



Cambridgeshire School Support Offer 2025-26

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Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

Cambridgeshire County Council Strategic Framework 2023-28, Ambition 7.

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Introduction

At Cambridgeshire County Council, our shared vision is simple yet profound; children and young people have opportunities to thrive (Ambition 7).

In Cambridgeshire's 2023 Quality of Life survey, only 66% of people expressed that they have access to great education. We need to raise this figure. We aim to ensure that all children have access to education from early years through to post 16 provision and are ready to enter and exit education prepared for the next phase in their lives.

Our ambition is to challenge and support all settings to set high aspirations for our children and young people. We are committed to improving outcomes for all children and young people including those with complex needs and mental health needs. This reflects our ambitions as set out in the Cambridgeshire County Council strategic framework.

Our strong, collaborative relationships with schools across the county are the foundation of our Successful School Strategy – because together, we can create brighter futures for our children.

Introduction

Through meaningful partnerships, our talented advisers work closely with senior leaders to strengthen leadership, and drive progress.

In line with national guidance, local authorities in England must consider recommendations from the Secretary of State regarding maintained schools identified as causing concern. This framework outlines key criteria and procedures that local authorities and regional school commissioners should follow to determine the most effective course of action for school improvement. Cambridgeshire's approach prioritises early intervention, aiming to safeguard pupils' education and mitigate risks associated with underperformance, including securing positive Ofsted outcomes.

To achieve this, Cambridgeshire rigorously analyses school performance using a wider range of indicators, including Ofsted inspection outcomes, national benchmarks and annual monitoring visits. Our Successful Schools Strategy is founded on the principles of proactive support, expert guidance, and a commitment to driving school improvement towards the best possible outcomes.

Support Level Universal Offer

Universal Support Offer

All Local Authority maintained primary schools in Cambridgeshire can access the universal offer of support.

All LA schools access an **Annual Monitoring Visit (AMV)**, the production of the **instrument of government** and the **appointment of LA governors**.

Governing bodies of these schools are responsible for ensuring that the LA is made aware of any **Headteacher recruitment** processes taking place, at which point, an LA adviser will be provided for the interview process.

In addition to this, Cambridgeshire maintained schools, academies and schools out of county can **buy into any of the traded elements**. These include the Primary Offer, specific subject support, training programmes, bespoke support, collaborative projects and reviews.

Support Level Initial Action

Level 1 Initial Action (IA)

- Schools will be placed on Level 1 initial action support if there is **targeted area of concern or temporary adversity**.
- Concerns raised to, or within the Local Authority, about the school will be discussed in the Local Authority School Improvement Group (SIG) who will contact the **School Improvement Adviser (SIA)**. The **SIA** will work with the school to look at how the area of concern or temporary adversity can be best addressed.
- This will be shared with the Lead Adviser for intervention and reviewed periodically to ensure progress is being made. If the issues persist or escalate beyond a reasonable timescale, the intervention stage may be raised.

Support Level Rapid Improvement Group

Level 2 Rapid Improvement Group (RIG)

Schools will enter **Stage 2 intervention** if their ability to independently drive improvement is deemed fragile, potentially leading to a **letter of concern**.

At the point at which a school is escalated to Stage 2 intervention, a core group of senior officers will determine whether to issue a letter of concern. This decision will be based on a set of criteria (See Appendix A) including pupil performance, leadership and management, safeguarding and Ofsted vulnerability.

As part of this process, schools will participate in **regular rapid improvement group (RIG) meetings** with **key senior officers** to closely monitor progress and impact against school improvement targets.

Where necessary, **additional support will be prioritised, for example from subject specialist advisers**, to accelerate positive change.

Schools are expected to remain at **Stage 2 for no longer than four terms** before demonstrating sustained improvement.

Whilst the RIG will prioritise support for the school, the school is responsible for making sure that it is purchasing the necessary amount of support to ensure the improvements can be made.

The Local Authority may exercise its statutory duty to direct schools to enter contracts or arrangements where insufficient support is being purchased.

Support Level High Level Action

Level 3 High Level Action (HLA)

Schools under **Stage 3 intervention** are considered to be delivering an **unsatisfactory quality of education**. For example, this may include where there is insufficient financial capacity to ensure that the appropriate quality of education can be provided. It may also be where there is too much instability in the school. For further information refer to Appendix A. This **will** result in a **letter of concern** which may lead to a **formal warning notice**. These schools will have a Local Authority High Level Action Plan coordinated by the Lead Adviser for intervention.

