



# School Improvement Strategy

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## 2019 -20

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## **SECTION 1**

### **1.1 Strategic Framework**

Sutton’s strategic school improvement framework continues to sit within a wider national framework for improvement. The statutory responsibilities of a Local Authority, for educational excellence, are set out in the 1996 Education Act. This role has been further developed through subsequent legislation and Schools Causing Concern statutory guidance.

The outcome of these developments is the Local Authority has increasingly become a strategic commissioner and champion for parents and children, rather than the organisation which deliver school improvement services directly. This reflects a changed policy context in which schools are more diverse and have greater autonomy. However, a Local Authority retains the statutory duty “to promote high standards so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential” (1996 Education Act) and is required to ensure secure arrangements for school improvement.

### **1.2 Local Authority Commission**

One of the reasons for the development of Cognus was its potential to provide these secure arrangements for school improvement within a much-changed educational landscape. Sutton Borough Council has commissioned Cognus to deliver the remaining school improvement statutory duties. This commission began in November 2016.

The Cognus Strategy for School Improvement (2019/20) is also designed to reflect national policy and guidance changes. These include:

- The Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement (22 September 2015);
- Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement (2015);
- SEND Code of Practice (2014);
- The Framework for School Inspection under Sections 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2006. (September 2015);
- The Education and Adoption Act 2016 (which amends the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Academies Act 2010); and,
- The Schools’ Causing Concern Guidance – Intervening in Failing, underperforming and coasting Schools (March 2016)

Cognus exist to support schools, families and children/young people to access, enjoy and thrive in educational settings in school and the community. This strategy contributes to the work of the School Improvement team and will provide the information gained from the monitoring to facilitate targeted support for schools.

1. Understand the performance of all schools in Sutton, using data and information to identify those

maintained schools that require improvement and intervention.

2. Seek to work constructively with academies and other providers.
3. Secure strong leadership and governance for maintained schools that are not providing a good enough education. This will include working with the LA/Cognus to identify and support potential successful sponsors.
4. Take swift and effective action when failure occurs in a maintained school, by liaising with the LA/Cognus to get leadership and standards back up to at least 'good'.
5. Intervene early where the performance of a maintained school is declining, ensuring that schools secure the support needed to improve to at least 'good'.
6. Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement and to support other schools.
7. Build strong working relationships with education leaders in the area (including Governors and Board members) and encourage high calibre school leaders to support and challenge others.
8. Through dissemination of best practice and signposting, help schools to purchase from a diverse market of excellent providers and signpost where schools can access appropriate support.
9. Provide information and advice to the LA/Cognus where there is a need for 'formal intervention'.
10. Share information and data with the LA/Cognus relating to safeguarding and follow the guidance on the roles and responsibilities for safeguarding as set out in: 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.
11. Liaise with the LA/Cognus to maintain information and data about the quality of governance in schools and develop appropriate monitoring arrangements to identify early signs of failure in relation to finance, safety or performance standards.
12. Work in partnership with the LA/Cognus to secure a positive outcome in the event of an Ofsted inspection of the LA's school improvement functions.
13. Share enough information about financial and resource issues to enable the LA/Cognus to be secure that the company is sustainable.

In addition to the expected outcomes outlined above, LA/Cognus also has desired school improvement outcomes, which form the basis of monitoring and accountability for the commission to deliver statutory duties relating to school improvement. These four priorities are listed below:

1. **Partnership Working** - Stronger partnership working across and between sectors and stakeholders (including Sutton Borough Council) impacts positively on outcomes for children and schools.
2. **School Outcomes** - The profile of Sutton schools and other settings is improving so that the Borough performance reaches and exceeds that of statistical neighbours and national averages.
3. **Pupil Outcomes** - The outcomes for Sutton children, at the end of each stage of learning, reach and exceed those of statistical neighbours and national averages.
4. **Outcomes for Vulnerable Pupils** - The gaps in outcomes between identified groups of vulnerable Sutton children and the Sutton average pupil performance are narrowed at the end of each key stage.

## SECTION 2

### 2.1 Our School Improvement Vision

The relaunch of the school improvement service is to support all Sutton Primary school children receiving the best possible education. We seek to build a school improvement service that is outward facing and actively involved in educational research, discussion and policy.

Our vision recognises that all schools need to improve continuously, and all schools have something to contribute to the improvement of others.

