

PRIMARY PRIORITISATION

Bradford Local Authority's PRIMARY Prioritisation of support and challenge to Local Authority maintained schools and educational establishments

Introduction

A key function of all Local Authorities (LAs) is to ensure that all of their maintained schools provide a high quality educational experience for the children and young people they educate. In meeting these statutory duties the LA is required to monitor, challenge, support and where necessary, intervene in maintained schools.

In order to carry out the LA's statutory role in an effective and transparent way, Bradford Council will operate a system of School Prioritisation which allows the LA and the partnerships to assess the performance of schools and educational institutions and judge the degree of risk in the quality of education being provided and respond where necessary.

The LA also has responsibilities to Bradford's children and young people who are educated in its non-LA maintained and independent schools. The LA will monitor available information from these providers to ensure that pupils receive an education that is at least satisfactory and to protect pupils from harm. Should these standards not be met, then Bradford Council will raise its concerns promptly with the appropriate authority.

Bradford Council's Children's Services Department is committed to working with its partners to monitor, challenge and intervene in LA maintained schools in inverse proportion to the success of each school; success being defined in terms of the quality of provision and the outcomes achieved by pupils.

The final section of this document indicates the levels of monitoring, challenge and intervention that schools in each of the Priority Levels can expect to receive from the LA.

Purpose of School Prioritisation:

This is an LA process to manage risk and target support to deliver its statutory duties.

The purpose of the School Prioritisation process is to reach an agreement about the Priority Level for each school. This enables the LA deliver its statutory functions in each school and to manage risks and target appropriate support in inverse proportion to their success and thereby help those which are causing concern to improve to at least a satisfactory level in the shortest possible time. The process will also allow the LA to be confident that all schools are meeting their responsibilities for continuous improvement.

Principles

- The Primary Prioritisation process is agreed by a panel consisting of the chairs of the primary partnerships, a governor representative and relevant LA officers to ensure that the procedures are open and transparent.
- Whilst this is a collaborative process with schools and partnerships of schools, the LA has the final decision about the Priority level in order to meet its statutory responsibilities.
- The LA's Priority level allocation is founded on each school's self-evaluation using a wide range of sources of evidence.
- Prioritisation levels reflect each school's capacity for and the degree of challenge they face in improving their performance. The highest priority for monitoring, challenge and intervention is given to those schools with the greatest needs and who present the greatest risk in not providing an adequate, and improving, education for the children in their care.
- Long term sustainable improvement of the whole system depends on the effective use of all the resources and expertise available in schools, collaboratives, the LA and other partners and providers.

- The secondary and special schools process is addressed separately through the relevant partnerships. This information is sent to the Deputy Director for Education, Employment and Skills.

Process for identifying priority support levels for schools

- As stated above, the process of school prioritisation and the associated identification of schools causing concern is rigorous and transparent.
- The Education Improvement Strategy Board hears any final appeals against decisions made by the panel. There will be a termly and annual review of Priority Levels as described below. However school leaders, governors and LA officers can request a change of priority throughout the year and these will be heard at the monthly Education, Employment and Skills management team meetings.

Annual review process

1. Primary schools are requested to consider the criteria for the allocation of a Priority Level during the summer term and to provide the LA with a proposed Priority Level by 31 June 2016 of each year.
2. It is the LA's expectation that this process is informed by the school's own self-evaluation.
3. Schools are free to carry out this process in any way they wish and they may receive the contribution, views and judgements of other professionals as they wish. For schools that are already designated as Priority 4, it is expected that the discussion on the Priority Level proposal will involve the assigned Achievement Officer and take into account the views of the external colleagues and other monitoring evidence.
4. The LA welcomes arrangements where school partnerships agree undertake a review process, of their own design, for all their member schools. This is the model adapted by the secondary schools at this moment in time. This will enable partnerships to agree Priority Level proposals before submitting member schools' proposals to the LA.
5. Having received the proposals from schools, the primary panel then convene a meeting to discuss and agree the Priority Levels. For this purpose the panel has access to LA monitoring information including:
 - The data held on EduNet / Bradford Schools Online
 - RAISEonline
 - Recent Ofsted reports
 - Recent monitoring reports from achievement officers or reports prepared by consultants working with schools and collaboratives, where schools have chosen to share these reports prior to the prioritisation meeting
 - Other monitoring evidence from teams within Children's Services, where that evidence has been shared by that team with the school concerned
 - Minutes of Governing Body minutes
 At this meeting the panel moderates the proposals and either accepts or rejects each school's proposed Priority Level.
6. Should the proposal be accepted, the Deputy Director will write to the headteacher and Chair of Governors at the start of the autumn term informing them of this.
7. In those instances where the proposed Priority Level is not accepted, the Deputy Director will write to the headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school, giving them detailed reasons for the rejection and providing an alternative Priority Level. The school will then have seven days to either accept the changed Priority Level or to provide additional information and/or meet with the deputy director and the panel so that their appeal can be considered.
8. In the unlikely event at the appeal that the LA and the school are still not able to agree a Priority Level, then the Education Improvement Strategy Board (EISB - membership listed in appendix 2) will consider the evidence from both parties and as the final arbiter will inform the school of its Priority Level for the coming year.

