

Slough School Effectiveness Strategy

2022-2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Covid-19 Preface

In March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a nationwide lockdown and schools were closed to all pupils except key workers and those deemed vulnerable. School leaders across Slough rose to the challenge with resilience and courage to support those pupils attending school and those learning at home whilst being mindful of pupil and staff wellbeing. Leaders faced unprecedented challenges in responding to a dynamic situation and ever-changing guidance.

The impact of the Covid emergency on pupils is yet to be seen long term despite all restrictions now lifted. Academically, longer term it is likely to have most negative impact on the more vulnerable and the disadvantaged. The impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people could be wide reaching. On the other hand, some children may have thrived during this period.

The start of the academic year 2022-23 will be the first year since the start of the pandemic uninterrupted by lockdowns, although the effects of covid will still be with us. We will need to ensure as an area we are able to monitor the progress of our young people and support them to reach their full potential despite the significant disruption to their education.

Slough LA enjoys strong partnerships with local schools and the Slough Education Partnership Board (SEPB) played, and continues to play, a crucial role in supporting schools to support our young people in these challenging times. This board which has developed over the last few years, was able to be a key conduit for communication between the LA, schools and the DfE as well as provide guidance and assurance to schools. In addition key network groups were set up such as the curriculum groups to enable schools to come together and share ideas to support each other.

In light of this background and context the School Effectiveness Strategy continues to be of great importance to ensure that we are working together with schools and wider partners, which include the DfE, Public Health, Social Services, Transport and many other services that will help our young people get back to a semblance of normality and overcome any barriers they may face academically or socially.

1.2 Introduction

This school effectiveness strategy outlines how the local authority (LA) will fulfil its statutory duties in relation to school effectiveness and articulates our ambitions for the school system.

This is also set within the context of the LAs shrinking resources and continuing financial challenges. The LA embraces the role of facilitator as opposed to provider.

This strategy recognizes that schools have long been responsible for their own improvement and that 69% of the schools in Slough are academies. Nevertheless, the LA retains a significant statutory role to “promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential so that all children and young people benefit from at least a good education” (Education Act 1996)

The LA also retains statutory responsibilities for identifying and, if necessary, intervening in maintained schools causing concern and for notifying the Regional Director (RD), formerly Regional Schools Commissioner, (RSC) of academies of concern. The strategy outlines how the LA will fulfil these responsibilities and how we work with the Regional Director in relation to academies causing concern and any schools which are judged by Ofsted to be Inadequate.

Nationally, the shape and working of the system has become increasingly complex, as have the lines of accountability, presenting challenges to all parties.

We believe that in an increasingly fragmented system the LA can play a crucial role in convening and facilitating partnership working and engaging with regional partners. The strategy outlines how we will work in partnership with all schools, including academies, Ofsted and the RD to build a strong school system in Slough. In addition, the Teaching School Hub for Berkshire, local MATs and free schools and the Slough Education Partnership are significant examples of system leadership across Slough which we hope to build upon

We are proud of the educational achievements of Slough children and young people and the effectiveness of our schools. Our educational outcomes for children and young people are consistently high and above the national average at EYFS, KS2 and KS4, as is the proportion of good to outstanding schools. We therefore have significant strengths to build upon, but also much to do to further develop the local system and secure sustainable improvement in a financially challenging climate.

The LA looks forward to continuing thriving relationships with academies, schools, and other partners as we aim to support and facilitate excellence and enjoyment for all pupils.

2. Vision for the School System

We have a shared ambition with our school leaders that Slough should be a great place to grow up and go to school. We believe that every child should have an opportunity to achieve and to live happy, healthy and successful lives. Young people have a vital role to play in shaping and benefitting from the regeneration of our town. We will work to support all young people into high quality employment, education and training. We will also provide them with opportunities to have their voices heard and to work with us in planning the future of Slough.