As part of this process, schools must attend **regular High-Level Action (HLA) meetings** with **key senior officers**, where progress and impact will be closely monitored. These meetings will also identify **additional support and partnership opportunities** to drive improvement.

To ensure sustained progress, the **school improvement team** may conduct **one-day reviews**, assessing whether necessary improvements, capacity-building, and long-term strategies are being effectively implemented.

Support Level High Level Action

Level 3 High Level Action (HLA)

At this stage, **further interventions may be considered**, including:

- **Withdrawal of delegated budget**
- **Appointment of additional governors**
- **Establishing a partnership with another school**
- **Replacing the governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB)**

Stage 3 intervention is designed to **ensure rapid and effective change**, strengthening leadership and governance whilst safeguarding students' educational outcomes

School support process

Key terms

SIG – School Improvement Group made up of: Head of School Improvement, Lead Adviser for Intervention, Strategic Lead for School Governance.

SIA – School Improvement Adviser

IA – Initial Action

RIG – Rapid Improvement Group

HLA – High Level Action

School support process

When a school is categorised for support, they will be notified by the **SIA** if it is Stage 1 Initial Action. If it is either Stage 2 or 3 support, they will be notified by a member of the School Improvement Group (SIG).

The Senior Adviser for Intervention will collaborate with relevant representatives from within the LA, and if appropriate the diocese to provide support.

A **RIG** or **HLA** meeting will be established chaired by the Senior Adviser for Intervention. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be invited to the meeting along with other key LA officers.

The purpose of these meetings is to work with school leaders to promptly remove the school from a high-risk category by ensuring weaknesses are resolved and progress is sustainable.

If governance needs strengthening, the Strategic Lead for School Governance will assist the governing body. As part of the support, the LA may **facilitate** a partnership with a more effective local school through the appointment of an executive head or the development of a federation or collaboration.

If a school fails to respond promptly to concerns raised by the **Local Authority**, the Local Authority may exercise its **statutory intervention powers** under the **Education and Inspections Act 2006**. These powers include:

- **Suspending the governing body's right to a delegated budget**, ensuring financial oversight.
- **Proposing the appointment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB)** to the Secretary of State, replacing the existing governance structure.
- **Requiring the school to collaborate or federate with another school** to strengthen leadership and drive improvements.

These interventions aim to secure rapid and effective improvement, safeguarding educational standards and pupil outcomes.

School support process

Flow chart

Stage 1 Initial Action (IA)

Concerns raised will be referred to the **SIG** group who will contact the **SIA**.

SIA will raise concern with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

SIA will work with the school to ensure that their strategic plans address the concerns.

SIA will provide a progress update to the **SIG** group each half term.

The school will move out of Stage 1 when the issue has been addressed. If the issue continues for more than 3 terms, capacity for improvement is limited or meets any of the school support criteria, a meeting of **SIG** group will decide on a move to the next stage of intervention.

Stage 2 Rapid Improvement Group (RIG)

Concerns raised will be referred to the **SIG** group to use the 'School Support Criteria' and determine the appropriate stage of support.

SIG group will invite the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to the **RIG** and consider whether to issue a letter of concern.

Lead Adviser for Intervention will meet with the Headteacher to discuss the **RIG** process.

The school will be sent the relevant documentation to support the **RIG** process and will be sent the dates for the meetings for the academic year.

Half termly **RIG** meetings will convene and will monitor the progress being made towards the concerns raised.

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will make recommendations to the **SIG** group about either the escalation or de-escalation of the stage of intervention depending on the evidence of progress being made.

Stage 3 High Level Action (HLA)

Concerns raised will be referred to the **SIG** group to use the 'School Support Criteria' and determine the appropriate stage of support.

SIG group will send a letter of concern to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors which may lead to a formal warning notice.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be contacted by the **SIG** group to inform them that they have entered Stage 3, the criteria this is based on and what this entails.

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will meet with the Headteacher to discuss the **HLA** process

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will decide if and when a leadership review is required.

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will co-ordinate a **HLA** plan to support the school.

