Wokingham Local Authority

Education Belonging Team

A Policy Framework for Engagement with Community Schools, Academies and local system actors

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1. Introduction

Vision

Wokingham Local Authority (LA) is committed to excellence in education provision for all young people and children in the Borough. Successful schools with ambitious leaders and governors along with their high-quality staff teams enable this to be achieved.

National Policy Context

Schools, whether academies or our family of community maintained schools, are primarily responsible for their own improvement.
This responsibility sits in the context of the Local Authority's statutory duty to *'promote high standards'* (1996 Education Act)

The Local Government Association (LGA) sets out clearly the current landscape as follows:

'The council role in school improvement has changed considerably. There are increasing numbers of academies and free schools, directly funded and overseen by the Department for Education (DfE) and increasing autonomy for all schools. A significant majority of secondary schools are now academies.

The council role has become more strategic and schools are increasingly expected to take responsibility for their own improvement and to help other schools that are struggling. However, this is a crucial area of importance for every council and most formal statutory responsibilities remain.

Children's services have a legal responsibility to promote the wellbeing of all local children. Councillors will always have a keen interest in school standards locally to improve the educational outcomes and life chances of local children and young people' LGA 2026.

Wokingham Local Authority Context

In line with the above central government policy direction, Wokingham LA works in partnership with its schools to deliver on shared foci and enable all partners to transact statutory duties to best impact on positive outcomes for children and families.

The Local Authority continues to have responsibility under its statutory duties for the performance of schools. The Local Authority's role differs according to school status. For maintained schools, the Council has statutory intervention powers in defined circumstances. Academies are accountable to their trust and the Secretary of State, with formal intervention exercised through the Department for Education and Regional Director. The Council nevertheless maintains a strong interest in the educational experience and outcomes of all Wokingham children and works

constructively with trusts, schools, dioceses and the DfE where concerns or opportunities for improvement arise.

The work of the Strategic Education Belonging Team has been changing over time and will continue to evolve in line with this policy direction. Officers have a strategic and partnering role with schools, enabling and facilitating system effectiveness.

A core function of the Education Belonging Team is to support and enable strong school leadership and management, intervening early where appropriate to work in partnership with schools to bring about the best possible provision for the children and young people in our joint care.

The Education Belonging Team should be viewed as strategic partners in the education system, rather than School Improvement delivery agents.

This framework should be read alongside the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Support and intervention in schools, updated September 2026, and will be kept under review to reflect subsequent changes to national accountability and intervention arrangements.

The Local System:

In Wokingham there are currently:

1 Maintained Nursery
9 Infant schools
9 Junior Schools
37 Primary Schools
10 Secondary Schools
1 Pupil Referral Unit
1 Hospital School
3 Special Schools

Of those provisions:

10 Secondaries are academies
42 Primary, including Infant and Juniors are academies
3 Special Schools are academies

The Wokingham Family of Community Schools come together as a regular group of school leaders and also routinely with officers. These meetings are designed to enable sharing of information, building collaboration across the system with the aim of enabling high quality education delivery within budgets available.

The Wokingham academy landscape consists of 14 Multi Academy Trusts and 2 Stand Alone Academies. Academy CEO's meet regularly as part of the Wokingham Academy Anchor Group. This group links with the Service Director for Education to maintain good system dialogue.

Both Primary and Secondary school sectors are represented through their relevant local bodies: The Wokingham Secondary Federation and the Wokingham Primary Heads Association.

The Wokingham Borough Education Partnership (WBEP) is a strategic body of representatives from across the Wokingham Education system. It reviews local priorities based on local data and intelligence. WBEP working parties exist to take forward improvement action relating to the identified key priorities for the year.

2. Policy purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the way in which the Local Authority engages with schools and the specific procedures that relate to identification of any concerns and resultant actions.

This policy seeks to make clear the mutual expectations between partners in the system in the identification and addressing of concerns.

The Local Authority recognises the importance of holistic working across the local education system whilst acknowledging the different structural and accountability lines existing across the landscape. This policy intends to enable holistic working across the system whilst maintaining the integrity of the different lines of accountability as set out for community maintained schools and academy schools.

