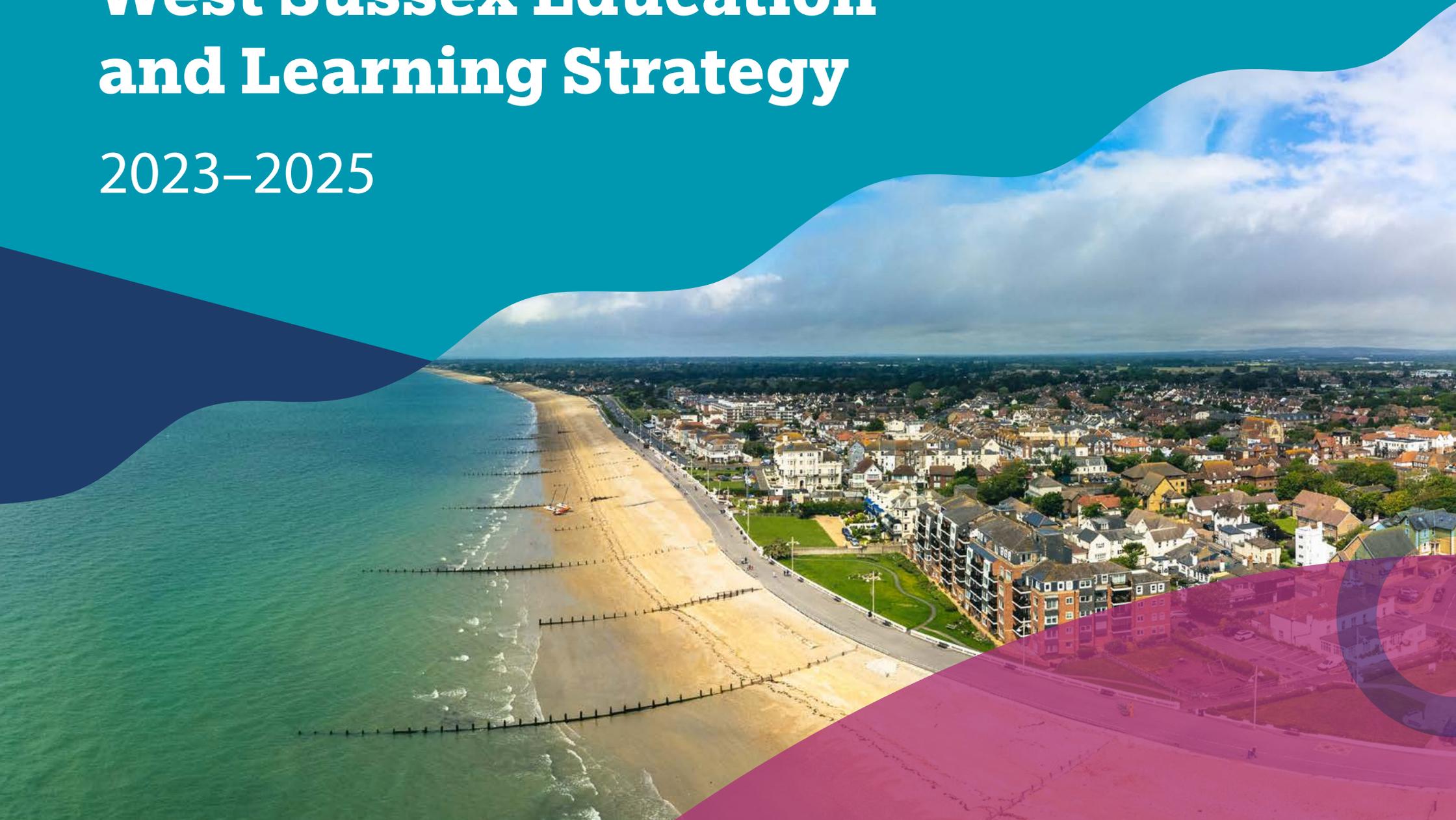


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West Sussex Education and Learning Strategy

2023–2025



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Foreword

As the UK emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the right time for West Sussex County Council to reflect, to look forward, and to reassess the priorities for education and learning as we set out on the next stage in our journey.

We owe it to our children and families to recognise that the disruption of recent years has had a profound effect on both the learning journey our children are engaged in, and also on their broader health and wellbeing. Many of the key priorities already established to improve outcomes and provision for all children in West Sussex remain our key priorities. However, the experience of our children and young people through the pandemic has led to renewed urgency in tackling the inequalities that inhibit some of our young people from achieving as well as they ought.

“Catching up on the lost learning many have experienced over the last two years has to be the key aim for us all. This also extends into providing our most vulnerable adults with opportunities to develop their skills to secure employment and be financially independent. This strategy draws all the council’s resources together towards achieving these goals.”

Nigel Jupp
Cabinet Member for
Learning and Skills

“The events of the last two years have had a profound impact on our children and families in West Sussex. As we emerge from the pandemic, this strategy provides a clear focus for all of us in supporting our children and families in raising achievement and overcoming barriers to learning. It is a key component of the wider Children and Young People’s Planning to provide children with the best start in life.”

Lucy Butler
Director of Children, Young
People and Learning

“This strategy provides a single view of the learning journey for all children from the time they enter nursery until they reach adulthood. The key themes within the strategy have been shaped in partnership with our stakeholders and aim to raise the bar with respect of meeting the learning needs of all our children and young people irrespective of where they live within the county.”

Paul Wagstaff
Assistant Director:
Education and Skills

Introduction

This document sets out the Education and Learning Strategy for 2023–25, developed in response to feedback from a range of stakeholders.

