



Cambridgeshire School Support Offer 2026-27

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: 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.

Stages of support



All schools can access the **Cambridgeshire universal offer of support**.

Where additional support is required, schools may be allocated to one of **four** support stages, based on the nature and extent of need.

Universal offer



Universal offer

- All Local Authority maintained primary schools in Cambridgeshire can access the universal offer of support.
- All Local Authority schools access an **Annual Monitoring Visit (AMV)**, the production of the **instrument of government** and the **appointment of Local Authority governors**.
- Governing bodies of these schools are responsible for ensuring that the Local Authority is made aware of any **Headteacher recruitment** processes that are taking place, at which point, a Local Authority 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.

Stage 1

Initial Action



Stage 1 Initial Action (IA)

- Schools will be placed on Stage 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 by 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.

Stage 2

Termly Review



Stage 2 – Termly Review (TR)

Schools will be placed on Level 2 where -

- Initial **concerns are not reducing** as expected, or there is a need to **monitor progress** against agreed actions aimed at addressing those concerns.
- **Additional oversight** is required to ensure that improvement actions are being implemented effectively.
- The school is **stepping down** from Stage 3 RIG support and requires continued monitoring to sustain progress and secure improvements.

Stage 3

Rapid Improvement Group



Stage 3 Rapid Improvement Group (RIG)

- Schools will enter **Stage 3 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 3 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 **half termly 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 3 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.

Stage 4

High Level Action



Stage 4 High Level Action (HLA)

- Schools under **Stage 4 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**.
- As part of this process, schools must attend **half termly 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.
- Between each HLA meeting, an interim review meeting will take place with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Lead Adviser for Intervention to monitor progress against agreed actions, strengthen school accountability, and ensure improvements are being implemented at pace. The Head of School Improvement and Strategic Lead for School Governance may also attend these meetings.
- 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.

Stage 4

High Level Action



Stage 4 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 4 intervention is designed to **ensure rapid and effective change**, strengthening leadership and governance whilst safeguarding pupils' educational outcomes

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, 3 or 4 support, they will be notified by a member of the School Improvement Group (SIG).
- The Lead Adviser for Intervention will collaborate with relevant representatives from within the Local Authority, and if appropriate the diocese, to provide support.
- A **TR**, **RIG** or **HLA** meeting will be established, chaired by the Lead Adviser for Intervention. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be invited to the meeting along with other key Local Authority officers.
- The purpose of these meetings is to work with school leaders to promptly remove the school from a high-risk category by ensuring actions are addressed and progress is sustainable.

School support process



- If governance needs strengthening, the Strategic Lead for School Governance will assist the governing body. As part of the support, the Local Authority 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 appropriately 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.

