



Cambridgeshire

School Improvement Strategy
2021-2023

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk



CONTENTS

Foreword by Jonathan Lewis.....	03
An introduction.....	04
Cambridgeshire Local Authority's role.....	05
Priorities.....	05
Cambridgeshire's three key priorities.....	06
Cambridgeshire's Framework for School Improvement ...	07
Monitoring	07
Categorisation of LA maintained schools.....	08
Support - Overview	09
Letters to Schools.....	10
Where the LA has concerns about an Academy.....	11 - 12
Prioritisation Criteria.....	13 - 15

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2022



FOREWORD BY JONATHAN LEWIS

Education remains one of the key priorities for Cambridgeshire County Council. Our schools are diverse in nature but have a common purpose and commitment to providing the best possible education environments and life chances to enable our children and young people to flourish and achieve.

Our aspiration to deliver good outcomes for all pupils is outlined in this strategy. The strategy details how we will secure and deliver a high-quality and transparent school.

It has been developed with the aim of providing a framework for the LA to support, challenge and work with every school in Cambridgeshire to continue to improve the life chances for children of all ages.

I am immensely proud of our schools, teachers and all school staff who are vital to the futures of Cambridgeshire's children and young people.

We all acknowledge that there is still more work to do and fundamental to the success of this Strategy will be the vital partnerships between schools, the local authority, academy trusts governors and wider stakeholders, who, with clear vision and shared desire can support truly outstanding learning outcomes for Cambridgeshire's children and young people.

Jonathan Lewis

Service Director for Education

Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Councils



AN INTRODUCTION

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing counties in the country, as a result of both new housing development and demographic change resulting from increased birth rates, and faces significant pressure on education places in many parts of the county. Our schools are vital to the futures of Cambridgeshire's children and young people and we are proud of Cambridgeshire's schools and ambitious in wanting them to be recognised across the country as some of the best – to work, teach and learn in.

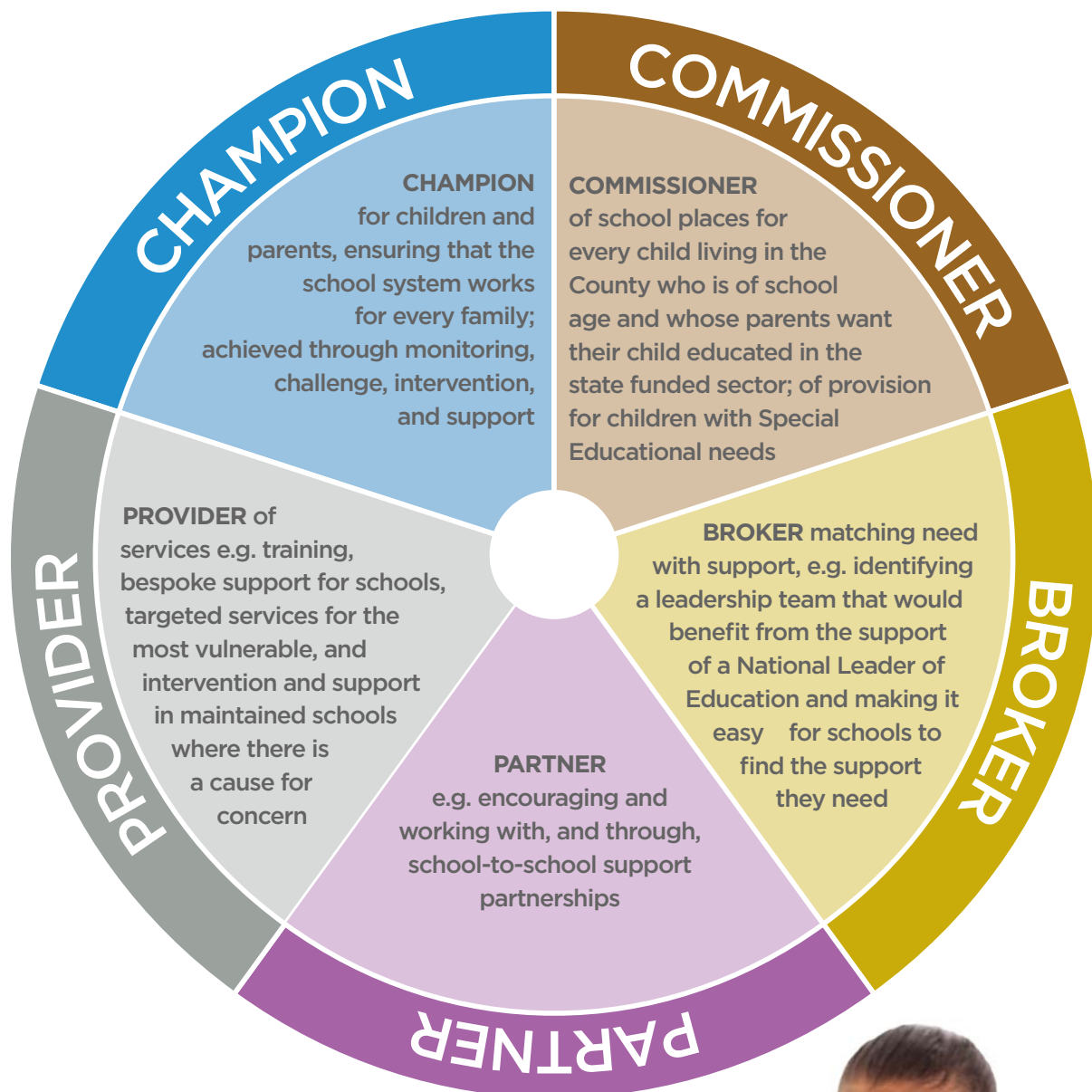
The School Improvement Strategy sets out Cambridgeshire Local Authority's vision, aims and priorities for school improvement 2021-2023 and has been developed with the aim of providing a framework for the LA to support, challenge and work with every school in Cambridgeshire to continue to improve the life chances and economic and social well-being of all our children and young people.