Mid-year change of Priority Level

9. In addition to the annual classification there may be a change in the school's capacity to improve and/or the degree of challenge it faces during the year.

10. In those circumstances the headteacher of the school should contact the school’s Achievement Officer or Primary Lead Officer to discuss the evidence for the proposed change. Subsequently, this will be taken to the Deputy Director and panel to be considered.

Description of Priority Levels

11. In applying the following criteria a ‘best fit’ approach should be used to decide on the Priority Level of individual schools. However, it is recognised that schools will display a variety of characteristics from a number of the following Priority Level descriptors.
12. In making a decision about the suitability of the criteria for a school’s Priority Level it is important to consider all of the descriptors. However, the Local Authority and Government have key priorities to raise educational attainment and achievement in all schools. **Therefore the criteria below that describe achievement or refer to the national Floor Standards will carry a greater weighting in making the final decision of Priority Level.**
13. The Priority Level 4 descriptors that are drawn from the Ofsted evaluation schedule are recognised as describing inadequate and unacceptable practice. **Therefore should one or more of these criteria apply to a school, it is likely that Priority Level 4 will be the appropriate designation.**
14. Within the descriptors, reference is made to the Government’s ‘floor standard’. The current floor standard is defined below.

***Primary:** a primary school is below the Floor Standard if less than 65% of pupils achieve either the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined, or make sufficient progress in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. (definition of ‘sufficient progress’ still awaited)*

The following criteria are used as a guide when agreeing the categories of school effectiveness:

PRIORITY 1	<p>Schools performing well</p> <p>This could include schools that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ as recently judged by Ofsted ▪ likely to be judged ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ ▪ close to floor standards but with good value added and good progress
PRIORITY 2	<p>This could include schools that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ judged as ‘requires improvement’ (RI) by Ofsted but making rapid improvement ▪ below or close to floor standards but making rapid improvement ▪ those with an uncharacteristic drop in performance ▪ those which have been making improvements but are not yet consistently performing well
PRIORITY 3	<p>This could include schools that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ judged by Ofsted as ‘Requires Improvement’ (RI) or ‘satisfactory’ and not making rapid improvement ▪ likely to be judged by Ofsted as ‘Requires Improvement’ - not making rapid improvement ▪ those where performance is not meeting expected standards of comparable schools ▪ close to floor standards but not making rapid improvement ▪ declining in performance over time ▪ those where performance is significantly below standards of comparable schools ▪ those where there are serious financial concerns ▪ those which have been causing concern and are showing early signs of improvement

PRIORITY 4**Schools causing concern**

This could include schools that are:

- in an Ofsted category (Special Measures or Serious Weaknesses)
- on the LA's schools causing concern register including those:
 - likely to be judged inadequate if inspected by Ofsted
 - with complex weaknesses
 - requiring significant improvement with limited capacity to improve
 - consistently below floor standards
 - where there are other serious concerns which will affect outcomes for children
 - below floor standards and *not* making rapid improvement

Levels of monitoring, support, challenge and intervention that schools in each Priority Level can expect to receive

Available to *all* Priority 1, 2, 3 and 4 LA maintained schools and educational establishments:

- **Named point of contact with the LA:** All schools and educational establishments will have a named first point of contact with Bradford Council. In the most cases this will be the school's assigned Achievement Officer.
- **Monitoring:** Achievement officers will carry out periodic desktop monitoring exercises using available performance data held on EduNet / Bradford Schools Online, RAISEonline, recent Ofsted reports, recent monitoring reports from achievement officers or reports prepared by consultants working with schools and collaboratives, where schools have chosen to share these reports, and other monitoring evidence from teams within Children's Services, where that evidence has been shared by that team with the school concerned.
- **Ofsted inspections:** The LA will endeavour to respond to all requests from Ofsted inspection teams to meet with inspectors. The LA will be represented at all Section 5 Ofsted inspections feedback meetings and will attend, where possible, the feedback provided for Section 8 monitoring inspections.
- **Headteacher recruitment:** Professional support, guidance and advice to the Governing Body from an LA officer for the recruitment of the headteacher. This does not include advice on Human Resources matters nor any associated administration tasks.
- The Strategic Director for Children's Services has a statutory right to be represented during the headteacher recruitment process. The appointed officer will represent the Strategic Director at shortlisting and during the selection and interview process.

