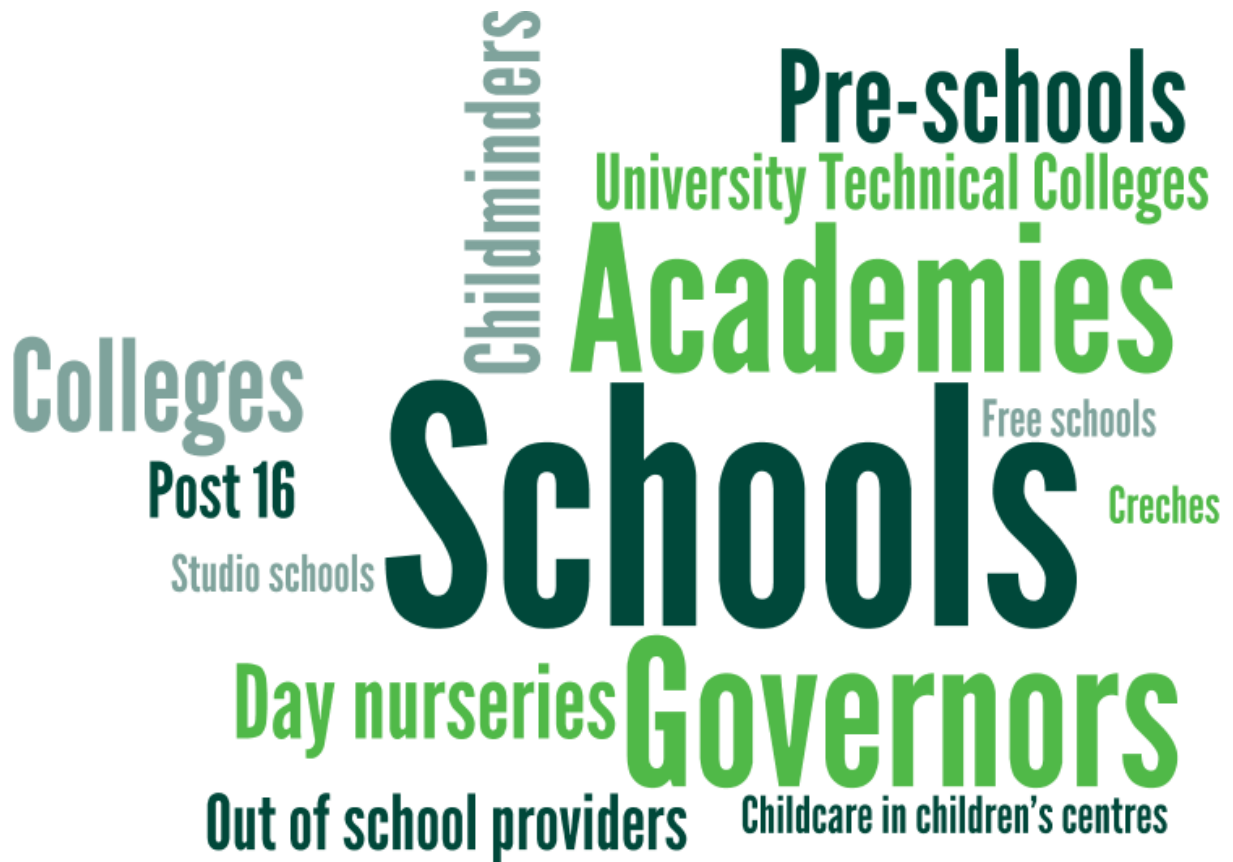


Oxfordshire Education Strategy 2015-2018



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Introduction

The growth of school autonomy is one of the defining features of the recent history of the English education system. A range of reforms has been introduced that have increased dramatically the autonomy of schools and have aimed to create a self-improving school system led by networks of schools. These reforms have transformed the role of schools and local authorities, and stimulated debate about the conditions necessary to encourage and sustain a self-improving school system.

It is in this context that this strategy is presented. Oxfordshire is developing new ways of working with all schools, including academies. The shape and ethos of the education system in Oxfordshire is becoming characterised by a series of networks of schools, rather than a collection of standalone, self-managing schools. The way in which the Local Authority discharges its functions has also undergone significant change. We are, however, expected to maintain oversight of local education provision, champion the interests of children, and commission school improvement from local system-leading schools.

