



Brighton & Hove

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

This strategy provides guidance for all schools maintained by Brighton & Hove City Council about the way the Children, Families and Schools Division will work in partnership with them in a common endeavour to raise standards and support school improvement. The guidance is based on strategies already developed in collaboration with schools, and draws these together. The document has been developed in consultation with headteachers, governors, members of the Headteachers' Steering Group and wider stakeholders.

Brighton & Hove Children, Families and Schools Service (CFS) is committed to supporting children and young people. The service has five key objectives:

1. High achieving, inclusive schools and learning
2. Keeping children safe and thriving
3. Developing integrated services where these are shown to be effective
4. Delivering services in partnership with young people and their communities
5. Building an effective workforce

Raising educational standards and achievement is at the heart of these objectives, as is working with schools to support them in self-improvement. The Education Development Plan (EDP), through the seven priorities, provides the main focus for school improvement. These are:

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| Priority 1 | Raising attainment in Early Years towards the early learning goals and in primary education especially in literacy and numeracy |
| Priority 2 | Raising attainment at Key Stage 3 |
| Priority 3 | Raising attainment at Key Stage 4 |
| Priority 4 | Narrowing attainment gaps and tackling underachievement |
| Priority 5 | Support for schools causing concern |
| Priority 6 | Recruitment and retention |
| Priority 7 | Raising attainment through partnership working |

The EDP is a five-year plan with annual action plans.

Purpose of the School Improvement Strategy

This strategy brings together the school improvement work across CFS to outline a transparent approach to our support for schools, including schools causing concern. It aims to provide:

- A clear framework for school improvement
- Clarity of expectations, roles and responsibilities
- Support for school self-evaluation, school improvement planning and review
- Partnerships, both formal and informal with schools and the wider community
- Links with performance data and pupil tracking information
- Understanding as to how and why support/intervention are triggered
- Co-ordination for CFS response to difficulties experienced by schools
- Support for school categorisation
- Links with promoting and disseminating good practice

School Improvement Services

There are a range of functions and teams across CFS who work hard to support and improve schools. Some of these staff work in specific areas, such as special needs, while others provide more generic support to all, such as school admissions. The merged services across CFS have brought benefits, as colleagues in social care are part of the same group working on school improvement. This could be through work with looked after children, work on child protection or work with particular families. It is important to stress the role that the whole service has in support of children, families and schools. More recently the successful Children's Trust proposal will enable staff in health to be a more integral part of the services for children and young people and their families.

The role of the school at the centre of the community is a role that is increasingly being recognised and focused upon. The work around the extended school and the full service school are important developments in this field. The vital role that early education and childcare can make in giving children that early start to their school life is clearly recognised through the work of the Early Years Development and Childcare/Sure Start Partnership, the developments in early education and the work of the Early Years team. As is the wider contribution that music, dance, drama and the arts can make to enrich school life and the experiences of children and young people. Transition and support for young people to progress beyond school is provided through the Connexions alliance.

Support for all schools

The primary aim of all schools is to raise standards of attainment and each school is responsible for their own performance and the achievement of their pupils. The relationship between the schools and the LEA is based on partnership and co-operation. The governing body is responsible for the direction of the school, including the promotion of high standards and sets the strategic framework for the school's development. The headteacher with other senior staff is responsible for the leadership, direction and management of the school within the strategic framework set by the governing body. The LEA has a duty to promote high standards and seeks to work in partnership with schools; this duty is underpinned with a specific set of powers when a school is giving cause for concern. In the case of schools with a religious character the LEA will work with the diocesan authorities and other voluntary bodies. CFS will also provide regular opportunities for schools to evaluate the quality of services that it provides and actively seek the views of pupils/parents/guardians in improving those services.

The monitoring and evaluation of each school is part of an ongoing process of providing support, challenge and ensuring school effectiveness. A range of information is used to inform that process and to focus support where most needed.

Performance Data

A wide range of data is held by the LEA and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on schools. This includes pupil performance data, trends over time, OfSTED reports, key stage data and the systems to analyse this data have become more sophisticated in recent years. The re-launch of the Autumn Package in September 2003 as the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) takes pupil information to a new level of use in the classroom. The Identification, Referral and Tracking project is part of a national development to link information systems in order to provide co-ordinated support for children and young people at risk.