Developing a self-improving school system will be at the heart of achieving that aim for excellence through mutual challenge, support and collaboration. Partnerships have a key role to play because they provide a rich combination of high expectations, innovative thinking and a strong community within which all learners can thrive and achieve. We will develop a strong partnership approach across the Slough education community, working together to strengthen schools and raise standards for all children including the most vulnerable. We will take a proactive, collaborative approach to school improvement, developing the capacity of our schools both to drive continuous improvement in their own institution and to work with others.

2.1 Role of the Local Authority (LA)

The Local Authority (LA) will provide a strategic overview of achievement issues and act as an “honest broker” and facilitator, engaging with maintained schools, academies and Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to facilitate and empower system leadership and improvement for the benefit of local children. We will convene local partnerships to share intelligence across the school system. We will sustain effective links with all local and regional partners including the Teaching School Hub for Berkshire (based in Slough), RD and Ofsted, championing a positive approach which welcomes constructive challenge. We will monitor performance in all schools, taking early and effective action to address risks where possible.

2.2 Role of Schools

A strong system is one in which schools understand their interdependence and share a sense of moral purpose for the outcomes of all children. System leaders understand that working together to identify and address shared challenges, is the best way to sustain improvement in their own institution. All schools will have something to offer and something to gain. This strategy therefore encourages all schools to consider what their contribution to the local system might be.

Governors play an ever more important and challenging role in acting as a “critical friend” to the Headteacher and ensuring that there is clarity in the vision and strategic direction of the school as well as overseeing the school’s financial management. The role that the school plays in the school system and the support the school might draw upon from the system are increasingly important elements for governors to consider in fulfilling their role.

3. Local Context

Slough is an urban area, comprising densely populated and richly diverse communities. It has a strong business sector including the headquarters of several key multi-national companies and a 21st century profile of innovative and creative industries. There are, however, significant pockets of disadvantage and many

vulnerable children, with high numbers of new migrants and asylum seekers from more than 70 different countries, unaccompanied minors and transient families.

There are also large variations in terms of affluence and deprivation among neighbourhoods across Slough.

Over 140 different languages are spoken across Slough and more than 50 different languages are spoken as a first language by children in Slough schools. 47% of pupils speak English as their first language compared to 87% nationally. The proportion of children eligible for the Pupil Premium 23%, is just below the national average. The proportion of children in Slough schools with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is 3.6%, below the national average of 4%.(2022).

As of September 2022, there are a total of 51 schools in Slough. We have five maintained nursery schools, 28 primary, 14 secondary, one all-through, two special schools and one AP/special School. 36 of our 51 schools (71%) are academies/free schools and 15 are maintained schools. There are 13 Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in Slough and seven single academy trusts.

Maintained Schools	Baylis Court Nursery School; Chalvey Nursery School; Cippenham Nursery School; Lea Nursery School; Slough Centre Nursery School; Claycots School; Holy Family Catholic Primary School; Iqra Slough Islamic Primary School; Our Lady of Peace Catholic Primary & Nursery School; Penn Wood Primary and Nursery School; Pippins School; Priory School; St Mary's Church of England Primary School; Wexham Court Primary School; St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School; Wexham School
Single Academy Trusts	Castleview Primary School; Ryvers School; Langley Grammar School; Langley Hall Primary Academy; The Westgate School; Haybrook College; Littledown School
Multi Academy Trusts* <i>*note individual schools identified in MATs are the ones in Slough. These MATs may have schools outside of Slough but are not highlighted here.</i>	The Elliot Trust (Cippenham School); Marish and Willow Academy Trust (Willow Primary & Marish Primary) Arbib Education Trust (Langley Academy, Langley Primary & Langley Heritage Academy); The Park Federation (Western House, Montem Academy, James Elliman & Godolphin Juniors); The Thames Learning Trust (Phoenix Infants & Baylis Court Secondary); Schelwood Trust (Herschel Grammar and Beechwood); Pioneer Education Trust (Foxborough Primary & Upton Court Grammar); SASH Education Trust (Grove Academy Free School & Ditton Park Secondary Academy Free School); Slough and East Berkshire C of E Multi Academy Trust (Colnbrook Primary, Slough and Eton Secondary, Lynch Hill Primary Academy & Lynch Hill Enterprise Academy); Star Academies (Eden Girls' School Secondary); The St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust (St Anthony's, St Ethelbert's & St Joseph's) Orchard Hill College and Academy Trust (Arbour Vale School), Khalsa Sikh Academies Trust (Khalsa Primary)