The quality of education provided in Oxfordshire is often good and sometimes outstanding. The Ofsted profile of schools is improving as are standards of attainment. However, across the county as a whole, standards for all learners in Oxfordshire are not yet good enough. This is particularly the case for vulnerable groups. Cultures, systems and practice are not fully effective in ensuring that all schools and settings have the support and challenge to become as good as the best. Oxfordshire is not occupying its legitimate place in the top quartile nationally.

In Oxfordshire, there is a growing collective view that what is needed is a local solution for local issues. Oxfordshire has existing good and outstanding practice on which to build. There is a determination to address those issues that present themselves in many schools and settings, to learn from each other and to work collaboratively to maximise impact. Partners recognise a responsibility for the education and well-being of all children and young people within the county and understand that their contribution to success can be played out on a much wider scale than in an individual educational establishment. This moral purpose motivates and sustains commitment, but it must be underpinned by trust and reciprocity.

The role of the modern Local Authority

- ✓ Provide an inspirational educational vision.
- ✓ Maximise use of influence to shape the system.
- ✓ Act as champion and advocate for all children and their families.
- ✓ Achieve a collective approach towards vulnerable pupils.
- ✓ Champion and promote educational excellence, whether schools are maintained or academies that are part of, and accountable to, the local educational community.
- ✓ Put the use of pupil performance data at the heart of what teachers, schools and the Local Authority do.
- ✓ Have an overview of the performance of all schools and settings, to prevent the slide into poor performance in schools irrespective of the status of the provider.

This strategy identifies those areas where influence can be brought to bear, both on those areas of underperformance across the county, and on our statutory responsibilities, in an effort to galvanise and renew efforts to improve performance and provide the highest quality of education for all.

Our vision for education

Our vision is for an autonomous and self-improving education system and we are committed to enabling schools and settings to promote excellence and lead their own improvement. This is set within the context of a well-planned continuum of provision from birth to 25 that meets the needs of children and young people in Oxfordshire. Our ultimate purpose is to improve attainment, achievement and well-being, including the progression into employment for young people, by developing collective capacity in the county.

We need to develop the right culture for improvement, including a guarantee of effective challenge from highly credible professionals. We recognise that there will be greater opportunity for sustained improvement when schools and the whole education community take responsibility for the required changes. This emphasises the importance of system leadership which, by definition, is the concerted effort of many people working together at different places in the system and at different levels, rather than single leaders acting unilaterally.

Scope of the Education Strategy

The outcomes outlined in the 2012-15 Education Strategy, *Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire* were largely achieved, with the exception of closing the gap for vulnerable groups. In the intervening three years, much has changed. This is a time of unprecedented local and national change, with system diversity meaning academies, free schools, faith schools and community schools are all represented in the county.

We have had a number of new Ofsted frameworks, each raising the bar; we have a new government with an agenda to raise standards; and we have to develop working relationships with new regional roles, such as Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Budget reductions as a result of decrease in central government grants have had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on the centrally retained funding for school support services.

The Education Strategy for Oxfordshire (2015-18) encompasses those areas of statutory responsibility for Oxfordshire, namely:

- Special Educational Needs
 - School admissions, organisation and place planning
 - School Improvement
 - Foundation Years
-
- ❖ New legal duties came into force in September 2014, through the Children and Families Act, to reform the way support is provided for children and young people with **special educational needs and disabilities**. Our aim is for every child and young person with SEN or a disability to be able to develop their potential and live happy and fulfilled lives.
 - ❖ We have a unique responsibility to make sure there are enough **school and childcare places** available for local children and young people. No other local or national body shares the duty to secure sufficient primary and secondary schools, although we increasingly have to work with schools and other partners to deliver the places needed.
 - ❖ The responsibility for **school improvement** is now firmly embedded with schools and their governing bodies. So it is timely to consider, as part of this

new education strategy, opportunities that can harness limited resources, engage partners and other agencies that can effect change, develop different delivery models, and consequently a step change in performance.

- ❖ Leaders of **Early Learning** are being empowered across the county by the Early Years Board so that schools and settings can lead their own improvement. The Early Years Team has a refreshed offer for all early years and childcare providers from September 2015. The new offer is designed to support all aspects of a child's early education and care, with an emphasis on delivering the best outcomes for Oxfordshire's children. This 'offer' is open to all Council funded early education providers in Oxfordshire (maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and private, voluntary and independent childcare providers including childminders).

The Corporate plan, 2015-18, A Thriving Oxfordshire states that the Council 'has a crucial leadership role in ensuring there is a diverse supply of strong schools for the County's children and a key role in continuing to improve educational attainment in the county.'

