

2021 -2026

Hertfordshire School Improvement Strategy



Hertfordshire



Foreword

Hertfordshire has great schools with excellent teachers and school staff supporting the development of our young people as they progress through their school years, gaining an education which will enable them to achieve and enjoy a fulfilling and productive future.

Teaching and learning evolves to meet challenges and opportunities and never has this been more apparent as we faced the impact of Covid-19. Through this pandemic, we need to have a strategy which underpins the quality of education, in teaching and learning and the strategy is vital to enable us to strive to improve. The School Improvement Strategy 2021 to 2026 is the foundation to this ongoing development to enable all our young people to achieve their own personal goals. It underpins our relentless support for children of all ages and abilities to enable them to flourish and where appropriate to provide support for children to catch-up on lost time.

I am immensely proud of our schools, teachers and all school staff and I want this strategy to be a living document with regular reviews to validate where we are in relation to it. Hertfordshire is a progressive and exciting county. It is rightly the County of Opportunity and a good education for all providing an academic or skills based teaching and learning environment will bring huge benefits for all in the future.

This is an excellent document, do please read and support it for the benefit of our future generations.

Terry Douris
Cabinet Member for Education,
Libraries and Life Long Learning
Hertfordshire County Council

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Hertfordshire's School Improvement Strategy 2021-2026

Our vision

1. The overarching vision of this revised Hertfordshire Strategy for School Improvement is that 'every child in Hertfordshire will attend a great school where they are safe and happy and enabled to reach their full potential'.
2. As part of this vision, all partners recognise that improving the attainment and progress of all pupils, but especially disadvantaged pupils, must be a priority, with the gap closing between underachieving groups and all children and young people in Hertfordshire.
3. This vision mirrors the ambitions as set out in Hertfordshire County Council's Corporate Plan 2019-25 that people and children should have opportunities to thrive, to prosper, be healthy and safe and to take part [Corporate Plan 2019-25 | Hertfordshire County Council](#)
4. The purpose of the Strategy therefore is to create a framework for all the key partners that will support delivery towards the vision. It describes what needs to be done to achieve this and defines the roles and responsibilities of key partners and the support available for schools. All elected members of the County Council are committed to this vision and will have a key role in the leadership and monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy's vision. The Strategy will be revised and rewritten in 2026 ready for the start of the academic year 2026-27.
5. It is shared and agreed by all the key educational partners working within Hertfordshire including schools, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Herts for Learning (HfL), Academy Trusts, the Department for Education (DfE), Teaching School Hubs and the Dioceses.

General approach

6. A review process of school improvement systems has been undertaken nationally by the ISOS Partnership under the auspices of the Local Government Association (LGA). This LGA/ISOS report titled 'Enabling School Improvement'

<https://www.local.gov.uk/enabling-school-improvement> sets out the 9 key conditions needed to establish effective local school improvement systems.
7. This Strategy has been developed taking account of these conditions and the need to sustain them; and if there are areas of weakness, we will look to address them.
8. The conditions are:
 - A clear and compelling vision for the local school improvement system
 - Trust and high social capital between schools, the Herts County Council, and partners
 - Strong engagement from the majority of schools and academies
 - Leadership from key system leaders
 - A crucial empowering and facilitative role for the County Council
 - Sufficient capacity for school support
 - Effective links with regional partners
 - Sufficient financial contributions (from all schools including academies and the County Council)
 - Structures to enable partnership activity.
9. The revised Strategy has been written in consultation with Hertfordshire Headteacher representatives from primary, secondary and Education Support Centres (ESCs)/ special schools through the Schools Forum, Hertfordshire Association of Secondary Headteachers, the Primary Headteacher Forum and the Special Schools Executive Headteacher Forum.
10. The Strategy will continue to be delivered by the Council and Herts for Learning in partnership with Hertfordshire's schools including Governing Bodies, Teaching Schools Alliances and Academy Trusts, the DfE and the Dioceses.
11. The programmes of work and activities that underpin the delivery of the Strategy are funded from a number of different funding streams, while some activities are traded with schools. The bulk of activity is funded from Dedicated Schools Grant and funds de-delegated by schools, with funding also flowing via TSA activity and from the county council itself. Self-improvement activity undertaken by schools and within Academy Trusts is also essential. Please see the tables on page 5 for further explanation.



School Improvement Strategy

Central Block of Dedicated Services Grant (DSG)

This funds certain statutory services that HCC has to provide to all schools regardless of status e.g. safeguarding support, retaining an overview of performance of all Hertfordshire pupils).

De-delegated Funding Support from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

This funds additional services to enhance the statutory education services and their purpose is to help and support Hertfordshire schools deliver the best education they can for their pupils.

They are provided under the core HCC/HfL school improvement contract for maintained schools only e.g. support and advice provided to all schools before an Ofsted visit

Traded Support

Linked Strategies

Corporate Plan 2019-25

HCC's SEND Strategy

Hertfordshire Children Looked After Strategy 2019 – 2022

Hertfordshire's 6 outcome bees

Covid 19

12. We have not addressed specifically COVID 19, and its impact on schools and pupils, in this Strategy. This is because the recovery plans and support that HCC, HfL, schools and other key partners have put in place, are not wholly different in terms of the approach to school improvement, that would have been taken pre-pandemic. COVID 19 will inevitably further increase the challenges for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and the need to address them. Indeed, the challenges of COVID 19 and our successful response reinforces the importance of the 9 conditions set out by ISOS. Herts for Learning's long time recovery plan supporting schools has been designed to support schools to address the challenges and gaps in children's learning as a result of COVID-19.

Hertfordshire's approach to improving school standards

13. The attainment of all children and pupils is one of the key measures of the success of our schools' system and a priority for all key partners. However, the attainment of disadvantaged children and pupils is an area where we have perhaps not been as relatively strong as in other areas of the schools' system. Pupil premium attainment for Hertfordshire as a LA is only broadly in line with national averages. Closing this attainment gap therefore remains a priority for elected council members, HCC, HfL and partners, with the with the overwhelming majority of activity funded by schools themselves.
14. By focusing on closing this gap though exceptional teaching, learning and assessment, having a rich, broad, balanced and bespoke curriculum and implementing other strategies that help to make 'great schools' this will benefit all children and pupils not just those disadvantaged groups.