We are working to ensure that all Sutton schools have access to the right expertise to support learning and governance with appropriate skills and knowledge. Professional development and staff wellbeing are key components of our strategy.

### 2.2 Inclusion

The early identification and overcoming of barriers to learning for vulnerable learners is at the heart of our strategy. Our objective is to maximise the attainment and readiness of all our vulnerable learners through supporting schools to develop strong inclusive practice, which is an entitlement of children and young people.

### 2.3 Enrichment

Our strategy believes education should include a focus on mental health, physical fitness, attendance, punctuality, pupil voice, supporting parents, families and communities to enhance learning. Only through incorporating each of these wider school improvement themes is it possible to achieve better outcomes for schools and their pupils.

### 2.5 The Five Performance Indicators

All schools demonstrate strong inclusive practice, with skilled professionals to meet predictive needs
All Pupils are making at least expected progress
More pupils are making above expected progress year on year
100% of teaching is assessed as being at least 'Good'
Pupils attendance is in line with the national average or higher

## SECTION 3

### 3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

The School Improvement Adviser will undertake categorisation of all Sutton maintained schools on an annual basis and this will be reviewed throughout the academic year when new hard and soft data is made available.

Categorisation will be based on a range of evidence including:

- governance;
- safeguarding;
- inclusive practices;
- published pupil outcomes (GLD, Key Stage 1 and 2);
- nationally available data on pupil performance, including IDSR
- The school's curriculum

- Ofsted / Parent View analysis;
- prior attainment data and indicators;
- Last inspection action points
- Your SEF
- Your SDP/SIP
- school's assessment/evaluation of the quality of teaching & learning;
- current levels of progress in reading, writing and mathematics;
- financial data, including details of over or under-spending;
- information regarding SEND
- parental complaints;

The School Improvement Adviser will be looking at how all these link together to lead the school forward.

The categorisation grade will be achieved through discussions with the leadership team. Support appropriate to the grade or any other support deemed necessary or pertinent to the school will be actioned within ten working days of the visit.

## **SECTION 4**

### **4.1 Support and Challenge**

All maintained schools within the Local Authority can expect to receive high quality and tailored support to meet their development needs as they work to become outstanding. Cognus will continually work with governors, headteachers and other professionals to ensure that it is able to provide the type of support required by schools within a constantly evolving educational landscape.

Maintained schools will be able to access a range of Cognus support to underpin their improvement journey.

Category	Support Model for Maintained Schools
(1) Focus: <b>Outstanding/Good Secure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 half day Adviser visits per academic year -no-cost service</li> </ul>
(2) Focus: <b>Good</b>  (with identified areas of development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 half days Adviser support a year - no-cost service</li> <li>• NLE/SLE support for specific areas of development</li> </ul>
(3) Focus: <b>Vulnerable schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 3 half days Adviser support a year - no-cost service</li> <li>• Additional adviser support during the year as deemed appropriate. *</li> <li>• NLE/SLE support for specific areas of development *</li> <li>• School Review Group meetings *</li> <li>• Cognus support according to priority development areas *</li> <li>• A review of governance arrangements</li> <li>• Support for governance / strategic change to Governing Body</li> </ul>

(\* if considered appropriate under the new DfE guidance September 2019)

## 4.2 DfE GUIDANCE

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the new guidance on **Schools Causing Concern**. This statutory guidance for local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) sets out the factors they will consider, and the process they will follow in order to decide the right approach to supporting a school to improve.

The new principles aim to provide school leaders with greater clarity and transparency on the circumstances in which there will be intervention in schools. It shows how underperforming schools are identified and the type of support they can expect; and the different ways of working with these schools. In practice, this means that:

- Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) will only mandate academy conversion, leadership change or trust transfer of a school in relation to educational standards if Ofsted has judged it inadequate.
- RSCs will not use educational standards warning notices unless the school has already received an Ofsted inadequate rating.
- RSCs will not use formal intervention powers as a result of a school meeting the coasting definition.
- RSCs will not conduct uninvited visits to schools.
- High quality and effective governance is key to the success of any school.

As such, the department is committed to ensuring robust governance in all schools. Where breakdowns in governance occur, The RSC and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to use their powers to hold schools to account for their governance and financial management regardless of the school's Ofsted rating. Both maintained schools and academies will be held to account equally and RSC's will continue to challenge underperformance in both types of school.

RSCs will always approach academy trusts, local authorities and in the case of schools with a religious character, the relevant religious body, not individual schools (unless the school is a single academy trust). The department remains committed to academy conversion as a positive choice for schools and will continue to aid conversion as it has done previously.