The school will be sent the relevant documentation to support the **HLA** meeting process and will be sent the dates for the meetings for the academic year.

Half termly **HLA** meetings will convene. Monitoring will take place of the LA **HLA** Plan and the schools own strategic documents. Progress will be identified towards the concerns raised.

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will recommend to the **SIG** group the de-escalation to Stage 2 when there is evidence of impact towards the **HLA** plan.

Where schools have made good progress and do not need to continue with either Stage 1 or 2 intervention, a termly review may be put in place until the school has a sufficiently strong exit plan to sustain their own school improvement.

Review process for school support

A school's level of support is subject to ongoing review throughout the year and may be adjusted as needed.

Regular analysis of school data and contextual information is essential for assessing performance and is shared with key professionals across various council services, including Early Years, governance, SEND, finance, attendance, safeguarding, and place planning.

Schools within support levels 1, 2, or 3 will undergo more frequent monitoring, with the expectation that rapid and sustained improvement is achieved.

For schools transitioning out of a support level, they may move to a termly review, which can involve an evaluation of leadership and teaching & learning standards.

To exit the intervention framework, schools will demonstrate a sustainable, long-term improvement plan that ensures continued progress and stability.

The Lead Adviser for Intervention will convene a meeting of the **SIG** group to agree changes in levels of support as needed.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TRAINING PROGRAMME 2025-26

For governing bodies, headteachers, principals, clerks and governance professionals of maintained schools and academies



Cambridgeshire County Council



early years childcare and
school readiness service

Learn Together Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire County Council

Primary School Improvement Offer 2025/26

School Improvement Service



The coordinated school support framework

Universal support can be located within

- **The Primary Offer**

[Cambridgeshire Primary School Improvement Offer 2025 2026 updated May 2025](#)

- **The Governance Offer**

<https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk/asset-library/School-Governance-Training-Brochure-2025-2026.pdf>

- **The Early Years Offer**

[Cambridgeshire Early Years and Childcare \(CambsEYC\)](#)

The coordinated school support framework

Support at Levels 1, 2, and 3 will be delivered through a structured and collaborative approach, ensuring targeted assistance for school improvement.

- Level 1 Schools: A School Improvement Adviser will guide leaders in identifying key actions to drive necessary improvements.
- Level 2 & 3 Schools: Regular RIGs and HLA meetings will bring together professionals from multiple teams to align support with school priorities while adhering to the latest Ofsted framework requirements. Level 3 schools will have an LA HLA plan to support their work.
- The Lead Adviser for Intervention will work closely with school leaders and Local Authority officers to ensure that purchased support is being utilised effectively to achieve the best outcomes.

Support from specialist advisers

Targeted support may include support from specialist advisers.

- RIG and HLA meetings will seek information from English and Maths advisers if working in the schools.
- RIG and HLA meetings may also be used to guide the work of English and Maths advisers.
- At times, the RIG and HLA meeting will request support from other subject advisers such as RE, PSHE or PE.

Documentation

There is an expectation that key documents will be shared at RIG and HLA meetings.

Most of these documents will be the school's own documents.

The attainment and progress information proforma will be sent to schools to complete.

Documents to be shared will include;

- The school's improvement plan
- The school's SEF
- The governing body action plan
- A class structure with year groups and class names
- A staffing structure including roles, responsibilities and FTE.
- Attainment and Progress information

Other documentation will be requested on an individual school basis.

Strategic aim for school support

The overarching goal is to empower schools to develop and sustain their capacity for improvement. This will be accomplished through:

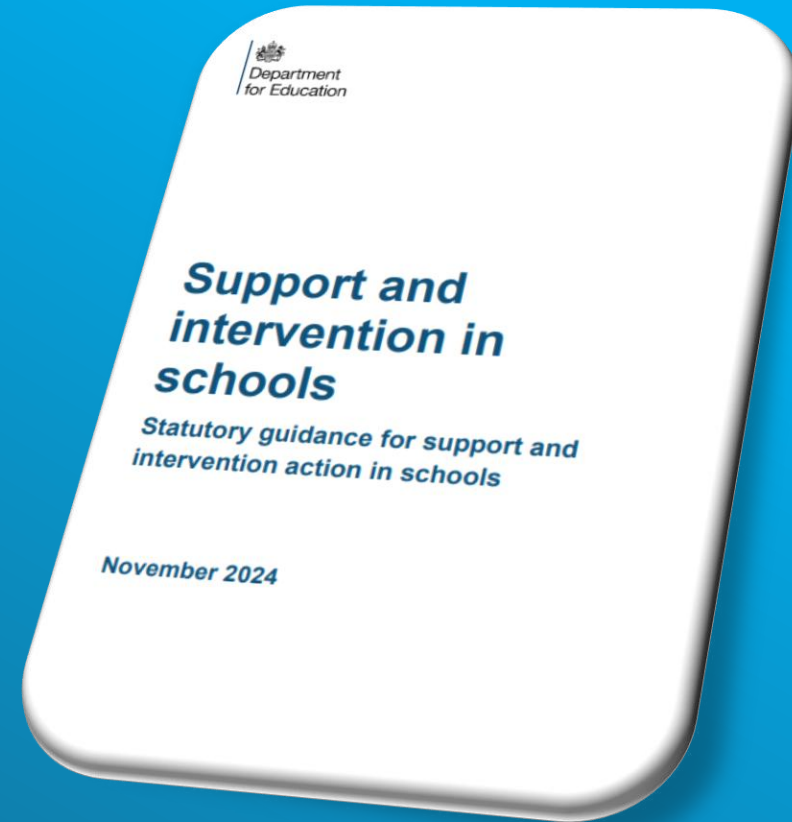
- Close collaboration with local authority teams.
- Establishing partnerships with successful local schools to share best practices and expertise.

By fostering strong networks and providing tailored guidance, this coordinated approach ensures that schools receive the necessary support to secure long-term improvement.

Statutory guidance on schools causing concern

The updated *Schools Causing Concern Guidance for Local Authorities*, effective **November 2024**, outlines the actions that local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) can take regarding schools eligible for intervention under **Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006**.

Where a maintained school has become eligible for intervention, local authorities have specific powers they may use to bring about improvement.



Warning notices for maintained schools

Local authorities can issue warning notices under the following circumstances:

- *The standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so; or*
- *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; or*
- *The safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise); or*
- *The governing body have failed to comply with a provision of an order under section 122 of the Education Act 2002 (teachers' pay and conditions) that applies to a teacher at the school; or have failed to secure that the Headteacher of the school complies with such provision.*

The Local Authority is required to provide a copy of any warning notice they issue to the relevant Regional Director and the appropriate religious body.

Contact

For any questions or further information please contact –

Lead Adviser for Intervention – Sue Bowman

Sue.bowman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Head of School Improvement – Emma Fuller

Emma.fuller@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Strategic Lead for School Governance – Chris Sutton

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Specialist advisers

Role	Name	Email
Lead Adviser for Maths and English	Gary Casey	Gary.casey@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Religious Education Adviser	Amanda Fitton	Amanda.Fitton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Physical Education and School Sports Adviser	Ian Roberts	Ian.roberts@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
PSHE Manager: development of the Primary Personal Development Programme	Steph Hoskin	Steph.hoskin@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
PSHE Manager: Relationships and Sex Education and Drugs Education	Cathy Murphy	Cathy.murphy@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Outdoor Education Adviser	Stephen Brown	Stephen.brown@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
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Appendix A: Criteria for school improvement

Any one or several of these criteria may lead to a school requiring support. This is at the discretion of the SIG group. School leaders will be made aware of those criteria that apply to them.

	Criteria	Details
1	Effective leadership and management	Areas in leadership or management not being addressed by the headteacher or governing body, requiring external support.
2	Effective governance	Governors not fulfilling statutory duties for example significant relationship issues or communication problems.
3	Attainment and progress	Levels of attainment, pupil's progress or expectations of progress are below national expected levels in core subjects, multiple foundation subjects or key pupil groups.
4	Curriculum	Curriculum design is not fit for purpose or significant work is required to enable an ambitious curriculum to be implemented.
5	Quality of teaching and learning	The quality of teaching and learning is prohibiting pupils from sufficient learning and making progress.
6	Behaviour and safety	Behaviour in classrooms, during transitions and relationships are poor. Behaviour impacts negatively on pupils' ability to learn.
7	Inclusion	Provision for SEND and disadvantaged pupils is concerning. This may include misuse of SEND funding, widespread concerns raised by parents or partner agencies.
8	Safeguarding	Safeguarding is not compliant, or the safeguarding culture is not strong. This could include inadequate safeguarding procedures, failures in risk assessments, reports of pupils not feeling safe.
9	Stakeholder confidence	A substantial number of pupils, parents, staff or governors have lost confidence in the school's leadership and is likely to lead to unplanned instability.
10	Resource shortages	Serious shortages of resources, mismanagement of resources or accommodation issues negatively affecting standards, leading to financial instability.
11	Ofsted	The school is judged to be requiring improvement/attention needed or less within an Ofsted area or identified as vulnerable by the Local Authority in terms of inspection outcomes, requiring additional support.