The Local Authority will work in partnership with the DfE Regions Group and Director along with relevant Diocesan Directors.

3. Aims

This policy aims to support the local vision for education:

'excellence in education provision for all young people and children in the Borough'
This will be achieved through:

- A shared ambition for sustaining high standards through strong teaching, learning and leadership which is rooted in effective self-evaluation and self-improvement
- The facilitation of cross-fertilisation of excellent practice and evidence-based research enabling continuous system improvement
- Sustaining effective working relationships across the system based on high challenge and high support, building a high performing and sustainable local system
- Maintaining open dialogue across the system that enables early identification of concerns and leads to constructive advice and signposting support for improvement action
- Using a clear set of indicators when identifying any schools causing concern
- Working to strengthen school leadership capacity for self-improvement

- Working in partnership with partners including, The Diocese of Oxford, The Diocese of Portsmouth, Trust leaders, Ofsted and DfE Regional Teams.
- To use the powers of referral and intervention accorded to the Local Authority appropriately and in a timely manner.

4. Engagement with schools

In addition to the representation groups outlined above, officers will engage in regular structured conversation with school leaders.

This conversation will be determined by the organisational status of the provision. Local and national performance data will inform discussions along with any inspection outcomes and preparation.

Community Maintained Providers:

Planned conversations between Education Belonging Team officer representative and school leaders will focus on identification of existing strengths, areas for system practice sharing and identified areas for development. System led support may be signposted or brokered as relevant.

The LA will work to engage with schools in proportion to need identified within resourcing available.

Academies:

An annual conversation is offered to each school leader. Uptake is at the discretion of MAT Leaders who may prefer to engage at MAT level directly.

The local authority maintains a performance data set locally including individual and aggregated performance across schools in each MAT. This data will inform any conversation as a starting point.

Working with governors

The LA takes an active interest in the quality of governance in community maintained schools and expects and supports high standards of governance, recognising where a school could improve and encouraging the governing bodies to do so. Wokingham LA Governor Services acts as a champion for high quality school governance; helping to ensure that governors have the necessary skills; and through the engagement with the Education Belonging Team has in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to identify signs of failure in relation to governing bodies' oversight of finance, safety or performance standards.

Maintained schools should have a code of conduct setting high standards of the role, conduct and professionalism of their governors. This includes an expectation that they undertake any training or development activity needed to fill skills gaps to contribute to the effective governance of the school.

Section 22 of the Education Act 2002 provides that local authorities should ensure that training they consider necessary to discharge their duties is made available to every governor, free of charge. Wokingham provides a regular briefing to Chairs of Governors on a termly basis to facilitate this and a termly Governor Digest to support all governors in understanding their role. A range of CPD activities are also available to purchase.

Wokingham maintains an up-to-date records of governors in maintained schools.

Local authorities should also encourage transparency around school governance arrangements including through information published on school websites in line with statutory guidance and compliance with schools' duties under s538 of the Education Act 1996 to populate all the governance fields on Get Information About Schools.

In carrying out these responsibilities in respect of voluntary and foundation school the LA works in partnership with religious bodies or other bodies who appoint the governors.

Where the LA has concerns about the governance of an academy or free school this will be discussed with the DfE Regional Team.

Use of Local Authority Officers as a resource

In order to act as a catalyst, challenge partner and champion for education in Wokingham the LA will ensure that there are structures which facilitate a shared understanding of ambition of children in the borough amongst all schools, both academy and maintained, along with a shared commitment to working together to meeting that ambition.

A significant key to all self-improvement work is the accurate use of effective data, robust self-evaluation and external validation of those judgements made by school leaders. As strategic partners in the enablement of effective education provision, officers will work in partnership with school leaders to support self-evaluation and onward improvement through an advisory and empowering approach.

The team of Education Belonging Officers offer a core engagement and regular conversation with all schools, both academies and community schools.

This engagement will assist in planning facilitation and enablement of any further development work to meet shared priorities.

