

Post 16 Provision

Ward(s): ALL

Portfolios: Education and Skills Councillor Kaur

1. Aim

This report provides the scrutiny committee with an update on post-16 provision within the borough.

2. Summary

This report will provide scrutiny committee with an overview of the post-16 landscape in Walsall and the work of the Post-16 Strategy Group.

3. Report detail – Know

3.1. Within Walsall there are 19 secondary schools and Walsall College, which is a further education provider (FE). Walsall does not have a sixth form centre, the nearest provider being the Sutton Coldfield A-Level Centre, which is part of the Birmingham Metropolitan College.

1. Aldridge School
2. Barr Beacon School
3. Bloxwich Academy
4. Blue Coat Academy
5. *Brownhills Ormiston Academy**
6. Grace Academy
7. Joseph Leckie
8. Ormiston Academy
9. Pool Hayes Academy
10. Queen Mary's Grammar
11. Queen Mary's High
12. Shire Oak Academy
13. St Francis of Assisi R.C.
14. St Thomas More R.C.
15. The Streetly Academy
16. Walsall Academy
17. Walsall Studio School
18. West Walsall E-ACT
19. *Willenhall E-ACT**
20. Walsall College (FE)

Brownhills Ormiston Academy and Willenhall E-ACT* are the exceptions to the norm and do not have a sixth form.

Schools and settings will have their own admission criteria for their sixth form that they will publish on their websites alongside their sixth form provision. Walsall College is an FE provider and offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses.

3.2. The Post-16 Strategy Group

This is our key strategic partnership with schools and Walsall college with the aim of ensuring that a comprehensive and dynamic range of education and training opportunities is available to all students across the borough. The group aims to enhance learner choice and actively engage with students to improve the quality of the post-16 offer, thereby elevating student outcomes throughout the borough.

Aligned with local and regional employer demands, the post-16 offer aspires to raise student aspirations and create opportunities for diverse and rewarding career pathways, including further and higher education. This initiative supports social mobility and personal development. The post-16 provision will involve all providers working collaboratively to establish an efficient and sustainable model across the borough. This will be complemented by high-quality, impartial career advice and guidance that adheres to statutory requirements. Our goal is to ensure that every young person leaving school post-16 has a confirmed transition route and they retain that placement to support their pathway into further education, work and skills.

The Post-16 Strategy Group Plan for 2024-2025 outlines a road map aimed at improving post-16 education in Walsall. The plan focuses on addressing key challenges, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring equitable access to high-quality education and career opportunities for all students.

Membership includes Headteachers, members, and curriculum leads of mainstream, specialist and Post-16 schools and settings, work and skills officers, careers hubs officer, West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Skills Board, Virtual School, Social Care, SEND, alternative provision, and, admissions and sufficiency teams.

The group is divided into sub-groups to ensure that the appropriate professionals are engaged in the relevant areas, enabling us to leverage expertise and enhance decision-making to drive improvement.

The Post 16 plan overview:

- The strategic objectives included in the plan are designed to focus on 8 key areas of development, enhancing awareness and maximising academic & vocational opportunities, promote equal respect for Post-16 pathways, encouraging collaboration between Post-16 providers on curriculum development, supporting high-quality Post-16 provision for SEND Learners, prioritising support for children in care transitioning to Post-16, prioritising support for children in care transitioning to Post-16, and promoting Gatsby Benchmarks and effective career advice.
- Key Actions: Specific, measurable actions with timelines and assigned responsibilities to achieve these objectives.
- Impact Measures: Clear metrics to evaluate success, including enrolment rates, retention, student satisfaction, and stakeholder collaboration.

The plan emphasises the importance of collaboration between educational providers, local businesses, and stakeholders to create a unified and effective approach to Post-16 education. It aims to prepare students for both higher education and employment while addressing local economic demands and promoting sustainability.

The Post-16 plan and offer will see all providers working in collaboration to create an efficient and sustainable model of post-16 provision across the borough. In conjunction with high quality impartial career advice and guidance that meets all the statutory requirements. We will strive to ensure that every young person leaving school post-16 has a confirmed progression route.