Appendix B: Formal intervention procedures

Section 63 – 66A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives the Local Authority and RSCs powers to challenge maintained schools to improve. The following actions can be taken:

1. Issuing a formal warning notice to the governing body.

LAs (and RSCs) may give warning notices to their maintained schools where they have concerns about unacceptable educational performance, a breakdown in leadership and governance, or where the safety of pupils or staff may be threatened.

2. To require the GB to enter into informal partnership arrangements.
3. Appointment of additional governors (Section 64).
4. Suspending the governing body's right to a delegated budget (Section 66).
5. Appointment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the Governing Body (Section 65 enables LA to apply to the RSC for consent to constitute the GB of a maintained school as an IEB).
6. Requiring the school to collaborate with another school or to federate.
7. Advise on alternative organisation including possible Academy type approach.
8. To enter into a contract or other arrangement for specified services of an advisory nature with a specified person (who may be the governing body of another school).
9. To make arrangements to collaborate with the governing body of another school.
10. To make arrangements to collaborate with a further education body.
11. To take specified steps for the purpose of creating or joining a federation



Cambridgeshire Local Authority acts as a champion of high standards of education across all its maintained schools and will work with intervention Stage 2 and Stage 3 schools to explore ways to monitor and support progress.
(Ref: DFE schools causing concern Jan 2024)

Purpose

The purpose of these meetings is to monitor, review and support school improvement. They will drive swift and sustainable improvements by closely monitoring progress, coordinating support, identifying challenges and holding leadership accountable. This collaborative approach will ensure that barriers to progress are addressed quickly, safeguarding the quality of education and outcomes for children.

Membership

The meetings will consist of the following members:

- Chair: Lead Adviser for Intervention
- School: Executive Headteacher or Headteacher
- School: Chair of Governors
- LA Officer: Strategic Lead for School Governance
- LA Officer: Strategic SEND Manager (as required)
- LA Officer: School Improvement Adviser
- LA Officer: Early Years Improvement Adviser
- LA Officer: SEND District Manager (as required)
- Diocesan representative (where appropriate)

Other LA Officers may be asked to attend the meetings depending on the circumstances and additional school representatives may be asked to attend where appropriate at the Chair’s discretion.

Frequency of meetings

The group will meet twice a term, but this may be increased, at the discretion of the Chair, should insufficient progress be made to address issues identified.

Meeting will follow a set agenda with papers to be circulated to members 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

Terms of reference

1. To ensure transparency, accountability and to facilitate the local authority's oversight and support role.
2. The meetings will monitor progress and impact through –
 - a. The implementation and impact of the School Development/Improvement Plan.
 - b. The work of the governing body.
 - c. The implementation and impact of the HLA plan for HLA schools.
 - d. Pupil performance outcome data in comparison to local and national statistics.
 - e. Internal monitoring processes from school leaders.
 - f. External monitoring processes from advisers.
 - g. Ongoing school self-evaluation.
 - h. Levels of stakeholder engagement and confidence.

3. The Chair will summarise the actions to be taken ahead of the next meeting.
4. Members of the RIG and HLA will address actions from the meetings and report back on impact in preparation for the following meeting.
5. At the end of each RIG and HLA there will be an evaluative summary on the progress and impact made since the last meeting. This in addition to the summary report can be shared with wider stakeholders such as FGB or senior members of staff as appropriate.
6. RIG and HLA meetings can run for up to 4 academic terms or will end when the Chair of the meeting and adviser colleagues feel that the school is able to sustain its own continued improvement.
7. Schools will produce an exit plan to share with the RIG/HLA group to outline its sustainability.
The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose.