OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Appendix C (Background Paper)

School Quality Assurance Strategy
2015-18

Ambition for All Schools to be Outstanding
October 2015

Contact: Pauline Anderson, School Quality Assurance Manager

School Quality Assurance Strategy 2015-18

1.   Introduction

This document is intended to clarify what schools can expect from both the Local Authority (LA) and its partners as part of their quality assurance of school improvement functions. It is a practical interpretation of the Education Strategy 2015-18, which explains Oxfordshire's position on the changing role of local authorities, the importance of local partnerships, system leadership and the increase in school autonomy and diversity in the education system. The LA role is to:

- Influence organisational change and development whilst keeping the best interests of all learners at the heart of our work.
- Build capacity for a sustainable system-led model of school improvement with inclusion being central to our work.
- Continuously evaluate our practice and processes and respond positively to challenge.
- Challenge discriminatory practices in ourselves and others and promote inclusive practice.
- Listen well and provide high quality feedback.
- Strengthen collegiate working and partnerships – building supportive learning networks across services and schools.
- Draw on a wide range of evidence to ensure that self-evaluation and risk assessments are valid, rigorous, systematic and transparent.
- Recognise and celebrate schools' achievements - promote and share effective practice.
- Set ambitious targets for improvement in order to fulfil our role as advocate for learners; explore innovative and creative approaches to improvement/problem solving using research where relevant.

2.   Partnerships

The partnership between schools, teaching schools, the LA and other local providers is central to the delivery of high quality school improvement services.

2.1   Strategic Schools Partnership

This group's key purpose is to ensure coherence and strategic oversight for school improvement in order that the transformational outcomes for all Oxfordshire learners, and especially those for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, are improved in line with The Education Strategy 2015-18 (Appendix 1). The Strategic Schools Partnership is a Board of key partners and providers brought together to review strategic issues for education in Oxfordshire. The Board will identify priority commissioning themes for countywide improvement, research and effective practice to encourage school to school support (Terms of Reference - Appendix 2).

2.2   The Operational School to School Support Group

The Operational School to School Support Group (Terms of Reference - Appendix 3) reports to the Strategic Schools Partnership and implements and commissions to meet the priorities identified via a standardised, quality assured, specification process using a range of potential providers. For example:

- Oxfordshire Local Authority
- Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance (OTSA)
- Local Area Partnerships
- The Anglican and Catholic Dioceses
- School Collaborative companies
- Multi-academy trusts
- Accredited school based providers for school to school support (National Leaders in Education (NLE); Local Leaders in Education (LLE); Specialist Leaders in Education; Leading Teachers; National Leaders of Governance (NLG) etc.)
- Approved Provider List of individuals and companies

2.3   School Partnership Groups

Local area school partnerships are autonomous groups led by their headteachers to identify and address common issues across their partnership. They provide a starting point for collaboration between schools and they seek to determine the efficient delivery of CPD and support. The chairs of the partnerships meet regularly with Local Authority representatives and the Local Authority offers a School Intervention Leader (SIL) to be the main point of contact and support partnership working for one day a term (6 days per academic year).

2.4   Oxfordshire Governors' Association

Oxfordshire Governors' Association aims to further the education of children in Oxfordshire schools and to promote co-operation. All governors of state schools in the county are members of the Association. The officers and the executive committee are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The executive committee has representatives from across the three divisions of the county - North, South and Central - and across different types of school. It works to represent the views and opinions of the board of school governors, to bring to the notice of the authorities concerned the needs and interests of schools and to press for action where it is required. It acts as a consultative body on behalf of Oxfordshire governors with the relevant authorities and is represented on many LA and county committees and groups.

2.5 Secondary, Special and Primary Representatives

Each phase has its own association. The chair of the association is the main point of contact for consulting and liaising with other schools and wider partners. The organisation for primary schools is the Oxfordshire Primary Headteachers' Association (OPHTA); for special schools it is the Oxfordshire Association of Special School Headteachers (OSHTA) and for secondary schools the Oxfordshire Schools Secondary Headteachers' Association (OSSHTA).