*Further information can be found on:*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-for-a-clear-and-simple-school-accountability-system>

<https://www.naht.org.uk/news-and-opinion/news/structures-inspection-and-accountability-news/new-guidance-on-schools-causing-concern-published-by-dfe/>

### **4.3 SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

The Sutton Educational Trust is made up of seven schools: Beddington Infants; Culvers House Primary; Dorchester Primary; Foresters Primary; High View Primary; Muschamp Primary and Nonsuch Primary.

The Sutton Education Trust is a Co-operative Trust which means that stakeholders, be they pupils, staff, parents/ carers or governors are full members and contribute in many ways. People who work and live locally, family members of our children as well as past pupils themselves can also join the Trust. There are also opportunities for other groups or bodies such as other schools and educational establishments to join the Trust. The Co-operative Trust school model means, that in a very real sense, schools will be increasingly owned mutually by their parents, pupils and staff plus their wider communities. All the schools currently involved made the decision to become the founding members of the Sutton Education Trust (SET) because it gives them the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other while protecting the individual nature of each of the schools.

### **4.4 SUTTON TEACHING SCHOOLS**

The Avenue Primary Academy is the lead Teaching School and has seven strategic partners:

- **St. Dunstan's Cheam C of E Primary School**
- **Stanley Park Infants' School and Children's Centre**
- **The Federation of St Elphege's Catholic Schools**
- **The Federation of Thomas Wall Nursery & Children's Centre and Robin Hood Infants' School**
- **Glenthorne High School** (our local secondary Teaching School)
- **University of Roehampton**
- **London Borough of Sutton** (Children, Young People & Learning)

They work in partnership with **Emmaus Teaching School Alliance**, **Sutton Secondary Teaching School Alliance**, and **Wandle Teaching School Alliance**.

All schools in Sutton with primary-aged pupils are members of the Alliance.

Cognus values the role of teaching schools in promoting excellence and ongoing improvement in Sutton schools. We work in partnership with teaching schools to commission school improvement work and signpost to training opportunities.

#### **4.5 HEADTEACHER INDUCTION AND INDUCTION MENTORING**

Cognus policy and procedures for the support of new Headteachers are set out in the School Improvement Policy for the Induction of Headteachers.

- The School Improvement Service will support all new Headteachers through a three- term induction period.
- The School Improvement Service will make it possible for new Headteachers to become familiar quickly with its structure, personnel and procedures.
- An Adviser may make additional half termly visits to provide support for the new Headteacher.
- A NLE /mentor will be identified to support the new Headteacher and the consent of the governing body for release will be sought.
- The provision of key contacts and their roles within the School Improvement Service will form part of the induction process; the school improvement adviser will facilitate this.
- Headteacher networks will provide an important, additional support mechanism beyond the scope of the School Improvement Service provision.
- From September 2019, a review of a school with a headteacher new to headship will be carried out within the first six months of the arrival of the new headteacher, unless inspected in the meantime. These reviews will be led by headteachers not advisers and be part of a supportive induction programme brokered through governing bodies.

#### **4.6 SCHOOL REVIEWS**

- All schools in Sutton will have the opportunity of commissioning a '360 Review', this will be carried out in line with the new Ofsted framework. This service will be available from Spring 2020.

#### **4.7 Curriculum Support**

- The School Improvement team will provide a series of training sessions and coaching sessions for Subject and Curriculum Leaders. Further details will be disseminated in November 2019, via e-mail to School Leaders and through the Cognus website. The training and coaching sessions will begin at the beginning of the Spring Term. The training will be led by Frances Hawkes, who is a trained Ofsted inspector. There will be a nominal cost for this training.

### **SECTION 5**

#### **5.1 SUTTON ACADEMIES**

The Local Authority has a statutory duty as set out in section 13a of the Education Act 1996 *“to promote high standards and fulfillment of potential in maintained schools and other education and training providers, so that all children and young people benefit from a good education.”*

To meet this duty the LA/Cognus will:

- monitor the attainment and progress of all learners in Sutton;
- ensure that the governors of all providers are aware of any concerns the LA/Cognus may have in relation to school provision;

National policy indicates that the LA/Cognus is expected to raise concerns about the conduct or performance of Academies and Free Schools directly with the DfE via the Regional School Commissioner. It is our shared intention that concerns, and issues should always be dealt with at a local level, but the LA/Cognus will exercise its right to direct formal concerns to the DfE where the concern is either persistent or so serious it cannot be resolved locally.