3. Local Priorities

Local school improvement priorities are decided annually and discussed with stakeholders. Local priorities will be agreed through the Slough Education Partnership Board (SEPB) which includes headteacher representatives. These priorities will then inform both LA wide strategies and bids for any national or local school improvement funding that is available.

Local overarching priorities include:

1. Developing a sustainable school led improvement system
2. Supporting all schools to be graded at least 'Good' by Ofsted with a higher proportion than national average rated as 'Outstanding'
3. Closing achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at all key stages
4. Ensuring children with SEND can thrive and have a fulfilled and inclusive experience

4. The Slough School System

The Slough school system has many strengths. We have established a strong school and LA partnership structure to ensure that we are able to work together to address key strategic education themes. Schools are represented on all partnership boards. Headteacher representatives are put forward by the Slough Association of Secondary Heads (SASH) and Slough Primary Heads Association (SPHA). We also have a Teaching School Hub for Berkshire based in the LA (see section 4.2).

4.1 Slough Education Partnership Board (SEPB)

SEPB was created to improve communication and two-way dialogue between the LA and schools. It is made up of a mixture of LA officers and Headteacher representatives. It has a strategic overview over the educational landscape. During the pandemic this board was crucial in providing support and a coming together for all schools and the LA to support each other and our young people through an unprecedented situation. It came to symbolise the strength of our partnership. The board meets monthly and is chaired by the Director of Children's Services.

Purpose of the Board

The Board will develop, promote and sustain the vision for education in Slough. It will ensure that there is a coherence and strategic oversight and leadership of education issues by Headteachers and Slough Borough Council across 5 thematic areas.

- School Effectiveness and Organisation
- Inclusion
- School Funding
- Safeguarding
- Wider support for children and young people

4.2 TSH Berkshire – the Teaching School Hub for Berkshire

The previous Teaching School programme finished in July 2021, and the Slough Teaching School Alliance ceased to exist at that point. Since September 2021, Langley Grammar School has been designated as the Teaching School Hub for the whole of Berkshire, operating under the name TSH Berkshire. The remit of the DfE's Teaching School Hub programme is work with national providers to provide CPD programmes and opportunities including:

- a) The Early Career Framework, which builds on initial teacher training to provide a programme of support for teachers in the first two years of their career.
- b) Appropriate Body services - the role of the Appropriate Body is to oversee and quality assure the induction process for Early Career Teachers
- c) The National Professional Qualifications for leadership, accredited by the Department for Education.
- d) TSH Berkshire also promotes other high-quality evidence-based professional development for school leaders and teachers.

TSH Berkshire operates a distributed model for provision, aligned to the complex and diversified nature of the hub area. This recognises the value and strength of local knowledge and collaboration, and utilises experience and expertise already established in different areas and across different phases.

Further information on the work of TSH Berkshire and the programmes offered can be found at <https://www.tshberkshire.org/>

4.3 Leaders from within Slough

The local system relies on contributions and commitment from the local area to share effective practice and where possible school to school support. The local authority can play a role in helping to broker and facilitate support. Schools already have their own networks in which they can do this also.

There are many schools with excellent expertise and strong leaders ranging from teaching staff to Headteachers that can provide support to others. This contribution can take the form of direct support, workshops or seminars.

The LA will use the annual conversation with schools to explore their areas of strength and where they feel they can support the school system in Slough for the benefit of all young people. Schools are expected to contribute to the local system where possible.

4.6 Communication with Schools

Currently, The Link website <https://thelink.slough.gov.uk> is available to all schools and is a key communication tool with lots of information for school professionals. The LA uses this site to send a weekly communication update to all schools that covers all educational services. It is an important source of information and is distributed normally every Wednesday.

