

Thurrock Council

Education Support Strategy

2019-2022



Thurrock Council vision

An ambitious and collaborative community, which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future



People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

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1. Executive summary

Working with our schools, early year's settings, partners and parents, we are proud to unveil our new Education Support Strategy for early years settings, schools, colleges, parents and partners, which focuses on six key areas.

Thurrock education will always hold a special place in my heart. From Primary School in Corringham, Secondary School in Stanford and onto College in Grays, Thurrock education gave me my start in life. I am only here today, getting to do this amazing job and having been elected at 19 years old because of the schools and teachers here in Thurrock.

With Ofsted criteria rightly becoming more rigorous, we need to ensure that Team Thurrock rises to the challenge. However, more to the point, we want to ensure we are working together to build a system which is ambitious, inclusive and sustainable. Key to this is the local authority's role as a constant critical friend, using our data to challenge and support our partners to close the attainment gap and to demonstrate progress for each child/young person. Equally, this means partners telling us about where they feel we can improve.

We have one of the most ambitious capital projects anywhere, with circa £70m of investment set aside to deliver around 3,500 new school places by 2021. Our locally grown multi-academy trusts have worked hard with the council to attract this record investment from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and our success is a strong commentary on our close working relationship with a range of strategic partners.

A key focus of ours is to support the growth of our schools and our Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to ensure we both drive economies of scale and build internal capacity to recruit, train and retain the best teachers within our MATs.

One of our six key priorities is mental and physical health, recognising the need to offer early help so our young people have the tools they need to cope with an often-hectic world. We know that children who are well are children who succeed. The financial plan Thurrock Council has run from 2016 has ensured we eliminated a £30m funding gap in the borough's finances, and balanced the budget, while producing modest surpluses over 4 years.

To demonstrate how important we take supporting wellbeing within our family of schools, we invested over £1.5m extra in the 2019 financial year alone to support non-statutory services such as mental health provision and the schools forum with the historic deficit in the Dedicated School Grant. We have also invested almost £4m extra in improving sporting facilities. We are also working closely with the police and schools forum to ensure that our early offer of help and youth offending offer are accessible for schools and young people outside of school hours.

We take inclusion seriously. Another of our six goals consists of building on the work to ensure we establish resource bases to try to support all children in mainstream education wherever possible – this is good for young people, avoids over and inappropriate use of PRU education and protects core budgets. We must build on this; certainly, as we look to a new long-term vision for Educational Needs and Disabilities and ensuring that Education Health Care Plans work is timely and effective for young people.

Thurrock is also proud that we are one of the few authorities, working with the School' Forum, to be fully rolling out the new National Funding Formula from 2020 (with 2019/2020 being used as a transitional year) to ensure that funding is closely targeted towards deprivation, and thus strengthening our inclusion agenda.

Thurrock has a bright future. We are on the doorstep of the greatest capital city in the world, with some of the best and most inclusive schools anywhere and with a local authority, which is a leader in local government. We will do more to support the delivery of our skills agenda across the South Essex Corridor to ensure that every Thurrock pupil has a clear and bespoke employment pathway.

Between our Skills and Employment Service, Inspire, and our family of schools, we want to ensure that the skills agenda is something that is embedded throughout every school phase.

We all know that we must build a local economy and a workforce which have the skills required to deliver the infrastructure of the future and in which students are ready and equipped to take advantage of the enormous opportunities around them.

I am very grateful for every teacher, governor, parent, student and members of the council and school staff who have done so much to make Thurrock such a success story today, and what we are all doing to make us the envy of the country tomorrow.