1. The strategy has children, young people and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in West Sussex at the centre of its thinking. We spoke to parents and carers, young people, those working in or supporting an education setting, members of the council, and its officers to develop the strategy. The [SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2019–2024](#) is a central plank to improve provision and outcomes for our children and young people with additional learning needs.
2. The strategy is integral to our [Council Plan 2021–2025](#) and its key priorities:
 - keeping people safe from vulnerable situations;
 - promoting a sustainable and prosperous economy;
 - helping people and communities fulfil their potential; and
 - making the best use of resources.
3. Our seven education and learning 2023–25 key themes have a direct link to our Council Plan 2021–2025 to broaden the skills, ambitions and opportunities for all children, young people and our most vulnerable adults. It supports them in the foundations to contribute to future economic growth and prosperity in West Sussex.
4. The Education and Learning Strategy embodies statutory responsibilities but does not outline all the functions of a local authority. Many operational statutory responsibilities run alongside the strategy in the form of continued business as usual.
5. We will work collaboratively with all stakeholders over the next three years to ensure that all West Sussex children and young people have access to high quality education and learning. We aim to help everyone to achieve the best outcomes and opportunities for future education, employment, or training. The council's ambitions in tackling climate change remain central to the actions taken to implement this strategy.
6. West Sussex County Council's Department for Children, Young People and Learning is committed to putting 'Children First' in its work and strategic thinking. The department has been through a major redesign in the way it delivers services to support children, young people and families. For the Education and Skills Directorate, this has led to greater co-ordination of resources alongside Children's Social Care and Early Help. This restructure has enabled a single view of the child's learning journey from the age of two through our early years' settings, schools, post 16

provision, and into adulthood. This provides an opportunity for the strategy to tackle some of the challenges that are complex and difficult to address, particularly at key transition points in that journey. It allows us to deliver a cohesive programme to make a difference as we challenge the barriers to success.

7. The seven key themes are supported with more detailed workstream plans and timelines co-created with partners and stakeholders. Workstreams will be developed and fine-tuned as the strategy unfolds and initiatives are introduced. Whilst the Education and Learning Strategy incorporates planning for Post 16 and Adult Community Education, it will not cover the wider skills agenda in full. A council-wide Skills Strategy will be developed separately with its own governance, reflecting the multiple stakeholders across Sussex. The Skills Strategy will align to sector led strategic planning and ensure a skilled workforce able to meet future economic needs and developments in the region.
 8. The Education and Learning Strategy is not a catch all. It cannot cover all the challenges facing children and families as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and face the significant cost of living crisis. It is a strategy focused on learning and achievement within the boundaries of the levers for change that a local authority can apply. The strategy will need to be viewed alongside the detail of the [SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2019–24](#), the broader council strategies for Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the key plans within the Children, Young People and Learning Department. It must also be viewed alongside major national policies on the future role of a local authority in education and learning, and the priorities set within these policies for improving outcomes for children and young people aged between two and 19.
 9. Several principles that underpin our strategic intent, and which provide influence and support to enable change to happen, are outlined in paragraph 26.
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Education and Skills Directorate

10. During 2021–22, the Education and Skills Directorate went through a significant redesign. This led to a rethink in how we operate to support schools and learning providers in line with the local authority’s statutory responsibilities. This led to incorporating Early Years Education and Care, the management of Free Entitlement for two and three-year-olds, and support for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years providers. This provides an opportunity to address the quality and continuity of provision from early years into schools. This connection has reframed our alignment to the council’s Early Help and Family Safeguarding services in a district and borough structure to better join up the support for our most vulnerable children and families.
11. Since 2022, there have been significant reductions in government funding to fulfil the council’s school improvement responsibilities for provision and outcomes. This has provided an opportunity to reassess how such services can be reconfigured to meet future priorities. It has led to greater targeting of resources to work with schools and providers needing the greatest help. It also has led to more external commissioning of expertise from schools and partners to provide peer support to schools, and to create a broader traded offer of services. Government



funding provided to local authorities remains challenging, and schools and learning providers are under significant financial pressures due to increasing demand for special educational needs support post-COVID-19. Increased costs and inflationary pressures combined with a falling birth rate leaves some schools and Early Years settings facing a challenging future.

12. The role of the local authority is changing in response to national policy and changes in funding which will determine the way we operate in the future. Three key national policy initiatives have been introduced in 2022, each of which have a direct impact on the strategic and operational role of a local authority. These include the Education White Paper: 'Opportunities for All' (2022); the SEND and Alternative Provision Plan 'Right Support; Right Place; Right Time; 2022'; and changes in Post 16 Qualifications. Whilst the Schools Bill (2022) aiming to embed 'Opportunities for All' into law has been withdrawn, some key expectations remain.

13. The national deficit in the government funding to support special educational needs, and our work to reduce local financial pressures will continue to be a significant priority for the Education and Skills Directorate. This will be reflected in the way services are deployed and reshaped to support education and learning into the future. It may reduce flexibilities to support beyond the local authority's statutory role.

Engagement survey

14. Stakeholder engagement took place between February and June 2022 to gather a range of views on the future direction of education and learning within the county. An online survey drew significant interest from parents and the community. Focused engagement sessions with schools and the further education sector gave a greater understanding of current and future priorities. Additional engagement sessions with officers and councillors reflected organisational priorities in response to the publication of national policy initiatives in April 2022.
 15. There are 10 key challenges which were raised as part of the engagement events.
 - Whilst academic success and educational outcomes have improved in recent years, there is still more to do to ensure that all children achieve as well as they ought. Some families face challenges which put them at a disadvantage. The impact of COVID-19 has interrupted learning and impacted the confidence of many children and young people.
 - Assessment and examination results in 2022 reflect the significant disruption to learning over the last two years.
 - Children who have SEND or are vulnerable, for example young carers, are not always achieving as well as they might, and inclusive practice is not consistently applied in all schools or across all parts of the county to enable them to do so.
 - There are still too many children falling out of education and learning either through exclusions or as parents remove children from school rolls when they hold the opinion that provision is not meeting their child's needs.
 - Learning and curriculum opportunities, along with the quality of provision for children and young people varies across the county. This results in 'inequality of access' to the range of opportunities appropriate to both children and young people's needs and interests and is too dependent on where children live within the county.
 - Even before children reach school age, the underachievement of our disadvantaged children is notable compared with their non-disadvantaged peers. Whilst progress is being made to close the disadvantaged gap, as seen in the 2022 Key Stage 2 assessments, the overall discrepancy seen in disadvantaged children's readiness for school at the end of the early years remains a constant throughout their learning journey.
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- Removing the barriers to academic success for some children and young people is complex and requires the engagement of many partners.
- Pathways and provision for students after 16 years of age varies across the county. There can be limited opportunities for the full range of options in some areas leading to students having either to travel to find the courses they want to study or pursue local courses to which they may not be suited
- Some of our most vulnerable young people continue to be at risk of criminal exploitation, exclusion, or harm.
- The current number of specialist placements in our maintained schools and academies is currently insufficient to meet escalating demand. This is leading to children increasingly having to travel out of their local communities or attend private schools at significant cost.
- The proportion of surplus places in our primary schools is increasing as the birth rate falls and house building slows down. This places pressure on schools both in retaining staff, and also in managing the needs of all children with dwindling resources. It also leads to some schools becoming vulnerable, affecting their ability to continue their improvement journey and maintain financial stability.