The Performance Data team is responsible for recording school and pupil information on the database. This is collected from nationally published information and at a local level from individual schools. The data is checked for accuracy and then analysed. The Performance Data team is available to provide training and development at an individual school level and also at an LEA level.

Headteachers, governors and individual teachers should have a good awareness of the school data available and at an individual pupil/class level headteachers and teachers must have a detailed knowledge of performance. This performance should be of their pupils in relation to benchmark data, they should track the progress of individual pupils, the progress of identified groups

particularly under-achieving pupils and be able to target teaching and planning of work at an individual or small group level.

Targets are set for the LEA by the DfES and from 2003 each primary school will be setting their own targets. Secondary school targets are set by the LEA. Performance in Brighton & Hove schools has improved overall but there remains underachievement in relation to our statistical neighbours and in relation to the DfES targets which we have not been able to meet.

Attendance

If pupils are to make the most of their opportunities in school it is important that they attend regularly. The Education Welfare Service and schools are responsible for monitoring attendance and data is available for all schools in terms of authorised and unauthorised absence. Attendance continues to be an issue for many of our schools as shown by Ofsted reports. In particular there is a higher than average incidence of parents/guardians taking their children on holiday during term time which can hinder pupil progress. Headteachers, governors, staff and the Education Welfare Service are working hard to address attendance issues. There are also specific projects being targeted on attendance as a key aspect of school improvement and as part of the School and Family Support Service.

Behaviour Management

The Behaviour Support Plan is updated regularly and provides the focus for work in schools. This plan takes account of emerging national initiatives, including the Anti-Bullying Strategy and the Behaviour and Attendance Strategy. Current best practice recognises the link between poor behaviour, poor attendance and bullying in schools. The current recommendation at a national level is that schools develop an integrated plan emphasising positive strategies. The LEA strategy is towards greater integration of services to schools in this area.

Governors and Governor Support

Effective governance involves partnership and teamwork with headteachers, staff, governors and the community. Governors come from different backgrounds, reflecting the many interest groups in our schools, but they have one important thing in common; they are dedicated to ensuring that the children in their school have the best education possible.

The governing body is responsible for ensuring this by maintaining and raising standards. This includes giving the school overall direction, selecting the headteacher, acting as a link with parents and the community, supporting the school and ensuring that the national curriculum is taught. The school governors are an essential part of the ongoing support for school improvement and they carry out specific roles to help the school to develop.

The Governor and School Management Support Service provides training and support for governors in Brighton & Hove through an annual training programme, governor newsletters, school bulletins and work with individual governing bodies. The team is involved in the recruitment and appointment of governors; it provides information about legislation relating to schools and practical information such as term dates. The team works with groups such as

the Governors' Network to consult on government regulations, LEA procedures and other issues relating to school governance/management and provides information and clarification on their implementation.

Many schools have developed active school councils and are working hard to ensure that students have an opportunity to voice their concerns and participate fully in their education. A pilot scheme is in operation to include students on the governing body.

Advisory Support and School Categorisation

The role of the School Adviser is to support self-review and evaluation, aid target setting and school improvement planning; and to monitor and evaluate each school's progress in relation to the school improvement plans and targets. It is intended that this should be a partnership, but it is also intended that schools should be challenged whilst at the same time supported through the process with an annual programme of school visits. There is a basic entitlement of time to all schools of three school visits per year. Additional days can be purchased through the Services to Schools packages. The visits follow the Self-Evaluation Framework and are focused on:

Autumn Term	Standards
Spring Term	Teaching and Learning
Summer Term	Leadership and Management

These meetings can include the Chair of Governors and other members of the Senior Management Team if appropriate.

The autumn visit will usually be in two parts, the visit in the first half of the autumn term will focus on the previous years work including a review of performance, an evaluation of school improvement plans and any LEA support. The visit in the second half of the term will focus on future target setting and look forward. The review includes:

- 1 Standards – pupil performance
- 2 Attitudes, behaviour and attendance
- 3 Quality of teaching
- 4 Curricular provision, including extra curricular activities and study support
- 5 Care and guidance, including assessment
- 6 Partnership working, including parents/carers and community links
- 7 Leadership and management
- 8 School self-evaluation
- 9 Inclusion, including equality of access and opportunity for pupils

It is intended to evaluate these criteria annually as part of ongoing development and revise/extend the criteria as necessary, for example to provide increased coverage of child protection matters, racial incidents, pupil tracking,

monitoring underachieving groups. The first review is proposed in early summer 2004.