Discussions will focus on key national and local priorities and include:

- Standards and outcomes for pupils
- Attendance
- Provision and impact on the most vulnerable/ disadvantaged including PPG, SEND, New Arrivals and Refugee pupils
- SEND
- Transitions

- Safeguarding
- Breadth of curriculum provision
- Overall quality of education provided and the impact of leadership and management on its delivery

5. Identification of vulnerability

Early identification is crucial to supporting swift improvement action.

The LA will review schools formally on an annual basis, but this will be updated termly should circumstances around a particular provision change.

In line with published MAT quality descriptions (DfE July 2023 Trust quality descriptions) officers will consider any risks facing the school in relation to the five pillars of quality:

Pillar	Local considerations
• **High Quality and Inclusive Education**	• Data analysis indicates a sudden drop or a steady decline in performance (attainment and/or progress) in relation to national standards • Outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including those Looked After, are below national averages for similar schools. • The gap between key vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged children, and their peers in school is not closing quickly enough and does not compare favourably with the national picture for all children. • Outcome data indicates inconsistent or variable patterns of attainment or progress within the school. • Data suggests that the school is not performing as well as comparable schools • Concerns regarding the suitability of provision for children with special educational needs • Attendance and exclusion/suspension data raises concern. • Concerns regarding the management of admissions or high rates of mobility, and removal for Elective Home Education • Evidence suggests that Children Looked After are not having their needs adequately met.
• **School Improvement**	▪ The school has not acted quickly enough to address any areas of weakness/recommendations made by external or internal review partners. ▪ Engagement with system led improvement
• **Workforce**	• Staffing churn • Recruitment and retention • Appropriate qualifications and experience •
• **Finance and Operations**	• There are concerns regarding the management of financial resources.

	• There is an indication that standards of safeguarding are not adequate for pupils or staff. • Expansion or reduction plans impinging on capacity
• **Governance and Leadership**	Turbulence/poor practice at leadership or governance level places the school at risk of underperformance • Any Ofsted potential or actual outcome • Complaints • Safeguarding concerns

Indicators will be considered collectively and in context. The presence of a single indicator will not normally determine a school's level of support or concern. Professional judgement, trend information, the school's own evaluation, contextual factors and evidence of its capacity to address emerging issues will be considered in reaching a proportionate view.

Through engagement with schools in continuing dialogue about their performance and development needs, the LA discharges its statutory functions in relation to supporting and challenging the local system and advocating for the most vulnerable. It also enables informed ability to work in partnership to broker, facilitate or signpost support in the case of a community maintained school, and in the case of an academy to be able to broker, facilitate and signpost support including liaison with the CEO or office of the DfE Regional Director.

Ofsted Inspection Outcomes

The Local Authority will discuss with those schools who find themselves in challenging situations how they can improve and return to secure Ofsted judgements as soon as possible through the signposting and brokerage of appropriate support, including reviewing their use of system led support.

The annual engagement conversation with schools provides information regarding potential pressures and vulnerabilities facing schools that may affect their ability to sustain expected grades or better across all evaluation areas at inspection.

If a school does receive an inspection outcome indicating concern, the LA will review with leaders the work being undertaken by the school on its improvement journey, the appropriateness of support and challenge currently provided and assess any need to escalate action to ensure swift recovery. This may include consideration of statutory powers outlined below.

Wokingham LA will discuss concerns with schools receiving areas 'needing attention' in an Ofsted inspection and this may result in convening a SIB.

For schools receiving a judgement of 'urgent improvement' a SIB will be called to consider the best course of action unless immediate invocation of statutory powers is required.

6. Links with the Regional Director, DfE and Ofsted

The Local Authority, in keeping with its overall vision of ensuring the best possible provision for all its children and young people, values its links with Academies and Free schools. Academies and Free schools will be included in the termly data dashboard refresh and have opportunity to influence the Local Authority's understanding of the effectiveness of their work by accessing the time allocated to support/challenge and external validation as set out above. Academy and Free schools are also not subject to intervention from the Local Authority. Accountability is directly to the DfE and RD.