4. Key Stage 5 (KS5) Data Information

- 4.1. In KS5, young people undertake A-Level or Vocational Exams. These are generally reported as an average point score and are undertaken at the end of Year 13. (Non-Statutory).
- 4.2. The headline attainment measures are the average point score (APS) per entry which report level 3 qualifications by four performance cohorts (A level, academic, applied general, and tech level). The average point score per entry is calculated by dividing the total number of points achieved by students in a particular cohort by the total size of entries for those students.
- 4.3. To be included in a particular performance cohort for a provider, the student must have entered for at least one of the following qualifications:
 - **A-Level** qualifications cover applied single award AS or A levels or applied double award AS or A levels. This covers students at the end of advanced level study who were entered for at least one A/AS level, applied single A/AS level, applied double A/AS level or combined A/AS level during 16-18 study. It does not include those pupils taking Tech levels.
 - **Academic** qualifications cover A levels and a range of other academic qualifications taken at level 3, including AS levels, the International Baccalaureate, Applied A levels, Pre-U, Free-standing mathematics qualifications and the extended project.
 - **Applied general** qualifications are defined by the DfE as 'rigorous level 3 qualifications for post-16 students who wish to continue their education through applied learning and that equip students with transferable knowledge and skills. These qualifications are reported in terms of a Distinction*/Distinction/Merit/Pass rather than a grade at A Level/Academic.
 - **Tech levels** are defined by the DfE as 'rigorous level 3 qualifications for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry or occupation and that develop specialist knowledge and skills to enable entry to employment or progression to a related higher education course. These qualifications are

reported in terms of a Distinction*/Distinction/Merit/Pass rather than a grade at A Level/Academic.

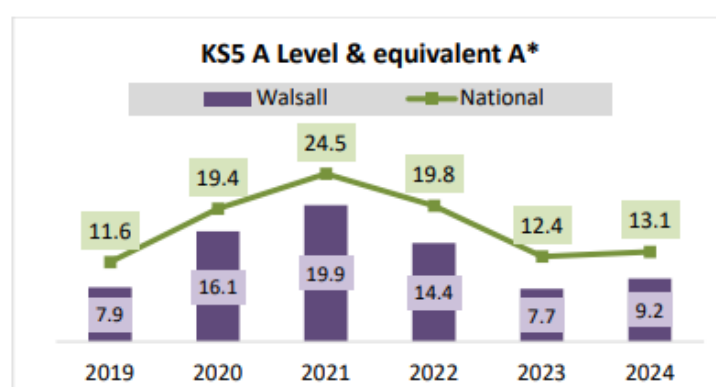
4.4. The latest provisional KS5 dataset was released by the Department for Education (DfE) on 28th November 2024. Validated data will be released in February 2025. It is expected that there will be some changes in results when the final validated data is released. This data is based on the state funded sector only (this does not include the colleges).

4.5. The average points per entry for the A Level cohort is 32.1, compared to the national average of 34.3 points (-2.2 points gap to national). Due to quality issues in some of the vocational data this provisional release will not include data on outcomes for applied general and tech level qualifications. Complete data for all qualifications will be included in the scheduled update with revised data in February 2025.

KS5 Headline Measures	Walsall 2024 Vs Walsall 2023	Walsall 2024 Vs Walsall 2019	Walsall 2024 Vs National 2024	Walsall 2024 Vs National 2024 - Gap
% A* Grades	Better	Better	Below	Improving
% A*-A Grades	Better	Better	Below	Widening
% A*-E Grades	Better	Better	Below	Improving
Average point Score - A'Level	Better	Better	Below	Widening
Average point Score - Tech Level	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Average point Score - Applied General	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