The strategy addresses the role and responsibility of the Local Authority, the significance of school-to-school support and protocols and procedures that the Local Authority follows when a school or Academy is causing concern.

The Local Authority will continue to broker and facilitate school-to-school support, both through formal and informal relationships and through key partnerships such as with the Teaching School Hub, with the aim of further improving standards in education across the county.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S ROLE CAN BE SUMMARISED AS



PRIORITIES

Cambridgeshire strives to achieve the best outcome for every child

We want to ensure the best possible achievement for all learners by ensuring they go to a great school, setting or provider.

We aim for all Local Authority maintained schools in Cambridgeshire to be judged as good or better.

For the period 2021-2023 we have three key priorities which we will help schools to achieve. We recognise that the last two academic years have been very challenging for all schools and we intend to support schools in their journey of recovery after the global pandemic.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S THREE KEY PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

COVID response recovery, which includes developing leadership and supporting wellbeing

PRIORITY 2

Ensuring schools have a broad curriculum that is relevant to their context

PRIORITY 3

Ensuring end of key stage outcomes in English and Maths continue to improve, and improve outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in all phases and close the gaps between them and other pupils in the country and nationality

These three priorities will be achieved through the following key actions:

PRIORITY 1

- Visits to schools by School Improvement Advisers
- New Headteacher Induction Programme and new Headteacher mentoring support
- Wellbeing support from Leadership and Improvement Advisers
- Brokering of peer support for senior leaders
- Advisers to help with gap analysis of pupils
- Advice provided on best use of Catch-Up Funding
- Use of target setting. Fisher Family Trust is provided at no cost to LA maintained schools, it is funded by the LA

PRIORITY 2

- School Improvement Adviser support to evaluate the school curriculum
- Training for Foundation subject leaders
- Advice on a variety of published curricula
- Curriculum Project led by School Improvement Adviser
- Specialist Adviser support for a range of subjects including PE, Outdoor Education and non-core subjects

PRIORITY 3

- Advice, support and training by English and maths advisers. Termly Briefings for maths and English subject leaders.
- Appointment of an adviser with particular responsibility for improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- Monthly newsletters to Pupil premium Champions
- Disadvantaged pupil projects for English and maths
- Pupil Premium Reviews





CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Schools requiring higher levels of support and challenge in order to improve are identified from a range of sources of evidence including pupil outcomes, attendance data, visits from school improvement advisers and intelligence from other teams within the Education Directorate including the governor services, SEN and Inclusion services and education safeguarding.

Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support for these schools is key to achieving our target to increase percentage of schools that are good or outstanding. Where necessary, the school improvement team will work in partnership with school leaders and colleagues from other teams in order to help to bring about more rapid improvement.

MONITORING

FOR ALL SCHOOLS

First-hand understanding of performance continues to be the starting point for school improvement. The LA examines and evaluates the evidence from attainment, progress and cohort data; information from regular visits by the School Improvement Team; and intelligence from across children's services.

We use this evidence to categorise schools as either 'low support offered' (performing well), 'medium level of support offered' requiring improvement and/or vulnerable) or 'high level of support offered' (significant cause for concern and/or in special measures / serious weaknesses). The criteria used are given in the table below. They are 'best fit', i.e., a school does not have to meet all bullet points listed to be judged in any one category. School ratings may change during the year, so direction of travel is monitored carefully on at least a termly basis.

FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

The LA carries out direct monitoring, including lesson observation, work scrutiny, and discussion with staff, governors, and parents in schools where there are performance concerns. The information gathered is used to guide the nature and form of challenge, intervention, and support.

CATEGORISATION OF LA MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

“ HIGH LEVEL OF SUPPORT

Schools require intervention and support...

These schools will receive support from a School Improvement Adviser and will be visited monthly (as a minimum). They will have access to support from the English and Maths team, and also to an Early Years Improvement Adviser.

In most cases a Local Authority Support and Intervention Plan is prepared that sets out priorities, targets and actions for improvement. Progress will be monitored half termly by the Local Authority Implementation Group (LAIG). The purpose of the LAIG is to hold the school to account ensuring that it makes rapid progress. It enables all personnel working with the school to come together to discuss the impact of the support the school is receiving.

The LAIG is a confidential meeting, but the summary 5 key points should be shared with the whole governing body after each LAIG. If concerns remain, a Warning Notice (Appendix 5) may be issued. This sets out actions that, if not met, can lead to the removal of the governing body. Elected Members are alerted if a school in their ward is causing significant concern. The Local Authority will seek reassurance from the governing body that the right steps are being taken.

If concerns remain it is likely that a Significant Concerns letter (Appendix 6) will be issued that will direct the governing body to take specified actions or face more formal intervention.

“ MEDIUM LEVEL OF SUPPORT OFFERED

Are schools which may require improvement in order to be good...

These schools will receive half termly visits from a School Improvement Adviser and can access English and Maths support.

“ LOW LEVEL OF SUPPORT OFFERED

Are schools which are likely to be judged as good or outstanding at their next Ofsted inspection...

These schools will be visited once a term. Schools can access support through the Primary School Improvement Offer. Schools can buy into the Early Years Improvement Offer.





SUPPORT – OVERVIEW

FOR ALL SCHOOLS

The Local Authority offers a wide range of services to schools and academies on a traded basis, which contribute to school improvement.

These range from support for learning outside of the classroom, PSHE, RE, PE, Cambridgeshire Outdoors, ECT support. A full listing can be found on our Learn Together Cambridgeshire website. Learn Together Cambridgeshire - Learn Together (camblearntogether.co.uk)

FOR MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

The Local Authority's Primary School Improvement Offer is a charged offer offering a range of bespoke school improvement activities. The Offer is available to Primary Maintained schools and academies.

At present around 90% of Primary Schools buy into the Offer which entitles them to attend at a range of conferences, courses and briefings. Element 1 of the Primary Offer entitles schools to at least four visits from a School Improvement Adviser plus at least two visits from an English and maths adviser per academic year.

Schools that do not buy into the Primary Offer will receive an Annual Monitoring Visit once per year carried out by a School Improvement Adviser. It may be that following this visit further visits are arranged if the school has particular areas to improve.