Councillor James Halden
Cabinet Member for Education Thurrock Council



2. Key education support priorities

The key education support priorities for Thurrock Council are:

- 1) **attainment** – raise attainment and close the attainment gaps between key pupil groups, across all key phases and key stages
- 2) **capacity** – see all of our schools as good or outstanding, look at the principle of a minimum of five schools from both primary and secondary phases within single MATs, and ensure that we support each MAT to have the greatest capacity for recruitment, retaining highly skilled staff across all key phases
- 3) **inclusion** – secure high quality alternative provision, which includes a mainstream offer, and implement a vision for SEND that ensures that every child and young person has equitable access to a great education
- 4) **employability and skills** – ensure all children and young people have access to high quality careers, information and guidance, which includes bespoke education and skills pathways, working with partners in the public and private sector to unlock opportunity for and meet employment needs of young people.
- 5) **wellbeing and safety** – promotion of an inclusive approach to creating improved mental and physical health, as well as lead the fight against anti-social behaviour, violence in all its forms and gang related issues
- 6) **rigor and partnership** – work in partnership with schools, academies and our Teaching Schools to be the constant critical friend, regularly applying data and information to support and challenge in order to ensure that problems are never a surprise, that our practice stands up to scrutiny and that we are always Ofsted ready

3. Vision for education in Thurrock

The Thurrock School Education Support Strategy, which includes the Policy for School Improvement, sets out how early years settings, schools, academies, MATs, colleges, teaching schools and the council will work in partnership to achieve our vision:

In Thurrock, we have a relentless drive to champion all of our children and young people to ensure they have the best start in life, make the most amount of progress enabling them to have a fulfilling and prosperous future. We want all of our schools to be sustainable, provide high quality learning and skills opportunities, including a rich cultural entitlement whilst continuing to raise standards to improve educational outcomes and meet the needs of our diverse growing communities.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health take the statutory duties very seriously; therefore will ensure that they know the schools, academies and free schools in the borough well. They will ensure their officers gather accurate and timely information about all schools, academies and free schools through annual conversation visits, which take place at the beginning of each new academic year and will provide feedback to schools and academies during the academic year.

Our aspiration is that by 2022, Thurrock will be one of the top 25% of local authorities nationally for the quality and provision of learning across all age groups and abilities. Our ambition is that all schools in Thurrock are in the Multi Academy Trust of at least five schools, which include both primary and secondary phase.

4. Principles

Our principles have a foundation in the statutory duties that local education authorities are required to carry out. The table shows how they will be applied in Thurrock. In so doing the council will act as the champion for all Thurrock children and young people.

Statutory responsibility	What we will do in Thurrock
<p>Provide strong, strategic local leadership and development of an increasingly autonomous and diverse education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote high educational standards for all our children and young people in the borough and ensure that particular attention is given to the most disadvantaged groups • Work in partnership with the Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioner, local school leaders and the Dioceses, ensuring that school organisations is centred on the needs of children and young people as learners • Actively form partnerships with Multi- Academy Trusts, and Teaching School Alliances • Ensure all those working with children and young people will fulfil their responsibilities as corporate parents
<p>Safeguarding children is 'integral to all local authority, schools and other partners too'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with all partners to ensure children are effectively safeguarded • Support self-evaluation of school cultures for safeguarding and challenge when these are not secure • Facilitate the Safeguarding Leads Forum to ensure clear communication and planning of support arrangements between all agencies and schools through direct briefing and engagement activities with the safeguarding leads in school

Statutory responsibility	What we will do in Thurrock
<p>Work with partners to promote prevention and early intervention so early problems are dealt with before they become serious</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with other council services such as Brighter Futures, and beyond, such as Health Services • As champions of children, we will work with school leaders so schools cultures ensure that the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils and staff is everyone's concern • Provide access to Educational Psychology Services to support consultation and early intervention with children and young people
<p>Promote the interests of children, young people, parents and families and work with local communities to stimulate and support a diversity of school, early years and 16 to 19 provision that meets local needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurrock primary, secondary and special schools will actively form sustainable partnerships to improve standards, and be more able to withstand all aspects of external scrutiny and will be financially sustainable • There will be sufficiency of high quality local places that support parental preference whilst avoiding costly surplus capacity (a target of no more than 5% spare capacity) • Young people will have the knowledge, skills and experience to be ready to work and have access to vocational and technical pathways, comprehensive careers information advice and guidance and meaningful employer engagement • Children and young people in the care of the council are at the centre of all we do and benefit from all services • The head teacher of the Virtual School champions the educational rights of all 'children looked after' and will ensure that they achieve the best possible educational outcomes and works with schools to use Pupil Premium Plus funding to best effect
<p>Work with head teachers, principals, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, to 'promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling under-performance'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the national drive for self-improving schools through strong school leadership and governance • School leadership will be challenged to provide high quality teaching, learning and leadership through the strong partnership work with the LA • School leaders will be challenged to provide concise evidence of standards and strategies for improvement during annual conversations with the Corporate Director Children Services (CDCS) or his representatives • Under-performance will be challenged by CDCS and through discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner • Pupil performance data will be made available and will be used to underpin monitoring and evaluations