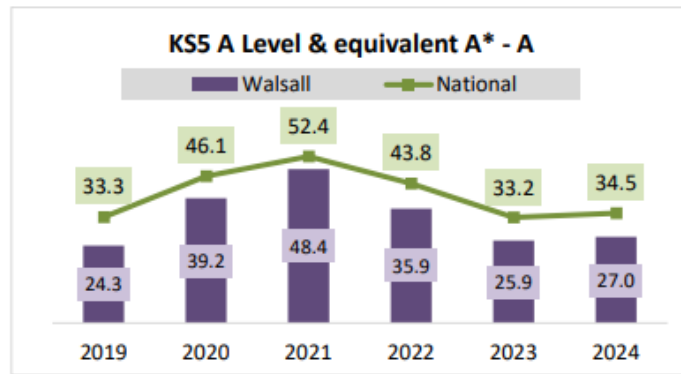
4.6. Over the past five years, the percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving an A* in their A Level and equivalent increased from 7.9% in 2019 to 9.2% in 2024, with a high of 19.9% in 2021. 6.4. The gap to national has slightly increased from 3.7 percentage points in 2019 to 3.9 percentage points in 2024. 6.5. KS5 school level data is currently unavailable.

A Level and equivalent A*



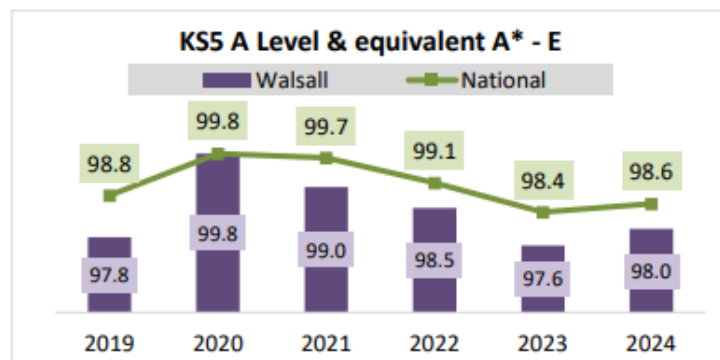
4.7. The percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving an A*-A in their A Level and equivalent qualification has increased from 24.3% in 2019 to 48.4% in 2021. 2023 declined to 25.9% and in 2024 improved by 1.1 percentage points to 27.0%. 2024 data demonstrates that Walsall are closing the gap to national, from 9 percentage points in 2019 to 7.5 percentage points in 2024. KS5 school level data is currently unavailable.

A Level and equivalent A*-A

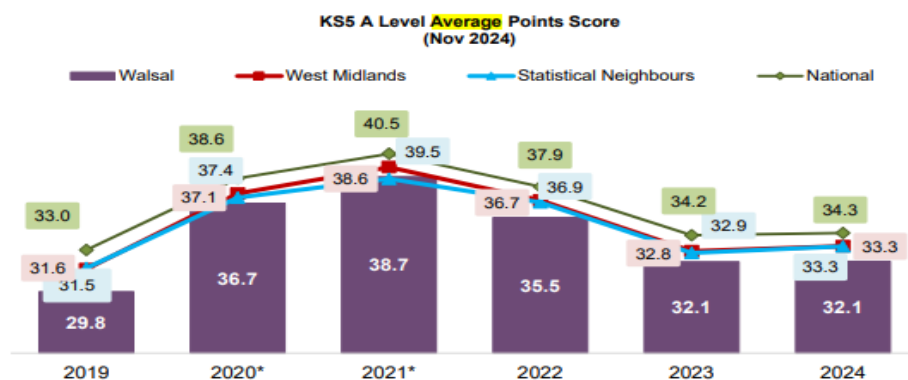


4.8. The percentage of pupils in Walsall achieving an A*-E in their A Level and equivalent qualification declined from 97.8% in 2019 to 97.6% in 2023. Attainment for 2024 has improved by 0.4 percentage points to 98%. Walsall is narrowing the gap to national from 1 percentage point in 2019 to 0.6 percentage points in 2024. KS5 school level data is currently unavailable.

