



A councillors' guide to Education Services in Walsall

March 2022

The Council **does have statutory responsibilities** to ensure:

- That working in partnership across public agencies, children in Walsall are safeguarded.
- Through leadership of place, partners work together for the best outcomes for children and young people across the Borough
- Children that have a disability or a Special Educational Need (SEN) have access to high quality education provision that meets their needs.
- Every child has a school place and has fair access to such places.
- Effective home to school transport for those that are eligible.
- High quality education for those pupils that have been excluded.
- Have systems for identifying pupils missing education and those whose parents/ carers have chosen to Electively Home Educate (EHE) their children.
- Consistent attendance intervening, including through penalty notices, where attendance becomes an issue.
- Intervening in a maintained school where there is specific evidence of a safeguarding, financial management or school improvement concern.

Council's **don't have the powers** to:

- Intervene in the leadership and school improvement of an academy setting (other than through dialogue and partnership). The Regional Schools Commissioner has oversight of academy settings.
- Intervene in the leadership and management of a maintained school unless specific cause for concern criteria are met.
- Intervene in parental complaints against a school (unless there are safeguarding concerns). The school must publish a complaints policy with the Governing Board and then Secretary of State being the arbiter of school complaints.
- Directly intervene in the management of staffing matters. That sits with the Governing Board with appropriate advice.
- Remedy all highways issues outside of schools. Congestion, inconsiderate parking remain longstanding community issues outside many schools. The Council can work in partnership with schools to promote road safety, alternatives to the use of cars and effective signage/ restrictions where feasible and cost effective to do so.

In addition the Council delivers **traded services** that schools and academies can buy into including: Education Psychologist Services, attendance support, governance support, HR advice and guidance, finance services.

These are delivered on a traded basis and schools may purchase this advice and support from elsewhere.



The education landscape 2022

The education landscape is set to change further over the coming year and beyond due to national and local drivers. Some of the key changes include:

Levelling Up. 55 areas, including Walsall, are to be offered additional investment as Education Investment Areas. The detail is still limited but is likely to include funding for teacher retention payments and pupil attendance programmes. The areas have been chosen on the basis of outcomes at the end of both key stage 2 and key stage 4, based on results between 2017 and 2019.

The Levelling Up commitments also include stronger commitments around food served in schools, the teaching of cooking in schools and potential reforms that could mean schools that have been graded requires improvement by Ofsted multiple times may be served with academy orders.

Local Authority School Improvement Grant. It has been confirmed that the funding that local authorities receive to fund school improvement activities is to cease with the funding instead going directly to schools. The proposal being discussed with Schools Forum is that a joint School Improvement Board be established to lead on school led commissioning of services in partnership with the local authority.

Specialist Provision places. There is a Headteacher led working group looking at options around ensuring the right number of specialist provision places for children and young people in Walsall. Based on the mainstream first model we will be working with schools to develop enhanced support around hubs enabling children with special needs to have their needs met in mainstream provision. Where a special needs place is needed we will look to expand specialist provision through re-designation of places and expansion/ re-configuration of existing provision where appropriate.

Specialist Inclusion Services. Led in collaboration with Headteachers the project is reviewing the support services delivered across the local authority, Health and the third sector to better support schools in providing for children and young people with Special Educational Needs, behaviour, mental health support and low attendance needs.

Walsall Families of Schools

Walsall Families of Schools is the vision for how, as a partnership, we will sustain and enhance high quality education provision across the Borough for the next 10 years and beyond to the benefit of the children, young people and communities of Walsall. In its simplest terms, Walsall Families of Schools is based on the principle that: collaboration, federation or acadamisation are the most effective means of securing the long-term future of high quality education provision in Walsall. It is for school leaders and Governing Boards to lead the way with the approach that best meets the needs of their school communities, with the Council supporting and facilitating this. In the medium term no school should be an island unto itself.

It's a building block for the conversation with Headteachers and governors about how we secure the leadership and governance capacity for our schools in the future. It also prompts leaders to take the fate of their future governance in their own hands rather than risk it being decided upon either by Ofsted (and an inadequate judgement forcing academisation) or through government policy.

How you can support schools

As a local councillor consider:

-Visiting schools periodically to build a working relationship with the Headteacher.

-Consider becoming a governor of a local school. As a councillor you will have multiple commitments but becoming a school governor provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing schools locally.

-Signpost parents/ carers to the school's Headteacher or school's complaints policy on its website. Often matters can be resolved most quickly when there is a direct conversation with the school itself. Flag themes or concerns with the relevant Council team.

-Be clear as to what information can and can't be shared regarding an individual pupil or family for data protection reasons and seek written permission from the parent if information is to be shared