In order to provide support to best meet individual school needs the schools in Brighton & Hove are placed into a support category. Once the review is completed there are three categories which schools can be placed in these are:

Category 1a:	Maintaining continuous improvement
Category 1b:	Developing effective improvement strategies
Category 2:	Support for school improvement
Category 2HT:	Support for headteacher for school improvement

Category 2 automatically includes schools who have been placed in any of the Ofsted categories (Underachieving, Serious Weaknesses, Special Measures) and formal warning. Where there is a new headteacher the school is included as a Category 2HT.

The category helps to determine the level of support provided to schools. The school categories are regularly reviewed, especially in the light of changing circumstances and in response to judgements by Ofsted inspectors. Particular factors, such as the departure of a headteacher, can result in a school needing additional short-term support. The system we have established in Brighton & Hove is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow us to respond appropriately to the needs of individual schools.

Each school in category 2 will be given an annual Support Plan which is produced in consultation with the headteacher. The Support Plan identifies the key improvement areas which the school needs to focus on and the support the LEA will provide. The plan is monitored on a termly basis and revised accordingly. All schools would be expected to improve their category on an annual basis. The support of school governors in monitoring the Support Plan is very important.

It is recognised that all schools face challenges but some schools particularly in deprived areas face complex issues and challenges. It is the interplay of factors which intensify those challenges. This includes features of multiple deprivation such as low income, high unemployment and poor housing, health and education. In the secondary sector schools facing challenging circumstances are defined and receive additional support for example through the Leadership Incentive Grant. It is intended to review support for primary schools facing challenging circumstances to better recognise the interplay of low educational performance, unstable communities, social and emotional illiteracy and the need to work together across CFS and wider partnerships. This work will be developed with headteachers over the next year and will aim to build on the successes of the Education Action Zone, the Excellence in Cities Cluster and the work of EB4U and Neighbourhood Renewal.

The advisory team does not have curriculum expertise across every subject area so the services of specialist staff such as a RE Consultant are purchased. In addition the work of the specialist secondary schools is used to support and facilitate developments, such as the outreach work for PE carried out by Dorothy Stringer School as part of their specialism in Sports and the ICT outreach work carried out by Varndean School.

Over recent years the LEA have used headteachers as mentors and buddies to new headteachers and as advisory headteachers supporting other schools. It is intended to continue these partnerships with headteachers to provide increased capacity and skills to support schools and tackle difficult situations. This work also complements the Advanced Leader and Consultant Leader roles being developed through the National College for School Leadership and the work of headteachers to support the Primary Strategy and collaboration through the Leadership Incentive Grant in secondary schools.

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is an important aspect of school improvement and is an essential part of ongoing development. The self-evaluation guidance from the LEA is based on three key areas (Standards, Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning). Headteachers are encouraged to focus on one of the key areas each term. Self-evaluation is encouraged by Ofsted through the completion of Form S4 and forms part of the inspection process.

Self-evaluation guidance is being finalised for governors and subject leaders. The focus on evaluation is to encourage all stakeholders to embrace self-evaluation as part of everyone's responsibility to recommend and make ongoing improvements to their areas of work.

The purpose of self-evaluation is to address three questions:

- How well is our school doing?
- Where can we improve?
- How could we bring about improvement?

The intention is for the headteacher and governors to use the results of the self-evaluation to inform the School Improvement Plan. Separate detailed guidance is available on school self-evaluation.

School Visits

The purpose of a school visit is to support school development. There are a number of colleagues across CFS who visit schools and this short protocol will apply to all school visits. The timing and purpose of a visit will be agreed with the headteacher and/or the member of staff. Any visit will be planned to avoid

disruption to pupils and staff. Any visit to a school will be logged at the school office and where appropriate a visit report produced within ten days.

Any person who is visiting a school will have fully prepared themselves for the visit. For example in the case of an Adviser prior to a school visit they will have worked on the school data profile; the School Improvement Plan; the post Ofsted action plan and any additional information relevant to the focus of the visit. An important strand of any school visit is to identify, disseminate and celebrate good practice.

Support for Ofsted Inspections

Before an Ofsted inspection the school will be preparing and reviewing their Action Plan to demonstrate the progress made since the last inspection. The S4 Form provides an opportunity for schools to evaluate progress and prepare the information base. The Adviser will help schools to prepare for Ofsted and provide advice and guidance on the completion of Form S4 and for the staff, parents and governor briefings.