5. Statutory Context

The LA has a statutory duty ‘to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential in schools so that all children and young people benefit from at least a good education.’ (Education Act 1996). Any child learning within the borough is a Slough pupil regardless of the form of governance of the school or their place of residence.

The LA retains responsibilities for all children in Slough schools in relation to the provision and outcomes for Children Looked After and those with SEND and for the safeguarding of children in all schools. (Education act 1996, Children Act 2004)

Local authorities are expected to intervene early to prevent failure in maintained schools causing concern and to inform the RD where there are concerns about an academy. These expectations are formally set out by the DfE in Schools Causing Concern Guidance which both the local authorities and RD must follow.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2>

Further detail on Slough’s approach to Schools Causing Concern can be found in section 7 below.

5.1 LA Engagement with the Regional Director (RD), Ofsted and other external bodies

The LA has regular meetings with the RD and with the link HMI inspector for Slough. Discussions cover both general school improvement and organisation activity across the LA and issues relating to standards, SEND and Inclusion, Exclusions, academy brokerage and safeguarding, across the LA and in individual schools. The LA works constructively with the RD to share information and consider any action which may be appropriate.

External partners, particularly the RD, often require the input of the LA into gaining a deeper understanding of individual schools and the local area. Hence why partnership between the LA and schools is critical. The views of the LA are also sought in situations where the RD is seeking to broker school to school support including re-brokerage of academies, sponsorship of new schools or applications to open Free Schools.

5.2 Raising concerns with the Regional Director (RD), Ofsted and other external bodies

The LA will generally not discuss an individual school with the RD or Ofsted without informing the Headteacher, although there may be exceptional cases where this occurs.

6. SEND, Inclusion, Safeguarding and Complaints

The LA plays a key role and has a strategic overview of SEND, Inclusion and Safeguarding across all schools, regardless of whether it is a maintained school, free school, or an academy.

6.1 SEND

The LA has statutory responsibilities for the provision of children with SEND. This is laid out in the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and in the local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy. As part of this school effectiveness strategy the LA will seek to have a conversation with schools around the achievement and experiences of children and young people with SEND.

In addition, the LA will seek to further enhance the experience of young people with SEND in Slough schools by promoting the development of the school workforce and a community of practice via both existing and future mechanisms which include the; current Slough SENDCo Network, Early Years SENDCo Network, Educational Psychology and Advisory Teachers Service (EPATS), Early Education SEND advisors, SENDCo Support Service, Headteacher conferences, and from Spring 2023, the Slough Resource Base Network.

The LA will also promote and use co-production methods in the planning, commissioning, and reviewing of services for children and young people with SEND. Slough schools, pupils and families amongst other stakeholders, will be invited to take part in strategic and operational panels, committees, task and finish groups, stakeholder consultations, practice sharing, peer reviews and the development of information resources.

6.2 Inclusion

The LA plays a key role in supporting and promoting inclusion in all schools. This includes the commissioning of alternative provision places and statutory responsibility for 6th day provision for excluded children. In addition, the LA chairs the fair access protocol which is responsible for placing vulnerable children in schools (see Fair Access Protocol)

Attendance

The Attendance Service works with primary and secondary schools and educational settings to deliver improvement in pupil attendance leading to better attainment and achievement outcomes for children and young people.

The 3 main functions of the Attendance Service are Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education, Attendance Intervention & Legal Enforcement.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Co-ordinate and manage all CME and pupil tracking functions. Process includes: Investigation, tracking and monitoring and case management of all CME and pupil tracking referrals; maintaining Slough's CME database; recording CME data on the Missing Pupils function of the schools to schools site

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Hold the EHE register for Slough. Process includes case management of all EHE referrals; carrying out assessment of education provision; rag rating of home provision

Attendance Intervention & Legal Enforcement

Coordinate and manage all attendance related referrals which meet the threshold of persistent absence or severe absence (Children Missing in Education). Core functions of the process include: investigation of absence, mediation for resolution; implementation of warning periods to improve attendance; issuing of fixed penalty notices; instigation of legal proceedings

6.3 Safeguarding

The LA play an integral role in providing schools with national and local safeguarding information, advice, and guidance. In order, to pursue effective challenge, the LA

carries out Section 175 / 157 annual safeguarding self-assessment audit, which feed into its Section 11 audits.