Source: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities for the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services

4.1. Outcomes

We have already made great strides in raising standards at all key stages during the past few years working closely with our partners. The ambitions in this strategy underpin our drive to secure the very best start in life for all children and young people in Thurrock. As the local education authority, this strategy enables Thurrock Council to:

- have a fully embedded partnership model, which involves all our stakeholders working together in practice not just in theory
- be known for our ability to work in a supportive and challenging way delivering on commitments and dealing with issues regardless of how hard they appear to be
- be operating within budget with fully developed business areas that are recognised for quality and provision nationally

Our work is underpinned by the following key principles:

- school leaders are the drivers of school improvement and the teaching schools and the council are the enablers of school improvement and effectiveness
- schools are self-managing and autonomous institutions, working within a local and national context – they are responsible for their own performance
- the role of Thurrock local authority is to commission or broker support for schools and to intervene should provision and high quality outcomes for children and young people be compromised
- where we identify concerns, we aim to broker improvement to prevent schools falling into an Ofsted category
- schools will be supported and challenged to continue and sustain improvement, both in attainment and in the rate of progress of our children and young people
- learning must be personalised, and partners will work together to narrow the attainment gap for all pupils and particularly for the most vulnerable
- all pupils must have the support they need to overcome any barriers to their learning and well-being and to achieve the highest possible standards
- young people in Thurrock aged 14 to 19 will have access to the widest range of education and skills opportunities and guidance in order to meet their interests, aspirations and needs and to be able to benefit from the growth in the area; this will include pupils aged between 19-25 with Special Education needs
- in Thurrock, we share performance data and use the analysis of it to improve outcomes for all children and young people. We will work together as one community for the benefit and ongoing improvement of all education establishments in the borough
- all pupils need access to a range of opportunities, which enable them to access support when required; this includes supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing

4.2. How we will measure progress made

Outcomes	Measures for success
All children and young people are ready for school and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children entering school at age related expectations • Children achieving a 'good level of development' at the end of the early year foundation stage • Children attain at least the 'expected standard' at the end of KS1 and KS2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined • Children make at least the expected progress at the end of KS2 reading, writing and mathematics • Young People attain at least grade 5 in English and Mathematics at the end of KS4 • Young People make good progress between the end of KS2 and KS4 leading to high progress 8 scores • Children looked after, children with SEND and disadvantaged children achieving educational outcomes in line with their peers • Access to support around physical and emotional wellbeing
Access to education that meets the needs our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurrock early years setting, included childminders, schools and colleges are judged good or outstanding by Ofsted • Children's centres that improve outcomes for children and their families reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers; in child development and school readiness and raise parenting skills and aspirations and improve child and family health and life choices • Take up of funded early education and childcare for two, three and four year-olds • Services for post-16 young people are effective • Sufficient, good quality early years, school and college places for all our children and young people

4.3. The School Support Strategy

This strategy sets out how Thurrock Council will balance both the support and challenge offered to all our education stakeholders. The goal is that all Thurrock's children young people leave school and college at Post-16 or 18 and pupils aged between 19 and 25 with Special Education needs, with a strong desire for learning and an ability to prosper and fully participate in the community in which they live and work. It has two elements; priorities for School Organisation and a School Improvement Policy.