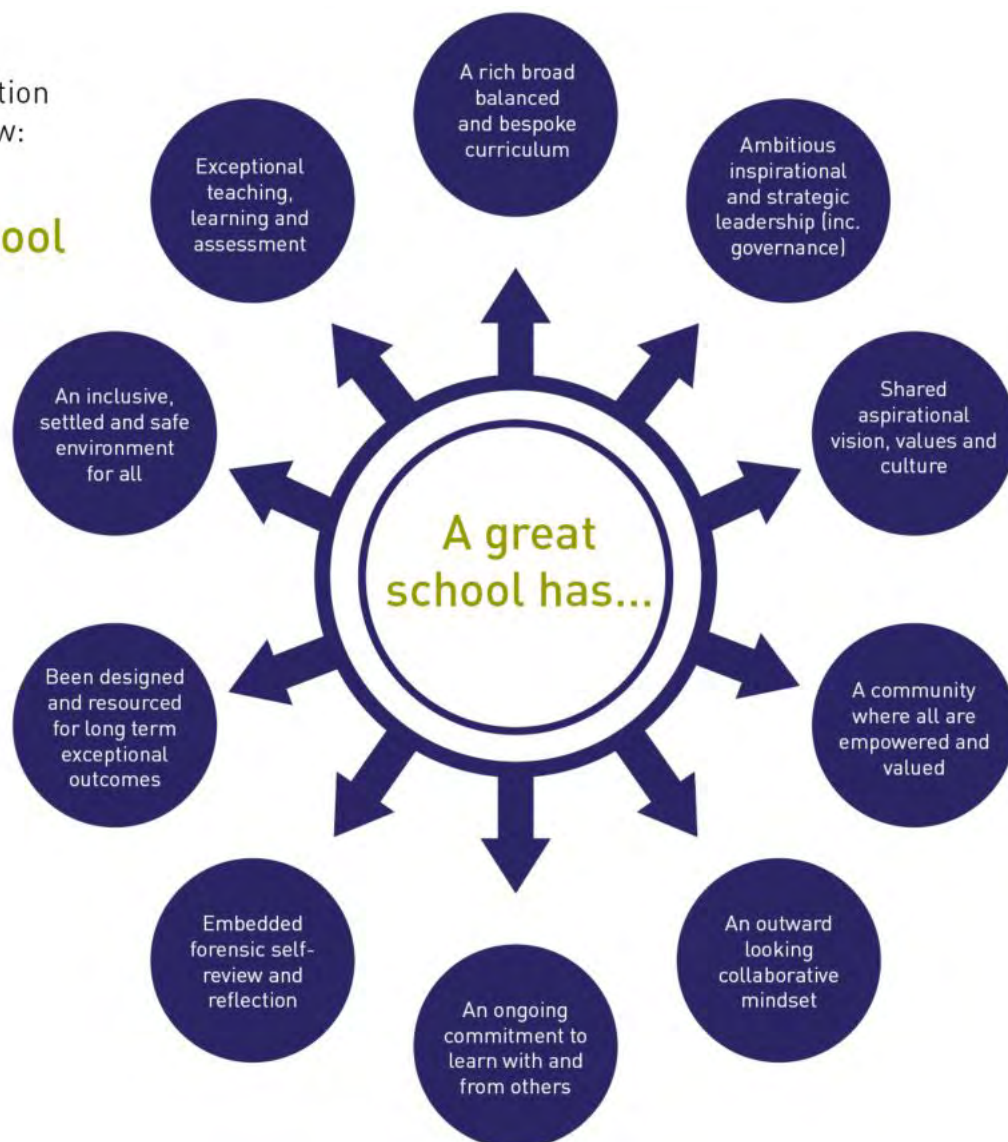
15. There are many different dimensions of disadvantage which all partners are continuing to address including SEND, Children in Need, Children Looked After, ethnicity, exclusions and pupil premium.
16. Hertfordshire County Council commissions additional work, depending upon trends and needs, to address the issue of closing the gap.
17. Set out below are some of the actions linked to this:
 - Support, challenge and advice provided to schools on closing the gap by Hertfordshire Improvement Partners (HIPs) and School Effectiveness Advisers (SEAs) in all visits
 - Funded Pupil Premium (PP) reviews
 - Funded support with statutory PP statements and plans
 - The Early Years Diminishing the Difference programme
 - The KS2 Closing the Gap programme, working with 24 schools with significant Year 5-6 gaps
 - The Early Years Transition Project aimed at improving transition from nursery provision into primary schools, for all children but with particular focus on those with the greatest challenges.
18. Further to the above are a range of activities undertaken within the HCC/HfL contract specifically in support of attainment in maintained schools.
19. The actions set out above are a snapshot of a moment in time and evolve and develop from year to year, reflective of availability of funding and opportunities and ideas for new initiatives.
20. In addition, the Hertfordshire Virtual School champions the educational needs of young people looked after by Hertfordshire, to ensure they have the best possible education and every chance to realise their potential. The Virtual School is committed to empowering schools, social workers and carers to make education a priority for Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers. The primary focus is to close the achievement gap between children looked after and their peers, both locally and nationally.
21. Our approach is based on the strong existing partnerships between maintained schools, academies, Teaching School Hubs (TSH) the Dioceses, the DfE through the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), Governing Bodies including Trusts, parents and through effective support from Herts for Learning (HfL).
22. The Council will continue to support schools that choose to become academies and encourage academy conversion in circumstances where it is necessary and/or beneficial. Equally, it is important for us to be able to ensure that schools which choose to remain with Hertfordshire County Council can do so securely and can be supported and challenged to make sure that outcomes for pupils are excellent.



23. HfL has developed the 'Great School Framework' <https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/news/herts-learning-launches-great-school-framework-building-nine-pillars-great-schools>, an aspirational vision of the lenses of a great school, which is designed to enable and facilitate in-school, school to school, and external school improvement. This Strategy reflects the ambitions of the Great School's Framework.
24. This is not the only framework within which school improvement can be undertaken. However, our expectation is that Hertfordshire schools, individually and collectively, in partnership with HCC, and with HfL where we have contracted them to act on our behalf, should be striving to have the ten 'lenses' of the 'Great School' Framework in place to continue to improve standards for all young people and become 'great schools': These ten lenses are as follows:
1. ambitious, inspirational and strategic leadership including governance
 2. shared aspirational vision, values and culture
 3. a community where all are empowered and valued
 4. an outward looking collaborative mindset
 5. an on-going commitment to learn with and from others
 6. embedded, forensic self-review and reflection
 7. been designed and resourced from long term exceptional outcomes
 8. an inclusive, settled and safe environment for all
 9. exceptional teaching, learning and assessment
 10. a rich, broad, balanced and bespoke curriculum

A graphic representation of this is set out below:

The Great School Framework



25. These ten lenses have helped to inform the development of the new HCC and HfL 'School Improvement Contract' which was signed in April 2019. The 'Great School Framework' is being used to frame the HCC funded school improvement work around the outcome of moving towards great, rather than simply being activity based.
26. As part of the contract, HfL ensures that Hertfordshire Improvement Partners (HIPs) and School Effectiveness Advisors (SEAs) can support and/or sign-post schools to advice and guidance where necessary for these ten lenses and challenge schools when required. The framework should enable the whole school community to understand their role in their school's journey to greatness.
27. These ten lenses will also be considered by Schools Forum when making decisions on the de-delegated funding element of the HCC/HfL school improvement contract to support maintained schools to become 'great' schools.



Hertfordshire County Council's role and accountability

28. Hertfordshire County Council and its elected members have an overarching duty to promote high standards of attainment and education locally and is accountable to central government through the DfE and also to Hertfordshire residents. Most of this Strategy relates to that overarching role, which includes championing the rights of all pupils and parents.
29. The Council has a set of specific roles and duties in relation to maintained schools. The operation of the partnership between HCC and its maintained schools is described in paragraphs 41 to 49.
30. The Council also has critically important roles in relation to children with SEND, as the commissioner of SEN provision. These are articulated through our SEND Strategy, and referred to only briefly below, although SEND and mainstream school effectiveness are closely interwoven. The Council also has responsibilities for early years. These are dealt with in our [Early Years Strategy](#).

Promoting high standards and acting as champion of all children and young people

31. The Council is committed to supporting the delivery of the Great School Framework's lenses – through its “empowering and facilitative role”.



32. In practice this means that we will:

- Support and engage with schools and stakeholder representative bodies, in particular Schools Forum, HASSH, PHF and Special School Head Executive (SSHE).
- Consult with schools both directly and through Schools Forum on all major issues affecting schools, and give great weight to schools' views
- Be open and transparent in development of proposals that impact schools
- Allocate staff and financial resources in support of these tasks
- Discharge our responsibilities for all vulnerable children including SEND pupils, children at risk of exclusion and excluded pupils and CLA, effectively and with regard to their impact on mainstream schools
- Discharge our responsibilities for Early Years effectively
- Represent the interests of local schools to national government and its agencies, in particular the DfE and Ofsted
- Through strategic coherence and planning, create a structure in which all partners can work together collaboratively and effectively to improve outcomes for all pupils
- Encourage and facilitate a strong system of support for schools, though school-to-school support, the work undertaken by HfL, and though the work of the Teaching School Hubs
- Hold all schools, Early Year and Alternative Providers, to account for how well they educate and look after their pupils, including the most vulnerable
- Promote high standards of school governance
- Engage with schools in an influencing role that acknowledges their expertise, but intervene directly in maintained schools or contact the Secretary of State for Education via the DfE where there are concerns about academies
- Work with schools and stakeholders on programmes and activities of wider importance, such as environmental sustainability and climate change
- Engage with parents through parental engagement programmes already taking place in many schools across the county and within all phases.