16. The online survey and engagement sessions identified the top priorities for learning provision over the next three years. Feedback from those involved has been central to identifying the key themes and to developing a common vision and strategy.



Vision and ambitions

Our vision is to enable every young person to secure the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to help them achieve their own ambitions.

17. To keep children safe from vulnerable situations and help people and communities fulfil their potential, West Sussex County Council aims to address issues of inequality in education and learning. It aims to level up the quality of provision in those localities and in those learning providers where provision is not meeting the needs and interests of all. This includes provision for the most vulnerable, those with SEND, and those who have ambitions for vocational qualifications. It also includes providers and schools requiring improvement, along with those districts and boroughs where pupil and student outcomes are not high enough. All children and young people deserve the best start in life in West Sussex and this can only be achieved if they have full access to a broad range of high-quality learning opportunities. This will enable every young person to secure the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to help them achieve their own ambitions. It will help support the development of a sustainable and prosperous economy across West Sussex.

18. Overcoming inequalities, learning gaps, and providing additional support is the responsibility of everyone involved with the lives of children. This can only be achieved through co-operation and strong, responsive partnership working across all services, families and learning providers.

19. The Education and Learning Strategy 2023–2025 is part of a co-ordinated series of actions and plans within the Children, Young People and Learning department. To tackle the barriers that many families face, our broad set of relationships need to be coordinated. Working collectively will enable children, young people and vulnerable adults to become independent and secure their best outcomes.

20. Inclusion and respecting the needs and vulnerabilities of all is central to our mission. Through a culture of value and respect, West Sussex County Council puts the principle of 'Children First' in all our decisions. This embeds a focus on high achievement and good progress made by all children from their respective starting points. Where there is discrimination, or where children and young people are restricted from achieving success, it is the local authority's role to challenge and create a climate that values children and young people and helps them succeed.

Where are we now?

21. The Education and Skills Annual Report in 2020 identified a number of key priorities based on the council's education and learning performance measures at the time. These included but were not restricted to:
- ensuring all pupils who are disadvantaged and those who are more able are challenged to achieve their potential;
 - providing strategic support for curriculum design, implementation and impact;
 - implementing the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2019–24;
 - exploring and implementing creative approaches to alternative provision to reduce the risk of exclusion; and
 - integrating cross directorate service delivery through the Children First Strategy.
22. West Sussex County Council and schools have worked hard to tackle these priorities, but the impact of COVID-19 cannot be underestimated. Managing learning during that time has required redefining our operational activity to meet a new and challenging situation. Schools have worked hard to maintain a





level of normality and to provide learning experiences during the COVID-19 lockdowns. However, several of the 2020 priorities remain today. National research and reporting have shown that many children and young people have lost ground over the period of the pandemic. Some have suffered a loss of confidence, increased anxiety, and have found their return to school challenging.

23. National GCSE and A level results in 2022 show a mixed picture for pupil and student attainment. This has been reflected in West Sussex and, although there was an improvement from 2019, results were lower than the high achievements in 2020 and 2021 and varied between schools. Ensuring that schools have the knowledge, expertise and resources to support social, emotional and mental health to help pupils catch up is essential.
24. 'Learning to live with COVID-19' and new ways of working in schools, coincided with the Government introducing several key policy initiatives during 2022, some of which will play a major role in the future shape of provision, the drive to raise standards in schools, and also the role of local authorities and their responsibilities for education. This will affect the way funding is deployed, as well as the way local authorities and their partners influence provision and outcomes.

Key principles

25. Achieving better outcomes relies on our key relationships with private providers in the early years sector, schools and their governing bodies; the academy sector and further education providers.
 26. This strategy requires co-operation and an openness among learning providers to align their own priorities with those identified by West Sussex County Council. It also relies on the key principles being shared by all stakeholders to maximise impact. The principles are as follows.
 - Improving learning is more than improving outcomes for children; improving learning involves developing a lifelong passion and curiosity for learning through into adulthood.
 - Improving learning and achievement is focused on all children and young people achieving as well as they can.
 - Centres of learning, which could be schools, early years providers, or independent alternative curriculum providers, should always provide children and young people with a safe environment where they can learn confidently and are free from intimidation, prejudice, and harassment
 - The West Sussex County Council SEND & Inclusion Strategy, agreed in 2019, should remain at the heart of the Education and Learning Strategy with inclusive practice at the core of the culture of all centres of learning.
 - Improving provision and outcomes for children with SEND and vulnerabilities is only possible through strong partnerships and collective ownership of actions and policy from across the sector.
 - The local authority will, within its statutory powers and responsibilities, provide strategic direction and ambition to achieve the best outcomes for the county's children and young people by working with a range of partners. It will use its role to engage, influence, coach and support schools and education providers to collectively achieve these ambitions.
 - Improving outcomes and opportunities for all children, young people and our vulnerable adults should not be determined by where people live; strong provision and outcomes should be accessible for all.
 - The Education and Learning Strategy should not be viewed in isolation. It should be viewed alongside the strategic
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‘Children, Young People and Learning Plan’ which covers service improvement, support for vulnerable families, improving outcomes and life chances for the disadvantaged, supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing, developing strategic relationships and integrating technology, ensuring value for money, and engaging with partners to jointly deliver improvement.

- Ensuring that children and young people can access education and learning close to where they live may not always be feasible. However, the SEND Green Paper indicates an ambition that there should be ‘appropriate and affordable specialist provision for those who need it ...and this should be of high quality and close to home wherever possible.’ For children and young people with specialist learning and support needs, we should always aim to achieve the concept of ‘Live Local – Learn Local’ wherever possible and efficient.

- In encouraging lifelong learning, we should provide a space for our children and young people to explore the issues that affect them both now and into the future. Our own work in meeting demand for new school places should also reflect the issues both of today and the future. We should use all opportunities and tools at our disposal to address the issue of climate change and assure the future for all our children.