The LA provides continuous professional development to designated safeguarding leads, governors, and senior leaders through the provision of training, seminars, and networks.

6.4 Complaints

In the case of complaints from Ofsted, The DfE, the ESFA, and other partners, the LA investigates the complaint and provides feedback to the relevant body.

In cases where schools are experiencing blockages in high-risk cases, the LA facilitates and supports the escalation of these cases.

7. School Improvement Capacity and Risk Evaluation (CRE) Process

The council's approach to school improvement risk evaluation will support system improvement, identifying both risks and capacity to contribute to the local system. The LA currently funds a team to enable all schools, including academies to engage in this process. Although in future years the model will be under review. SEPB, which comprises headteachers, and LA officers, is a key forum in ensuring transparency and engaging school leaders in the identification of area wide priorities and the brokerage of support.

The process is intended to identify risks to school improvement at an early stage and to work with the school to consider how these can be mitigated. CRE may include factors such as a major building programme which can place additional drains on management capacity. The evaluation process is also intended to identify capacity that the school may have which might mitigate any risk in their own institution and support improvement across the system. If a school is identified as needing support through the CRE process it does not mean that formal intervention is required or that they are a school of concern.

Supplementary CRE Questions

A standard set of CRE questions will be asked each year, and in addition a supplementary set of questions may be asked that focus on a specific area in more detail. This will be done in collaboration with SEPB. Examples of this in previous years has been a specific supplementary set of questions around Headteacher and staff well-being following the pandemic, or a supplementary set of questions focussed on SEND provision and practise. Supplementary questions will be decided in the summer term before that year's ATV.

7.1 Role of the School Effectiveness Partner (SEP) and Importance of the Autumn Term Visit (ATV)

The role of the LA SEP (for schools that have one, see 7.4) is to support schools through professional dialogue and advice. The SEP will undertake an Autumn Term Visit and a report will be shared with the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of the school.

In addition, schools and academies will be asked to self-evaluate both their school improvement risks and their capacity to contribute to the local school system.

The visit offers an opportunity for schools to discuss their self-evaluation in more detail with their SEP. It provides an opportunity to look beyond published data, learn more about the school and understand its capacity to drive improvement in their own schools and in the local system. The SEP can gather intelligence about priorities, challenges, innovations and effective practice.

The Autumn Term Visit allows the LA, working with SEPB, to identify common challenges across the borough as well as identified areas of strength. This intelligence will then inform LA wide priorities and the potential to broker school to school support. The qualitative intelligence gathered is invaluable in enabling the LA to be able to represent Slough schools in the best way possible to external partners who often rely only on published data.

NB: Due to financial challenges the LA may not be able to provide SEP visits to academies, but in turn will use the CRE to evaluate schools. The LA will also look to work with schools to develop potential peer to peer reviews. This will be an ongoing piece of work and dialogue with the sector.

All maintained schools will receive a visit or annual conversation as a minimum from the LA, either directly or through any other initiatives in place e.g. peer to peer visits.

7.2 Role of SEPB in CRE process

SEPB will have an overview of the process of the ATVs once they are complete, in order to ensure transparency, and may provide challenge to some CRE assessments. Only after this process will evaluations be confirmed. (see timeline 7.3)

SEPB will also be in a position to provide knowledge and expertise of the school system and be in a position to work with the LA to facilitate and broker support for schools where needed. This may include suggestions for collaborative projects to address common challenges or areas of interest.

7.3 Timeline

The CRE process will take place annually during the Autumn Term Visit (ATV) to schools and be validated at the beginning of the spring term. Schools will be asked to self-assess their CRE category and this should be discussed with the SEP.