33. Beyond the functions listed above, the Council will continue to provide traded services to schools where it is to the benefit of schools, and to do so on the basis that what is offered is of good quality and value for money.

34. To fulfil some of these duties listed in paragraph 30 the Council is able to retain part of the Central Block of Dedicated Services Grant (DSG) to cover the cost.
35. In addition, centrally retained funding will be used to pay for the following for all schools, including academies. This list is not exhaustive.
- Safeguarding support
 - Communication with all schools
 - Investigating Ofsted complaints and requests for information
 - Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
 - Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) guidance

County council as commissioner of SEND provision

36. Hertfordshire has a commitment to provide high-quality education for all pupils and this includes pupils with SEND.
37. As part of this commitment, Hertfordshire has published the Special Educational Needs and Disability Five Year Strategy April 2018 to March 2023.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/media-library/documents/policies-and-procedures/send-strategy-2018-2023.pdf>



38. The Strategy sets out the vision that:

‘All children and young people with SEND 0-25 have access to high quality local provision that meets their needs. Schools, early years settings, colleges, families, other partners and the Herts County Council work together to support children and young people to make good progress and achieve the best possible outcomes that prepare them effectively for adulthood’.

39. Good Whole School SEND Practice will be evidenced by:

- Strong SEND Leadership
- Improved outcomes for pupils with SEND
- Quality teaching and learning for pupils with SEND
- Strong partnership work with pupils with SEND and their parents/carers of
- Effective assessment and identification
- Clear monitoring, tracking and evaluation
- Efficient use of resources
- Ensuring every young person with SEND can maximise their potential as close to their home as possible.

40. Hertfordshire is committed to supporting all schools in ensuring that pupils with SEND make good progress and achieve the best possible outcomes.

41. Our vision for all Children and Young people (CYP) in Hertfordshire with SEND is that they will have their needs met with a range of inclusive provision available through our mainstream schools, specialist resource provision (including Education Support Centres and Primary Support Bases) and special school provision. CYP with SEND will have access to a high quality, broad and balanced curriculum which will be holistic and provide support across education, health and social care to meet their needs. Our approach will always have the CYP and their family at the centre of what we do, and we will co-produce our strategies, working closely with existing schools and our parent carer forum.

42. Our aim is to ensure that we meet the needs of our growing SEND population. Wherever possible, we will ensure that all children and young people with SEND have access to high quality local provision that meets their needs and will look to provide equity of provision across the county which ensures that:

- School systems promote parent/carers contributions to maximise outcomes for pupils with SEND
- Progress for pupils, across year groups and with differing SEND needs, is consistently strong with evidence available through analysis of both internal and national data sets
- School records indicate that regular moderation takes place, both internally and with local and/or national partners
- The school is engaging with a range of methodologies for preparing pupils for the next stage in their education, training, employment and independent life.

The partnership between HCC and HfL with maintained schools regarding school improvement

43. The basis for the partnership between HCC and maintained schools is our strong belief that schools are, for the most part, self-improving. Strong schools and leaders with capacity take an effective role in developing system leaders and sharing good practice, thus influencing the success of this school improvement Strategy. These schools embrace the concept of school-to-school support and take responsibility for school improvement beyond their own organisations.
44. For all schools to be successful, however, schools need to have access to a range of support, when required; and the scale of this support will vary greatly with the circumstances faced by each school.
45. At the same time, however, just as do Governing Bodies and Academy Trust Boards, HCC must hold schools to account for their performance and for the attainment of the children attending them. There is a clear expectation both in legislation and from the DfE and Ofsted that this is what a local authority must do. In order to do this effectively, the Council must understand accurately the challenges each school faces.
46. The Council and maintained schools therefore have a set of mutual and reciprocal rights and obligations; rights to support and assistance, and rights to a constructive dialogue round performance.
47. In Hertfordshire, much of this is provided through the work of HfL, which is directly commissioned by HCC. Some of the funding for this School Improvement Contract is paid for by maintained schools through de-delegation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the use of this DSG element of the contract is managed by Schools Forum. The de-delegation consultation reinforces this circle of accountability, and de-delegated funding for the HfL contract is the basis on which our system for support for maintained schools, rests.
48. Beyond this are a number of powers of intervention when this is necessary to further support schools in difficulty.
49. All services provided under the core HCC/HfL school improvement contract are for maintained schools using de-delegated funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant as agreed by Schools Forum. Academies may choose to access those services but must pay for them separately, apart from those paid for out of the Central Block of Dedicated Services Grant as set out above.
50. The Strategy informs the work of work of HfL under the core contract and this is manifested within the Annual School Improvement Action Plan which sets out the actions and targets agreed jointly by HCC and HfL.
51. The contract between HCC and HfL is managed by HCC officers, and actively involves school representatives (a sub-group of Schools Forum), who consider both contract performance and priorities and the services which should be offered.

Performance management and oversight of the HCC/HfL School Improvement Contract

52. HfL is subject to robust Performance Management, both at a strategic and operational level.
53. At the strategic level, performance is monitored and appraised through Management Reporting and at an operational level, through service targets detailed in Service Level Agreements. Monitoring and management follow an annual cycle.
 - In the autumn term, HCC holds a Joint Annual Performance Review, (JAPR), meeting chaired by the Operations Director, Education, with HfL.
 - Strategic Development Group (SDG) meetings are held in the spring and summer terms between HCC and HfL. These meetings ensure that statutory services and requirements are met and reviewed.
54. During the JAPR meeting, HfL provides a detailed commentary and analysis of performance of the previous academic year against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Hertfordshire LA (showing previous performance and targets using national benchmarking data and the targets agreed between HCC and HfL for the academic year) and the Annual School Improvement Action Plan. KPIs are agreed on an annual basis between HCC and HfL and include the attainment and progress of underachieving groups.
55. Herts for Learning produce an Annual School Improvement Action Plan which sets out their plans and activities to address the county key priorities and provides an analysis and commentary for performance during the last academic year. There are two county priorities for the School Improvement Contract. These are to:
 - Increase the number of good and outstanding schools and settings
 - Increase the pace of closing the gap for vulnerable groups, whilst maintaining current high levels of attainment.
56. The JAPR also has a focus on setting priorities and targets for the coming year and for the Annual School Improvement Plan. A sub-group of the Schools Forum is part of the Joint Annual Performance Review process.
57. The JAPR ensures that collectively HCC and HfL challenge and adapt national and local performance indicators which ensure the partnership continues to achieve against Key Performance Indicators and key targets and that the work and activity of HfL continues to be aligned to council priorities.

58. The Strategic Development Group (SDG) meetings are the forum for strategic overview of existing and development of future services.
- The spring SDG meeting focuses on value for money and considers the HfL Core Contract Improvement Plan. This sets out further support for improvement across the core contract's priorities that Herts for Learning provides which may also include traded work.
 - The summer SDG meeting focuses on reviewing special projects that have been commissioned by HCC for school improvement and the implications of changes in national policy. The meeting also reviews services not covered in the Joint Annual Performance Review meeting.
59. HCC itself also funds an annual dialogue visit by HfL to each maintained schools, to ensure mutual understanding on what we and individual schools believe are challenging areas.