Stage 1 Initial Action



1

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

2

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

3

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

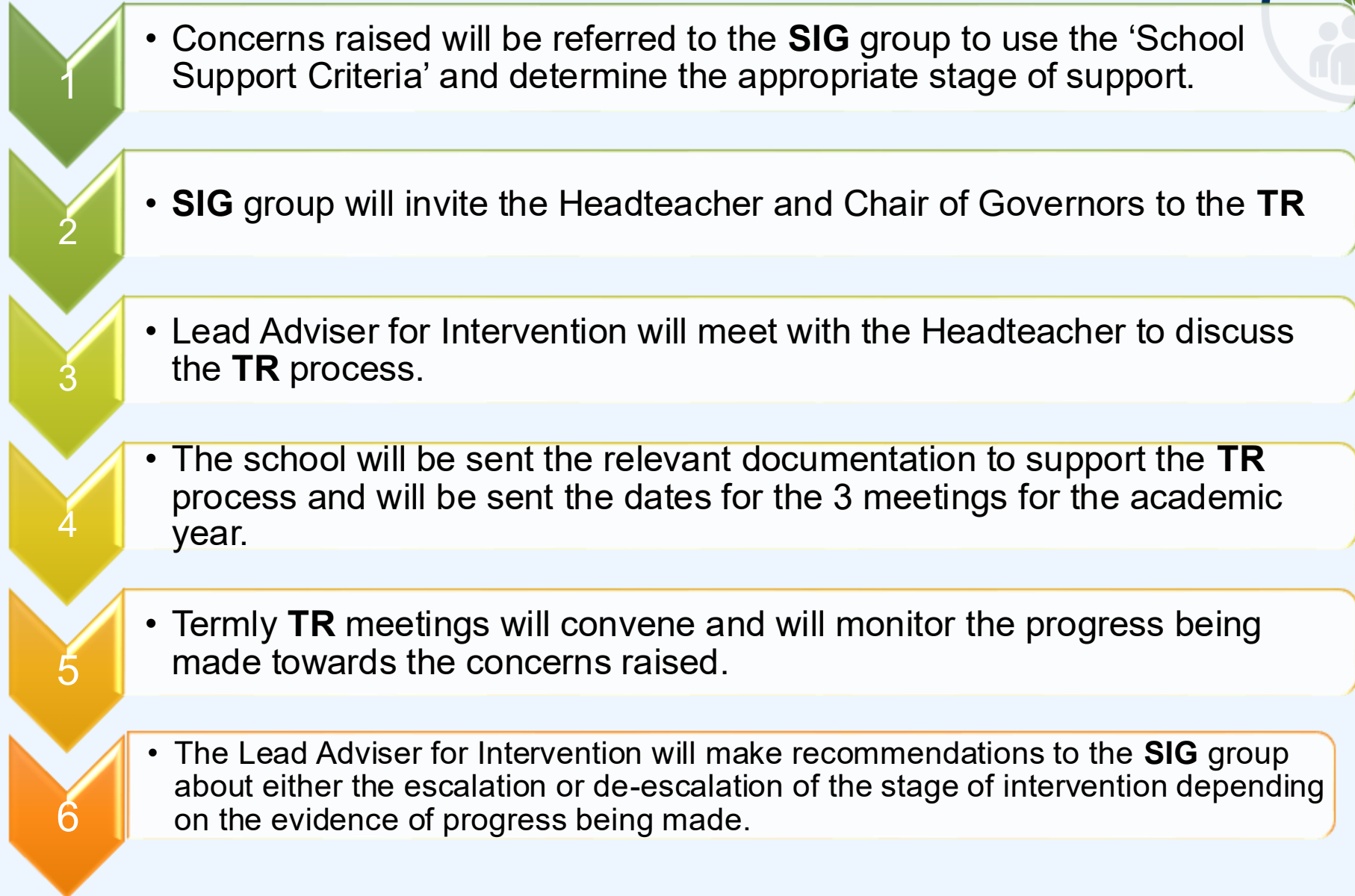
4

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

5

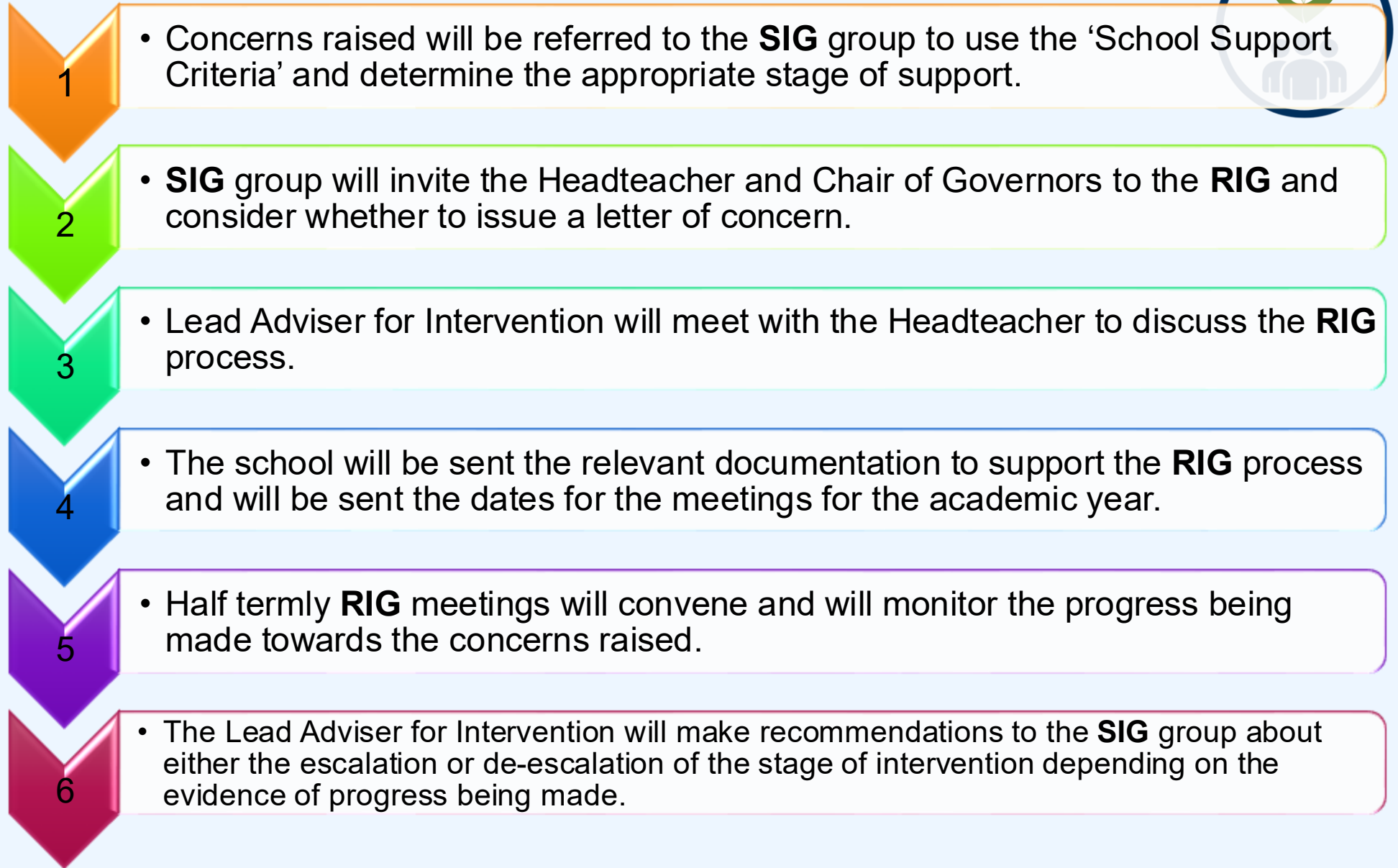
- The school will move out of Stage 1 when the issue has been addressed. If concerns persist despite support, or if additional criteria emerge, the **SIG** group may consider escalation to a higher level of support.

Stage 2 Termly Review



Stage 3

Rapid Improvement Group



Stage 4 High Level Action



1

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

2

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

3

- The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be contacted by the **SIG** group to inform them that they have entered Stage 4, the criteria this is based on and what this entails.

4

- The Lead Adviser for Intervention will meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to discuss the **HLA** process

5

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

6

- 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.

7

- Half termly **HLA** meetings will convene. In addition, interim review meetings will be scheduled to monitor progress against actions set at the HLA meeting.

8

- The Lead Adviser for Intervention will recommend to the **SIG** group the de-escalation to Stage 3 when there is sufficient evidence of impact from the school leadership.

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, 3 and 4 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 be required to demonstrate a sustainable, long-term improvement plan that ensures continued progress and stability.