In delivering the Education Support Strategy, Thurrock Council will:

- collaborate with education providers to improve attainment and progress for all Thurrock pupils
- reduce dips in attainment arising from transition points when children change school phases
- develop our collective commitment to enable all children and young people to experience an inclusive education

- embed the ambition to raise standards for all pupils including those who are disadvantaged, those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those in the care of the council
- secure long-term financial sustainability for all schools taking into account funding challenges and increasing pupil numbers
- work in partnership with all stakeholders who play a role in education provision and standards across Thurrock

We will evaluate our progress and report to the Corporate Director of Children's Services Management Team, Children's Overview and Scrutiny committee and stakeholders annually.

5. Reasons for change

The landscape for education in Thurrock is changing in line with the national context:

- the implementation of the revised National Funding Formula presents challenges to all schools, both nationally and locally regardless of whether they have experienced an increase in funding or a reduction in funding – we recognise that our smaller primary schools are likely to be particularly vulnerable and we will continue to support opportunities to expand smaller primary schools to support the funding landscape
- the curriculum demands under the new inspection regime from Ofsted will increase the range of leadership responsibilities – these will affect all schools, but are especially demanding for smaller schools alongside changes in funding
- school leadership is demanding – school leaders have to respond to challenges to recruit high quality staff and the governing body to ensure that it has a full complement of members, which can be a challenge across our borough and is intensified in some schools
- outcomes across key stages 1 and 2 have risen and are all nearly at, or above, national averages, although not enough disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make the expected progress
- key stage 4 is below the national average, so standards need to improve
- there is a growing need and therefore an increasing demand for specialist provision for children and young people with SEND
- demand for school places is increasing as the population grows in some parts of the borough but some schools remain unpopular with parents

5.1. Inclusion

Thurrock has a long-standing commitment to an inclusive system of education health care and support that actively enables access and full participation to all aspects of community life.

Developing inclusive practice is a consistent theme in ensuring the success of this strategy. All children and young people are entitled to an education, which enables and empowers them to achieve the best possible outcomes. The majority of school aged young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities attend a mainstream school in their local community.

A small number of children / young people have special needs that are appropriately met in a special school, which provides for pupils with special needs. In Thurrock there are 2 special academies which provide for those pupils with special educational needs and a further special free school, which is due to deliver a further 75 places in the academic year 2021/22. There are also a number of bases located within schools catering for Social Emotional Mental Health, Hearing and Visual Impairment and Speech, Language and Communication needs.

We recognise that for some children with SEND need a mainstream school which will provide the best educational opportunities, as a result of this we have introduced the following model:-

An additional Primary Resource Base for children and young people who have Education Health and Care Plans describing their social emotional and mental health needs. This resource base is

being developed to build on the successful practice of the existing Primary Resource Base to provide opportunities for these children to be involved in the wider community of the school.

Two inclusion bases – this will offer primary school children who are experiencing difficulties in mainstream school and are at risk of, or have been permanently excluded from school. Admission to these two bases is through the Inclusion and Access service of the Local Authority and managed through the Primary Inclusion Panel with the view to reintegrating these children back into mainstream school when they are able to engage fully within the community of the school.

The Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service provides a wide range of consultation and support to enable schools to develop their inclusive offer for all children. Educational psychologists working in Thurrock undertake direct work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. In line with the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority outlined in the SEND Code of Practice. In addition to this, schools and academies are able to commission an educational psychologist to support early intervention with children and young people who require SEND support. This can be through consultation, person centred planning meetings, assessment and intervention activities, and training/support for staff.

We take a holistic approach to promoting positive outcomes across all areas of development and learning for children and young people. We also follow a person centred planning approach. This means that our practice is always informed by which is important for the child/young person.

We offer:

- facilitating person centred planning meetings
- supporting parent/carers to understand the child or young person's needs to promote positive outcomes
- assessment of the child or young person's individual needs within the context of their educational setting and community
- consultation, supervision and training for school staff and other professionals working with children and young people
- liaison across agencies to facilitate a holistic approach to supporting children and young people

The Virtual School

In order to thrive, all young people need to feel safe, cared for and loved. For some children this responsibility falls on local authorities and is underpinned by statutory guidance. The council has a unique responsibility to children in care, as corporate parents and should ask the question 'would this be good enough for my child?' All officers of the council, working in collaboration with partner agencies, have a responsibility to ensure that all 'children looked after' receive the highest quality education. The Virtual School provides challenge and support to all partners and promotes the educational rights of all 'children looked after'.