A timeline of the CRE process is outlined below. Whilst risk evaluations take place annually, they may be subject to change throughout the year depending on a school's particular circumstance e.g. it is inspected as inadequate following a risk evaluation.

7.4 Academies choosing not to take part in the ATV and/or the CRE process

If academies do not have a School Effectiveness Partner and ATV, they still have the opportunity for an 'annual conversation' and can submit their self- evaluation and supporting evidence to the LA. This needs to take place by the end of the autumn term of each year.

Where no partner visit has taken place and/or a self-evaluation has not been submitted, the LA will carry out a desktop evaluation based on any known data and risk factors (see 7.6) and with SEPB, decide on the appropriate risk evaluation.

Timeline	Activity
September - October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEP contacts school to organise ATV or half day annual conversation - Scope of visit agreed with school - ATV pro forma and/or CRE self-assessment sent to school in advance and is returned to
October - December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ATV or half day annual conversation takes place - Opportunity to discuss self-assessment between school and SEP. - SEP and school agree self-assessment and CRE category.
January - February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEPB meet to discuss, and oversee the ATVs and CRE category of each school. - Discussion of common themes and dissemination of areas of effective practise and areas of support - Potential follow up support for schools discussed e.g. use of local school leaders, brokering school to school support etc.

7.5 Disagreements on Self Assessment

Occasionally the school and the SEP may disagree with a school over their self-evaluation. More rarely, SEPB may disagree with a school's CRE even if it has been agreed between the school and SEP. In these cases, the process below will be followed:

Action

The LA lead for schools will contact the headteacher to discuss queries for further exploration.

The school will have an opportunity to address queries (this need not be a follow up visit but schools may wish to provide further evidence)

7.6 School Improvement Capacity and Risk Factors

Factors below, which are not exhaustive, may be taken into account when coming to an evaluation of a schools CRE category. These factors should be considered in identifying both potential risks and the potential capacity the school may have to drive improvement or to support others and contribute to system leadership.

7.7 LA Capacity and Risk Evaluation - School Contributions

Schools are expected to contribute to the local system and suggestions for contribution based on CRE are below.

The Capacity and Risk Evaluation is intended to be a reflective process in which schools self-assess using the following categories:

Dark Green	Very low school improvement risk - strong capacity for system leadership
Light Green	Low School improvement risk - some capacity for system leadership
Amber	Medium school improvement risk – limited capacity for system leadership
Blue	School Causing Concern

The ratings for each category highlight both their potential school improvement risks, but also their capacity to contribute to the local system. The information collected from the CRE process will feed into SEPB meetings and be drawn upon to broker support or identify clusters of schools to work together on common challenges.

8. Schools Causing Concern

As outlined in Section 4, the LA has a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to identify schools which give cause for concern and if necessary to issue a formal Warning Notice. In undertaking these duties the LA must follow the statutory Schools Causing Concern Guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2>

8.1 Schools judged Inadequate by Ofsted

Schools judged inadequate become eligible for intervention from the Regional Schools Commissioner or the LA.

Where a maintained school is judged inadequate the RD has a duty to issue an academy order for it to convert to an academy and become sponsored by a multi academy trust. The LA has a duty to facilitate the conversion. If the school is a Foundation or Voluntary Aided school the RD will consult with the Trustees or

relevant religious body. The RD will ensure that the religious character or ethos of these schools is maintained.

Where an academy is judged inadequate the RD has the power, but not a duty, to terminate the funding agreement of the academy and 'rebroker' the school to another multi academy trust. However, the RD may choose not to do so and to implement other alternatives for school support. If a standalone academy is judged inadequate, the RD will normally 'rebroker' it to join a MAT. If a school is deemed unviable then the RD may terminate the funding agreement and direct the closure of the school. Further details can be found in the DfE schools causing concern document.

