Hull School Improvement Strategy
2015-2018
(updated June 2017)
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Introduction

Hull has developed a statement setting out ‘An Ambitious Education for all Children and Young People in Hull 2015-2018’. The ambition is that all schools will be at least good and preferably outstanding. Also that the city will have closed the gap to the national average on the range of key indicators that measure standards.

Achieving this will have a real positive impact on the lives of our city children and will enable them to take full advantage of the economic development that will happen in the coming years.

This document sets out how the authority will fulfil the school improvement functions that remain in place for the year 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, regardless of the variety of school types that now exist in the city. The intention is to be clear and transparent about how schools are categorised; what the expectations of school and authority are in each category; and what the consequences are of progress that is not taking place, or not taking place swiftly enough.

The strategy is built upon an expectation that although schools have autonomy and freedoms, all schools in Hull are part of the ‘family’ and will want to work cooperatively, including sharing appropriate information in line with protocols. The local authority wants to maintain good relationships with all schools and is seeking to promote the highest standards in all schools.

In December 2015, the Local Authority had an inspection by Ofsted of the support for school improvement. The narrative judgement was published in January 2016, and there is an action plan to take forward the recommendations. Much has changed both nationally and locally since then and the proportion of academies means that the school improvement role is very different. The government direction of travel is slowly becoming clearer and the creation by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) of sub-regional forums with a school improvement remit is a positive change. This takes effect from September 2017.

It also takes account of the changes in the Education and Adoption Act 2016, giving greater powers to the RSC and the likely changes from 2017, particularly those related to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Some of the financial changes look as though they are going to be introduced on a slower timetable than originally planned.
Statutory Role

The local authority still has a strong statutory role in education, having a duty to promote high standards and to act as a champion of children, particularly vulnerable children. The full list of statutory duties can be found on the Direct.gov website. Definitive guidance is still awaited but our role across the education sector is fairly clear.

In the school improvement field, the best and only way of fulfilling our statutory functions and the ambition for Hull is through partnership working with all schools of all types. As a local authority, we wish to have good, strong and positive relationships with all education providers. The shared values and ways of working set out in the ambition document will mean that school-to-school support, effective governance, different approaches to school leadership, improving the quality of teaching, will all come naturally as part of improving the lives of all our children.

As the statutory roles are more effectively delivered, there will be more and more to celebrate. Higher percentages of children will be learning in good or outstanding provision. More children will be achieving results at national expectations or higher. Vulnerable groups will be learning more effectively and gaps will close.

Where there is underperformance, or risk of underperformance, whatever the reason or type of school, the local authority will respond. We will want to work with the school to ensure a rapid and robust response. With a maintained school that may involve the use of statutory powers as set out in this strategy. For an academy, we will work with the governing body, the sponsor, or other relevant organisation to ensure rapid progress. We will work closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for both academies and maintained schools that are causing concern. This is in line with the Education and Adoption Act 2016 and the recently issued statutory guidance on schools causing concern.

The role of governors in schools is becoming ever more important and the local authority is expected to have a good knowledge of the quality of governance in all schools. In the current climate, where local authority officers no longer attend governing body meetings regularly or act as clerk to all governing bodies, this is a challenge and we are keen not to create additional bureaucracy. This strategy sets out simply what we will offer and how we will gather knowledge.
Partnerships and Accountabilities

At the simplest level there is one large family of schools within Hull. We work best when we support each other, building on strengths and developing improved outcomes as a community. Being a member of that family gives access to a range of support that is universal and applies to schools and academies.

- Annual School Improvement conversation(s) for all maintained schools, as set out in this strategy
- Head teacher network/briefing sessions for phases each half term including local and national updates
- Contributions when requested to conferences organised by head teacher groups, teaching school alliances or others
- Support for secondary curriculum leader groups
- Induction support for NQTs and new head teachers
- Training available in various areas including Early Years; Safeguarding; Children in Care
- Governor support including termly briefings for chairs and governors on local and national issues
- Access to governor training and annual conference for governors through GAtHER (Hull and East Riding governors association)
- Connexions support targeted at those at risk of becoming NEET
- Core work of Educational Psychology Service
- Initial Critical Incident Support
- Co-ordinated admissions arrangements
- School Place Planning
- Statutory SEND assessments
- Support for Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecution for non-attendance

There is also a wide range of services that is available to schools and academies on a traded basis.
School Partnerships

There are a number of partnerships of different types within the Hull schools. These range from the more informal arrangements through to the more formal multi-academy trusts. The proportion of academy schools is growing and most are joining a multi-academy trust. Whatever the partnership, the school is still a Hull school and will be considered as part of this strategy.