6. SEND strategic vision

Our vision is that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across the Local Area access outstanding support in their early years, school, college and at work that enables them to fully achieve their potential and have happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Outreach

The council has commissioned **Beacon Hill Academy** to provide Outreach to all schools and academies in Thurrock supporting pupils with physical, severe or complex learning difficulties in:

- early years learning
- ICT access
- risk assessment and manual handling
- physical education

The council has commissioned Treetops School to provide Outreach to all schools and academies in Thurrock supporting pupils with learning difficulties and autism in:

- specialist Applied Behavioural Analysis/Verbal Behaviour (ABA/VB support for pupils with Autism)
- specialist assessments and support for dyslexia
- specialist support for learning difficulties

The council has commissioned The Osborne Trust to provide outreach for children and young people with Hearing or Visual Impairment from the Resource Bases at St. Clere's School.

The Area SENCo will also support early years' settings and schools to ensure all pupils have access to an appropriate, challenging place of learning with a curriculum that has expectations and meets the needs of all learners.

The Area SENCo will also advise early years' settings and schools on the SEND processes and how to access Disability Access Funding (DAF) and the Early Years Inclusion Fund.

6.1. SEND priorities

	Priority	Evidenced by
1.	Ensure children and families are at the heart of an effective SEND system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parental engagement and co-production in all areas of SEND ▪ The role of the parent/carer Forum in putting forward parent voice through CaPa ▪ Parent, child and young person engagement in service commissioning, planning and delivery ▪ Co-production of individual Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) ▪ Pupil voice and targeted engagement work ▪ Feedback via surveys and group work

	Priority	Evidenced by
2.	Ensure every child and young person is making good progress and attends a good place to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A comprehensive range of high quality SEND services available in mainstream and special early years settings, schools and colleges for children and young people for SEND support and EHCP ▪ Measures of individual outcomes progress through EHCP and SEND support and beyond academic attainment ▪ Appropriate range of specialist places in place ▪ SEND progress measures in schools and bases for EHCP and SEND support ▪ Targeted monitoring and support for all vulnerable groups including SEND support, EHCP, LAC, CIN and young offenders
3.	Ensure children and families are well supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality comprehensive information on all SEND services through the Local Offer ▪ High quality support services in all provision to enable parents, children and young people to achieve identified outcomes ▪ High quality advisory and support services through IS and Information, Advice and Guidance services (IAGS) ▪ Clear and comprehensive routes of access to coordinate Health and Social Care support including SEND support, CAF, Health Pathways including Emotional, Health and Mental Wellbeing and EHCP
4.	Ensure an effective and responsive approach to assessing and meeting the needs of children and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality and efficient SEND assessment, delivery, monitoring and administration at early years settings, schools and college provision with effective Local Authority, Health and Social Care contributions ▪ Comprehensive support for children and young people in place leading to enhanced outcomes for all children and young people
5.	Ensure the identification of early support for children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive early identification and support systems including Early Support, Portage, Outreach services and co-ordinated support in Early Years settings incorporating Health, Social Care and Education systems under a single coordinated system ▪ Clear systems of support and advice to early years settings to ensure identification of needs and support including support from the Area SENCo ▪ Access to Educational Psychology Services for early intervention and support

	Priority	Evidenced by
6.	Ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear and timely Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) planning ensuring young people have a wide range of opportunities and achieve across all six areas of PFA ▪ Clear and effective systems enabling young people to transition to adult education, employment, health and social care services based on their individual needs

7. Safeguarding

Safeguarding in Education is a high priority. This includes providing training to Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in schools and other educational settings and coordinating DSL forums to ensure regular updates and information. We regularly provide advice and support to schools and parents as appropriate.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The LADO is responsible for co-ordinating and managing the process and framework for allegations of abuse against children by people who work either in a professional or voluntary capacity. It may be that the person either:

- has or may have behaved in a way that has harmed a child
- may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

By law, unitary local authorities like Thurrock have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is involved in the management and oversight of individual cases. The LADO does not investigate cases but they do:

- give advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- work closely with the police and other agencies
- monitor cases to make sure that they are dealt with as quickly, thoroughly and fairly as possible

Allegations against employees must be reported to:

- a senior manager in the organisation immediately
- the LADO within 1 working day

8. School organisation

8.1. Aim

Our School Organisation aim is that by 2022 Thurrock will have sufficient high quality early years and education places for all of the children and young people in the borough. Every parent should be confident that their child would be able to attend a local, good or better school that meets their needs.

8.2. Objectives

Our objectives are to:

- secure sufficient places for children in all phases and types of school
- maximise the proportion of children being offered a place at their first choice of school
- schools will be of a sufficient size to be viable in the future, offer a high quality and broad curriculum, attract pupils from the local community and provide strong outcomes for children
- primary schools will be readily accessible* to pupils; for the majority of children within walking distance in urban areas and with transport to school in rural areas, in accordance with the council's *Home to School Transport Policy April 2016

To meet our objectives, we will:

- plan school places to meet both current and projected future demand
- actively promote strong schools, encouraging the best schools to expand
- work with the Admissions Service to maximise the opportunity for parents to secure a place at one of their three preferences when applying to a school for admission
- work with schools to ensure they remain a popular choice for local parents and young people
- work in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE), the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses, Multi-Academy Trusts, local councils, Regional Schools Commissioner's Office and agencies to secure the best and most sustainable schools for local communities

Further guidance on school organisations across Thurrock is given in the council's 'Pupil Place Plan'

8.3. Sufficient school places

It is the role of Thurrock Council to plan, organise and commission places in the borough, in a way that raises standards. Manages rising pupil numbers and creates a diverse community of schools. The council seeks to exercise this function in partnership with the DfE, local and National MATS and the ESFA.

The need for school places changes in response to population movements and birth rate variations. Increases in demand can lead to the creation of a new school or the expansion of existing schools by adding permanent or temporary accommodation. Surplus places can also mean the reduction of school provision in an area through reduced admission arrangements or the rationalisation of school provision, including changes to existing catchment areas. Predicting school place demand is a complex task. Where children go to school involves a range of factors such as housing growth, inward and outward migration and parental preference. For instance,

some of our schools on the edges of Thurrock cater for out-of-borough pupils, some Thurrock pupils attend schools in neighbouring counties, and other schools rely on significant numbers of pupils beyond catchment areas to fill places.

Every year the team works extremely hard to produce a new Pupil Place Plan, which forecasts the future need for pupil places. This document not only informs the council strategically where education provision will need to be expanded, but also informs housing developers where educational infrastructure will be required.

We are very fortunate in Thurrock to have built strong working relationships with our schools and academies and this allows us to work in partnership with them when identifying locations where we can build in additional capacity for schools places. The council regularly updates the Schools' Forum so that we are able to widely communicate where schools will be expanded or take bulge classes. Schools in the relevant planning area are also consulted when the council is looking at options for expanding schools to take additional pupils to meet demand for places. This allows for total transparency with decisions that are made when meeting the demand for additional places. The council also provides updates on Schools capital Programme via the Head Teachers Bulletin as well as termly Head Teacher Briefings. This has further strengthened the partnership working we have in place with our schools and academies across Thurrock.

As a result, planning for school places is based on a number of different variables. The council is forecasting that for school places to date has been robust and accurate. Again this year, as last year, there was only a 0.9% difference between forecasts and actual numbers admitted for September. Forecast pupil numbers inform any review of school provision undertaken by the council. We are committed to ensuring there is best match of pupil places to pupil demand, wherever practicable.

There will be a total investment of £100 million in our schools which includes the expansion of some good schools, the building of two new secondary free-schools, Thames Park and Orsett Heath and a new Treetops Special School. There will also be new accommodation for Harris Riverside, which will be in full operation in their new premises from September 2019.

There has been a strong schools capital Programme 2018/19, which has delivered over 400 additional primary and secondary schools places in order to meet demand and support parental choice for schools places.