LETTERS TO SCHOOLS

✔ CONGRATULATIONS LETTER

- Where a school has improved its Ofsted grade or sustained good/outstanding overall effectiveness
- Where there has been a significant improvement in pupil performance
- Where a school has significantly accelerated the achievement of disadvantaged groups

⚠ SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS LETTER

Where one or more of the following indicators apply:

- Risk assessment confirms a declining trend in pupil performance
- Safeguarding Concerns
- Management of the Schools Finances
- Leadership does not have the capacity to address the school's problems in a timely manner
- There are concerns that the Governing Body is not effective in holding the school to account
- A drop in Ofsted rating
- There is a combination of concerns relating to, for example, parental complaints, moderation, attendance, exclusions, inclusion practice, and staff turnover
- There are consistently wide attainment/progress gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers
- There are persistent concerns about achievement and/or teaching quality in one or more key stages
- Self-evaluation is not robust or realistic enough and engagement with school improvement is weak

⚠⚠ WARNING NOTICE

Where one or more of the following indicators apply:

- Evidence of unacceptably low standards, i.e. school has been below the floor standard
- Evidence of a breakdown in leadership or management, e.g. declining school popularity (school rolls falling more rapidly than might reasonably be expected from demographic changes), high/increasing absence rates, high rates of staff turnover or numbers of staff grievances, significant/increasing numbers of parental complaints
- School leaders are not taking urgent and appropriate action to resolve the problem
- Governors are not acknowledging the seriousness of the position nor challenging school leaders to secure rapid improvements
- School is at risk of being put in Serious Weaknesses or Special Measures
- School is subject to Required to Improve monitoring and/or a Local Authority Improvement Plan but is not making sufficient progress

⚠⚠⚠ SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS

- School is at risk of being put in Serious Weaknesses or Special Measures
- School is subject to Required to Improve monitoring and/or a Local Authority Improvement Plan but is not making sufficient progress

WHERE THE LA HAS CONCERNS ABOUT AN ACADEMY

Where the LA receives complaints from parents about an academy, the LA will advise parents to make their complaint directly to the academy, following its complaints procedure. If parents contact the LA about undue delay or non-compliance by the academy with its own complaints procedure, the LA will advise parents to contact the Education Funding Agency.

⚠️ WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERNS RAISED WITH THE LA WILL BE RE-DIRECTED TO THE EDUCATION FUNDING AGENCY

The LA has overarching duties under the Children Act of 1989 in respect of the safeguarding of children in need, or those suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, regardless of where those individual children are educated. To comply with these duties the LA will need to work with academy trusts, (or independent schools, wherever the individual child concerned is educated) to investigate what action is needed to safeguard such a child, as it does with maintained schools.

Where the Local Authority has concerns about an academy or free school's safeguarding arrangements or procedures (arising as a result of investigations about individual children or otherwise), these concerns will be reported to the RSC, as well as to the academy / MAT. If, as is often the case, the concern has been raised by Ofsted, the outcome of the investigation will also be reported to Ofsted.





The LA may have its own concerns about an academy. These may relate to one or more of the following issues (but the list is not exclusive):

- declining trend in pupil performance
- high absence or persistent absence
- high exclusions
- persistent underperformance of disadvantaged groups, e.g. those eligible for Pupil Premium or with SEN
- continued reluctance to admit, or provide for, disadvantaged groups
- behaviour and/or safety
- evidence of a breakdown in leadership or management
- refusal to engage with the LA through ongoing processes
- inadequate progress towards becoming a good school
- a drop in Ofsted rating.

Where the LA has concerns, the Director of Education will contact the academy's principal/headteacher and/or the Chief Executive Officer of the Multi-Academy Trust to arrange a meeting to discuss the concerns. It is hoped that, in most cases, concerns will then be resolved informally, or a way forward agreed.



Should that not be the case, the LA will write formally to the Chair of the Academy Trust, setting out the concerns and seeking a meeting as soon as possible. If this does not lead to a satisfactory conclusion, the LA may escalate matters by, depending on the urgency and nature of the concerns, contacting:

the Education Funding Agency

the Regional Commissioner for Academies

Ofsted

LA senior officers hold regular meetings with Ofsted and the Department for Education. Where the LA has its own significant concerns about an academy, these concerns are likely to be raised at either or both meetings.

