

SLOUGH

School Improvement Strategy

2011

Draft 3

(Subject to consultation and further revision when new Education Act becomes law in Autumn 2011)

Introduction

The Slough Children and Young People's Plan is specific in its vision for partnership working to benefit children and young people in the Borough:

The key aim is to develop 'system reform' to achieve world class standards and close the gap in educational achievement for disadvantaged children. We need to aspire to create an educational system where all institutions are consistently achieving at a high level. In order to deliver this goal we must have a world class workforce that operates within an environment that supports effective teaching and learning and is dedicated to attainment. Pupils that are excluded, those that are unable to attend mainstream school and those that are disengaged from education represent a relatively small proportion of pupils but their individual needs must also be considered and met.

In Slough there are outstanding, good and improving schools. However, some are underperforming and these need intensive action to bring about improvement. Outcomes for children and young people are at and above national averages on many measures, but we do aspire to achieve more. We know that the changing social context, with changing patterns of family life alongside technological and global changes, place significant challenges on schools, families and communities. Slough is committed to working in partnership to prevent problems, to intervene early, support parents and families and build stronger and united communities. The role of our schools and settings is vital in delivering 21st Century services to meet 21st Century needs, and we aim to deliver excellence and high standards for all our pupils and their families.

This document describes the main statutory school improvement responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) and sets out a framework within which the Improvement and Standards Team in Slough will work to meet these, pending a new Education Act in the autumn 2011. The current White Paper and subsequent Education Bill are clear about the changing role of the LA, and it is in that context that this Strategy is being written.

Context

The recent change in central government (May 2010) means that we are in the midst of a number of key strategic and legislative transformations which will impact on the Local Authority (LA) and schools. Many of these are outlined in the recent Education Bill, where the importance of schools as autonomous institutions supporting each other, the need for consistently highly performing schools, and the further development of partnership and collaboration between schools, are significant drivers. Slough will work in partnership with schools and other settings to facilitate this transition into new roles. This is a time of change with regard to relationships between the LA and its schools. At the same time, the Local Authority is determined to continue working in close partnership with all schools, settings and providers with formal joint arrangements to drive rapid and sustained improvement.

As well as responsibilities with regard to access and Special Educational Needs (SEN), LAs have to secure diversity and choice and have an explicit role in relation to schools causing concern with a range of duties, powers and responsibilities in relation to underperforming schools. Other school specific statutory responsibilities currently relate to:

- target setting
- ensuring assessment is secure and teachers are appropriately trained
- acting as responsible body for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)
- assuring Governing Body membership, induction and access to information
- involvement with head teacher appointments
- the wider school planning functions, and buildings
- finance for maintained schools
- early years provision.

The *2009 Framework for Inspection* emphasises the role of schools with regard to safeguarding and ensuring the progress of each and every child and young person. Until such time as a new Education Act is in place, these responsibilities continue. Likewise, the current OfSTED framework remains in place until changes in January 2012, when we know that inspections will focus on:

- achievement, attainment and pupil progress
- the quality of teaching
- leadership and management
- behaviour and safety

Evidence shows clearly that educational achievement is the most effective way to improve outcomes and break cycles of deprivation. Improving life chances for all is therefore the key driver for our work, and there is a crucial role for everyone in shifting the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives, to early identification and intervention safeguarding them in the first place. To the same end, Slough will continue to promote partnerships, in the belief that they provide a rich combination of high expectations, innovative thinking and a strong community within which **all** learners can thrive and achieve.

Key principles

Our work is underpinned by the following key principles:

- Schools are self-managing and autonomous institutions, working within a national context, that are responsible for their own performance and improvement. The role of the LA is to intervene should school provision and quality for children and young people be compromised.
- Schools will be supported and challenged to continue and sustain improvement, both in actual attainment and in the rate of progress of our children and young people.
- Learning must be personalised, and partners will work together to narrow the attainment gap for all pupils and particularly for our most vulnerable pupils.
- All pupils, and in particular the most vulnerable, must have the support they need to overcome any barriers to their learning and well-being.
- The range of opportunities for 14 – 19 year olds will continue to be a priority, in order to meet the interests, aspirations and needs of Slough's young people
- The LA will work with parents, families, communities and partners to transform delivery of its services through a common approach, resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people in Slough, particularly the most vulnerable.