Oxfordshire's Children and Young People's plan 2015-18 wants Oxfordshire to be 'the best place in England for children and young people to grow up in, by working with every child and young person to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.'

The Children and Families Act 2014 recognises the value of integration of education provision with health and social care provision to improve children and young people's well-being:

- *Physical and mental health and emotional well-being.*
- *Protection from abuse and neglect.*
- *Control by them over their day to day lives.*
- *Participation in education, training or recreation.*
- *Social and economic well-being.*
- *Domestic, family and personal relationships.*
- *The contribution made by them to society.*

What this strategy aims to achieve

- An improving quality of education and rising standards.
- A closing of the performance gap between vulnerable learners and their peers.
- Robust safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of every child and young person.

We want:

- Every school and setting in Oxfordshire to be at least good by 2018.
- More Oxfordshire schools and settings to be outstanding – at least 25% by 2018.
- Improved standards across the county to ensure that outcomes for children and young people are consistently in the highest performing 25% of local authorities.
- A reduced achievement gap between children and young people from deprived backgrounds to be in line with the highest performing 25% of local authorities nationally, with a strong equalities and early intervention approach promoted across all education providers.
- The attendance of all children and young people to match the attendance rates of the highest performing authorities.
- A reduction of both fixed term and permanent exclusions across the county.
- Strong collaboration between early years settings, schools, alternative providers and colleges in order to realise the vision and improve education in Oxfordshire.
- A more extensive and higher quality offer for pupils requiring an alternative provision.
- A resilient and sustainable market of school and childcare places meeting local demand and responding to national initiatives, including delivering the 30 hours childcare offer.
- Every local area to offer a wide range of high quality provision to ensure that vulnerable children and young people can remain in their local area wherever possible.

In achieving our aims and reflecting the changing role of the Local Authority, we have identified the following five key levers for effecting change:

- Strategic leadership
- Market development
- Support and challenge
- Influence and inspiration
- Using data

Strategic Schools Partnership

The formation of the Strategic Schools Partnership provides an alliance between the Council, schools and key partners to work collectively towards the improvement to which all aspire. Strong leadership, professional trust and defined structures are crucial for the success of the Strategic Schools Partnership in order to achieve the expected collaborative advantage. There are similar arrangements in place for the Early Years Partnership, driving forward the local leadership of early learning.

The aim of the Strategic Schools Partnership is to encourage head teachers and other partners to assume leadership responsibilities on a wider scale and encourage strong school to school collaboration. System leaders have existed in education for some time with the designation of National Leader of Education (NLE) and Local Leader of Education (LLE), National Leaders of Governance and Teaching School Alliances. These roles share the conviction that leaders should strive for the success of other schools and their students, not just their own.

Our Strategic Schools Partnership takes this concept to another level and seeks to identify leaders who would assume responsibility for the commissioning, co-ordination and evaluation of school improvement to help all schools in the area become as good as they can be.

The parallel Early Years Board is developing leaders of early learning across the county to support networks of best early years practice.

Outcomes

Theme A - Improving quality and rising standards

Data

- The percentage of schools and settings which are at least good is increasing, but too few are outstanding.
- Most additional places are created in schools which are at least good.
- Standards are rising at KS1 and KS2, but not yet be at a fast enough rate to put Oxfordshire in the top quartile of local authorities.
- The percentage of children reaching a Good Level of Development has risen again.

Examples of key actions we are taking for the life of this strategy

Strategic leadership:

- Commission high quality school to school support through the Strategic Schools Partnership Board.
- Develop an effective practice map to share expertise from OTSA, collaborative companies and other partners.
- Develop Leaders of Early Learning through the Early Years Strategic Board.
- Develop a new service model for School Improvement to be a fully traded model, ensuring all statutory duties are met.
- Review the Attendance Strategy to improve rates of attendance.
- Identify through the Strategic Schools Partnership those areas or themes of particular concern and commission partners to work to address them.
- Engage with all schools to support whole system improvement, not just those in an Ofsted category.
- Map school partnerships, federations, Multi Academy Trusts and collaborative companies to encourage effective collaboration.

Market development:

- Link more closely strategic place planning with quality provision.
- Encourage the expansion of high quality alternative provision.
- Disseminate better information about the range of alternative providers.
- Respond to the extension to a 30 hour child care offer.

Support and challenge:

- Only approach sponsors who have good track record of achievement.
- Use the relationship with Regional Schools Commissioner to challenge quality in order to ensure failing academies recover quickly.
- Target support with under performing schools to secure improvement at speed.