Partnerships include:

- Informal Partnerships – groups of schools who have chosen to work together without any change to status or governance
- Federations – schools have come together and formally federated. Each school is a separate school, however there are joint governance arrangements
- Cooperative Trusts – groups of schools who work together under a Trust that is committed to the cooperative principles. There are several of these Trusts within Hull.
- Multi – Sponsor Academy Trusts – schools are part of a group of schools across the region or country. These chains of schools vary in size and geography.
- Multi – Academy Trusts – groups of schools who come together under a single academy trust. These partnerships have the ability to design a level of flexibility that suits the schools concerned

Teaching Schools

Hull is fortunate to have the number of teaching school alliances there are in the City. They have good reputations in their various sectors and the choice means that there is normally expertise available within the area. In addition there are a wider number of teaching schools within travelling distance and where necessary, these have been approached. As a resource within the City, the council has commissioned activity from the teaching schools. In addition the teaching schools have secured external resource to secure improvement work. This list may grow as other alliances are created.

Teaching Schools in Hull:

- Blueprint Alliance Teaching School – Based at Sirius Academy, the alliance involves secondary schools, PRUs and colleges from inside and around Hull.
• Tidal Teaching Schools Alliance – Based at Spring Cottage Primary School, the alliance involves mainly primary schools, but also schools from other phases and sectors.
• Hull Collaborative Teaching School – Based at Collingwood Primary School, the alliance involves mainly primary schools, but also schools from other phases and sectors.
• DRET Teaching School Alliance – Based at Wold Primary School, the alliance covers DRET schools across the trust but adds capacity within the city.

Lead Member

The Lead Member for Learning, Skills and Safeguarding Children has a high level of accountability from the Council perspective and takes the responsibility very seriously. The Councillor is a member of the Cabinet, the decision making body for the Council. The Lead Member is well briefed by officers about all aspects of Learning and Skills. This ensures that he/she is able to make decisions from a strong knowledge base. The Constitution sets out the basis on which decision making is based.

Early Support and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Commission

This Council Committee scrutinises decisions made by the Cabinet within its area of responsibility. In addition, it agrees a work programme each year and examines a number of topics of importance to look at in detail. There are visits made by the commission to schools and settings as well as the study of reports prepared by officers for discussion.

Area Committees

There are area committees for each area of the city. Each year an education report is prepared for each Committee setting out the performance of schools and settings within the city. Only Ofsted judgements and public data about schools and settings will be used in any report.

Communication

Whilst there are regular meetings between school leaders and the authority, the intention is to further improve the communication lines between us. At present too much of the regular meetings is taken up with giving out information. We need to have a more
efficient way of giving out information, preferably electronically, and then use our valuable joint time looking at some of the major developments and challenges that affect us.

**The School Improvement Process**

Schools are self-managing and autonomous and are responsible for their own performance and improvement. Schools are expected to have a rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, leading to timely intervention to address issues that arise from that self-evaluation.

In 2016/17 academic year, the local authority has a role in monitoring, support, challenge and intervention for maintained schools. With the role of championing pupils and families, the local authority also has a strong interest in the performance of academies and free schools.

From 2017, an Annual Conversation will be held with all maintained schools about their plans for continuous improvement. These discussions will, wherever possible, be undertaken face to face. However, it may be necessary to use other channels. These discussions will include:

- Plans for the future
- School-to-school support
- Areas of strength
- Performance of key groups

**Monitoring** – The authority will gather performance data about schools regularly and will discuss with schools issues that may arise from their own self-evaluation. This will contribute to the authority planning arrangements and prioritisation of resources. The authority will ensure that statutory requirements are met.

**Support** – The local authority will ensure that support is proportionate and timely. That support is often brokered through teaching schools, through direct school-to-school support, from the local authority or from an external organisation. The way support works will vary between schools.
Challenge – There are several levels of challenge that should be evident. There should be evidence that governors are providing appropriate challenge to head teachers within the school. There should be evidence that the self-evaluation has had rigorous, preferably external, challenge so that it can be effective. For a, hopefully, small number of maintained schools, the local authority will provide challenge to the head teacher and governors to ensure there is rapid and sustainable progress.

