

Members Checklist – Knowing Your Schools

The purpose of this checklist is to provide a guide for elected members to work effectively with schools in support of the County Council's strategic priorities in Education. Elected members already build relationships with people in their community on a daily basis, and consequently this document is not intended to show how to build effective relationships. Instead the focus of this checklist is to attempt to enable councillors, officers and school leaders to discover the value of striking up effective partnerships.

Below is a list of preliminary steps that are needed to ensure that members are fully aware of the structure of the education system, the support that your council gives to schools and the school in the wider context of a community. This is an essential foundation to developing an effective working relationship with schools. The following few tips serve as a checklist in knowing what 'homework' you need to do!

1. Get to know schools in your ward

- ☐ a. Plot the schools in your ward or division on a map; find out about their governance and the key stages they cover.
- ☐ b. Build a database of head teachers and chairs of governors in your ward or division and establish regular contact. You can always ask the Education Service for the name of your school's Headteacher.
- ☐ c. Understand the demographic make-up of each school. We can provide members with a 'school on a page' to get information on that schools make up. For example which of your schools has
 - a really high level of families living in poverty.
 - issues with the local community e.g. burglaries, security, drugs.
 - high levels of particular groups of pupils e.g. SEN/Free School Meals /Looked After Children/Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- ☐ d. Read the most recent Ofsted reports for the schools in your ward or division. What have you learnt? What action is to be taken if any? How is it progressing? Is there further information you need to find out from meeting with the headteacher and chair of governors or the Chairman Children and Young People Committee? These may be found online at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.
- ☐ e. Visit the '[Watchsted](#)' website, a good way of getting to know about the Ofsted results across an area.
- ☐ f. Look up any planning applications for schools in your ward or division and consider if you need to take any action on this in support of the school.
- ☐ g. Consider the location of each school in the community and the impact of other facilities such as road safety, sweeping, and planning policies on take-aways etc.
- ☐ h. Plot the provision for Early Years, special needs and pupil referral units within the council area.
- ☐ i. ... and for Further Education and Higher Education providers.

2. Familiarise yourself with education policy, inspections and other issues affecting children such as safeguarding

- ☐ a. Research information to improve your understanding of the complexity of the education system, and the changes affecting it. E.g. watch the education pages of the BBC/Guardian for brief headlines and summaries of key issues/changes
- ☐ b. Look up Government policies, plans, requirements, priorities and local funding allocations. Set up an Ofsted/DfE notification link or regularly scan their news pages.
- ☐ c. Understand the Ofsted framework and its cycle of inspections and reports. [Ofsted School Inspection Handbook \(2015\)](#)
- ☐ d. Understand what it means to be a corporate parent and be responsible for looked after children. [Promoting the education of looked-after children](#)
- ☐ e. Understand safeguarding issues and child protection. [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- ☐ f. Find out what governors do and the different forms of governance of schools that now exists. [Governance handbook](#)

3. Find out about the role of your council

- ☐ a. Find out about your council's support for schools - the statutory requirements and how it is resourced e.g. is there a school improvement team? [CCC School Improvement Offer](#)
- ☐ b. Find out about procedures for place planning by the local authority. [CCC Education Organisation Plan](#)
- ☐ c. Find out about school admissions and appeals, and look at recent data and parent/school feedback. [CCC School Admissions](#)
- ☐ d. Find out about school exclusions procedures that have to be followed and the incidence in your ward or division.
- ☐ e. Ask for information about home to school transport and the take-up in your ward or division. [CCC School Transport](#)
- ☐ f. Look at safeguarding policies and issues such as school security. [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- ☐ g. Find out about the work of your local Schools Forum which makes decisions about school funding allocations. [Schools Forum](#)
- ☐ h. Find good practice examples from within the local authority and beyond it.
- ☐ i. Look at the council's Children and Young People Committee work programme and recent reports to find out if they have covered or plan to cover anything to do with schools. [CYP Committee](#)