A Level and equivalent A*-E

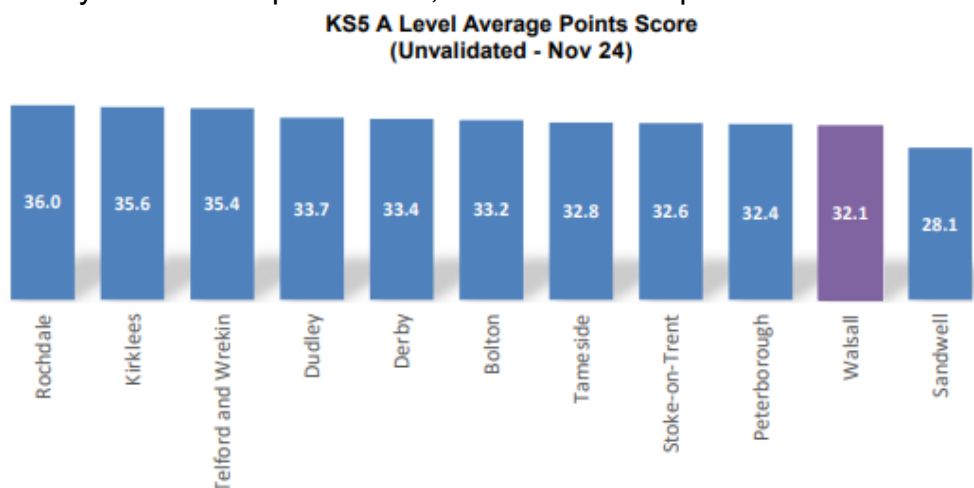


4.9. The average point score for A level has increased from 29.8 points in 2019 to 32.1 points in 2023. Attainment for 2024 has remained the same compared to 2023.



4.10. Compared to statistical neighbours, Walsall ranked 10th and was 0.3 points below Peterborough. Compared to Rochdale (36 points), who had the highest average point

score per entry at A 'Level qualification, Walsall was 3.9 points below.



4.11. 2024 data is currently unavailable, due to quality issues in some of the vocational data this provisional release will not include data on outcomes for tech level qualifications. Complete data for all qualifications will be included in the scheduled update with revised data in February 2025.

5. Walsall Works

5.1. Launched in 2012, the programme provides an inclusive service for economically inactive people of working age who are currently not working, unemployed benefit claimants who are actively seeking employment or those who are employed in low waged jobs or those with an aspiration through developing workplace skills. We work with local employers to understand the demands of the local labour market and bring forward local employment opportunities to our residents of all ages. Our free job brokerage service matches current job vacancies to participants registered on our programmes.

Qualified Advisors will support people to improve employability but also their key skills i.e. communication, timekeeping, presentation, problem solving, team working as well as improving CVs, job searching and assisting with registration to courses. We host job vacancies on our website www.walsallworks.com, through weekly jobs bulletin and on all social media platforms, and these also helps to promote our outreach services. Jobs fairs and group sessions are delivered weekly and provide a valuable opportunity for participants to meet employers and training providers. Walsall Works host a series of events across the borough as well as focussed events to market pre-employment, apprenticeships and placements.

We have robust relationships with our further education and independent training providers so that we can actively market the plethora of training budget devolved and available in the borough and provisions across the wider region.

During 2024, Walsall Works secured 1,219 positive outcomes for participants, ranging from employment, apprenticeships, part or full-time training, self-employment and work placements.

NEETs Prevention

5.2. During 2024, Walsall Works offered supports funded through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Funding to prevent young people becoming NEET. Post Black Country Impact funding, we have maintained close partnership with key services in order to source referrals of our most vulnerable young people from Transitional Leaving Care Team, Early Help Team, SEND Team (including those with ECHP's), Youth Justice Service and Family Hubs. We also receive some referrals of young people at risk of becoming NEET from education providers and local authority services i.e. children missing education, home school elected services, early help services, young carers.

The service is delivered face to face on a one-to-one basis from various settings in our co-location venues below, established in 20 locations across the borough. Advisors will meet young people regularly to create clear action plans focussing on tackling barriers that may prevent progression into training, education, apprenticeship, job placements or employment opportunities.

An employer engagement officer works closely with Advisors to better understand participant aspirations and career goals, in order to bring forward relevant opportunities. In this academic year, we have attended some secondary school careers events to raise awareness of our service and the labour market. We also continue to promote our offer through various forums represented by education i.e. Post 16 Group, SEND Group, Walsall Learning Alliance and Childrens Alliance.

5.3. During 2024, 338 young people aged 16-18 enrolled and 316 aged 19-24 years. In the same year, 420 positive outcomes were secured for young people, 190 were young people aged 16-18 and 234 were aged 19-24 years.