2.6 Multi-academy Trusts

Multi-academy trusts increasingly deliver education in Oxfordshire as well as school improvement services and engage in collaborative work with others. They are represented in strategic partnerships and local partnership arrangements between groups of schools.

3. Data Analysis and Risk Assessment

LA data and analysis services provide a central collection point for data which is shared with schools via 'Perspective Lite'. The data team provides analysis for schools and groups of schools, some of which is provided at no cost to the school and some of which is traded.

Each year in the autumn term, every school receives an Autumn Position Statement derived from data and field intelligence (Appendix 4). This is used by governing bodies and school leaders to establish the position of their school in relation to a series of indicators and compare it with national and county averages and, wherever possible, with statistical neighbours.

All schools are offered a half day visit by a School Intervention Leader (SIL) to discuss the Position Statement, gain the views of school leaders (including governors) and identify good practice within the school. Where there are sufficient indicators to cause concern, the school will be required to meet with the LA to determine its programme for any additional monitoring, intervention, challenge and support. The LA then commissions or brokers support and monitors the progress of the school.

Special schools are allocated a link officer who discusses data and intelligence with school leaders and brokers support as required.

4. Monitoring, Support and Challenge

The LA has a strategy for intervening early in under-performing schools and a robust process whereby support is tailored to the school's specific circumstances. This may involve a range of Local Authority officers and/or external support. The LA may also act as a broker for school to school support. Using information from the Autumn Position Statement, the school's self-evaluation and local intelligence, an overall judgement of categorisation is determined using a 'best fit' principle from these criteria.

The three categories are:

> **Light Touch Schools** are offered 0.5 days contact time with a link Local Authority officer or commissioned individual (LLE/NLE/Consultant/SIL) to discuss data.
>
> **Schools at Risk of Under-Performing** are entitled to up to 6 days of contact time from either a link LA officer or brokered individual as above.
>
> **Schools Causing Concern** - Requiring Improvement/Serious Weaknesses/ Special Measures are entitled to up to 20 days, including Ofsted and HMI liaison work.

Support for schools will come from a variety of different places. Schools will continue to commission their own support; other support may be commissioned through the teaching schools or through the Strategic Schools Partnership Board or its Operational School to School Support Group and agreed with the school(s) involved.

Under the traded brand of 'Oxfordshire Partners in Learning', the LA works with all schools to provide a high quality bespoke offer, as well as providing courses and programmes designed to make a difference and help schools to achieve the best outcomes for all pupils. Academies broker their own support for improvement and may work with the LA, other schools in local partnerships through collaborative arrangement and other providers. All interested parties are welcome to purchase Oxfordshire County Council traded services (link to Oxfordshire Partners in Learning - Appendix 5).

5. **Schools Causing Concern**

All schools categorised as 'special measures, 'serious weaknesses' or 'requiring improvement' by Ofsted will immediately trigger a School Causing Concern category. The LA has a statutory role with Schools Causing Concern and will oversee and monitor the progress of schools in this category through a formal Task Group (Appendix 6). The impact of any support commissioned by the school is also a focus for scrutiny by Oxfordshire County Council via the Lead Member for Education.

There is a clear expectation by the Department for Education (DfE) that where the school has been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate or the school is 'coasting', conversion to Academy status with a strong sponsor will be the normal route to secure improvement. The DfE's Schools Causing Concern guidance is adhered to (Appendix 7). Support for Schools Causing Concern may be brokered or commissioned through the LA, local partnerships and the Operational School to School Support Group.

Support for the academy conversion process is available from the Oxfordshire Academies Team. The Academies Protocol clarifies the LA's role with

academies and their relationship with the Regional Schools' Commissioner. (Appendix 7a)

6. Supporting High Quality Leadership

6.1 Leadership Development Programmes

Leadership Development Programmes, including new headteacher induction, are available through Oxfordshire County Council. These may be accessed directly or may be brokered through the Strategic Schools Partnership Board and its Operational School to School Support Group. Leadership programmes can also be accessed through the National College of Teaching and Leadership, which include programmes for school governors and middle leaders.