If there are concerns about provision or standards the Local Authority will raise these with the DfE through the Regional Director in the regular discussions that take place.

In addition, where concerns are drawn to the attention of the Local Authority by parents, we will, as champions of the child, draw these concerns to the attention of the school.

The LA also has a duty to respond to complaints or concerns raised to Ofsted or DfE when complaints are made direct to those organisations about a school within the borough, whether it is academy or a maintained school. The LA will liaise with the school in compiling the formal response regarding any such complaint to Ofsted/DfE.

If, following an OFSTED inspection, an academy is judged as requiring Urgent Improvement, the proprietor is required to prepare a statement of action and will be subject to HMI monitoring visits. The Secretary of State in such situations has intervention powers including: appointment of additional governors, stopping funding the academy or closing the academy. Where schools in Wokingham choose to become Academies, the Local Authority is committed to working in partnership on school improvement, sharing expertise and best practice and providing access to local traded services.

If, following an OFSTED inspection, a community maintained school is judged as requiring Urgent Improvement, the head teacher and governors are required to prepare a statement of action and will be subject to HMI monitoring visits. The Secretary of State in such situations has intervention powers including issuing a Academisation Order. Where schools in Wokingham choose to become Academies or are directed to convert by the Secretary of State, the Local Authority is committed to working in partnership on school improvement, sharing expertise and best practice and to enable improvement to continue at pace and pupils' education is not put at further risk.

DfE Raising Standards in Education (RISE) Support

Officers will liaise with DfE Regional Teams regarding providing of RISE Team support to any school in Wokingham LA area.

Targeted RISE Intervention RISE teams will provide a mandatory targeted service to schools that Ofsted identifies as needing to improve. This will focus on 'stuck' schools which have not had a change of responsible body since their last inspection, and, from September 2026, schools judged as 'requires significant improvement'. **Universal RISE Support** RISE teams will also provide a universal service aimed at fostering and driving a self-improving school system. This support is available to all schools, regardless of Ofsted rating or intervention status.

The RISE National Priorities are identified as:

- Attainment in Maths and English
- Mainstream Inclusion
- Quality of provision in Year R
- Attendance

The LA will factor these priorities into its identification of vulnerable schools and signpost RISE support accordingly. Regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) - GOV.UK

7. Support and challenge for vulnerable schools

The attached LA officer, usually from the Education Belonging Team, will discuss with school leaders and governors as appropriate the vulnerabilities identified and explore the form of support and challenge most appropriate for moving forward. Actions taken and their impact will be kept under review. School leaders and governors are responsible for delivery of improvement and should own and take responsibility for the generation of any relevant action plans and engagement with support.

Schools may become vulnerable for a variety of reasons and the Local Authority undertakes an annual review of school's in line with Section 5 above and the DfE July 2023 Trust Quality Descriptions

To support this annual assessment the Education and Belonging team will update the assessment on a termly basis.

The Local Authority will have regard to a broad range of information which will rely on published data and any information already provided by schools to officers and wider system stakeholders.

In line with the Support and Intervention in Schools Guidance DfE September 2026 this information will include but not be limited to:

- assessment, test and exams results data; •
- attendance and persistent absence data, based on the school census;
- exclusions data;

- information relating to the capacity and capability of leadership and governance, including the oversight and use of finances and the ability to deliver school improvement;
- any evidence relating to workforce recruitment and retention;
- parental preferences, in terms of the number of first-choice applications compared with the PAN;
- pupil destination data

The Local Authority recognises its responsibility for safeguarding and will also take into account any safeguarding concerns as part of this assessment.