6. Special Education Needs

6.1. To improve our intelligence gathering we collect information from participants which allows us to analysis our service users, improve services and triage new participants to ensure they get the most appropriate and relevant support from us. The data below outlines the number of young people aged 16-24 who have disclosed they have a health barrier, learning difficulty or physical disability and those with an current EHCP. This data does not account for those who choose not to disclose this personal information but does include those state they have a disability but prefer not say what this is. Our improvement in processes has resulted in an increase in capturing the data and outcomes for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Learning Difficulty / Disability	2024	2023	2022
Aspergers Syndrome	2	4	3
Autism Spectrum Disorder	29	14	19
Disability Affecting Mobility	1	3	6

Dyslexia / Dyscalculia	18	14	9
EHCP (Education Health Care Plan)	13	15	1
Hearing Impairment	2	1	2
Learning Difficulty	13	11	11
Mental Health Difficulty	17	22	36
Other Unique Disability	27	2	7
Yes (But Prefer Not to Say)	3	4	7
Visual Impairments	2	1	1
Social and Emotional Difficulty	3	0	0
Total	130	96	108

The support provided through the Walsall Works programme is a universal offer regardless of personal circumstances, barriers or difficulties. All participants who are registered are supported until they voluntarily exit the programme or until they achieve a positive outcome. The reported participant outcomes in 2024 for those with a learning difficulty and disability are set out below and this highlights 24 positive outcomes were achieved showing a good mix of employment and education results.

Outcome Type	Employer / Provider	Job or Learning type	Learning Difficulty / Disability
Education	Nacro Training walsall	L1 Business & Retail	Learning Difficulty
Education	Nova Training	L1 Employability and work experience in child care.	Mental Health Difficulty
Education	Nacro training Walsall	Personal and Development inc English and Maths	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Employment	Co-op	Retail Assistant	Mental Health Difficulty
Employment	Co-op	Retail Assistant	Mental Health Difficulty
Employment	Ability Healthcare	Care Worker	Learning Difficulty
Employment	Shire Oaks Court Health Care Limited	Health Care Assistant.	Mental Health Difficulty
Apprenticeship	Homeserve	Customer Service Apprentice	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Training	Juniper	Internship	Learning Difficulty
Training	Netcom	Infrastructure Technician Course	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Education	Walsall College	Level 2 Diploma in Site Carpentry Evening	Learning Difficulty
Education	Nacro Training	L1 Health and Social Care	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Training	Job Change	3 day care course	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Training	Nacro Training	Health and Social Care L2. English GCSE	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Education	Nacro Training Walsall	Work ready programme with English and Math's	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Education	sixth form	Level 2 Creative Pathway	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Education	Studio school	English / Maths	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia

Training	Job change	Health and safety level 1	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Training	Wolverhampton CSCS Training Centre	Health, safety and environment test for Operatives	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Employment	Ratcliffe Cleaning	Cleaning operative	Dyslexia / Dyscalculia
Training	RMC	ESOL non accredited	Mental Health Difficulty
Training	Job Change	3 day care course	Mental Health Difficulty
Employment	Carpet Right	Customer Service Advisor	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Employment	Decathlon	Full time Sports Advisor	Autism Spectrum Disorder

6.2. NEETs Tracking

The management of our Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) is contracted to Prospects Services (Shaw Trust) who tracks the status of young people in year 11 to 13 for statistical returns to DfE. Prospects provide the local authority with real time information to identify those who are not participating in education or those without destinations. Prospects collect the data but do not provide any local follow up to re-engage those who have become NEET or who are 'Not Known' to mainstream education. There is a heavy reliance on the Employment and Skills Team to make contact with these young people and to engage them in our services. Considerable work has been undertaken this past year to improve data sharing agreements, to ensure that the tracking of our most vulnerable young people is accurate in order to closely identify those who are NEET.

Further improvements to the tracking systems include the use of private emails, phone numbers, home addresses so that we may use all communication methods to ascertain the current status of young people and provide the most accurate NEETs figures to DfE. We have used this information to write to parents and to conduct home visits. We can also use the emails to better communicate our offer, events and other support services.

December 2024 figures (latest full month reporting) show a slow but steady improvement from the start of the academic year, with NEET figures at to 3.2% we continue to contact the individuals and offer the support and services of Walsall Works to assist these young people back into education, training or employment.