Monitoring maintained school performance and targeting support

60. HfL carries out desk-top exercises looking at the latest published data alongside Ofsted reports in order to assess school performance and detect any signs of concern.
61. Regular school performance meetings take place between HfL and HCC in order to share information, ensure early intervention and provide a regular and systematic review of the performance of schools where there are concerns.
62. HCC and HfL seek to identify, in partnership with the schools, those that are making good progress, those who have the capacity to support others and those that would benefit from additional support. The latter are tracked through a Keys to Success register and programme of meetings.
63. The impact of interventions is evaluated and barriers to progress discussed. Plans are made for further actions, where needed, to bring about improvement.
64. This provides an overall picture of school strengths and areas for development. HfL is then well-informed to target resources to the areas of greatest need and to provide, broker or commission tailored support that will bring about improvement.
65. Where HCC has concerns about a maintained school, we will work with the school and key partners to ensure rapid improvement including, where appropriate, formal processes which are set out in the DfE's schools causing concern guidance.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831895/Schools_causing_concern.pdf

66. Greatest attention and support is directed towards those schools where there are concerns for example:
 - schools with attainment and/or progress outcomes well below average, have a Requires Improvement judgement
 - where there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is impacting on the standards of performance; this may also include the financial performance of the school
 - where the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise).

67. Additional support and services can include:
- Intensive intervention work in schools in an Ofsted category, with attainment and/or progress outcomes well below average, including curriculum support
 - Support and intervention work with schools with attainment and/or progress outcomes well below average, those which have a Requires Improvement judgement, or that are otherwise causing concern to the Local Authority
 - Support and intervention work with Early Years in Primary schools including nursery classes and schools which are causing concern to the LA
 - Intervention for school to school support, ensuring that schools receive the most appropriate peer support.
68. This support is continually under review and HCC and HfL have committed to work with school representatives as part of this review.
69. The county council may also identify additional projects with Herts for Learning to address the ten features of the 'Great School Framework' which are funded out of the Central Block of Dedicated Services Grant, and/or address particular local priorities such as attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
70. In circumstances where maintained schools requiring intervention consistently refuse to engage with HCC or HfL on behalf of HCC, and where performance gives serious cause for concern, the Council will exercise its powers under the 2006 Education Act, (see Appendix A).
71. For further details about monitoring school performance and targeting support please see Appendix A.



Roles and responsibilities of other partners regarding school improvement

Academy Trusts including Multi-Academy Trusts

72. Hertfordshire County Council will continue to support schools to join an Academy Trust where they think this is in the best interests of the school, and where schools are compelled to do so.
73. HCC has been keen to support and enable local Academy Trusts to expand where they have the capability and capacity to support local school improvement and have a strong commitment to our local collective ethos round the Hertfordshire family of schools.

Department for Education

74. The DfE through the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) takes action in underperforming schools. This includes both arranging sponsorship for maintained schools judged as Inadequate by Ofsted, and also re-brokering academies where this is required. HCC meets regularly with the RSC to make representations in relation to inadequate and underperforming schools.
75. The RSC has an important role in promoting school improvement through work with Academy Trusts, to support them in their growth and in approving applications to convert or join academy trusts.



Diocese of St Albans Education Service

76. The Board of Education of the Diocese of St Albans exists to provide support and advice to church schools throughout the Diocese. The Schools Team liaises with the 138 Anglican church schools in the Diocese of St Albans, covering six Local Authorities including Hertfordshire. The Board works alongside those providing statutory services to schools, delivering advice and support in a distinctively Christian manner which enables all to flourish. This takes the form of direct intervention by members of the diocesan schools team and consultancy support brokered through the Boards Service Level Agreement. Where schools experience challenging circumstances guaranteed support packages can be accessed as required.

Diocese of Westminster Education Service

77. The Education Service supports 208 schools across 17 Local Authorities and 2 Shire Counties to secure, protect and develop Catholic education. They have direct responsibility for leadership and governance in accordance within canon law and the statutes agreed by the Catholic Education Service (CES) and the DfE. This involves offering support, advice and direction on a broad range of educational matters such as: Religious Education and curriculum issues; pre and post Section 48 Inspection instruction; Catholic Life of a school; staffing and recruitment; governance; admissions; pupil numbers; and capital and academy developments.
78. In order, to do this the team works closely with Parishes, Deaneries, Local Authorities including Hertfordshire, Herts for Learning, the Department for Education, NGA and the National College for Teaching and Leadership. Strong partnerships are key, and the team values the support of the Diocesan Education Service.

Education Support Centres (ESCs)

79. The ESCs provide services to improve pupil behaviour and access to education provision. They provide a range of support for pupils in mainstream schools whose behaviour is giving cause for concern. This includes outreach support for individual pupils. They also provide full time education for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 who are at risk of being permanently excluded or have been permanently excluded. Wherever possible and appropriate, children and young people are supported to return to a local school.

Hertfordshire Association of Secondary School Headteachers (HASSH)

80. HASSH represents and supports Secondary Headteachers and their schools to ensure they can deliver the highest possible standards for all children they are responsible for.
81. HASSH has strong and effective links with both HCC officers and HfL.

Hertfordshire's Primary Headteacher Forum (PHF)

82. PHF represents and brokers Hertfordshire headteachers' views to the Local Authority and their representative groups. To achieve this successfully, PHF also assist in the shaping of County's school related initiatives and policy making so that they are fit for purpose. PHF also works closely with HfL.

Hertfordshire's Schools Forum

83. One of the main powers of the Schools Forum is to determine a range of financial and budget matters affecting schools. Among its duties, the forum approves proposals for the central retention of budgets for a range of services, relating both to schools and to Early Years. It has the right to be consulted on a range of matters.
84. However, in Hertfordshire we have chosen to go beyond a narrow, limited view of the role of Forum. Forum is now and will continue to be a key and appropriate setting for partnership working on a range of issues, especially SEND. It is a foundation stone for the sets of relationships described in paragraph 81 above, which underpin what we believe to be a successful local system.
85. Forum is the place where maintained school representatives determine the level of funding de-delegated to sustain the support and system in place for maintained schools.

Parents

86. We acknowledge the important part that parents play in ensuring good outcomes for children. Many of the Strategy's objectives will build on the excellent parental engagement programmes already taking place in many schools across the county and within all phases. We also recognise that some parents choose to educate their children at home. Where possible, we encourage parents to help their children back into school, and as part of this will facilitate a return to school when parents and children want this to happen.

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

87. Hertfordshire SACRE is a statutory LA Council to support and oversee the provision of RE and collective worship in maintained schools:
- it consists of teachers, faith representatives and LA representatives
 - it's role is to advise on all matters to do with RE and collective worship
 - SACRE's two core functions are:
 - to review the locally agreed syllabus
 - determine whether a school may be exempt from the requirement for collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character
 - SACRE must publish an annual report on its work
88. Hertfordshire SACRE supports schools in the development of meaningful and inspiring religious education and collective worship, appropriate to the pupils' age and background, rooted in sound educational principles and within the legal framework.

School Governors, Academy Trustees and members and the Hertfordshire Association of School Governors (HASG)

89. Governing bodies and boards of trustees have a crucial impact on ensuring school improvement, whether it is in maintained schools, free schools or academies. This role has become increasingly important as schools gain more autonomy.
90. It is recognised that governors are volunteers, but it is vital that governing bodies are well trained and organised to ensure schools run well in three core strategic functions:
 - ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
 - holding the leadership effectively to account for the educational performance of the school and its children and
 - ensuring the financial performance of the school is sound and providing good value for money. The same expectations apply to all types of governing bodies and trustee boards
91. Where governing bodies are well organised and focus effectively on these core strategic functions, it helps to ensure schools thrive. The HCC/HfL school improvement contract includes support for high-quality training, support and challenge for school governance for maintained schools, and similar services are on offer to Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) / Single Academy Trusts (SATs).
92. At county-wide level the Hertfordshire Association of School Governors (HASG) is an independent organisation supporting and informing school governors, ensuring their views are heard and promoting high standards of school governance services.
93. In terms of school improvement, their key objectives include supporting the development, effectiveness and good practice of governors and governing bodies and furthering the education of the children in Hertfordshire schools and promoting co-operation between Hertfordshire schools.