Following an Ofsted inspection an Adviser will attend the oral feedback from the Registered Inspector to the governing body. At the meeting the role of the Adviser is to listen, make notes and observe, it is not to take part in the discussion. The results of the Ofsted feedback will be reported by the Adviser to the Senior Adviser (Primary or Secondary) and the Assistant Director, Quality, Standards and Leadership. All schools will receive advice and support for the preparation of the post Ofsted Action Plan.

Every Ofsted report is received and considered by a sub group of the Directorate Management Team and it is intended that the headteacher and Chair of Governors will be invited to attend the meeting where their report will be considered. In addition at the end of each term the P&R Committee receive a report on Ofsted Inspections carried out during that term. Issues from Ofsted reports will be used to inform planning in relation to school improvement.

Intervention in schools causing concern

Schools which are causing concern will have one or a combination of the following factors:

- Unsatisfactory standards, either across the school or in particular key stages or in English, mathematics and science;
- The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory or poor in more than 10% of lessons;
- There are concerns about the standard of pupils' behaviour and conduct, or about relationships generally;
- Leadership, management and/or governance is ineffective;

- The school does not give value for money;
- The level of attendance is below 90%;
- There are more than 5 permanent exclusions per year;
- Fewer than 25% of pupils at secondary school achieve 5 A* to C grades at GCSE;
- Insufficient progress made in implementing the school improvement plan and/or post Ofsted Action Plan;
- High level of complaint from parents/community about the school;
- Ineffective provision for special educational needs pupils;
- More than one teacher subject to formal monitoring;
- Budget problems in critical areas;
- School Governing Body relationship difficulties;
- Performance well below targets, especially over time;
- Failure to implement statutory requirements in critical areas; and
- Temporary turbulence due to a specific issue.

Where a school is under performing support will be provided to the headteacher and senior management team and to governors. In the case of Church Schools CFS Officers will liaise closely with the Diocesan Education Officers. Where no improvements are made the LEA has a duty of care to protect the interests of the pupils and intervention will be necessary. This is taken as a last resort but is intended to prevent severe failure. Schools and officers have worked hard to improve our schools and there are currently no schools in Brighton & Hove in the Ofsted categories of special measures or serious weaknesses.

The majority of LEA and school contact will be through mutual discussion and agreement and most schools welcome the advice and support provided by the LEA. Schools in category 2 have a Support Plan prepared to provide an agreed strategy for support. Where schools have acknowledged and accept the issues that need to be addressed the LEA will work with them.

If a school is giving cause for concern the first stage will be discussion and support to improve. In most cases supportive intervention is sufficient for the school to improve. If this is not enough and the warning signs are that the problems are not being addressed the LEA has the power to intervene. The LEA has four key powers of intervention:

1. Issue a formal warning notice requiring the school to take specific action;
2. Appoint additional governors;
3. Suspend the delegated budget;
4. Direct the school to take specific actions where discipline has broken down.

These are extreme measures and are not taken without a great deal of discussion, thought and consultation with the Director.

Professional Development

The central role that training and development has in school improvement is well established. The opportunities are documented in the Framework for Professional Development which shows support for newly qualified teachers, through the various stages of leadership and management to headship and consultant leader. The programme of Training and Development opportunities is published annually and events added to through termly updates. Training and development is provided in schools, and at our Learning Development Centre (LDC) the facilities provided are being improved each year. The LDC is also a hub for the National College of School Leadership in the South East. This enables schools to access national programmes locally. The professional development programme is established in conjunction with the continuing professional development co-ordinators in schools and senior advisers and CFS managers. It is designed to meet school needs and to support national and local priorities as identified in the Education Development Plan.

Support for new headteachers

All new headteachers (whether acting, new to headship, or experienced but taking on a new headship post) are offered a programme of support. This starts with a one-day induction with the senior primary adviser, the senior secondary adviser and the adviser for professional development. During the day the headteachers also meet the Director and the Assistant Director, Quality, Standards & Leadership. The day includes a wide range of topics associated with the service, including 'vision' and priorities, the Education Development Plan, school improvement planning, the role of the advisers, support services, school categorisation, school self evaluation, LEA support plans, visit reports, and professional development, including the new Headteacher Induction Programme (HIP).