There has been significant activity to reduce the number of Not Known's from a record 14% (1005) in the October return, down to 3.4% (269) currently and with further activity scheduled before February half term, our aspiration is to significantly reduce this number by at least half.

The Not Knowns are a difficult subset to validate, but our ongoing efforts to make contact by email and postal campaigns has proven successful, and with a planned activity to visit last known addresses of these young people to understand where they are and what they are currently doing in terms of education, training or employment.

Current December 24 Stats - RPA				
Year 12	Year 13	Combined	Target	
94.6%	89.8%	92.32	94.9%	
Current December 23 Stats - NEET				
Year 12	Year 13	TOTAL	Current %	Target
88	165	254	3.2%	3.1%
Current December 23 Stats - Not Known				
Year 12	Year 13	TOTAL	Current %	Target
107	162	269	3.4%	4.1%

6.3. Careers Enterprise Company (CEC)

The CEC is the national body for careers education in England, delivering support to schools and colleges to deliver modern, 21st century careers education. Careers 5.16 Hubs bring together schools, colleges, employers, and apprenticeship providers in a local area. Their goal is to work together and help schools and colleges improve how they prepare young people for their best next steps following education.

Until this academic year, Walsall was the only WM Local Authorities not to have transitioned the responsibility for leading and managing a team of Enterprise Coordinators. In October 2024 Walsall Works secured funding to 1.5 FTE posts in order to continue the facilitation of high-quality careers and enterprise education for 11–18-year-olds. This is more effective delivery enabling better alignment to local economic and skills priorities and will improve career outcomes and achieve sustainable change at a local and national level. It ensures careers service delivery is consistently of a high quality, aligning to the Gatsby Benchmarks and performance requirements set in a grant agreement with CEC.

CEC Co-ordinators will provide support to schools to delivering CIAG against the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks identified as the core priorities within a good quality careers and enterprise programme in schools.

These are:

- Stable careers programme
- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, post-16 provision and outcomes remain a focal area for our Local Authority. We have made significant progress by creating the Post-16 Strategy Group to drive priority areas forward and build relationships and trust between our providers. The Post-16 Strategy Group Plan for 2024-2025 is a detailed and comprehensive framework aimed at addressing key challenges and opportunities in post-16 education. With clearly defined objectives, actionable plans, and measurable outcomes, it provides a robust roadmap for improving educational access, equity, and outcomes in Walsall.

This is a key focus moving forward and the next 12 months will see further efforts to develop our post-16 offer, ensuring good quality and positive outcomes across all post-16 settings in our region to ensure pupils get the right support, in the right place, and at the right time.

8. Decide

The committee may decide to request further information on the education outcomes of children within Walsall.

9. Respond

Any recommendations made by the committee will be responded to by the appropriate service area.

10. Review

The actions and outcomes within this report are monitored by Access & Inclusion SMT and by individual schools.

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Appendix A:

TERMS OF REFERENCE for the Walsall Post 16 Strategy Group & Post-16 Plan

September 2024

Purpose

The Post-16 Strategy Group is dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive and dynamic range of education and training opportunities is available to all students across the borough. The group aims to enhance learner choice and actively engage with students to improve the quality of the post-16 curriculum, thereby elevating student outcomes throughout the borough.

Aligned with local and regional employer demands, the post-16 offer aspires to raise student aspirations and create opportunities for diverse and rewarding career pathways, including further and higher education. This initiative supports social mobility and personal development.

The post-16 provision will involve all providers working collaboratively to establish an efficient and sustainable model across the borough. This will be complemented by high-quality, impartial career advice and guidance that adheres to statutory requirements. Our goal is to ensure that every young person leaving school post-16 has a confirmed transition route.