Special Schools

94. Special schools in Hertfordshire are an important contributor to the services and provision which the local authority makes for children and young people with SEND. Hertfordshire special schools offer a variety of provision, including school to school support, through their distinctive areas of expertise. The Special School Heads Executive represents and brokers Hertfordshire headteachers' views to the Local Authority and their representative groups.

Teaching School Hubs

95. As school-led centres of excellence for teacher and leadership training and development, Teaching School Hubs and subject hubs play a key role as one of the vehicles through which the Department for Education channels resources to support school improvement. The teaching school hub programme will create a network of 87 centres of excellence for teaching training and development, focused on some of the best schools and multi-academy trust in the country.
96. This programme replaces the previous network of around 750 teaching schools, which ended in August 2021. The TSH support is provided direct from central Government, is voluntary and sits alongside support provided by the Local Authority. There are currently two hubs covering Hertfordshire. They are the Chiltern Teaching School Alliance and Alban Teaching School Hub.

Collaboration between the Hertfordshire Family of Schools

97. Central to the Hertfordshire Strategy is the strong belief that schools are, for the most part, self-improving. Strong schools and leaders with capacity take an effective role in developing system leaders and sharing good practice, thus influencing the success of this school improvement strategy. These schools embrace the concept of school-to-school support and take responsibility for school improvement beyond their own organisations.
98. Collaborative models in Hertfordshire include the Teaching School Hubs, Hertfordshire based academy trusts, soft federations, hard federations and education improvement partnerships. Herts for Learning facilitates and supports the development of these models on behalf of HCC.
99. This Strategy has school support at the heart of the system-wide school improvement that will help to ensure every Hertfordshire child attends a great school. It recognises and supports the challenge for good and outstanding schools to sustain those judgements over time and against an increasingly demanding Ofsted framework.

Monitoring and evaluation of academies

100. For all academies and free schools, as it does for maintained schools, HfL carries out desk-top exercises looking at the latest published data alongside Ofsted reports in order to assess school performance and detect any signs of concern.
101. In order to assess risks around schools where concerns may lead to a decline in an Ofsted judgement or may have already done so, HfL review a number of other sources of information including local information.
102. Where HCC has concerns about an academy, free school or university technical college, initial discussions are undertaken with the organisation and/ or its sponsor with the intention to agree actions to address the concerns. If the academy does not engage with these discussions, HCC will contact the DfE's Regional Schools Commissioner. Discussions about these schools are held with the Herts County Council and RSC on a termly basis.

Appendix A: Monitoring school performance and targeting support

1. Hertfordshire County Council commissions Herts for Learning to provide an appropriate level of direction, challenge, scrutiny and support to all Hertfordshire maintained schools using de-delegated funding. Centrally retained funding is used to undertake a desk top exercise to identify academies that are causing concern and this information is shared with HCC.
2. The purpose of this commission is to help, and support Hertfordshire schools deliver the best education they can for their pupils.
3. Appendix A sets out the following information:
 - (i) The RAYG rating system HfL uses including the criteria
 - (ii) What specific support is available if a school is identified as red or amber
 - (iii) Academies identified as red or amber
 - (iv) Support and challenge for maintained schools causing concern
 - (v) Performance, standards and safety warning notice including formal intervention powers.

RAYG rating

4. HfL review all schools and academies on an annual basis and provide a RAYG rating following the release of external test/exam data in the summer. We use a wide range of evidence to determine our ratings, as shown in the table. HfL communicates to each school that books an autumn term visit from an HfL SEA/HIP their allocated RAYG rating. The RAYG rating is reviewed after each subsequent visit and may be amended mid-year by the HIP/SEA, moderated by the DSEA/ESD.
5. It is important that the RAYG colour allocated to a school is communicated to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors and that the criteria for the judgement are made clear and discussed openly.
6. For primaries with nursery/reception, a separate RAYG rating is given for EY provision, in addition to the whole school RAYG rating. For secondaries with a sixth form, a separate RAYG rating is given for post 16 provision, in addition to the whole school RAYG rating.
7. The RAYG rating relates to, but is not identical to, Ofsted's 4 category grading structure for schools, for a start, there are 5 colour categories – dark green, light green, yellow, amber and red. It includes reference to indicators that Ofsted does not measure, such as financial management.

8. The RAYG rating system supports the HfL school improvement team in identifying schools where the Ofsted grade does not accurately reflect the current quality of education provision (it may be stronger or weaker). It assists in identifying schools at risk and those who would benefit from/require additional support or resource. It enables the HfL teams to facilitate early intervention to address issues swiftly and before they become entrenched and harder to impact. HCC maintained schools rated amber or red are prioritised for funded support from de-delegated monies.
9. HIPs/SEAs use their professional judgement when determining a school's RAYG rating. This is a pragmatic decision, based on the best-fit principle and the evidence available to them at the time. In some cases, a school may be on the cusp of two categories; DSEAs and Education Service Directors (ESDs) will gladly support HIPs/SEAs in determining the most appropriate colour to allocate to such a school.



A very strong school which would be likely to gain or maintain 'outstanding' under the 2019 EIF (or 2a in a section 8 inspection)

Safeguarding is effective.

- The quality of education provided is exceptional.
- The school's curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across the school. Across all parts of the school, series of lessons contribute well to delivering to the curriculum intent. The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum is consistently of a high quality.
- Pupils consistently achieve highly for the context of the cohort (in mainstream, normally well above national average).
- Those with SEND and the most disadvantaged achieve exceptionally well.
- Behaviour and attitudes are exceptional. Pupils behave consistently well.
- Pupils show consistently high levels of respect for each other and play a highly positive role in creating an inclusive school.
- Pupils consistently have highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education.
- Pupils make a positive and tangible contribution to their school and the wider community. They actively support the well-being of others.
- The school takes fair and highly effective action to support students with behaviour and self-control.
- Personal development is exceptional.
- Students have access to (and there is a strong take-up for) a wide, rich set of experiences and are supported to develop their strengths and interests. Disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from this work. These experiences are planned in a coherent way and enrich the curriculum.
- The way the school goes about developing pupils' character is exemplary.
- Leadership and management are exceptional. Leaders ensure that teachers receive focused and highly effective CPD.
- Resources are deployed exceptionally well and financial management is very sound.
- Leaders engage with staff at all levels in a highly effective and meaningful way. Issues, including workload, are identified and dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- Staff report high levels of support for well-being issues.
- EYFS statutory requirements are fully met.

Dark Green	<p>A very strong school which would be likely to gain or maintain 'outstanding' under the 2019 EIF (or 2a in a section 8 inspection)</p>	<p>EY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of EY education is exceptional. • The EYFS curriculum provides no limits or barriers to children's achievements, regardless of background, circumstance or needs. All staff have high ambition. • The impact of the EY curriculum on what children know, can do and can remember is strong. • Children demonstrate deep engagement and high levels of concentration. • Children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, do well. • Children with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes. • Children are highly motivated and keen to join in. They share and cooperate well, demonstrate high levels of self-control and show respect for others. Children consistently try hard.
Light Green	<p>A solid or strong good school, likely to be a 2b under the 2019 EIF</p>	<p>Safeguarding is effective. The quality of education is good/very good.</p> <p>Best fit from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils consistently achieve well (in mainstream, typically above the national average). • The curriculum is broad, balanced, ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and including pupils with SEND, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. It is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. • Pupils study the full curriculum; it is not narrowed. In primary schools, a broad range of subjects is taught in key stage 2 throughout each and all of Years 3 to 6. In secondary schools, the school teaches a broad range of subjects throughout Years 7 to 9. The school's aim is to have the EBacc at the heart of its curriculum and good progress has been made towards this ambition. • Teachers have good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Teachers present subject matter clearly, promoting appropriate discussion. They check pupils' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. They respond and adapt their teaching as necessary. • Teaching is designed to help pupils to remember long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. Teachers and leaders use assessment well. • Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer. A rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading.