Influence and inspire:

- Direct funding to specific projects – Every Child Counts, Every Child a Writer and Every Child a Reader.
- Develop a forward thinking, creative and inspirational offer for training in the county.
- Continue to deliver high quality funded places for disadvantaged two year-olds.
- Work with school partnerships and collaborations to research the impact of pedagogy on pupil outcomes.
- Research and training on recruitment and retention to ensure we appoint and keep the best.

Using data:

- Focus commissioning based on outcomes in Early Years settings to develop leaders of early learning.
- Share better quality of data more widely in a timely fashion, e.g. the Autumn Position Statement.
- Identify and map effective practice and disseminate it across the county.

Theme B - Closing the performance gap for vulnerable learners

Data

- Most minority ethnic groups perform less well than nationally.
- Children with Special Educational Needs, other than those with Statements/Education, Health & Care Plans, perform less well than their peers.
- Children in the care system have low levels of attainment.
- The attainment gap between children eligible for free school meals and those who are not is wider than nationally, but has narrowed for the second year in a row.
- Looked After Children's GCSE performance is much improved, but still far below their peers.
- Not all schools are meeting the legal requirement in terms of having an accessibility plan.

Examples of key actions we are taking for the life of this strategy

Strategic leadership:

- Develop more effective commissioning processes which co-ordinate education, health and care resources to deliver high impact, low cost provision.
- Provide SEN Support Guidance to ensure a consistent approach to identifying when a child or young person has special educational needs and how to support them to achieve good outcomes.
- Challenge the use of Pupil Premium income.
- Challenge the presumption of low achievement for children in or on the edge of care
- Review and consult on the Equity and Excellence in Education Strategy
- Co-ordinate more effectively education, health and care services for 0-25 year olds, particularly at points of transition.
- Provide integrated services for 0-19 year olds.

Market development:

- Increase the range and quality of specialist provision in local areas.
- Use the opportunities arising from building new schools to create centres of specialist expertise through more resource based provision supporting children with low incidence SEN and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Encourage the promotion of Alternative Provision and Special Free Schools.
- Increase the range of employment programmes for vulnerable learners, including Supported Internships.

Support and challenge:

- Develop and evaluate programmes to support vulnerable learners, e.g. Aspiration Networks.
- Promote the role of Governor with lead for Vulnerable Learners.
- Evaluate managed moves to ensure their success and be more aspirational for the educational outcomes for children in care.
- Improve the quality and range of information available to support informed choices.
- Provide networks of schools with training and advice to ensure quality first teaching addresses the needs of all learners with SEND.

Influence and inspire:

- Promote collaborative working with parents across education, health and care services and the voluntary sector.
- Encourage and model good practice at In Year Fair Access Panels.
- Commission services from highly credible and specialist staff.
- Use the Caremark as a quality standard for excellent school practice with children in care

Data and trends:

- Identify schools that 'buck the trend'.

Theme C - Safeguarding and wellbeing

This priority is a direct response to the learning from the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) cases and Serious Case Reviews in Oxfordshire.

Key areas for consideration for schools and settings are:

- Poor attendance, unexplained absences and reduced timetables.
- Exclusion, temporary and permanent, particularly for vulnerable children.
- Too many children have attendance rates which are too low to enable them to achieve and leave them vulnerable to exploitation.
- Overall exclusion rates are relatively low, but rising, and in a few schools are unacceptably high.
- Vulnerability is not always taken into account when children are excluded from school.
- Record keeping and transfer when children change school is not always comprehensive.

Examples of key actions we are taking for the life of this strategy

Strategic leadership:

- Raise awareness of and training for CSE and its impact on children and young people.
 - Implement Academy Protocols.
 - Strategic involvement in the MASH.
 - Speed up in year admissions.

Market development:

- Audit the wide range of providers to ensure compliance with OSCB requirements.

Support and challenge:

- Use Annual Safeguarding Audits of settings and schools to develop a systematic approach to alert areas of non-compliance.
- Undertake a strategic overview of analysis of Ofsted reports.
- Learn from serious case reviews and internal audit.
- Focus on the risks inherent in Elective Home Education.
- Maintain a strategic scrutiny of children missing out of education.

Influence and inspire:

- Promote projects such as Primary GLS theatre, Values vs. Violence and Chelsea's Choice.
- Provide advice for the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator e.g. Sexting.
- Develop Prevent training.
- Develop FGM support.
- Promote a positive view of difference.

Using data:

- Identify and challenge schools with high or rising levels of exclusions.
- Identify and challenge schools with high or rising absence rates.