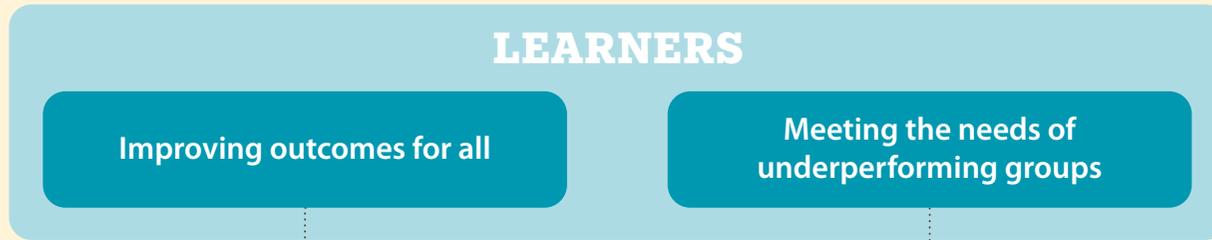


Key themes and priorities

27. The strategic priorities forming the Education and Learning Strategy 2023–25 cover seven key themes, two of which are learner focused, three of which provision focus and two of which focus on strategic support. Each of the themes is supported by specific workstreams that contribute towards achieving our education and learning goals and ambitions for the next two years, and set the foundations to meet the national education policy ambitions for 2030.
 28. The seven key themes link both to Our Council Plan 2021–2025 and the broader plans and initiatives embedded in the Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) department. Different teams will collaborate and coordinate work to ensure synergies across all CYPL plans. Only through this can we fulfil West Sussex County Council’s education and learning ambitions for our children and young people.
 29. To meet the learning ambitions set within the strategy, children need to feel safe. They need to rebuild relationships and be supported in addressing the anxieties that may have developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are discrete strategies and plans to support the mental health and wellbeing of our children and the co-ordination of these plans alongside the strategic workstreams will be crucial. Where workstreams include specific focus on social, emotional, and mental health, or have dependencies on other plans, these will be referenced.
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Children, young people and learning

- Children, young people and learning
- Education and skills key themes



- Keeping children and young people safe from harm
- Earliest possible support to families with low incomes
- Closing the disadvantage gap for children and young people



- Improving emotional, health and wellbeing
- Multi-agency approaches for children and young people with SEND



THEME 1

Improving outcomes for all children and young people

30. Improving outcomes and achievement for all children is a key priority. In 2019, outcomes for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 and 2 rose nationally, but did not rise at the same pace in West Sussex.
31. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers was greater in West Sussex than both regional and national averages at all key stages. In 2019, 52%

West Sussex rank out of 151 local authorities (2019)	Rank	Quartile
Outcomes at the age of five years (EYFS Good level of Development %)	71	B

Outcomes at the age of seven years (Key Stage 1)

Reading – expected standard	66	B
Writing – expected standard	87	C
Maths – expected standard	99	C

Outcomes at the age of 11 years (Key Stage 2)

Reading, Writing, Maths (Combined) – expected standard	107	D
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of five-year-olds from disadvantaged families in West Sussex had the health, emotional maturity and skills required to settle into school, compared to 71% overall (PACEY model). Compared with their peers, 26% fewer disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. This is wider than the national average of 19%.

32. We know from national research and inspection evidence that many of our youngest children have missed out on quality early years experiences and social interactions over the last two years. These are crucial to developing social confidence and early language. A lower number of five-year-olds achieved a good level of development in 2022 due to gaps in their personal, social and emotional development. There has been a significant fall in the outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. Whilst 2022 examination results for GCSE and A levels showed an improvement on outcomes achieved in 2019, fewer pupils achieved the highest grades, and English Baccalaureate entries fell.

33. There are many facets to raising the attainment and outcomes for children and young people and the endeavour should be a collective effort as we focus on our children in care, those with additional learning needs, or learning English as an additional language, refugees, those with SEND, and those who are high attainers. For children electively home educated (EHE), it is important that high quality information and guidance is available to parents to help them through the limited powers that the local authority has in this area. Workstreams have been identified to improve outcomes and support high achievement for all children. A local authority's role in improving education standards across its schools is limited as it does not extend to the direct delivery, but rests with championing high standards. However, local authorities can influence improvement by networking best practice, and intervention in schools and early years settings where there are concerns on the quality of provision.

WORKSTREAM 1

Securing high achievement in literacy and numeracy competencies for all pupils and students

We will aim to work with schools to share best practice in raising attainment for all pupils, including the most able. We will target areas in West Sussex where data suggests weaknesses in performance compared with both national averages and statistical neighbours. This includes writing and mathematics, and the achievement of greater depth for high attaining pupils.

WORKSTREAM 2

Working collaboratively with the Early Years sector to improve outcomes for young children including early language, reading, and personal, social and emotional development

We will develop an Early Years Strategy for learning and transition planning into schools.



WORKSTREAM 3

Ensuring smooth transitions for all so that every child is well prepared for their next stage of learning.

We will build on current transitions planning incorporated as part of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2019–24 and address issues of curriculum continuity. This involves planning for children and young people at risk of disengaging with education at transition points and will include careers guidance and support.

WORKSTREAM 4

Ensuring that all children, irrespective of the learning provision they attend, have access to a curriculum of relevance and meaning so they develop a broad knowledge and diverse range of skills that motivate and inspire learning and achievement

We will focus on the provision of a range of high-quality lesson and subject pathways, including vocational and alternative curriculums, with appropriate adaptations for those who need them.

THEME 2

Responding to the learning needs of under-performing groups

34. There are groups of learners who do not achieve as well as they ought. The local authority has a key statutory responsibility for reviewing patterns of underachievement, providing leadership and tackling underperformance. There has been significant success of our School Effectiveness Strategy 2018–22 and partnership working in tackling underperforming schools. The proportion of schools deemed ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ in November 2022 reached 91.4% with 93.6% of West Sussex children attending schools that are ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. This marks the highest proportion on record in West Sussex.
35. The 2022 Key Stage 2 national assessments saw a closing of the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers in West Sussex. However, overcoming the barriers to success remains an essential priority if our disadvantaged children are to fulfil their learning potential. This includes groups of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable, for example, the children we care for, asylum seekers, young carers, children with SEND, those not in education, employment or training (NEET), those both subject to Youth Justice oversight, and those at risk of criminal exploitation.
- It is crucial that they have access to high quality learning that is both appropriate to their needs and assures their future independence and access to continued learning or employment.
36. Building on the White Paper, Opportunities for All (2022), support for schools in tackling persistent absence is recognised as crucial in ensuring that young learners maximise the opportunities available for them in school. The local authority has a statutory duty to provide a multi-agency partnership with schools to improve the attendance of children and tackle persistent absence. Improving attendance is a key priority as increasing numbers of children and young people struggle to return to the routine of learning and school attendance post COVID-19.
37. It is important that the council supports schools and families to reduce exclusions and suspensions by helping to identify pupils through a multi-agency approach. We need to balance our resources towards prevention and the provision of an appropriate full time alternative curriculum. This links closely to the SEND Green Paper and the Alternative Provision Strategy already being co-created with schools.