A solid or strong good school, likely to be a 2b under the 2019 EIF

- Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well.
- Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well.
- Pupils with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Pupils are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training.
- Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. They are able to apply mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.
- The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. These expectations are commonly understood and applied consistently and fairly. This is reflected in pupils' positive behaviour and conduct.
- Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils' attitudes to their education are positive.
- Pupils have high attendance, come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. When this is not the case, the school takes appropriate, swift and effective action.
- Fixed-term and internal exclusions are used appropriately. The school reintegrates excluded pupils on their return and manages their behaviour effectively. Permanent exclusions are used appropriately as a last resort.
- Relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; pupils are safe, and they feel safe.
- The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development. The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.
- The curriculum and the school's effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.
- The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Lops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading.
- The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and respect.

A solid or strong good school, likely to be a 2b under the 2019 EIF

- The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. Pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.
- Secondary schools prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They use the Gatsby Benchmarks to develop and improve their careers provision and enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13. All pupils receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance. The school provides good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.
- Leadership is strong and leaders have high expectations. They create an inclusive culture and do not allow gaming or off-rolling.
- Leaders engage effectively with pupils and others in their community, including, when relevant, parents, employers and local services.
- Leaders invest in staff CPD and provide effective support for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise.
- Leaders exercise prudent financial management to ensure that the school is well resourced.
- Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment and support them in managing their workload.
- Those responsible for governance understand their role and carry this out effectively. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties.

EY

- There is a sharp focus on ensuring that children acquire a wide vocabulary, communicate effectively and, in Reception, secure a knowledge of phonics, which gives them the foundations for future learning, especially in preparation for them to become confident and fluent readers.
- The school's approach to teaching early reading and synthetic phonics is systematic and ensures that all children learn to read words and simple sentences accurately by the end of Reception.
- Staff manage the EYFS curriculum and pedagogy in relation to the learning needs of their children. Staff are expert in teaching systematic, synthetic phonics and ensure that children practise their reading from books that match their phonics knowledge.
- Staff read to children in a way that excites and engages them, introducing new ideas, concepts and vocabulary.

A solid or strong good school, likely to be a 2b under the 2019 EIF

- Staff are knowledgeable about the teaching of early mathematics. They ensure that children have sufficient practice to be confident in using and understanding numbers. The mathematics curriculum provides a strong basis for more complex learning later on. Over the EYFS, teaching is designed to help children remember long term what they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts. This is checked well by staff and leaders.
- The curriculum and care practices promote and support children's emotional security and development of their character. Leaders and staff are particularly attentive to the youngest children's needs.
- Staff teach children to take managed risks and challenges as they play and learn, supporting them to be active and develop physically.
- Staff provide information for parents about their children's progress, in line with the requirements of the EYFS. They provide information to parents about supporting their child's learning at home, including detail about the school's method of teaching reading and how to help their children learn to read.
- Children develop detailed knowledge and skills across the seven areas of learning in an age-appropriate way. Children develop their vocabulary and use it across the EYFS curriculum. By the end of Reception, children use their knowledge of phonics to read accurately and with increasing speed and fluency.
- Children are ready for the next stage of education, especially Year 1 in school, if applicable. By the end of Reception, children achieve well, particularly those children with lower starting points.
- By the end of Reception, children have the personal, physical and social skills they need to succeed in the next stage of their education. Most children achieve the early learning goals, particularly in mathematics and literacy.
- Children enjoy, listen attentively and respond with comprehension to familiar stories, rhymes and songs that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children develop their vocabulary and understanding of language across the seven areas of learning.
- Children demonstrate their positive attitudes to learning through high levels of curiosity, concentration and enjoyment. They listen intently and respond positively to adults and each other. Children are developing their resilience to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.
- Children are beginning to manage their own feelings and behaviour, understanding how these have an impact on others. They are developing a sense of right from wrong.

**A solid or
strong good
school, likely
to be a 2b
under the 2019
EIF**

Post 16

- Leaders adopt or construct study programmes that are ambitious, appropriately relevant to local and regional employment and training priorities and designed to give sixth-form students, particularly those with high needs and the most disadvantaged, the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life.
- Sixth-form students study the intended curriculum. The school ensures this by teaching all components of the full programmes of study.
- Teachers have expert knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Leaders provide effective support for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise. When relevant, teachers have extensive and up-to-date vocational expertise.
- Teachers encourage students to use subject-specific, professional and technical vocabulary well.
- Students are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. They have gained qualifications or met the standards that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, aspirations and intended course of study. Students with high needs have greater independence in making decisions about their lives.
- The sixth form prepares its students for future success in education, employment or training. It does this through providing unbiased information to all about potential next steps; high-quality, up-to-date and locally relevant careers guidance, and opportunities for good quality, meaningful encounters with the world of work.

Yellow	<p>A vulnerable good or rapidly improving RI school, likely to be a 2c or 3 under the 2019 EIF</p>	<p>Safeguarding is effective.</p> <p>Best fit from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intent and implementation of the curriculum is further developed in some subjects than in others. The quality of education may be rapidly improving. Outcomes are not yet consistently good. • Behaviour and attitudes are good in places but not yet consistently good. They may be rapidly improving. • Attendance may not be consistently good. • Personal development in the school is good in places but not yet consistently good. It may be rapidly improving. • Leadership and management, including governance, are good in places but not yet consistently good. They may be rapidly improving. <p>EY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of the EY is good in places but not yet consistently good. It may be rapidly improving. <p>Post 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of education in the sixth form is good in places but not yet consistently good. It may be rapidly improving.
Amber	<p>A solidly RI school, likely to be a 3 under the 2019 EIF</p>	<p>Safeguarding is effective or there are minor weakness in safeguarding, which can be easily rectified and do not leave children harmed or at risk of harm.</p> <p>Best fit from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of education provided by the school is not good. Outcomes are not good. • Behaviour and attitudes are not good. • Attendance is below the national average. • Pupils are safe and they feel safe. • Personal development in the school is not good. • Leadership and management, including governance, are not good. • Any breaches in the EYFS statutory requirement can be easily rectified promptly by the school and pose no immediate risk to children’s safety and wellbeing <p>EY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of the EY is not yet good. <p>Post 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of education in the sixth form is not yet good.

A school currently in an Ofsted category or likely to be placed in a category under the 2019 EIF

Evidence of some of the following:

- Safeguarding is ineffective
- The school's curriculum has little, or no structure or coherence and leaders have not appropriately considered sequencing. Pupils experience a jumbled, disconnected series of lessons that do not build on their knowledge, skills or understanding.
- The range of subjects is narrow and does not prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or apply maths sufficiently well for their age.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is consistently well below that of other pupils nationally and show little or no improvement.
- Pupils with SEND do not benefit from a good quality education. Expectations of them are low, and their needs are not accurately identified, assessed or met.
- Pupils have not attained the qualifications appropriate for them to progress to the next stages of education, training or employment.
- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure good behaviour from pupils and a consistent approach to discipline.
- Pupils' lack of engagement and persistent low- or high-level disruption contribute to reduced learning.
- A significant minority of pupils show lack of respect for others and a lack of self-discipline. There is poor behaviour around the school.
- Attendance is consistently low and shows little sign of sustained improvement.
- Incidents of bullying are frequent. Pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to tackle harassment and bullying successfully.
- Pupils are not safe or do not feel safe at school/alternative placements.
- Leadership is inadequate.
- The school is systematically gaming its results and/or off-rolling.
- Leaders are not aware of, or taking effective action to stem, the decline in the attainment or progress of disadvantaged children.
- Governance is weak, with breaches of responsibility.
- Assessment is overly burdensome and unhelpful in determining what pupils know, understand and can do.
- EYFS statutory requirements are not met

Red

A school currently in an Ofsted category or likely to be placed in a category under the 2019 EIF

EY

- By the end of Reception, children cannot communicate, read or spell phonically decodable words as well as they should. They do not have basic fluency in number and shape, space and measure.

Post 16

- The school does not ensure that sixth-form students get access to unbiased information about potential next steps, high quality careers guidance or opportunities for encounters with the world of work.



What specific support is available if a school is identified as red or amber

10. The identification of schools in the red or amber categories triggers a series of actions to support, challenge and, where necessary, intervene. These actions ensure that the causes for concern are remedied in the shortest possible time. Support programmes are put in place to bring about rapid improvement and build sustainable internal capacity within the school.
11. When a school is rated as amber or red through monitoring systems, or through other concerns arising, this is discussed, in the first instance, by the relevant HIP with the headteacher and chair of governors. This initial judgement is then discussed with the relevant district school effectiveness adviser (DSEA) and team leader, if agreed by them the initial judgement is confirmed in writing to the headteacher and chair of governors.
12. When a school is rated amber or red it may result in some or all of the following actions:
 - an increased allocation of HIP/ DSEA an action group is established (see section Support and challenge for maintained schools causing concern' on next page)
 - the school draws up an improvement plan, (agreed by the governing body), which rapidly addresses the key concerns
 - a support plan is drawn up and commissioned by the team leader/ DSEA to support the school improvement plan.

This contains:

- the number of support days allocated to the school
 - details of the professional expertise which will be provided
 - any additional support which may be allocated through the intervention funding
 - school to school arrangements as appropriate
 - planned reviews by advisers or external consultants, arrangements for monitoring and evaluation
 - the support outlined in the plan commissioned by the team leader/ DSEA.
13. As part of HCC quality assurance framework, the impact of support plans is reviewed in the regular school and district monitoring meetings.

Academies

14. Academies, including free schools, and university technical colleges (UTCs) are monitored according to the statutory duties of local authorities. This includes data monitoring throughout the academic year and, in particular, an annual desktop analysis and risk assessment of test and examination results.

15. Where there are concerns about an academy and it has been rated amber or red, HfL will contact the academy trust to discuss these concerns in accordance with government guidance. If the concerns are not able to be resolved rapidly, HfL will discuss this with HCC and the academy trust to agree further action. The Head Teacher and CEO of the academy trust, if different, will be copied into all communications. Where HCC believes there are sufficient grounds, it may exercise its powers to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education formally outlining its concerns.

Support and challenge for maintained schools causing concern

Action groups

16. An action group is set up to support all schools causing concern which are rated red. The action group includes the headteacher and chair of governors along with professional experts from HfL, HCC and other schools that are well placed to help the school to improve.
17. For schools rated amber, a judgement is made about the most effective strategy to bring about improvement. For schools where the main concerns are around standards and performance this may include an action group.
18. The co-ordination and monitoring of support programmes for schools where there are concerns is the responsibility of the school's linked HfL adviser or SEA and agreed by the relevant strategic lead from HfL. The adviser draws on specialists from HfL, HCC, and from other schools, including Hertfordshire's Teaching School Hubs, to provide appropriate support.
19. The purpose of the action group is to:
 - ensure the right balance of challenge and support
 - focus the efforts of the school on improving standards of achievement and pupil wellbeing
 - help the school to address barriers to improvement
 - provide a dynamic forum where support needs are identified and actions planned
 - provide a route for contact between HfL, HCC and the school
 - ensure that support programmes are well co-ordinated
 - ensure that professionals from HfL, HCC and other schools are taking the right steps to support the school
 - hold the school staff and governors to account for improvement monitor the effectiveness of support provided
 - monitor the progress against the school improvement plan and HCC support plan report to HCC through school monitoring meetings
 - the progress made and further actions required.

20. The action group may be joined by key specialists, such as finance officers, on occasions where relevant issues are being addressed.
21. The action group does not replace any of the functions of the governing body.

Support for governing bodies

22. Support for governing bodies may include:
 - skills and training needs analysis
 - a review of the effectiveness of the governing body
 - bespoke training, coaching or support from governors with particular expertise
 - training on the skills required to evaluate the effectiveness of the school and governing body over time.

Schools in an Ofsted category

23. When a school is judged by Ofsted to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses, the local authority is required to produce a statement of action within ten days of the inspection report being published. The statement is prepared in consultation with the head teacher, governing body and, where relevant, diocesan or other appropriate authority, and sent to Ofsted by HfL on behalf of HCC.
24. The statement of action provides details of the actions HfL will take on behalf of HCC to support the school and to ensure a timely transition to an sponsored academy trust brokered by the DfE's RSC, any additional support the local authority will commission to help the school and a plan of future action including any plans to use intervention powers. Ofsted evaluates the local authority's statement of action to assess the effectiveness of the support.