Intervention – Where the support and challenge has not resulted in the expected improvement in a maintained school, the authority may need to use its statutory powers of intervention through the use of warning letters or other powers. Where support and challenge has not had the intended effect in an academy, the local authority may need to take appropriate action through the academy sponsor or Regional Schools Commissioner.

Whilst these inevitably concentrate on areas where a school is less successful, we will also identify areas of strength within schools. Knowing where there are school strengths will help the overall school body to know where to seek support when particular issues arise within a school. The earlier an issue is addressed, the less likely it is going to develop into something that may impact adversely on outcomes.
The City-wide Monitoring Process

Schools are already given a grade by Ofsted once they are inspected, and in the light of the coming changes to school improvement, the growing number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and the changing role of the RSC, we are not proposing to undertake additional categorisation from 2016/17. Schools will be categorised by their Ofsted grade.

As a local authority, those officers involved with schools will continue to meet regularly, at least half termly, to share information and to monitor what is happening in the city. This process is based on using a range of indicators and areas of potential vulnerability as set out here. Wherever possible, published information is used, albeit not always fully validated. Schools that are seen as likely to need significant support/challenge will be identified and an appropriate plan developed. Where possible this will be done early in the academic year so there is time to work with those schools identified.

The schools that are a priority can change at any time in the light of circumstances that must be addressed immediately, eg, an Ofsted inspection outcome, major behavioural issues, a building issue such as fire or flood, or other significant change.

The Schools Monitoring Group (SMG) of officers will be chaired by the senior manager for Education. It will include all relevant officers including those in relation to SEN, vulnerable pupils and governance. The Data Manager is a core member.

Data on each school will be available at the meeting including standards of attainment and progress, attendance, inspection outcomes, trends, etc. There should be no information about which a school would be unaware.

The SMG will consider the following range of issues (not all will be applicable to all schools):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Categorisation Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ofsted</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Leadership and management</strong></td>
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<td>Rigour and accuracy of self evaluation</td>
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<td>Effectiveness of school improvement planning</td>
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<td>Use of the pupil premium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues in relation to SLT such as recruitment, succession, absence or others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of complaints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff and pupil survey information, if known</td>
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<tr>
<td>School rolls and trend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compliance of school website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues relating to membership, capacity, vacancies, attendance or similar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of minutes, evidence of challenge,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective relationship between school and governors</td>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>SEF Score and Ofsted grade, if recent</td>
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<td>Attainment outcomes relevant to the key stages within the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement of floor target, distance above or below national</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress relevant to the key stages within the school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance above or below national</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 year trends for attainment and progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attainment and progress of groups, particularly FSM, SEN, LAC and the most able</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching, Learning and Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEF score and Ofsted grade, if recent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence for evaluation including any external validation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents’ views where known</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing issues such as recruitment, turnover, absence or others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of NQTs if relevant</td>
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<td>Consistency of prediction against actual outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Development and Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEF score and Ofsted grade, if recent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levels of attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of persistent absence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed and permanent exclusions</td>
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<td>3 year trends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility, in year transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children who are missing education, move into home education or are on part time timetables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safeguarding issues and child protection</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive surplus or deficit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Link between priorities and outcomes if known</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcomes engagement as donor or recipient</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subscribes to all children belong to all of us</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Major Event</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a major event happened that impacts upon this process such as fire, flood, death, conduct or other</td>
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Support for Governors

The role of governors has had a growing importance with the inspection of schools focussing more rigorously on the quality of governance. This is fair as governors have a key part to play in ensuring quality education, but it also has to be remembered that governors are volunteers and they give up their time freely.

Whilst it is true that local authorities are not able to either clerk or have an officer presence at governing body meetings in the way that this used to happen, there is still an expectation that the authority will have a good understanding of the quality of governance in all schools in the city, irrespective of their status. We will see whether the expected guidance on the role of the authority changes this expectation.

If we are to fulfil this requirement from a distance without creating new bureaucracies, we will need to monitor key indicators such as; vacancy levels; attendance; training; evidence of appropriate challenge; strategic thinking rather than operational detail. This can mostly be gleaned from governing body minutes and judgements from more recent inspection reports.

School clerking arrangements are varied. Some schools buy in a clerking service from the local authority governors’ support team or from an independent clerking service. Other schools do their own clerking. We will be seeking to have sight of governing body minutes of all schools, wherever possible as they are produced, but if necessary after they are ratified and therefore public.