Managing Change

To support the Academies Act and in anticipation of the changes expected in the Education Act 2011, the LA will continue to:

1. Support the move from national school improvement programmes to local commissioned and brokered support, with resources held by schools
2. Fulfil the LA's specific role in relation to schools of concern
3. Work constructively in partnership with the increasing number of schools outside LA control ie Academies and Free Schools
4. Emphasise the strategic role of partners, inside and outside the Local Authority, especially the Private Voluntary and Independent sector
5. Support the work of Governors in managing change effectively
6. Ensure 'appropriate body' support for Newly Qualified Teachers
7. Support succession planning to meet recruitment challenges, and head teacher appointments
8. Maintain a close partnerships with schools in design and delivery of CPD for all staff
9. Respond to parental concerns about the quality of local schools
10. Promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination
11. Promote race equality
12. Appoint a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

For further information regarding the current statutory work of the LA see:
[Every Child Matters \(ECM\)](#)

[Revised DCSF statutory guidance for schools causing concern - amended 2008](#)

[Education and Inspection Act 2006](#)

School Improvement Partner Advice and Guidance for Local Authorities 2008

DCSF target setting guidance (updated annually)

Statutory Guidance on Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Academies Act 2010

Partnership Working

The success of our strategy is dependent on the extent and quality of our partnership working, particularly with Slough's head teachers working together, cross-borough, by phase or area. The Local Authority believes that harnessing the collective resources of partners provides the best solutions to both change and challenges, and it will work proactively to strengthen and encourage collaborative working, in particular school-to-school support. The LA will rely on partners to support its work, including external partners such as Public Health and the National College for Leadership of Schools and wider Children's Services. Likewise, schools and settings will work with other agencies and each other to deliver improved outcomes and wider services to children, young people and their families.

Collaboration across schools and settings is an important way of increasing the capacity of schools and settings through:

- leadership development at all levels
- sharing teaching and learning techniques
- a broader and more personalised curriculum
- shared professional development opportunities
- shared strategies to manage exclusions and attendance
- inclusive practices
- support services that meet the broader needs of children and families
- access to extended services

We will support work across partnerships to make the continuum of learning a reality for all children and young people. Further structural solutions across schools and settings will be developed. We anticipate that Slough's schools, working in partnership, will take on an increasingly important role in leading learning and offering mutual support in developing curriculum and educational provision.

School Self Evaluation

The quality of the school self-evaluation process is of vital importance in ensuring schools are highlighting the right priorities and taking appropriate action to address these. The process requires strong leadership and governance at a senior level in the school.

Self evaluation provides schools with the opportunity to highlight their strengths and areas for development, measured against national criteria. Although the school Self Evaluation Form is no longer a requirement, it will be used by Ofsted until the new Framework is introduced in January 2012, and the LA recommends that a SEF or similar document is frequently updated. Self evaluation is likely to be an important judgment in the new Ofsted Framework in the context of Leadership and Management. Similarly, the School Improvement Partner will no longer be a statutory requirement, and there is no funding provision for this role in the delegated budget for 2011 – 12. However, governing bodies will still have a duty to appoint an external adviser to give them advice and support regarding the management and review of the head teacher's performance. Alongside this, the LA nevertheless, has a responsibility for ensuring that it does maintain contact with all its schools, in order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. To this end, a copy of all school self evaluation/improvement plan is requested, and we should be pleased to receive this document electronically early in the Autumn Term 2011.

Full details and grade descriptors can be found on the [OfSTED website](#), along with the proposals for inspection arrangements from 2012.

Priorities

The priorities for the LA Team, as set out in the School Improvement and Standards Plan are to work with schools to:

1. Maintain and improve outcomes for all pupils
2. Close the gap in achievement between the highest and lowest attaining groups
3. Ensure that the LA offers appropriate and timely support for any School Causing Concern.

These remain the priorities for 2011, regardless of external changes.

Local Authority Support and Challenge for Schools in Slough

Schools are self-managing and autonomous, responsible for their own performance and improvement. The role of the Borough is to support and challenge this and if necessary intervene should educational provision and quality for children and young people be compromised. Under the new Government expectation, schools deemed good or outstanding by OfSTED (now the only external regulator) will have minimal involvement from the LA, except for the implementation of the LA's statutory responsibilities. Some may want to convert to Academy status, and will receive appropriate support from the LA if consultation approves this course of action.

OfSTED Categorisation

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	School Causing Concern - any school placed in Notice to Improve or Special Measures by OfSTED

The ending of the School Improvement Partner (SIP) function means that Slough needs a new model to fulfil its statutory obligations. We are determined to maintain high quality relationships with our schools, and the following model will be implemented from April 2011, subject to consultation.

Grades 1 and 2 Outstanding and Good schools	Expected LA Support/Action
<p><i>It is expected that these schools will take responsibility for their continuing improvement through purchased/brokered and commissioned services.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, good and outstanding schools are expected to work in partnership to support other schools in improving impact and outcomes.</i></p>	<p>Core Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One visit by an LA Improvement Partner in the Autumn Term re achievement and progress • Telephone contact in Spring and Summer Terms, with a follow up visit if appropriate • Quality assurance of the NQT induction process and joint responsibility for NQT supervision and training • Access to training on local and national initiatives Senior leaders' induction (<i>charged</i>) • Professional development opportunities (<i>charged</i>) • Briefings and 'good practice' information sharing • Brokerage and commissioning of support (<i>charged</i>) • Data information packs

Grade 3a Satisfactory Schools	Expected LA Support/Action
<p><i>Satisfactory schools will commission support within the LA and from other partner schools, but in addition, the LA will take an early support and challenge role to ensure that the school is on an upward trajectory and well-placed for OfSTED re-inspection, usually within 2 years of a 'Satisfactory' judgement.</i></p>	<p>Core provision as above, plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 day Section 8 type monitoring visit, based on OfSTED criteria and conducted jointly with the Head teacher, within 10 months of a 'satisfactory' judgement*, to challenge and ensure that the upward trajectory of improvement has been sustained, especially in relation to OfSTED priorities.

**only for schools with a satisfactory judgement relating to capacity of Leadership and Management*

Division of OfSTED 'satisfactory' category

To provide enhanced support for schools below floor standards in any measure, the LA will retain the model of a **3b 'Focus school'** category. This model of LA support, with a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) and termly monitoring meetings has been recognised by OfSTED as an effective LA model of support.

LA Category 3b: Focus School
<p>In addition to Core Provision, a Focus school will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advice on creating a Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) ▪ Advice on commissioning appropriate support to implement the plan ▪ Leadership and Governance support, including attendance at Governing Body meetings as appropriate ▪ Regular monitoring of the RAP by the Head of Improvement and Standards at a termly RAP meeting ▪ 1 day Section 8 type monitoring visit, based on OfSTED criteria, 6 months after a 'satisfactory' judgement ▪ 1 day Section 8 type monitoring visit, based on OfSTED criteria, within 2 years of a 'satisfactory' judgement.

OfSTED Grade 4: Notice to Improve (Ntl) or Special Measures (SM)

When a school is placed in Notice to Improve (Ntl) or Special Measures (SM), the LA writes an Action Plan with clear priorities and milestones for improvement. A **Strategy Action Group (SAG)** is formed, chaired by the Head of School Improvement and Standards, or their representative. The Chair will ensure that school support is coherent, aligned and focused on impact and outcomes for learners. The **SAG** will meet as often as required, and will report at least twice every term to provide the Director and Assistant Director with timely and relevant information on progress towards removal from category.

Sometimes, **SAG** support, or commissioned and brokered support for the school improvement process, proves insufficient or ineffective in improving outcomes. In these cases the Head of School Improvement and Standards may recommend recourse to the statutory guidance on schools causing concern to ensure that pupils are provided with the educational opportunities they deserve and that their education is safeguarded.

The document 'Statutory Guidance on Schools Causing Concern' (September 2008) gives details of how Local Authorities interpret and make full use of the powers provided through the Education and Inspection Act (2006).

Powers of Intervention

The powers afforded to a Local Authority through the Education and Inspection Act (2006) and Statutory Guidance on Schools Causing Concern September 2008 are:

- a formal warning notice to the governing body;
- appointment of additional governors;
- suspension of the delegated budget;
- proposal to the Secretary of State of the appointment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the governing body;
- the requirement for school(s) to collaborate with another school or FE college or to federate (see section 63 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).

Formal Warnings

Slough Borough Council will consider issuing a formal warning notice to a governing body if:

- the school is causing concern and concerns are grounded in evidence which has been investigated and discussed with the school;
- standards of attainment or progress of learners at the school are unacceptably low and likely to remain so without intervention;
- there has been a serious breakdown in the way in which the school is managed or governed;
- the safety of the learners or staff of the school is at risk.

A formal warning will include the actions the governing body is asked to take and the deadlines for meeting these. If the governing body does not comply with a formal warning notice, Slough Borough Council (SBC) may use its other powers of intervention. If the governing body feels that SBC is acting unreasonably in issuing a formal warning notice, or in the terms of that notice, it can make a complaint to the Secretary of State.

Appointment of Additional Governors

SBC may appoint additional governors to any school which is causing concern.

Additional governors are identified for their skills and experience. They are mainly selected from existing governing bodies, SBC staff and other community workers. A register of additional governors is maintained by the LA team and they are matched carefully to schools when needed.

The role of the additional governor is:

- be exemplar governors;
- to participate fully in all governing body activities;
- to ensure that the governing body takes the necessary actions to make the school successful;
- to participate in committees set up by the governing body where specialised skills are needed;
- to agree all monitoring and reporting with the chair of governors and head teacher;
- to assist the governing body to work effectively, identify any areas of weakness and to receive any training needed;
- to be positive and encouraging but not afraid to challenge.

Suspension of Delegated Powers

SBC has the power to suspend the governing body's right to spend the school budget. If SBC decides to take this course of action, the related staffing powers are also restricted.

This power of intervention may be used in circumstances where:

- the school has received a formal warning notice, but the matter has not been remedied;
- the school has been found by Ofsted to require special measures or an improvement notice, or is designated by SBC as causing concern;
- the governors have failed to comply with any requirements under SBC's scheme for financing its schools, or are not managing the delegated budget satisfactorily.

Suspension of delegation is a temporary and transitional measure and not a permanent state. SBC will work with the school during the period of suspension to ensure that the school's capacity to take decisions is strengthened.

Before suspending a school's budget, the Director of Education and Children Services will consult with the Lead Member. The Director will give the governing body at least one month's notice in writing of any suspension, except in the cases of gross incompetence, mismanagement or other emergency. The notice will specify the grounds on which SBC proposes to suspend delegation.

SBC will be selective and will leave with the governing body such decision-making powers as it considers appropriate.

Interim Executive Boards

The Education and Inspections Act provides LAs with the power to appoint a specially constituted governing body or Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace a governing body for a temporary period. This power is available when a school:

- is in special measures;
- has a notice to improve; or
- has failed to comply with a formal warning from its LA; or
- that the governing body is judged to not be capable of securing continued school improvement, even with appropriate support.

The power is intended to be used only in the most exceptional circumstances where it is clear that other intervention powers (to appoint additional governors or withdraw delegated budget) have failed or would fail to bring about the necessary improvement, and may be

used only with the consent of the Secretary of State.

Before using this power, SBC must consult the school governing body and, in the case of a foundation or voluntary school, the Diocese or other appropriate appointing authority. The governing body must also be given written notice that SBC proposes to establish an IEB.

Power to require a school to enter into partnership or change status

The purpose of this intervention is to require a school to enter into collaborative arrangements to secure improvements. Before using this power, SBC must:

- consult the school governing body and, in the case of a foundation or voluntary school, the Diocese or other appropriate appointing authority;
- find a willing school, college, other organisation or individual to act as a partner.

Collaborative arrangements will be used wherever appropriate as part of a package of support for schools causing concern (section 63 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).

SBC will do all in its power to support schools causing concern, taking swift and decisive action when necessary as detailed above. Should these strategies prove to be unsuccessful in advancing the issues and preventing failure, SBC will close the school and the school may re-open as an Academy, or be amalgamated with an existing school. The Secretary of State has powers to close a school and it may re-open subject to open competition.

A change of status is a structural solution, and the present Government has high expectation that any and every school which is underperforming should become an Academy. The sponsor may be a local 'outstanding' school or an external Academy Sponsor. The Office of the Schools Commissioner will offer advice to the LA regarding any such move towards a structural solution.

The Following table gives the range of options considered for implementation by the Local Authority when schools are in difficulty

Range of options related to schools in difficulty

These options don't need to be pursued in order from left to right. They are simply the options to be considered related to the magnitude and the nature of school difficulties

Early Support	Monitoring		Challenge		Intervention					
								With Secretary of State Agreement		
Interim Headteacher	Statement of Action	Strategy Action Group	Leaders in Education (National and Local)	Serve a warning notice on a school about proposed intervention	Appoint additional governors or re-organise existing governing body	Take back school's delegated budget	Enter into a partnership / soft federation / hard federation / amalgamation with another school	Set up an Interim Executive Board (IEB)	Make a recommendation to the Secretary of State to establish an Academy	Close a school in Special Measures

Whilst the LA may be required to use its powers of intervention from time to time, we are committed to local self-governance and school autonomy. Therefore prior to, or in conjunction with the use of its powers, the LA will seek to ensure that appropriate support and training is put in place to develop the effectiveness of the school and governing body in order to avert the need for intervention, and secure quality of education for pupils during the time of change.

Monitoring and Accountability

The Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure it has a clear and accurate understanding of schools' effectiveness and performance in order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. To this end the Authority requires copies of all school self evaluation/improvement plans to go with schools performances data as a means of monitoring improvement and standards. Alongside this, the Authority is implementing a School Improvement Panel to strengthen monitoring, challenge and intervention. The remit of which is specified below:

School Improvement Panel

The Local Authority has recently established a School Improvement Panel, which will meet every half term. The remit for the Panel is:

- To secure school improvement and raise standards through appropriate challenge and intervention with schools
- To oversee the Local Authority School Improvement Strategy
- To oversee and review the categorisation of schools and associated support policy
- To review support arrangements and to address monitoring, challenge and intervention of schools in OfSTED category, those at risk of going into category, and those below the government's floor targets
- To determine next steps for schools in category, giving consideration to a continuum of options including intervention and structural changes (refer to attached sheet above entitled '**Range of options related to schools in difficulty**')
- To review identified support arrangements and to address monitoring, challenge and intervention for those schools beneath the floor target, exempting those schools which are making better than average progress as determined by central government
- To demonstrate that the courses of action are appropriate and achieving timely and sustained positive steps in standards and achievement
- To meet head teachers and Chairs of Governors of schools causing concern to review support arrangements and determine what further action may be required in terms of internal and external support
- To make recommendations for consideration by the Director and Lead Commissioner for Education and Children's Services as necessary.

Representation in the first instance will include Primary head teacher representation, Secondary head teacher representation, the Assistant Director for Education and Children's services, the Head of School Improvement and Standards, relevant LA officers and a note taker. In the future, consideration will be given to representation from chairs of governors and elected members.

The Panel will be accountable to the Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services and Lead Commissioner for Children's Services.

Towards Excellence

In Slough, we aspire to having significantly more outstanding schools and no school less than satisfactory and improving. To achieve this, we will work in partnership to build capacity across the system; we will recognise excellence and support partnership across the Borough. We are working for the very best for the children, young people and families of Slough. We aspire to a system of learning that is fit for the 21st Century.