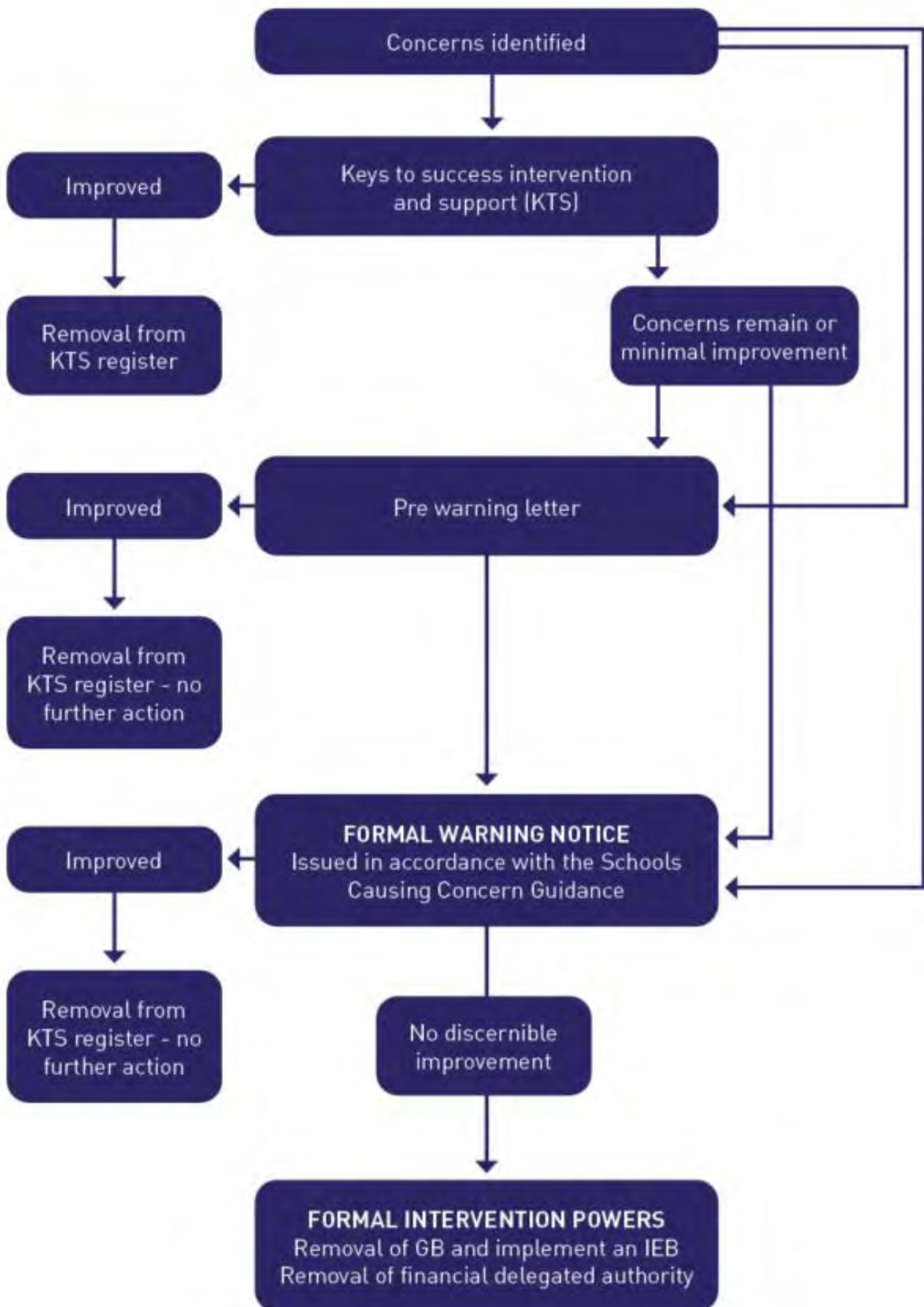
Monitoring of support

25. The impact of support for all schools causing concern is reviewed at regular school and district monitoring meetings, where any further support or intervention is agreed.
26. When schools causing concern have made sufficient improvement, they are removed from HCC register. The process for the removal of a school from the register includes discussion with the headteacher and chair of governors. The discussion will include both removal from the register and the new category of school effectiveness and decisions will be confirmed in writing.
27. Schools are expected to remain on the register no longer than 18 months.

Academies

28. Academies, free schools, and UTCs requiring improvement make their own choices about how to obtain the best support. This can be purchase from HfL Ltd and HfL is also able to broker support for academies through Teaching School Hubs.

Performance, standards and safety warning notice



29. Where schools are deemed underperforming HCC may judge that a 'letter of concern' be issued. This letter is not a formal letter, as in the case of a warning notice (see paragraph 35) but is an early indicator from HCC that there are significant concerns regarding the performance of the school.
30. Before issuing a letter of concern HCC will always consult with its school improvement partners, this might include one or more of any of the following; Herts for Learning Ltd, HCC safeguarding teams, HCC finance teams, the relevant diocesan director of education, Teaching School Hubs.
31. The circumstances under which a letter of concern may be issued include:
 - a. A significant and unexpected drop in performance at the end of any key stage
 - b. Concerns raised with HCC regarding the effectiveness and quality of governance in the school
 - c. Early indications of safeguarding concerns
 - d. Concerns regarding the financial position of the school
 - e. Complaints received by HCC, either through Ofsted or directly, where the complaint has been upheld following an initial review.

The letter of concern will outline:

1. The specific nature of HCC's concern(s).
 2. The date by which an action plan should be produced and sent to HCC for review.
The plan will need to show:
 - a clear timeline by which the concern(s) will be addressed and eradicated
 - what actions the school intends to take to address the concern(s)
 - which individual at the school will be responsible for ensuring each action is successfully completed
 - milestones of improvement towards the eventual eradication of the concern
 - measurable success criteria so that progress can be clearly monitored.
 3. What additional support the school can expect from HCC's.
32. Where a letter of concern has been issued the school will be expected to engage in the process and with the improvement partners nominated by HCC to support the school to improve. Failure by the school to make the necessary improvements, within an agreed timeframe, may result in the issuing of a formal warning letter (see below for details).
 33. The above does not preclude HCC taking the decision to exercise its statutory powers of intervention immediately if it is deemed that the school's performance is sufficiently poor to justify it or where the school is not meeting its statutory obligations, for example in terms of safeguarding.
 34. Statutory powers of intervention are based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance which can be found on the DfE website at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00192418/scc>

35. If an LA maintained school on the register of schools causing concern is unable to address concerns rapidly and successfully, a warning notice may be issued.
36. A warning notice may be issued by HCC in circumstances where:
- standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so unless the authority exercises its powers under Part 4 of the 2006 Act
 - 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 at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise).
37. A warning notice from HCC to the governing body sets out the:
- detail of matters on which HCC concerns are based
 - action which the governing body is required to take in order to address the concerns
 - initial compliance period, beginning with the day when the warning notice is given and ending 15 days later
 - process for making representations to Ofsted against the warning notice
 - steps the local authority will take if the governing body does not or is unable to take the required actions.
38. As well as issuing the warning notice to the governing body, the local authority sends copies to:
- the headteacher
 - the appropriate diocesan authority in the case of Church of England Church or Roman Catholic schools
 - the person who appoints the foundation governors in a foundation or voluntary school
 - Ofsted.
39. The Secretary of State also has the power to direct a local authority to give a warning notice or to request Ofsted to inspect and report on a school where there are serious concerns.
40. The local authority statutory powers to issue warning notices do not extend to academies, free schools or other schools not maintained by the local authority.

Formal Powers of Intervention

41. Hertfordshire County Council has specific powers of intervention in local authority maintained schools. The process for invoking these powers is outlined below.

Schools in Ofsted categories of Special Measures or Serious Weaknesses

42. When a school is judged by Ofsted to be inadequate (special measures or serious weaknesses), it is not necessary for HCC to give a warning notice before it intervenes. If the school had previously been given a warning notice, the Ofsted category will override any warning notice conditions.

Schools causing concern following a performance, standards and safety warning notice

43. If a school has not complied with a warning notice to the satisfaction of HCC and/or within the compliance period, HCC will give the school notice in writing that it proposes to exercise one or more of their powers under Part 4 of the 2006 Act. These will only be used in circumstances as defined in part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/part/4>

44. If a school has failed to comply with a warning notice and HCC has given a further written notice, it is then eligible for intervention.

45. The powers available to the local authority in schools in receipt of a further written notice or in an Ofsted category are:

- the appointment of additional governors and the suspension of the delegated budget
- proposing to the Secretary of State the appointment of an Interim Executive Board to replace the governing body
- requirement for schools to collaborate with another school or FE college or to federate (Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 63)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/part/4>

46. Before the local authority exercises these powers it will consult the governing body of the school, the appropriate diocesan authority and, in the case of any other foundation or voluntary school, the person who appoints the foundation governors.

Removal of Formal Powers of Intervention

47. Once the required improvements have been made any relevant powers will be reinstated to the school as soon as possible. This will be confirmed in writing by the local authority.

Appendix B: Glossary

CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CLA - Children Looked After
CPD – Continuing Professional Development
CYP – Children and Young People
DfE – Department for Education
DSEAs – District School Effectiveness Adviser
DSG – dedicated services grant
EBacc – English Baccalaureate
ESCs – Education Support Centres
ESD – Education Services Director (HfL)
EY – Early Years
EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage
HASG – Hertfordshire Association of School Governors
HASSH – Hertfordshire Association of Secondary School Headteachers
HCC – Hertfordshire County Council
HfL – Herts for Learning
HIPs – Hertfordshire Improvement Partner
JAPR – Joint Annual Performance Review
KTS – Keys to Success
LA – Local Authority
LGA – Local Government Association
MAT – Multi-academy trust
PHF – Primary Headteacher Forum
PP – Pupil Premium
RAYG rating – red, amber, yellow, green rating
RSC – Regional Schools Commissioner
SACRE - Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
SAT – Single Academy Trust
SDG – Strategic Development Group
SEAs – School Effectiveness Advisers
SEND – special education need and/or disability
SRE guidance - Sex and Relationships Education guidance
SSH Exec. - Special School Head Executive
TSH – Teaching School Hubs
UTC – University Technical College