Additionally each headteacher is matched to a 'buddy' headteacher who is available for telephone contact and introductions. Each new headteacher has a Support Plan provided by their link adviser. Through HIP new headteachers can have an adviser or headteacher mentor to do a needs analysis, and if required in depth mentoring (or if they have a particularly challenging school this may be supported through LEA school improvement/LIG funding). A 'development' programme runs every term (about 6 half day or day sessions) led by peer headteachers or LEA officers - these sessions provide opportunities for heads to share practice/issues about a variety of current agenda items (eg performance management, school improvement planning, finance, personnel). They are open to all headteachers, but new headteachers are particularly encouraged to attend.

Reporting of School Performance and Achievements

The schools in Brighton & Hove have improved performance year on year but we are still not meeting the national targets we have been set. The performance of schools is reported through the national league tables and progress is reported to CFS Sub-Committee in the autumn once the results are final.

The schools in Brighton & Hove are very active in pursuing the various external quality awards, such as Healthy Schools, Eco Schools, Quality Mark, Artsmark. In addition we have beacon, leading edge and specialist schools who work hard to share and disseminate good practice. There is much to celebrate and feel proud of in all these achievements.

Separate guidance has been prepared on good practice so that we have a common understanding of how to identify, promote and disseminate good practice. This is an area which we all need to take responsibility for developing.

National Strategies

The National Strategies have been a central part of the national school improvement agenda set by the DfES. We are fortunate in having been a pilot authority for many of these strategies and therefore been able to get a headstart in developments. This continues with the successful applications to lead on the Modern Foreign Languages Pathfinder Project and the Extended Schools Project. The National Strategies are fundamental to the school improvement plans over the recent and immediate future. At the same time the DfES have stressed the importance of the broader curriculum and the importance of creativity in its widest sense. The consolidation of the literacy, numeracy, ICT and modern foreign languages strategies at primary level into the Primary Strategy is welcomed.

Primary consultants are deployed based on meeting of targets, analysis of results, item analysis leading to setting of curricular targets and the schools identified need. The focus is general classroom management, literacy, numeracy, ICT and assessment for learning. Secondary consultants work at both Key Stages 3 and 4 and their work is focused on English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, ICT and teaching and learning, including assessment for learning. Support for a school identified in category 2 is co-ordinated by the link adviser who ensures the effectiveness of support through work on leadership and management.

Meeting Particular Needs

There are a number of children and young people who may have special or additional needs at some point in their school life, which will impact on their ability to achieve their potential. There is a range of support services which are available to work with schools to ensure that such pupils are effectively provided for. The Learning Support Services and the Educational Psychology Service can provide schools with advice, support and training, either at a whole school level or to address specific curriculum or individual needs. The modelling of effective teaching strategies and in some cases direct intervention with pupils can help to improve classroom practice. These arrangements can be negotiated locally. The availability of specialist expertise and experience, alongside the dissemination of good practice and access to current resources make these services a significant tool for school improvement.

The Learning Support Services have good contacts both locally and nationally and have developed effective working partnerships with colleagues in other agencies, such as health and voluntary organisations, who also have a role to play in the school improvement agenda. We aim to seek out funding opportunities to enhance and improve the provision made for pupils with special or additional needs, so that through working collaboratively, we maximise our chances of raising the achievement of pupils.

Having a particular need can lead to social exclusion and CFS works with schools, teachers, young people and other partners to tackle the causes and outcomes of social exclusion and to promote the interests of children/young people at risk of failing to achieve their full potential. The Social Inclusion team in particular supports curriculum developments focusing on personal, social and health education, citizenship and pastoral care. The team produce a range of strategy and curriculum guidance documents, as well as supporting communication and co-ordination between schools and other organisations working with young people on issues such as substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, bullying and racial harassment. It also facilitates opportunities for pupils to have a voice and participate in decision making.

The development of the School and Family Support Service will provide a more holistic response to the child, the family and schools with regard to health, social care and other community services.

Conclusion

This strategy is intended to sit alongside the Education Development Plan which sets out the priorities for school improvement and the specific actions to be achieved annually. It should also be viewed together with the separate guidance that is available for specific activities such as admissions, guidance and information on special educational needs. CFS is well placed to support schools through extensive local knowledge and considerable expertise and experience in managing services that support school improvement. The intention is to work in partnership with schools and other stakeholders in a joint endeavour to raise attainment and to do this through collaboration and co-operation.