The main aims of the group are:

- 1.To enhance awareness of the diverse range of post-16 education and training opportunities and ensure that both academic and vocational choices are maximised for all students in the borough.
- 2.To promote equal respect for all post-16 pathways by monitoring and sharing best practices, while recognising that different qualifications and training are suited to different learners based on their intended career goals.
- 3.To ensure that **all** post-16 providers share provision plans to enhance curriculum development across the borough and our neighbouring authorities.
- 4.To identify and address barriers to accessing provision for post-16 learners across the borough and our neighbouring authorities, including curriculum offer and place planning to ensure Walsall has sufficient places for learners. This includes planning for the number of post-16 specialist places required over the next 5 years.
- 5.To ensure that strategies address the needs of all young people, including the most able and those with SEND (as defined in the SEND banding document), and that these strategies are integrated and cohesive.
- 6.To ensure high-quality post-16 provision for students with SEND and to target suitable programs designed to support those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 7.To ensure that students in care are supported in all provisions by identifying key leaders within those settings to provide dedicated support to children in care.

8. To use destinations data and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) to help inform the post-16 borough-wide offer on an annual basis.
9. To work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and Careers Hubs to ensure that Gatsby Benchmarks are prioritised and provision meets the needs of the labour market.
10. To establish an IAG (Information, Advice, and Guidance) network that benefits all students and post-16 leaders, through the roles of CE Coordinators.
11. To ensure all students that are transported to post-16 provisions, have support to promote their independence and preparation for adulthood.
12. To target appropriate provision for young people aged 16-19 years old who are at risk of becoming NEET or are identified as NEET.
13. To monitor and report on the impact of the Walsall Post 16 Strategy Group in order to improve progress against these aims.

Sept 2024

Summary of the Post-16 Strategy Group Plan 2024-2025

The Post-16 Strategy Group Plan for 2024-2025 outlines a road map aimed at improving post-16 education in Walsall. The plan focuses on addressing key challenges, facilitating collaboration, and ensuring equitable access to high-quality education and career opportunities for all students.

It includes:

- **Strategic Objectives:** Nine key objectives targeting areas such as academic opportunities, vocational pathways, mental health, sustainability, and alignment with regional economic needs.
- **Key Actions:** Specific, measurable actions with timelines and assigned responsibilities to achieve these objectives.
- **Impact Measures:** Clear metrics to evaluate success, including enrolment rates, retention, student satisfaction, and stakeholder collaboration.

To ensure the terms of reference are fulfilled, the group has identified objectives and created a comprehensive action plan for the Walsall Post-16 Strategy Group. It outlines specific actions aimed at achieving strategic objectives, including enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, improving educational outcomes, and addressing key challenges in post-16 education.

The overall plan emphasises the importance of collaboration between educational providers, local businesses, and stakeholders to create a unified and effective approach to post-16 education. It aims to prepare students for both higher education and employment while addressing local economic demands and promoting sustainability.

The action plan provides a comprehensive action plan for the Walsall Post-16 Strategy Group. It outlines specific actions aimed at achieving each strategic objectives, including enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, improving educational outcomes, and

addressing key challenges in post-16 education. The plan also includes timelines and responsibilities for each action.

Objective 1: Enhance Awareness and Maximise Academic Opportunities

This objective focuses on developing borough-wide communication strategy to promote both academic and vocational post-16 pathways, ensuring it is embedded as an ongoing annual initiative. Evaluating existing student engagement events and webinars to enhance opportunities for showcasing the full range of post-16 options, including academic, vocational, and apprenticeship pathways. Additionally, create a comprehensive website to provide detailed information on all available post-16 pathways in Walsall, making it easier for students to explore and access their options.

Objective 2: Promote Equal Respect for Post-16 Pathways

This objective aims to ensure equal promotion of academic and vocational pathways by assessing the availability of regular CPD sessions for careers advisers and teaching staff. It seeks to leverage Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) to tailor career advice based on local job market demands, with this information shared consistently with staff and advisers. Additionally, it focuses on engaging parents through information sessions that emphasise the benefits of pathways such as apprenticeships and T Levels. A campaign highlighting success stories from both vocational and academic routes will also be developed to celebrate student achievements and inspire others.

Objective 3: Encourage Collaboration Between Providers on Curriculum Development

This objective aims to establish a borough-wide post-16 curriculum network, including Special Schools, to facilitate coordination among providers, enabling the discussion of curriculum development and the sharing of best practices. The network will also support the annual exchange of curriculum provision plans to address gaps and prevent duplication in course offerings across the borough.