WORKSTREAM 1

Tackling the attainment gap for disadvantaged by working to overcome the barriers to success

We will build on existing work to tackle the attainment gap. We aim to focus on both identifying and tackling some of the key barriers that implicitly restrict opportunities for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds and living in poverty.

WORKSTREAM 2

Raising the attainment and achievement of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable, for example, children we care for, asylum seekers, young carers, children with SEND, those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and those both at risk of criminal exploitation and with Youth Justice oversight

We will focus on strategies, as well as both multi-agency and partnership working, to raise aspirations and directly tackle the causes of underachievement where it exists.

WORKSTREAM 3

Working in partnership with schools to improve the attendance of children and learners

We will fulfil the Department for Education (DfE) expectations for local authorities set out in 'Working together to Improve Attendance 2022'. This includes monitoring attendance and the inappropriate use of extended part-time timetables, along with providing multi-agency support to schools to improve attendance and tackle persistent absenteeism.

WORKSTREAM 4

Supporting schools in the early identification of children at risk of exclusion, providing appropriate provision to meet their needs, whilst rebalancing resources towards prevention and greater partnership working to achieve positive outcomes

We will reshape the way children and young people at risk of exclusion are identified and supported. By rebalancing the use of funding towards prevention, we can ensure that young people subject to Youth Justice oversight or at risk of criminal exploitation are appropriately supported through full-time provision.

THEME 3

Embedding and developing the Council's SEND & Inclusion Strategy

38. The SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2019–2024, has been a key driver for improving provision and outcomes for children with special educational needs. There are three priorities:
- knowing our children and families well (an inclusive person-centred approach);
 - meeting the needs of our children and young people through our schools, education settings and services;
 - working together towards solutions (collective responsibility).
39. The growing culture of inclusive practice through improved tools and support has led to 486 children staying at their mainstream school rather than travelling to an independent special school. An ambitious SEND Capital Sufficiency Plan is in place to create over 500 new specialist places in the county's schools and academies over the next five years, subject to the financial constraints and increasing construction costs.
40. We have introduced 'Therapeutic Thinking' and are seeing a cultural change in how schools manage children exhibiting complex behaviours. It focuses on how all children and young people can be supported in terms of their emotional wellbeing and mental health. The approach helps professionals to understand how to respond if a pupil is communicating through inappropriate behaviours. Lots of work around transitions between settings and schools, alternative provision has been developed, and we have improved data analysis of future need. Stakeholders highlighted the need to maintain the focus and scope of the SEND Strategy and to continue with the work. Any changes arising from the outcomes of the SEND Green Paper consultation, and any changes to the Ofsted process of SEND Area Reviews, will be reflected in future work.
41. The assessment of children with special educational needs and securing appropriate provision to meet these needs is significant. It is delivered against increasing demand and financial pressure, creating constraints.

WORKSTREAM 1

Securing inclusive practice as the core of all learning provision across the county

We are continuing to align services and support to ensure that all schools are inclusive. It focuses on schools having the skills, knowledge and capacity to meet the needs of all the children and young people they care for. It can help to ease financial pressures as children stay in local mainstream schools.

WORKSTREAM 2

Strengthening the education, health and care needs assessment process to improve timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) within the context of increasing demand

We will focus on reducing the time taken to complete Education, Health and Care Plans against an increasing demand.

WORKSTREAM 3

Implementing the local authority's Alternative Provision Strategy towards early intervention and reducing exclusions

We will improve quality and co-ordination of alternative provision and aim to reduce exclusions. This aligns with theme 2, workstream 4.

WORKSTREAM 4

Embedding therapeutic thinking as a core tool to secure a culture change in the management of behaviour across all providers and localities

We will continue to expand 'Therapeutic Thinking' as the key strategy across all schools to bring about a cultural shift in the way complex behaviours are managed in schools.

WORKSTREAM 5

Securing appropriate increases in specialist places in the county's schools and academies, thereby reducing the High Needs Grant overspend

We will pursue the creation of additional specialist places in schools and academies to reduce reliance on the independent non-maintained special school (INMSS) providers. This has a significant part to play in easing pressures on the grant provided by the Government to provide for children with special educational needs.

WORKSTREAM 6

Incorporating key themes arising from the national SEND policy review

We will pick up on issues arising from any policy announcements and drivers arising from the SEND Green Paper consultation.

THEME 4

Ensuring high quality provision that meets the needs of all children and young people

42. There is a diverse landscape of education providers in West Sussex which generally brings a strong quality of provision, with the highest number being rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. However, there are inequalities between districts and localities, especially regarding access to a diverse range of high quality and appropriately targeted pre and post 16 vocational courses. Accessing a full range of good curriculum subjects and pathways currently depends on where the young person lives. Tackling this inequality is morally the right thing to do. It is important for us to work with further education providers and plan for a diverse range of opportunities and courses across the county, despite limited responsibility held by the local authority.

43. The pandemic and current cost of living pressures are having an impact on recruitment and retention in school and early years provision. Job vacancies to support children with SEND

in schools are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. Financial pressures on early years settings are leading to challenges in recruiting and retaining a high quality and experienced workforce. In both cases, this inhibits some of our youngest and most vulnerable children from being able to access high quality provision. A county wide recruitment plan to support the development and retention of a well-qualified workforce is crucial in sustaining good quality provision into the future.

44. The COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges, but also facilitated schools to look at new ways of engaging children and young people through online and virtual learning. This created a diverse range of teaching approaches and practices which have led to engaging pupils in new and exciting ways.

WORKSTREAM 1

Ensure that children and young people have equal access to good or outstanding learning provision irrespective of where they live.

We will increase the focus of our Standards and Effectiveness team to monitor provision across our schools and early years providers and intervene where standards are falling. We will provide a programme of professional development and peer school to school support.