The following table shows the stepped process for intervention and support :

At a glance intervention and support stepped process

Step	Status / Trigger	LA Response	Support Mechanisms	Accountability
Step 0 Universal Prevention	School performing securely	Universal school improvement offer	Network meetings, governor training, safeguarding reviews, attendance support, SEND support, peer review	Annual risk assessment
Step 1 Emerging Concerns	Declining outcomes, attendance, finance, safeguarding, leadership capacity, complaints or governance issues	Light-touch monitoring	Officer visits, data review, self-evaluation support, governing body challenge	Termly review
Step 2 Targeted Support	School identified as vulnerable through risk assessment	Shared action plan agreed LA and School Leadership/ Governance	Improvement plan, leadership coaching, peer support, LA adviser involvement, governor development	Termly reviews
Step 3 Intensive Support (RISE Eligible)	Persistent underperformance or significant capacity concerns or Needs Attention Ofsted Judgements	School Improvement Board convened	RISE engagement if appropriate, improvement board, external reviews, curriculum and teaching reviews	Termly SIB meetings
Step 4 Requires Urgent Improvement or Eligible for Intervention	School receives "Requires Urgent Improvement " judgement or Failure to improve, warning notice issued, low standards, governance breakdown, safety concerns	Mandatory intervention planning and engagement with RISE, through School Improvement School Board or becomes eligible for statutory intervention	Targeted RISE support, leadership strengthening, external governance review, attendance and inclusion improvement programme. LA may appoint additional governors, require collaboration arrangements, or establish an Interim Executive Board (IEB)	SIB formal monitoring and progress reviews; likely reinspection around 18 months

Step 5 Formal Statutory or Structural Intervention	Warning notice not complied with or serious concerns persist Ofsted inspection Urgent Attention required or persistent failure despite support	Use of statutory powers, Regional Director/Secretary of State consideration of structural solutions	Additional governors, IEB, suspension of delegated budget, directed support, Academy Order (where judged appropriate by DfE), sponsored academy solution, closure in exceptional cases	Frequent monitoring and reporting Potential direct DfE oversight

School Improvement Boards (SIB)

The purpose of a School Improvement Board is to bring a range of support around the school to facilitate swift, co-ordinated multidisciplinary system support and challenge to school leaders in order to bring about the improvement change required. These changes may be required by Ofsted or through locally identified concerns as set out in section 7.

Schools requiring a SIB will be informed and the headteacher and chair of governors will be invited to an inaugural meeting with the Service Manager for Education and Belonging or Service Director for Education who will chair the SIB for the duration of the challenge and support programme in place for improvement.

Particular consideration will be given to the schools 'capacity to improve'. Meetings will follow a standard agenda, as follows.

- Progress against last actions agreed at last meeting
- Successes noted by school- Head Teacher and Chair of Governors (CoG)
- Successes noted by LA supporting officers
- Barriers to progress identified by School HT and CoG
- Barriers to progress identified by LA supporting officers
- Action identified for next working period.

Exiting the SIB process is predicated on successful removal of or mitigation of concerns that resulted in invoking the SIB. Exit is agreed mutually through the SIB process.

Terms of reference for SIBs can be found in Appendix B

Financial Concerns in a Community Maintained School

Where concerns arise relating to financial sustainability, deficit positions or financial management, these will be managed in accordance with the LA Education Finance team protocols (see Appendix C for overview and refer to full Wokingham Deficit Schools Framework for full information) and are likely to generate the convening of a SIB.

Invoking statutory powers – Warning Notices

Where concerns are considered serious and immediate intervention is necessary the LA will move to invoke its statutory powers.

As cited in the Support and intervention in schools - GOV.UK (2025) Local authorities may issue warning notices to their maintained schools under the following circumstances:

- *the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so*
- *there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, such standards of performance;*
- *the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise);*
- *the governing body have failed to comply with a provision of an order under section 122 of the Education Act 2002 (teachers' pay and conditions) that applies to a teacher at the school; or have failed to secure that the head teacher of the school complies with such a provision*

Invoking statutory powers – LA and Secretary of State Interventions

Failure to comply with a warning notice will make a maintained school 'eligible for intervention' under sections 60 and 60A of the 2006 Act. Local authorities and DfE Regions Group will use their discretion to decide whether the use of formal powers is necessary.