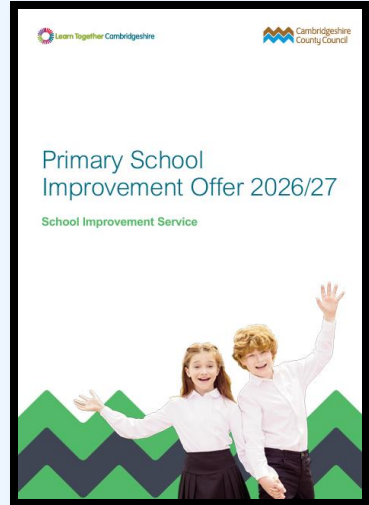
The Lead Adviser for Intervention will convene a meeting of the **SIG** group to agree changes in levels of support as needed.

The coordinated school support framework



- The Primary School Improvement Offer 2026/27

[Cambridgeshire Primary School Improvement Offer booklet 2026_2027 March 2026](#)

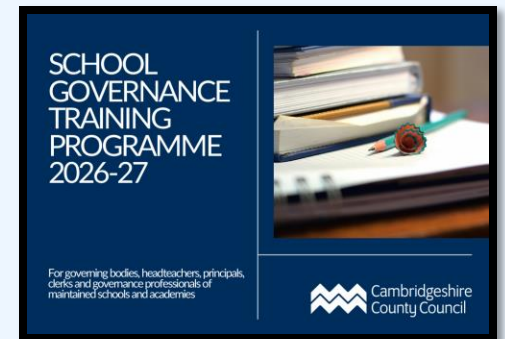


- The Cambridgeshire Early Years Childcare and School Readiness Service

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

- The School Governance Training Programme 2026/27

[2026 Governor Training Brochure July 2026](#)





Schools are expected to share key documents at TR, 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 may be requested on an individual school basis.

Documentation



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.

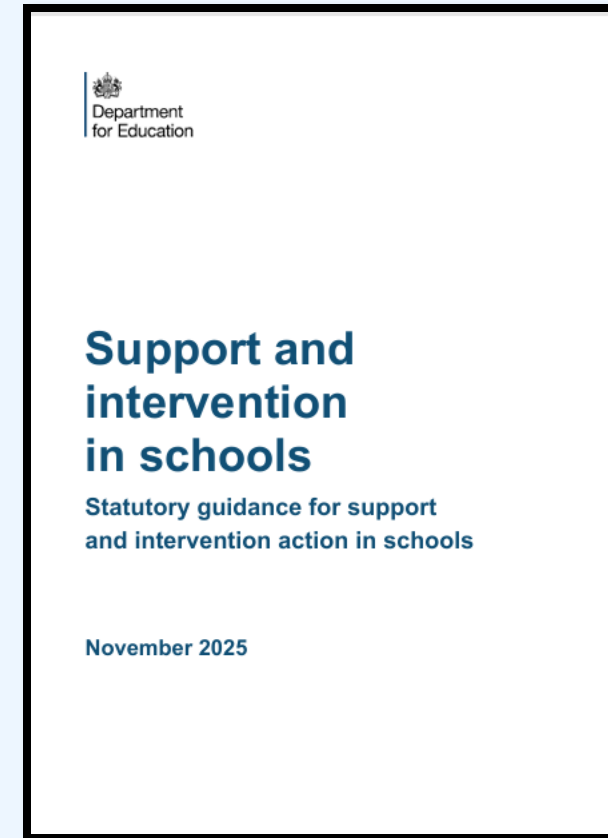
By fostering strong networks and providing tailored guidance, this coordinated approach ensures that schools receive the necessary support to secure long-term improvement.

Statutory guidance on schools causing concern



The updated *Schools Causing Concern Guidance for Local Authorities*, effective **November 2025**, 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.



Contacts



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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, pupils' 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 preventing pupils from making sufficient 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 other disadvantaged groups of 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, which 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 Needs Attention or Urgent Improvement within the Leadership and Governance 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