PRIORITISATION CRITERIA

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

LOW SUPPORT

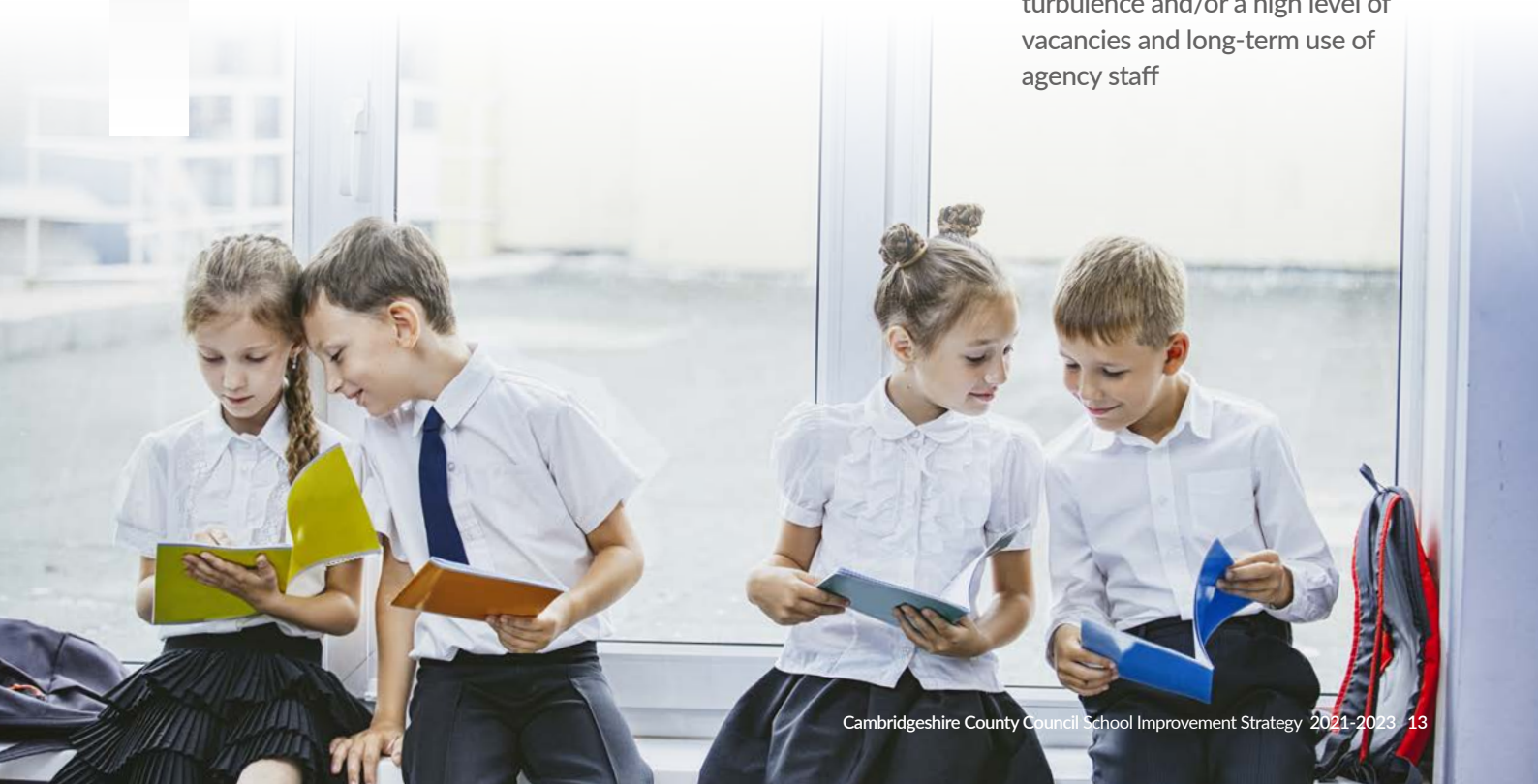
- The culture of safeguarding is strong, and all statutory requirements are met
- The effectiveness of leadership to drive school improvement is strong.
- Leaders and governors have a clear vision and ambition for the school that is communicated very well to all stakeholders
- The school's overall effectiveness is judged good or better and is able to maintain this judgement at its next inspection
- Governors understand their role clearly and are effective at holding school leaders to account for the quality of education. They know the school well, and are clear about areas for improvement

MEDIUM SUPPORT

- There are minor weakness in safeguarding arrangements and practice that require attention
- The effectiveness and capacity of leadership to drive school improvement requires support.
- Leaders' and governors' vision and ambition for the school lacks detail and is not consistently communicated
- The school's overall effectiveness is currently RI or at risk of being judged Requiring Improvement or being downgraded
- A new or interim Headteacher in the first year of Headship

HIGH SUPPORT

- Safeguarding statutory responsibilities are not fully met. The culture of safeguarding is weak and of serious concern
- The effectiveness and capacity of leadership to drive school improvement is of serious concern
- Leaders' and governors' vision and ambition for the school is unclear.
- The school has been issued with a Warning Notice or Significant Concerns letter
- The school's overall effectiveness has been judged or is at risk of Requiring Improvement, Special Measures or to have Serious Weaknesses
- Schools self-evaluation is inaccurate or not current
- Governance is ineffective and leaders are not held to account for the quality of education
- Substantive leadership (HT or governance) is not in place.
- Leadership and staffing is not stable; there is significant turbulence and/or a high level of vacancies and long-term use of agency staff





PRIORITISATION CRITERIA CONTINUED

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

LOW SUPPORT

- Teachers have consistently high expectations of what each pupil can achieve, including disadvantaged pupils and SEND pupils
- The school's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils gain sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning
- Teaching is securely good or better
- Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum, and as a result, achieve well

MEDIUM SUPPORT

- Teachers expectations are inconsistent of what each pupil can achieve, including disadvantaged pupils, and SEND pupils
- Leaders' plans to improve the curriculum are at an early stage of development
- Knowledge and skills for pupils are not yet coherently planned and sequenced
- Teaching is inconsistent and requires improvement
- Attainment is broadly in line with national averages at the end of each key stage (See data)
- Attainment is declining over time. (See data)

HIGH SUPPORT

- Teachers' expectations are too low of what each pupils can achieve, including disadvantaged and SEND pupils
- The school's curriculum has little or no structure or coherence, and there are no effective plans in place for the urgent development of the curriculum
- Knowledge and skills for pupils are not coherently planned and sequenced
- Pupils do not have access to the full curriculum which is often narrowed
- Too much teaching requires improvement or is inadequate
- Attainment is consistently below national averages at the end of each Key Stage
- Attainment is declining (See data)

BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES

LOW SUPPORT

- Attendance is high or, where it is not, it is rapidly improving (See data)
- High expectations for pupil's attitudes, behaviour and conduct. These are applied consistently, and low-level disruption is rare
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their education. They are committed to their learning and take pride in their achievements

MEDIUM SUPPORT

- Attendance is low and not showing sustained improvement or improving sufficiently quickly (See data)
- Expectations of pupils attitudes and behaviour are not high enough and approaches are inconsistent
- A significant number of pupils are not committed to their learning and do not take pride in their achievements

HIGH SUPPORT

- Attendance is consistently low for all pupils, groups of pupils including disadvantaged pupils (See data)
- Behaviour and attitudes are poor and there are regular incidents that disrupt learning
- Significant concerns surrounding relationships between pupils, parents and staff including complaints to the LA
- Pupils' lack of engagement contributes to reduced learning

LOW SUPPORT

- SMSC is of high quality
- Pupils understand fundamental British values including. showing respect for differences; and are well prepared for life in modern Britain

MEDIUM SUPPORT

- SMSC requires development
- Leaders, governors and pupils have a limited understanding of British values, and how to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and this requires improvement

HIGH SUPPORT

- SMSC is underdeveloped across the school and is poorly planned for across the curriculum
- Leaders and governors are undermining fundamental British values. Discriminatory behaviour and prejudice occur and are not challenged. This is of serious concern

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