Where the LA is concerned that the safety of staff or pupils at a community maintained school is at risk then a warning notice in respect of statutory guidance relating to roles and responsibilities for Safeguarding as set out in Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK and Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK Where a maintained school is eligible for intervention there are a number of statutory powers the local authority and the Secretary of State may use to support school improvement. The intervention powers in respect of local authorities are set out in sections 63-66 of the 2006 Act as follow:

Section 63 – power to require the governing body to enter into arrangements;
Section 64 – power to appoint additional governors;
Section 65 – power to appoint an interim executive board (IEB);
Section 66 – power to suspend the delegated budget.

Further guidance and detail on execution of the above powers can be found in Support and intervention in schools - GOV.UK

Exiting the vulnerable school or causing concern categories

Through regular monitoring and review officers will track progress towards the pre-agreed required outcomes for exit. Schools will be responsible for taking action to achieve expected outcomes and demonstrate progress. Decisions to exit the process may be made via a SIB meeting, formal review process or due to intervention by the Secretary of State that passes responsibility for a community maintained school to an academy trust.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Activities undertaken by the Local Authority to provide challenge and support to schools

Enabling activities to support statutory function fulfilment:

- Annual keeping in touch meetings offered to every school
- Review of performance data at national, local and school level for benchmarking purposes
- Regular conversation with linked HMI for challenge and support to the system
- Regular discussion with DfE and Regional Director for strategic development and system effectiveness
- Co-ordination of interagency and cross department working for academy conversions
- Professional input and challenge to task and finish groups working on local strategic priorities and advising on best practice and effective delivery
- Intelligence analysis of system performance based on a range of indicators including customer satisfaction, Ofsted outcomes, complaints and standards
- Investigating and responding to concerns regarding safeguarding or failures in leadership and management

Examples of how this might look in practice to the wider school system:

- Keeping in touch meetings with all community schools (also available to all academy schools)
- Sharing educational updates and reminders, best practice, research and collaborative working opportunities, e.g. Monthly Leadership Drop-Ins, Education News, Termly Governors Digest
- Facilitating, leading and co-ordinating on a variety of networks and professional development opportunities, e.g. Pupil Premium Network, WEIP meetings, Racial Equity CPD programme
- Governance support, training and guidance
- CPD on Ofsted inspection practice, bespoke preparation for individual schools and continuing professional dialogue with Wokingham HMI
- Monitoring and supporting statutory assessments, e.g. Key Stage 2 test and Phonics Screening Check monitoring, EYFSP assessment support sessions and KS2 writing moderation
- Signposting specific advice and resources to support cohorts of vulnerable pupils, e.g. EAL, new arrivals and refugee guidance via the EAL network and EAL courses; Mental health and wellbeing via the MHWB network in partnership with Charlie Waller Trust

This work supports the underlying statutory responsibilities held by the Local Authority and summarised below:
Curriculum and Assessment

- SACRE to support RE provision
- KS2 Assessment

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- KS2 Writing TA Moderation
- Phonics Screening Check monitoring
- Broad balanced curriculum available to all

Leadership and Management

- Ensuring governor appointments and provision of training and support
- Supporting local strategic leadership of the diverse local system
- Facilitating engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in supporting effective provision for children
- Ensuring effective attendance for all
- Supporting work to overcome barriers faced by vulnerable cohorts of children including those socioeconomically disadvantaged, those with SEND and those known (or previously known) to children's social care
- Ensuring equality matters are addressed
- Supporting academy conversions
- Supporting schools to address community/parental feedback or complaints direct or via Ofsted

Safeguarding

- S175 audits
- Prevent duty
- Supporting effective safeguarding and working with the LADO
- Responding to safeguarding concerns or complaints received by Ofsted

Ensuring Fair Access

- Supporting early intervention and effective transitions
- Meeting local needs, place and transport planning at all ages
- Promoting positive attendance and reducing exclusions and suspensions

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Appendix B

SIB Terms of Reference

Why?

- The purpose of the Board is to secure effective and high-quality education at the school with strong and sustainable educational standards, particularly for disadvantaged children.