We know who attends LA training or that provided by the Hull and East Riding governors association (Ga-ther). Other training is likely to be reported through governor minutes. It should therefore be possible to establish a reasonable picture of the local situation regarding governor training.

There is a range of local authority support for governors already in place to help them fulfil their important role, regardless of the type of school.

- Termly briefing for Chairs of Governors – information and discussion on current and emerging education topics
- Termly newsletter for all governors
- Annual governors conference – jointly with East Riding governors
- Hull governor training programme – including induction and a range of other topics
In addition to this advice and training are available from a range of external organisations.

**Support for Children in Care**

DfE statutory guidance “Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children” (July 2014) has outlined the role of the Local Authority’s Virtual School Headteacher in supporting schools. This is to track, monitor and ensure support for the progress of every child in the Local Authority’s care (also called looked after child/LAC/CLA) as if they attended a single school, as well as to give support to professionals working with LAC placed in Hull by other local authorities.

The key priorities are to:

- Close attainment and progress gaps.
- Create a culture of high aspirations.
- Meet the training needs of all professionals.
- Ensure access to a range of high quality placement options – good and outstanding schools.
- Ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor the attendance and educational progress.
- Maintain up-to-date roll and inform schools of children coming into care.
- Ensure all children in care have up-to-date, effective and high quality Personal Education Plans that focus on educational outcomes (in Hull this is an electronic plan).
- Ensure provision is full-time (and minimise gaps in schooling).
- Report regularly on the achievements of LAC and arrange celebrations of their successes.
**Intervention**

Following the Schools Monitoring Group, or at any other time, a decision may be made by the Senior Education Manager to identify a school as one needing additional support and/or challenge.

**Maintained Schools**

If the school is a maintained school it will be informed in writing about this identification and the reason for it. There will normally be a meeting with the Manager and the school’s head teacher and chair of governors which will give an opportunity to discuss the issues identified and to agree a plan to improve the position.

These discussions will include:

- The school improvement plan or similar, plus the school’s own self-evaluation
- Identification of agreed priorities across all relevant plans/inspections/reviews
- Commissioned work (from school resources) to support plan
- Planned LA support including reviews
- Follow up visits to assess progress, evaluate activity and see whether there have been positive changes
- Regular meetings, either termly or half termly, to involve Chair of Governors as well as the head teacher
- Where progress is insufficient, then take appropriate intervention action.

Where a maintained school is causing concern or showing insufficient progress but not to the extent that it would require a formal warning notice as set out in the ‘Schools Causing Concern: guidance for local authorities and RSCs (March 2016)’, then a Hull Letter of Concern will be sent to the head teacher and chair of governors. This letter will set out clearly the concerns, the support available and the expectations in terms of improvement required and timescale to achieve.

If, as hoped, the Hull Letter of Concern has the desired effect, then the school will have the letter of concern removed. If there is insufficient progress or the concern level rises, then formal intervention as set out in the statutory guidance is likely to be the next step.
If the level of concern is such that the Hull Letter of Concern would not be appropriate, it may be necessary to proceed straight to the statutory guidance.

This could be a formal warning notice or it might be one of the powers of intervention. There will normally be consultation with the RSC at this stage if it has not already happened. The RSC has the power to intervene directly as set out in the guidance.

- Power to suspend the delegated authority for the governing body to manage a school’s budget
- Power to appoint an Interim Executive Board
- Power to appoint Additional Governors
- Power to require the governing body to enter into arrangements.

Academies

If the school is an academy, it will be informed in writing about this identification and the reason for it. There will normally be a meeting with the Manager and the school’s head teacher, chair of governors, and academy sponsor, if appropriate. This will give an opportunity to discuss the issues identified and to share a plan to improve the position.

These discussions will include:

- The school improvement plan or similar, plus the school’s own self-evaluation
- Identification of agreed priorities across all relevant plans/ inspections/ reviews
- Commissioned work (from school resources) to support plan
- Involvement, if any, from the Regional Schools Commissioner

If the RSC is not aware of the concern, the school or the local authority would normally be expected to keep the RSC informed. Only in exceptional circumstances would the local authority report a school causing concern to the RSC without first discussing the situation with the academy.

Any formal intervention would be the responsibility of the RSC, in line with the guidance.