsall College and WACC showcased)
- but on the more 'to do'
 - ❖ staying in learning and succeeding in learning
 - ❖ maximising apprenticeship potential
 - ❖ quality of teaching and learning – vocationally competent and work ready





And finally...

'The 'lucky' poor child is born in the right postcode, gets to the right school and has the widest opportunities. The unlucky poor child does not' (HMCI, December 2013)

so our challenge is to ensure that through our collective leadership Walsall's unlucky children are turned into lucky children.