Implementation and discontinuation

- Commenced when a school becomes vulnerable in ensuring or maintaining an Ofsted status of expected in all areas
- Discontinued when a school has achieved an Ofsted grading of expected in all areas and shows robustness in retaining or improving this status without needing continued School Improvement Team support

Who?

- The school and the Local Authority working closely and constructively together in partnership through support and challenge to achieve rapid and sustainable success
- Core attendees are the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Education Belonging Officer for the school and Senior member from Wokingham Borough Council Children's Services
- The Chair will be an officer from the Local Authority
- Additional attendees can be agreed through the Chair and core attendees. These should be included as they are pivotal in driving the school forward in a timely manner.

When?

- A minimum of once a term
- A maximum of 2 hour meetings

Where?

- At the school or virtual by prior agreement

Administrative arrangements

- Action notes made for each meeting
- Action notes distributed to attendees prior to the next meeting, preferably five working days prior to the meeting
- Agenda to be distributed 5 working days prior to the meeting
- Papers need to be focused on registering progress through improved impact and outcomes for pupils

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Appendix C

Deficit Budget Management overview identification of risk

1. Identification of Risk

Risk register – ascribes weighting to the following in order to identify schools at risk of deficit:

- Prior year outturn – review of movement on revenue surplus balances,
- SFVS returns – highlight areas of inadequate governance
- Budget setting – has the school submitted a balanced budget? Is the budget setting robust and the assumptions realistic?
- Budget monitoring – in year monitoring to identify schools with adverse variance to budget at P6 and P9
- Pupil numbers – impact of demographic changes on budget plans
- SEN data – benchmarking for SEN children on roll
- Staffing data

School identifies a deficit budget / ends the financial year in deficit / forecasts deficit in-year

↓

School to submit deficit recovery plan (SFH support where schools purchase a traded package).All deficits will be reported to and considered by the School Deficit Monitoring Group (SDMG), chaired by the Service Director: Education. Quarterly reporting to DCS and S151 Officer.

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Deficit Recovery Plan subject to review. If deemed to be a robust plan which will recover the deficit within 3 years, the plan will require approval by the Service Director of Education, DCS & S151 Officer

↓

Advisory Letter – Following approval of their deficit recovery plan, schools will be issued with an advisory letter setting out the conditions of the plan and required actions

↓

Further intervention will be considered where either:

- The school has not engaged in the deficit recovery process
- The school has failed to submit a deficit recovery plan
- The deficit recovery plan fails to provide sufficient assurance
- The deficit is not recovered within 3 years
- The deficit worsens and no action is being taken by the school
- The school has failed to submit deficit monitoring returns

Notice of Concern – will be issued to a school where it is considered LA intervention is required. The letter will express concerns regarding the financial health of the school and actions that school may be required to undertake.

Where a school has received a Notice of Concern and a level of intervention has already proceeded but there is insufficient assurance from the actions taken that the deficit will be recovered, the school will be referred to the SDMG.

The SDMG will decide the appropriate action to be taken, which may include setting up a Finance Improvement Group.

Finance Improvement Group

- Service Director of Education
- Chair of Governors
- Headteacher
- School Business Manager
- School Finance Manager
- Head of Education & Partnership

Appendix D

Key Statutory Duties and national guidance relevant to this framework.

This policy is underpinned by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended), the Education and Adoption Act 2016, the Academies Act 2010, the Education Act 2011, the Education Act 2002, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and associated School Governance Regulations.

It should be noted that current statutory guidance published by the Department for Education should always take precedence.

Guidance, resources and links

Support and intervention in schools guidance DfE September 2026

Governance Handbook Departmental advice

Regional improvement for standards and excellence (RISE) - GOV.UK

Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory guidance

External reviews of school governance Departmental

External reviews of the pupil premium Departmental guidance

School Governance (transition from and IEB) England Regulations 2010

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-performance-tables-about-the-data

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-18-minimum-standards

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-performance-tables-about-the data

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/schools-commissioners-group

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-improvement-support-for-the-2018-to-2019-academic-year

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