Available to Priority 3 schools

In addition to the above -

- **Monitoring, support and challenge:** It is the expectation of the LA that schools in this Priority Level will quickly make improvements to provision and pupil outcomes, in order for them to achieve a good overall effectiveness judgement at their next Ofsted inspection and be designated as Priority Level 2 at the earliest opportunity within 12 months of being designated Priority Level 3. The assigned Achievement Officer will make a half termly visit to the school and may make further visits to the school throughout the year should there be any concern that insufficient progress is being made or should further support and challenge be helpful in accelerating improvement. Should further support be required, the Achievement Officer will provide advice on possible sources of professional support including appropriate school-to-school support. Subsequent visits will be used to monitor and challenge the impact of the activities being undertaken by the school to bring about the necessary improvements.

- **Ofsted inspections:** The school's Achievement Officer will discuss each school's preparedness for its next Ofsted inspection as part of the half termly visits and will provide advice and guidance as necessary.

Available to Priority 4 schools

In addition to the above -

- **Assigned Achievement Officer from the LA:** All Priority 4 schools and educational establishments will have a named Achievement Officer allocated to be their main point of contact with the LA.
- **Monitoring, support and challenge:** All Priority 4 schools will have an agreed target date for their removal from the list of schools causing concern. The LA will work closely with the school leadership and governors to achieve that target date. Regular feedback will be provided to all partners on the progress that is being made. As improvements are seen to be sustainable then the Achievement Officer will work with the school to plan the exit strategy and to reduce the level of external support.
- The school's Achievement Officer will provide an enhanced level of monitoring, support and challenge through regular contact and visits to the school. The number of officer days that will be available will be agreed with the school each term. All Priority Level 4 schools will receive a termly summary report and will also receive notes of visit during the term from the Achievement Officer.
- All schools and establishments in Priority Level 4 will be regularly monitored by the school's Governing Body Monitoring Group to which the Achievement Officer will provide progress reports. The headteacher will also provide a brief written summary outlining actions and impact. This report can also be taken to Governing Body meetings as the Headteacher report. All monitoring group meetings will conclude with a judgement of the progress that the school is making.
- **Headteacher Performance Management:** The allocated Achievement Officer will be available to support the school's Governing Body in carrying out headteacher performance management at no additional cost to the school.
- **Ofsted inspections:** The school's Achievement Officer will work closely with the school's leadership and governors to ensure they are well prepared for Ofsted inspections and monitoring inspections. The Achievement Officer will normally meet the inspection team to give them an overview of the actions taken by the LA and the impact of those actions. The LA will be represented at all Ofsted feedback meetings.

Use of Intervention Powers

Where a school accepts the need for improvement and is open to challenge, works positively with the support provided and shows improvement, then the use of intervention powers is unlikely to be warranted. However where these conditions do not apply and the LA has serious concerns about the school then it may issue a formal warning notice. Schools issued with a warning notice have the right of appeal to Ofsted. If a school fails to comply with a warning notice, or where it requires significant improvement (Ofsted indicate the school has serious weaknesses), or the school requires special measures (as an outcome of an Ofsted inspection), then the school will be "eligible for intervention" as defined in Part 4 of, and Schedule 6 to, the 2006 Education and Inspections Act.

Where a school is eligible for intervention the LA may exercise its power to:

- require the governing body to enter into arrangements (partnership arrangements)
- to appoint additional governors; to suspend the delegated authority for the school's budget
- to appoint an Interim Executive Board (to replace the Governing Body).

In addition, where a school is eligible for intervention, the Secretary of State has power to:

- appoint additional governors;
- appoint an Interim Executive Board or make an academy order.

Where a school is in special measures the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will issue a letter instructing academisation or the Secretary of State may direct the LA to close the school. Detailed guidance is given at <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00192418/scc>

Appendix 1 – List of the membership of the primary panel

Judith Kirk	Deputy Director for Education, Employment & Skills
Yasmin Umarji	LA Primary Strategic Manager
Duncan Jacques	Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership
Jayne Clarke	Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership
Catherine Markham	Catholic Schools Partnership
Lynn Donohue	LA Early Years Strategic Manager
Jane Arundale	Senior Achievement Officer
	Governor Representative

Appendix 2 – List of the membership of the Education Improvement Strategic Board (EISB)

Heather Flint	Chair
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Leader of the Council
Cllr Imran Khan	Lead Member for Children's Services
Cllr Jeanette Sunderland	Liberal Democrat Group Education Spokesperson
Cllr Debbie Davies	Conservative Group Education Spokesperson
Kersten England	Chief Executive
Michael Jameson	Strategic Director: Children's Services
Andy Welsh	Post 16 Representative
Sir Nick Weller	Secondary Representative
Duncan Jacques	Primary Representative
Catherine Markham	Catholic Partnership Representative
Anne-Marie Merifield	Nursery School Representative
Sally Joy	Special School Representative