WORKSTREAM 2

Work with schools and post 16 providers to ensure efficient use of public funds in providing a diverse range of options for young people to access education, employment or training locally.

We will work with schools and colleges to ensure a broad range of post 16 courses appropriate to student's needs and interests that offer value for money. This requires a fundamental review of how Post 16 provision is organised across the county to ensure equality of access to a diverse range of programmes and qualifications locally.

WORKSTREAM 3

Strengthen the use of new technologies to enhance learning opportunities for all children and young people, and develop digital literacy as a core skill.

We will build upon the significant development and use of virtual learning, as well as the innovative use of IT over the pandemic, and share best practice in these areas. We aim to make best use of new opportunities created through the implementation of a new school management information system (MIS) in schools.

WORKSTREAM 4

Implement a recruitment strategy to secure a high-quality workforce to support children and young people's learning, whilst engaging with partners to secure continuing professional development to maintain and further develop a talented workforce.

We will work with schools and the early years sector alongside our strategic partners including Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), universities and our regional teaching and research schools, to implement a major recruitment drive and find creative solutions of securing and sustaining a high-quality workforce.

THEME 5

Securing sufficient and sustainable provision to meet changing nature the county's education and learning needs

45. The Education White Paper: 'Opportunities for All', signposted an ambition that all schools should be part of a partnership with a strong Multi Academy Trust (MAT), or with plans to be so, by 2030. The full impact of the withdrawal of the Schools Bill (2022), which aimed to provide the legislation to enact key provision within 'Opportunities for All', is to be clarified at the time of writing. However, West Sussex County Council is committed to supporting schools to make informed choices on their future organisational structures. Part of this includes enabling strong communities of schools, whether these take the form of localities, maintained school partnerships and federations, or MATs. The White Paper defined strong partnerships or MATs as being inclusive, providing good outcomes and with the capacity to grow and support underperforming schools. An optimum of 10

schools (or 7,500 learners) is deemed by the DfE to an indicator of a strong MAT. West Sussex is well behind the curve on this with small or single academies being the most prominent. The council has a strategic role to play enabling a diverse range of partnerships which include the provision of strong MATs as well as exploring the possibility of a council led MAT. We are committed to ensuring all maintained schools are aware of their future options to be part of a strong federation, locality, or MAT. It will require significant work in partnership with the DfE, MATs, strategic partners (including Diocesan authorities), and both governors and headteachers of the council's maintained schools.

46. The private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) Early Years sector is being affected by a falling birth rate, surplus primary provision increases, cost-of-living pressures and increased

energy prices. Sustainability of early years provision in some communities is at risk. Primary schools also face a challenging future. The local authority strategically plans for sufficient number of high-quality places in schools and early years settings to meet current and future population demand. Expanding and creating new schools in response to housing developments and working to make all our school's energy efficient as part of the council's response to climate change are core activities.

47. Schools will need to expand to create more places in some areas of the county and meet the growth in demand for specialist places for children with special educational needs. However, there are areas of the county where schools will have significant surplus of school places. These need to be reduced to create efficiencies, and secure viable and sustainable schools. This will be a challenge for West Sussex County Council given that the bulge in demand for primary school places moves into and through our secondary schools. Our intention is to prescribe to the principle of 'Live Local – Learn Local' wherever possible and efficient. This may require some consolidation and restructuring of current provision and plans for sustainable provision the MAT partnerships.



WORKSTREAM 1

Reduce surplus school places to ensure sustainable and financially viable schools into the future.

We will build on existing initiatives to provision in localities and agree achievable plans for reducing surplus school places in line with projections for future demand. Where this provides an opportunity to align provision to create all-through primary schools, this will still be a key consideration.

WORKSTREAM 2

Respond to basic need and work to increase places locally where demand requires.

We will respond to ongoing demographic changes and building developments arising from district and borough council's housing and residential building plans. We aim to use Section 106 funding from developers to invest in increasing provision that is aligned with the Council's climate change strategy wherever possible.

WORKSTREAM 3

Work together with the early years sector to ensure sufficient high quality and accessible places for learning and care local to need.

We will work with the early years sector and local communities to ensure sufficient affordable learning and childcare places to meet local demand. This includes working with providers to secure sufficient places to meet the growing demand for two and three-year-old free entitlement.

WORKSTREAM 4

Develop a strategic county wide plan for the longer-term provision of a diverse range of high quality school partnerships and MATs

We will map the landscape and engage with strong MATs operating both in West Sussex or outside the county. We will develop a strategic county wide plan in partnership with the Diocesan offices to ensure sufficient choice for our church schools and with MATs or strong localities of schools. This may result in the Local Authority communicating and brokering links between schools and MATs. The strategic plan will consider setting up local authority MATs where this is deemed to add value, deliver on any gaps that could arise, and seek feedback through consultation.

THEME 6

Service development and increasing partnership working

48. A significant redesign of the council's services across the Department of Children, Young People and Learning has taken place over the last two years. This included the way in which schools and early years settings are supported and how teams supporting school's co-ordinate their work with the broader family support teams. Embedding these changes through effective relationships and new ways of working will ensure that support is coordinated around the child, the family, and the school or setting. This is essential to ensure that the needs of children remain firmly at the heart of all we do. Aligning resources alongside Early Help, Family Safeguarding and Youth Justice teams will create a stronger and more effective wrap around support for children and their families.
49. Many schools and early years settings draw in external support to help them improve. High quality advice and expert guidance is held by West Sussex County Council, but there is a much wider range of external sources. The council can adopt a co-ordinating, brokering and commissioning role that is responsive to need and complemented by its own professional traded services. This is already underway as a result of the redesign of the Standards and Effectiveness service. The need for a co-ordinated approach to direct advice, using broader local partnerships to support schools, early years providers, and families, was raised by stakeholders. The ability to ensure timely support where needed remains a key requirement to maintaining the quality of provision is secure.
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WORKSTREAM 1

Embed a co-ordinated approach alongside broader local partnerships to support schools, early years providers and families to ensure timely support where needed.

We will significantly change the way we work with schools and early years providers to monitor provision and quality. We will organise support and intervention around both district and borough council boundaries and introduce a stronger commissioning model to utilise external professionals that is responsive to need.

WORKSTREAM 2

Work in partnership with stakeholders to ensure best use and deployment of the service support teams.

We will pursue the greater co-ordination of education and learning support alongside Children's Social Care and Early Help teams in addition to support for families.