6.2 Quality Assurance of Governance

The LA has a commitment to support and ensure effective governance. The clerking service for governors is quality assured through high level training and a national accreditation programme. The Oxfordshire County Council governance manager attends Schools of Concern briefings and contributes to Task Groups as appropriate. The LA commissions governance reviews using a range of experienced and skilled staff. Governors are encouraged to follow a developmental path and the training that is provided is quality assured using self-reflection and appraisal. The LA has a statutory role to represent the Director of Children's Services at headteacher recruitment. This includes attendance at shortlisting and interviews and the provision of advice and guidance.

6.3 Advocating for Vulnerable Groups

The document 'A Strategy for Equity and Excellence in Education' sets out Oxfordshire's strategy to close attainment gaps for those vulnerable to underachieve (Appendix 8). It has four priorities:

- Priority 1 – Improve achievement for those who are disadvantaged.
- Priority 2 – Improve the achievement of those with Special Educational Needs.
- Priority 3 – Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Priority 4 – Reduce permanent and fixed term exclusions.

The strategy is overseen by the Strategic Schools Partnership and involves the whole range of partners across the Oxfordshire education system.

7.   Assessment and Moderation

The LA provides a robust statutory moderation process for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This work is commissioned from an approved provider and is quality assured by a SIL, so that practitioner judgements are evaluated in line with statutory requirements. There are teams of experienced school-based moderators, including teachers and headteachers, drawn from good and outstanding schools. The LA works in partnership with other local authorities to ensure that quality assurance is externally validated. In view of significant national changes to assessment in schools, the LA is working in partnership with schools to ensure that assessment systems are fit for purpose and that good practice in assessment is shared across the system. Moderation services are available to all providers.

8.   Ofsted and HMI

The LA has a strategic role to account for the quality of schools in Oxfordshire. The Head of Schools and Learning liaises regularly with our regional HMI. When grade 3 and 4 schools are inspected, LA staff or their commissioned counterparts contact the school, hold discussions with the lead inspector during the inspection and, if required, attend the feedback. During a new Short Inspection, LA staff will have a watching brief over the school and provide feedback as above. The LA gives formal feedback to the Director for Children, Education & Families and Interim Deputy Director – Education and Learning and to council members about the inspection. The LA also has role in the monitoring and challenge of schools judged to Require Improvement, including attendance at Section 8 monitoring inspection visits and liaison with the relevant inspector linked to those schools.

9.   Newly Qualified Teachers

The LA has delegated the support for newly qualified teachers to OTSA. Termly reports are commissioned from OTSA as the Appropriate Body and regular meetings are held to ensure the quality of newly qualified teachers. The impact of support for newly qualified teachers is monitored through the Operational School to School Support Group.

10.   Post 16

Most schools in Oxfordshire offer sixth forms. A small group in the south of the county operate as 11-16 schools and young people move after year 11 to sixth form provision in colleges of FE or independent providers. A multi-disciplinary group focusing on post 16 learning under the 'Raising the Participation Age' agenda has been in place since the inception of this duty. This pulls together the expertise of Oxfordshire colleagues with a responsibility for young people's post-16 destinations and particularly focusses on the needs of our most vulnerable learners to build aspiration and achievement. Links with schools are good and have played a significant part

in the improvement of Oxfordshire's figures for NEET, September Guarantee and Participation in Learning.

11. Other Local Authority Statutory Duties

- To act as an advocate for all children and young people in Oxfordshire.
- To establish and service a Standing Advisory Council to support Religious Education.
- To monitor children missing education and those children not in receipt of a minimum of 21 hours education.
- To ensure that families who elect to home educate meet their statutory obligation within a safe environment.
- To secure the correct licenses and work permits for children participating in employment.
- To reduce the need for exclusions and support effective transfers of pupils who are permanently excluded to secure continuity of education.

12. Summary

This is a working document that reflects the changing nature of school improvement services and the growing role of school leaders in developing a self-improving school system. The LA has its continued statutory roles as set out here and is, furthermore, highly committed to building capacity with the school sector and working transparently to co-deliver school improvement support. The LA also has a traded offer as 'Oxfordshire Partners in Learning' (OPL), which is continuously evolving to deliver high-quality services that respond to the needs of schools in Oxfordshire.