8.2 Slough Schools Causing Concern Process (Maintained Schools)

Slough Council is committed to identifying and working with schools which might be at risk of formal intervention or an inadequate judgement by Ofsted at an early stage, so that rapid progress can be made to address the matters of concern and prevent the need for a formal Warning Notice or intervention. To date the LA has worked positively with both maintained schools and academies that have fallen into the criteria for schools causing concern.

There are 3 steps in the School Causing Concern process, which usually follow in sequence. On rare occasions, serious concerns may come to light which would lead the LA to move straight to step 3 e.g. a serious safeguarding issue.

Step 1

The LA will write to schools about which it has cause for concern

setting out the reasons for concern. Concerns about a school can include safeguarding, governance, finance, and attendance as well as performance.

The LA evidence base may include published data about the school, financial information or concerns raised by parents, staff and governors.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be asked to meet with the LA Service Lead for School Effectiveness and the school SEP to discuss the matters for concern and the schools plans for improvement. The meeting will also consider:-

- The reasons why the LA is concerned and the supporting evidence
- Whether the current plans to address concerns, including support already in place, are sufficient
- What additional support from the LA or other schools might be useful. The LA may recommend that the school commission an external review of an aspect such as governance or SEND.

The SEP/LA will monitor progress.

The outcome of the meeting will be considered, together with discussions regarding potential schools to provide any additional support. In the majority of cases we would expect no further action to be necessary and we will write to the school to confirm this.

Step 2

Where progress to address matters of concern is not sufficiently speedy, or where additional matters of concern come to light, the Director of Children, Learning and Skills will issue a Formal Letter of Concern triggering entry into the formal LA School Causing Concern Category.

These schools will be asked to produce an action plan and to attend 6 weekly monitoring meetings with the Service Lead - School Effectiveness. The focus will be on working with the school, drawing on the capacity across the school system, to address the matters of concern.

The school governing body will be asked to submit minutes of full governing body meetings to the LA for the period that the school is in a formal category of concern. The LA may commission an external review of governance, Safeguarding, SEND, Finance, Health and Safety or use of the Pupil Premium.

Monitoring information will be passed to the Director of Children, Learning and Skills and discussed with LA officers. Schools Causing Concern are also routinely discussed with the RD at termly meetings.

Where it is agreed that the school has made sufficient progress and is no longer considered a school of concern the Director of Children, Learning and Skills will write to formally remove the school from school causing concern category.

Step 3

If a School Causing Concern fails to make rapid progress then the Director for Children, Learning and Skills or the RD, will issue a Warning Notice to the governing body of a maintained school under section 60(2) (a-c) of the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.

In rare cases serious matters of concern may come to light, which will lead the LA or RD to immediately issue a Warning Notice.

In line with DfE Schools Causing Concern Guidance the Warning Notice will set out the following:

1. the matters on which their concerns are based;
2. the action the governing body is required to take in order to address the concerns raised;

3. the period within which the governing body must comply or secure compliance with that action (the compliance period); and
4. the action (intervention power) the local authority or RSC is minded to take (under one or more of sections 63 to 69 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 or otherwise) if the governing body does not take the required action.

All formal warning notices must be copied to the RD and to Ofsted.

8.3 Academies Causing Concern

The LA will write to the Chair of Trustees and the headteacher of an academy about which it has concerns. In line with the DfE Guidance we will also inform the Regional Schools Commissioner:

“Where a local authority has concerns about standards, management or governance, or safety in an academy, it should alert the relevant RD.” (School Causing Concern Document, DfE, February 2022)

Where the Regional Director is already engaged in support or monitoring of the academy, the LA will ask that there is one joint meeting to consider plans to address areas for improvement and any further support that might be useful. Where the RD is not already engaged in support or monitoring the LA will consider, in consultation with the RD and the school, if entry in the LA school causing concern process might be useful.

If an academy Causing Concern fails to make rapid progress or where serious concerns come to light, the LA will inform the RD and ask that a Warning Notice be issued. In these cases the LA will inform the principal and Chair of Trustees of the action it is taking.