WORKSTREAM 3

Work with the sector to ensure a professional and commercial range of services responsive to need and which makes best use of the expertise of partners to secure a sector led approach to support.

We will provide a range of non-statutory support services to schools and others that are high quality, professionally led, and commercially viable.

THEME 7

Adult learning and employability

50. West Sussex County Council has launched a new Economy Plan 2020–2024 to reflect a changing workforce and trends in employment over the COVID-19 pandemic. Priorities were reset, particularly with respect to the adult workforce, levelling up, and economic regeneration. This has coincided with the national levelling up agenda, major investment in local further education providers, and the support of new technologies. It has also led to a co-ordinated business sector Sussex wide approach to the development of an Adult and Community Education Mission Statement.
 51. The adult skills agenda is very broad, and leadership is driven by business representatives, training and further education sectors, and skills agencies all working to secure employability. A separate Skills Strategy with its own governance and links to the business sector and a Pan Sussex view is crucial. This will be set out separately in due course.
 52. West Sussex County Council has direct responsibility for ensuring that grants for the delivery of adult learning in the community, are used effectively and provide good value for money. Grants received are not insignificant. The work on adult learning has a crucial role in retaining the relationship and support for the most vulnerable adults in West Sussex who may lack the confidence to access existing education and training.
 53. The local authority has a crucial role in tracking and working with young people who leave school at the age of 16 years without pathways into employment, education, or training. The council works with young people to secure appropriate pathways into education, training or to employment, including apprenticeships. It is important that this continues so all our young people can gain essential skills.
 54. Activities within adult learning and support for 16–19-year-olds not in education, employment and training remains a key priority. This will be underpinned by dedicated workstreams and feed into the broader skills agenda and governance of a Pan Sussex Skills Strategy.
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WORKSTREAM 1

Ensure a sustainable model of support for adult community-based learning that reaches the county’s most vulnerable adults and provides high quality and responsive provision

We will improve our future delivery model for adult learning in the community, as well as access for our most vulnerable adults. The aim is to reflect a changing need in the county council’s contracting and delivery model for this service and create clear and meaningful links into the broader Pan Sussex Skills Strategy.



WORKSTREAM 2

Work with schools and those young people not in education, employment or training to secure appropriate and robust pathways into further learning or employment

We will continue to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) to gain access to appropriate course or employment opportunities. We aim to provide careers support for those under the age of 16 years, where schools consider bespoke advice and information is required.

WORKSTREAM 3

Through working with strategic partners, implement a high-quality programme to improve adult numeracy skills through the national Multiply programme.

We will deliver a strong programme of numeracy for the county’s vulnerable adults and school leavers who do not have formal mathematics qualifications, and are therefore restricted in the employment opportunities available to them.

ANNEX 1

Statutory responsibilities of a Local Authority

School place planning duties (s13–14 Education Act 1996)

The council as an education authority has a duty to promote and champion high standards of education and fair access to education. It also has a general duty to secure sufficient schools in their area, and to consider the need to secure provision for children with SEN. This includes a duty to respond to parents' representations about school provision. These are referred to as the school place planning duties.

The LA has a duty to follow statutory processes when establishing, closing, or making alterations to a school (s6A, 7,9, 10,11, 15 and 19 Education and Inspections Act 2006 and school organisation regulations).

The class size duty requires the LA to restrict class sizes for children aged 4–7 years to 30 pupils per class (s1 School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

Education otherwise than at school

The council as an education authority has a duty to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise for each child of school age who for reasons of illness, exclusion or otherwise would not receive it unless such arrangements were made. This does not include for those children whose parents/carers choose to educate their children at home, known as Elective Home Education (EHE). For such children, the local authority has the duty to provide information for families opting to educate their children at home. Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding a child being educated at home, the local authority has the duty to act under safeguarding procedures to ensure that the child is safe. Local authorities may establish pupil referral units but do not have a duty to do so (s19 Education Act 1996). However:

- where a PRU is established, the LA has duties to set up a management committee and to delegate its duties to the management committee
- the LA has a duty to provide education for a permanently excluded child from the sixth day after the exclusion

Welfare/inclusion

The local authority has a duty:

- to make arrangements to establish the identities of children residing in the area who are not receiving suitable education (s436A Education Act 1996);
- to begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order if it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (s437 Education Act 1996);
- to consider serving an education supervision order before prosecuting for truancy (s447 Education Act 1996);
- in relation to pupils excluded from school to receive information from schools and pass it to the Secretary of State and to establish review panels (s51A Education Act 2002); and
- to develop accessibility strategies to facilitate better access to education for disabled pupils. Schools also have to develop access plans which build upon the local authority access strategy. (s88 Equality Act 2010).

Special Educational Needs

The council as education authority has specific duties in relation to provision of education for children with special educational needs (SEN). The main duties are (Part 3 Education Act 1996):

- to publish information about SEND provision available in and outside the area;
- to identify whether a child for whom they are responsible has SEN;
- to assess a child who in their opinion has SEN. If the assessment shows that it is necessary, to make an EHC Plan determining the child's needs and the educational provision required;
- to ensure the specific provision set out in the plan is made;
- to keep the plan under review;
- to educate children with SEN in mainstream schools where possible;
- to inform parents when SEN provision is made;
- to arrange for and participate in mediation where required;
- to make all decisions with regard to:
 - the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his/her parent or the young person
 - the importance of involving them in decisions and providing the right information and support to allow them to do so
 - the need to support the child or young person and help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes

- to promote integration of education and training provision with health and social care;
- to make joint commissioning arrangements about education, health and care provision; and
- to make arrangements for an advice and information service and a dispute resolution service for parents of children with SEN.

School transport duties

The local authority has a duty:

- to make provision for suitable home to school travel arrangements for eligible children of compulsory school age (5–16) to facilitate attendance at a relevant educational establishment. Travel arrangements are provided free of charge. (s508B Education Act 1996);
- to promote sustainable modes of travel to assess general school travel needs. The local authority must publish each academic year a document containing their strategy to promote the use of sustainable school travel. (s508A Education Act 1996);
- to have regard to religion and belief in exercise of travel functions (s509 AD Education Act 1996);
- to specify to what extent the arrangements they include in their annual transport policy statement facilitate the attendance of disabled persons and persons with learning difficulties; and

- to publish annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement which must set out the arrangements for the provision of transport, and for financial assistance towards transport costs it considers necessary to facilitate attendance of students of 6th form age.