Objective 4: Improve Access and Address Barriers to Post-16 Education

This objective focuses on ensuring sufficient post-16 places and specialist provisions by projecting demand over the next five years and conducting a borough-wide needs assessment to identify barriers to access, such as geographic and socio-economic factors. Annual surveys of parents and students will gather insights into challenges like transport, finances, and other support needs. Collaboration with transport providers will aim to secure affordable travel options while promoting independence for students attending post-16 institutions. Life skills training and independence programs will further support students with transport needs in their transition to adulthood. Clear information on bursaries and financial support for disadvantaged students and those with SEND will be provided. Additionally, systems to monitor post-16 attendance will be explored, along with schools being supported to identify at-risk students at the earliest point. Tailored support, such as mentoring and alternative pathways, will be explored to address the needs of students at risk of becoming NEET.

Objective 5: Support High-Quality Post-16 Provision for SEND Learners

Objective 5 aims to improve the quality and accessibility of Post-16 education for learners with SEND, including the best SEND providers. It focuses on conducting needs assessments to identify barriers, emerging needs, exploring specialist programmes to support career guidance and transitions, and ensuring every post-16 provider has a

dedicated SEND coordinator working closely with the Walsall SEND team. Additionally, it prioritises exploring suitable placements, reviewing Education, Health, and Care Plans and supporting inclusion in both mainstream and specialist education settings. These efforts aim to provide tailored support and promote successful outcomes for SEND learners.

Objective 6: Prioritise Support for Children in Care Transitioning to Post-16

Objective 6 aims to enhance support for children in care within post-16 education by identifying key leaders to provide dedicated assistance and monitoring their academic progress and well-being to offer tailored support, such as tutoring and mental health services. A network meeting of CIAG advisors and Virtual School post-16 leads will be established to improve communication and ensure seamless transitions. Virtual School are leading on key initiatives in post-16 transition sessions in the spring term and a Post-16 Options Fair specifically for Year 11 CIC students.

Objective 7: Strengthen Use of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) and Destinations Data

This objective ensures the borough-wide post-16 education offer aligns with local labour market needs by analysing LMI and student destination data annually. The findings will be used to inform curriculum adjustments to match evolving job markets and integrate LMI data into curriculum design, equipping students with skills required by local and regional employers. Partnerships with local businesses will be further developed to provide work experience, internships, and employment opportunities. Additionally, alternative education pathways, such as flexible schedules, online courses, and part-time options, will be explored to address the diverse needs of NEET students. The Walsall Employment and Skills Board have agreed to support this objective to ensure robust collaboration with employers.

Objective 8: Promote Gatsby Benchmarks and Effective Career Advice

This objective focuses on strengthening careers education by exploring a borough-wide Information, Advice, and Guidance network across all post-16 providers to support the delivery of the Gatsby Benchmarks. Collaboration with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and local Careers Hubs will ensure these benchmarks are prioritised in all institutions. Career leaders will be trained or guided on using the benchmarks to help students make informed career choices. Regular career workshops and fairs will connect students with employers and educational opportunities. Additionally, re-engagement programs for NEET students will be explored, alongside partnerships with local businesses and training providers to offer apprenticeships, vocational training, and internships aligned with local labour market needs.

Objective 9: Monitoring and Reporting Progress

Objective 9 emphasises the importance of tracking progress and measuring impact through regular monitoring and reporting. Key actions include collecting feedback during termly meetings, presenting annual progress reports to stakeholders, and using evidence to demonstrate continuous improvement and stakeholder satisfaction. This ensures accountability and the effective implementation of strategies.

Impact Measures

Impact measures have been created to evaluate the success of the action plan. These include quantitative measures, such as increased enrolment in Post-16 programmes,

improved retention rates, and positive student and parent/carer feedback. It also includes qualitative assessments, such as enhanced stakeholder collaboration and improved perceptions of post-16 education pathways.

Conclusion

The Post-16 Strategy Group Plan for 2024-2025 is a detailed and comprehensive action plan aimed at addressing key challenges and opportunities in post-16 education. With clearly defined objectives, actionable plans, and measurable outcomes, it provides a robust roadmap for improving educational access, equity, and outcomes in Walsall.