## **SECTION 6**

### **6.1 CPD TO PROMOTE INCLUSION AND QUALITY FIRST TEACHING**

#### **CPD 2019/20 – Investigative Seminar/Action Research Approach**

- Leading an Inclusive school – Natalie Packer – Heads/SEN(D)Co and Middle Leaders – Autumn Term 2019
- Quality First Teaching – Michael Hawkins – Middle Leaders/Class Teachers – Autumn/Spring Term
- ASD and Autism – Andrew Whitehouse – Leaders, SEN(D)Co and Class Teachers – Primary and Secondary x 4 sessions together and 2 separately
- Assessment for Learning - Shirley Clarke –Spring Term 2020 – Leaders/Teachers/Primary/Secondary

#### **APPENDIX 1**

### **PROTOCOLS FOR WORKING WITH SCHOOLS**

Schools:

- recognise that they are responsible for their own performance and the achievement of their pupils and should be given the maximum possible discretion to make decisions for themselves;
- appreciate that they must plan for continuous improvement with the maximum freedom to make decisions and manage resources;
- identify areas of their own practice that have proved to be instrumental in raising standards and brought about improvement in any aspect of school life. Share this practice with the Local Authority to enable good practice to be shared widely; and,
- are open and transparent about challenges they face.

The School Improvement Adviser is expected to:

- know each partner school sufficiently well to support the school to make effective judgments about the progress they are making and be able to challenge and support the school to improve;
- use a clear evidence base to qualify or challenge the schools own SEF judgments;
- in partnership with the school, provide practical advice and support;
- facilitate the sharing of good practice;
- adhere to guidance on confidentiality within the context of the Freedom of Information Act, The Data Protection Act and the Code of Practice on Local Authority and school relations (DfE 0027/2001); and,
- use knowledge of the school to alert the LA/Cognus to any emerging issues and broker additional support as appropriate.

**The School Improvement Adviser will:**

- demonstrate transparency and professionalism in dealings with each school;
- understand the school's context and develop a mutually trusting relationship with the school;
- ensure that any work in the school will be kept confidential to the school and Cognus staff on a need to know basis;
- ensure unnecessary bureaucratic burdens are not imposed on the school;
- carry out a minimum of three visits a year (dependent on category) with a clear focus on Achievement, Quality of Teaching, Leadership and Management and Behaviour and Safety;
- agree with the Headteacher any additional foci for visits (in addition to the termly agenda) in advance of each visit;
- provide a written Note of Visit within 5 working days; and,
- support the Governing Body in headteacher Performance Management if requested.

**APPENDIX 2**

**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL REVIEW GROUP**

In Sutton, School Review Groups are set up when a school is identified as causing concern. That concern may be short or long term. The aim of the group is to monitor the progress of the school towards a position where it can take independent responsibility for standards and provision in the school.

The Review Group is initially constituted at the behest of the local authority. Its membership will be:

- School Improvement Adviser (Chair of Review Group);
- Headteacher;
- Chair of Governors;

An appropriate officer, who will send out an agenda one week in advance of the meetings and prepare all minutes and other items for circulation as required, will assist this group. The group may receive any Trust review which may have taken place,

The group will involve any other school or Cognus staff as

required. Its key functions will be to:

- have a critical eye on the priorities and improvement strategies being utilised;
- ensure that it has an up-to-date view of current standards;
- measure progress on the identified issues;
- receive evaluation impact reports based on support provided;
- direct new work streams in the interests of learners;
- the school is improving rapidly enough; and,
- identify additional support required.

The group will meet on a timescale decided by the group.

The Local Authority will routinely generate an agenda. A model agenda is noted below:

## **School Review Group Meeting AGENDA**

**Date of Meeting:**

**Location:**

**Time:**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising
3. Brief reports from the Headteacher and Link Adviser including information on:
  - Effectiveness of leadership and management
  - Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - Personal development, behaviour and welfare
  - Outcomes for pupils
  - Early years provision (if applicable)
  - 16 to 19 study programmes (if applicable)
  - Progress on other issues
4. Information from others (depending on circumstances and may include SEND, attendance, exclusions, admissions and human resources)
5. Governors' Report
6. School's Financial Position
7. Any Other Business
8. Date of Next Meeting