Admissions duties

The council has duties in relation to school admissions both as local authority and as the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. These duties are:

- to provide advice and assistance to parents when deciding on a school place and allow parents to express a preference (s86(1A) School Standards and Framework Act 1998);
- for each school year, the local authority must publish the prescribed information about the admission arrangements for each of the maintained schools in their area, and if regulations so provide, such maintained schools outside their area (s92 SSFA);
- to publish each year a composite prospectus for all publicly funded schools in the area;
- to formulate, publish and adopt a scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools in the area, which allows parents to apply to schools in other local authority areas, and to provide information to the Secretary of State on secondary school admissions on national offer day;

- to make arrangements for parents to appeal against admissions decisions;
- to establish and manage a Fair Access protocol for in year admissions;
- to annually write to parents of prospective schools in their locality with information about schools with atypical admission ages within the local authority or within reasonable travelling distance; and
- to include details of schools with atypical admission ages in the local authority or within reasonable travelling distance in their composite prospectus.

Curriculum and assessment

The local authority, and governing bodies have a duty to exercise their functions with a view to securing, and a head teacher has a duty to ensure, that the curriculum provided is:

- broad and balanced;
- comprises the National Curriculum, including implementing key stage test arrangements (SATs);
- including provision for religious education and for pupils in secondary school, sex education; and
- they have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State (Education Act 2002, s79,85(9) and 88 1(A))

In relation to key stage 1 assessment, the local authority must:

- make provision for moderating teacher assessments in respect of 25% of relevant schools;
- collect teacher assessment information from relevant schools and quality assure it, and submit it to the DfE; and
- ensure school have training and advice in all aspects of key stage 1 assessment and electronic systems to submit data

In relation to key stage 2 assessment, local authorities must visit 10% of schools administering tests for monitoring purposes.

From summer 2012, local authorities must monitor at least 10% of relevant schools to ensure Year 1 phonics screening check is being administered correctly. They must visit at least 10% of relevant schools before, during and after the check and submit information to the DfE. (Key Stage 1 assessment Order and statutory guidance)

Religious Education

The local authority must establish a body called a standing advisory council on religious education. (s390–391 Education Act 1996).

The local authority must ensure that head teachers comply with their duties to secure due provision of religious education, and that all pupils take part in a daily act of collective worship. (ss 69-70 School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

School Meals

The authority has a duty to provide school lunches for those eligible for free school meals, and to ensure that the food provided is nutritious. In practice, this duty is delegated to schools.

School Finance

The local authority has a duty to (s45 etc. School Standards and Framework Act 1998, School Finance Regulations 2008 and 2011):

- determine school and PRU budget shares in accordance with the school finance regulations;
- establish a schools' forum for the area;
- maintain a scheme for financing schools; and
- provide accounting information to the DfE under the Consistent Financial Reporting Regulations.

School Governors

The local authority has a duty to:

- appoint parent governor representatives to local authority committees dealing with education (s499 Education Act 1996);
- appoint local authority governors to all maintained school governing bodies (s19 School Standards and Framework Act 1998);
- provide training and information for school governors (s22 Education Act 2002); and
- set up temporary governing bodies for new maintained schools (s34 Education Act 2002).

School sites and buildings

The local authority has a duty to:

- ensure that school buildings meet minimum standards (s543 Education Act 1996 and School Premises Regulations 1999);
- maintain school premises (s22 School Standards and Framework Act 1998);
- comply with legislation governing disposal of land on school sites (s77 School Standards and Framework Act 1998); and
- transfer land when school changes category or becomes an Academy (Education and Inspections Act 2006).

Inspection/intervention

The local authority has a duty to:

- provide information, distribute report and to produce and distribute a post-inspection action plan for Joint Area Reviews and OFSTED inspections;
- produce an action plan if a school goes into special measures following an OFSTED inspection;
- comply with statutory requirements if the authority decides to use its powers to intervene (s64-66 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006);
- to comply with a direction of the Secretary of state to give a school a warning notice (s60A and 69B of the Education & Inspections Act 2006) .

Teachers and staff

The local authority is the employer of all staff in community, voluntary-controlled and special schools. In foundation, voluntary-aided and foundation special schools, the governing body is the employer.

Under the school staffing regulations, the governing body and head teacher in all schools are responsible for the day-to-day management of staff. The following duties are therefore largely delegated to schools, although the local authority will have supervisory or residual role, particularly where they are the employer. The local authority has:

- duties in relation to teachers pay (s122 Education Act 2002 and School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document);
- a duty to check that teachers have Qualified Teacher Status (School Teachers Qualifications Regulations);
- a duty to ensure that staff have the necessary health and physical capacity (Education Health Standards Regulations 2003);
- duties in relation to the appointment, management and dismissal of staff (School Staffing Regulations);
- a duty to keep a register of vetting checks carried out on staff (School Staffing Regulations);
- to establish a performance management policy for teachers (s21 Education Act 2002); and
- duties as employer for pension purposes of all teachers in maintained schools relating to service and contribution remittance (Teachers' Pension Regulations 2010).

The Prevent duty

This duty arises from the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and relates to a range of organisations including schools and LAs. They must take steps to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Local authorities must work with local partners to protect public, prevent crime and promote strong integrated communities. Some local authorities do this through Community Safety Partnerships.

LADO (Local Area Designated Officer)

The LADO has responsibility under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 to manage allegations against individuals who work with children.

Academy conversions

The local authority has a duty to, where the Secretary of State has made an academy order, to arrange to transfer the land and buildings to the academy trust on a 125 year lease and assist with the preparation of the lease and CTA within reasonable timescales.

Delegated grants

The local authority has the responsibility for ensuring that grants delegated to it for supporting education and learning are used effectively and provide value for money in the delivery of its functions.

Early Education and Childcare

The local authority has a duty to (s6,7,9 Childcare Act 2006):

- secure sufficient childcare places, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0–14 (or up to 18 for disabled children); and

- take into account what is ‘reasonably practicable’ when assessing what sufficient childcare means in their area and:
 - the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists
 - the state of the labour market
 - the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience and expertise
 - encourage schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am and 6.00pm
 - encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market

The White Paper: ‘Opportunities for All’ currently going through to legislation includes new responsibilities for local authorities linked to the delivery of the aims and ambitions set out in the White Paper.