8.4. A diverse supply of strong schools

Thurrock also has a growing population – predicted to rise by approximately 10% every decade. The ethnic profile of Thurrock has become increasingly diverse over the last decade. Both the age and ethnic profiles differ significantly between the 20 wards.

Thurrock Council is in a unique financial position. It is the first top tier authority who have not only successfully balanced the budget until 2021/22 without cutting services, but is also well on its way to achieving its ambition to become self-sufficient from national revenue support grant funding.

Under the banner 'People, Place, Prosperity', the council is creating a place where people and businesses want to stay and thrive, and developers and investors want to invest. Investment in infrastructure for the benefit of residents and local businesses is key. Good roads, health services, schools and leisure facilities are all required to enable people to live and work, play and stay in the borough.

Thurrock is a mix of semi-rural and urban areas and we want to ensure that education provision is sustained in all parts of the borough to ensure the needs of our local communities are met. This is especially important given the national challenges that we face. We will work with schools to provide the best provision of school places and outcomes for pupils within a given locality.

The council will support a governing body to find and join a suitable multi-academy trust where there is a need to raise standards or expand the variety of provision in an area. All schools are different and governing bodies need to reflect on which option works for them. We will also work with the Regional Schools Commissioner to support academies with falling standards to become a part of an existing MAT. Thurrock is keen to keep the 'family of schools' in Thurrock and to work alongside them to ensure schools continue to meet the needs of the population.

8.5. Admissions process

Thurrock Council subscribes to the national admissions process. This includes rounds for starting school and secondary transfers and managing in-year admissions. It also includes adhering to a Fair Access Protocol to place children who may be considered vulnerable.

Our admissions team will strive to ensure every child in Thurrock is offered a school place on national offer day. They will also arrange appeal hearings for Thurrock community and voluntary controlled schools and some academies who wish to buy into the service.

The governing body or academy trust arranges appeals hearings for foundation schools, voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools.

Every year the council has ensured that every Thurrock child has a school place on National Offer Day.

On National Offer Day on 15th March 2019, 1708 (71.2%) Thurrock secondary school applicants were offered their first preference school (71.2%), 263 Thurrock applicants were offered their second preference school (10.9%) and 140 Thurrock applicants were offered their third preference school (5.8%).

On Primary national offer day, on 15th April 2019, there were 2126 offers made, 87.96% got their first choice of primary school place for this September, 160 (6.62%) applicants got their second choice place and 42 (1.74%) were offered their third choice school place.

Nearly 100% of primary and secondary school applications are made online.

9. School education support

9.1. Aim

Our School Education support aim is that by 2022, there will be an effective process to 'challenge and support all schools to increase quality and standards of education'.

Thurrock has an innovative approach to school/college effectiveness, which involves the council and all schools and colleges. This includes:

- the sharing of LA data with all stakeholders to ensure identification of vulnerable/ low performing institutions
- sector-led improvement – schools/colleges providing analysis, challenge and support to each other to effect rapid and sustained improvement
- the teaching schools, good and outstanding schools, stand-alone academies, academy chains and free schools providing capacity and school improvement strategies for others with the ambition to ensure all schools are good or better at their next inspection
- working with the teaching school alliances to promote and participate in evidence based improvement and CPD activities
- high quality, school driven initial teacher training with continuous professional development for the extended QTS requirements and a continued focus on recruitment and retention of the best staff to our institutions
- ensuring the 'Family of Schools' in Thurrock remains strong and increases the pace of improvement and accelerates progress especially in English, mathematics and science whilst maximising the unique benefits of working in partnership with the Royal Opera House, Thurrock Music Service and other outstanding external cultural partners to ensure our pupils have a rich and varied curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils
- developing a range of high quality employment, apprenticeships and training opportunities supported by settings, schools, academies, higher educational establishments and local business to ensure no one is NEET

The teaching schools will:

- deliver high quality, evidence-based CPD
- work closely with the Local Authority to ensure that schools access the training opportunities that have been developed
- recruit and train new teachers
- share their best leaders to coach and mentor staff in other schools
- offer additional support to schools that have judgements of RI or inadequate, as brokered by the local authority

9.2. Objectives

Our objectives are:

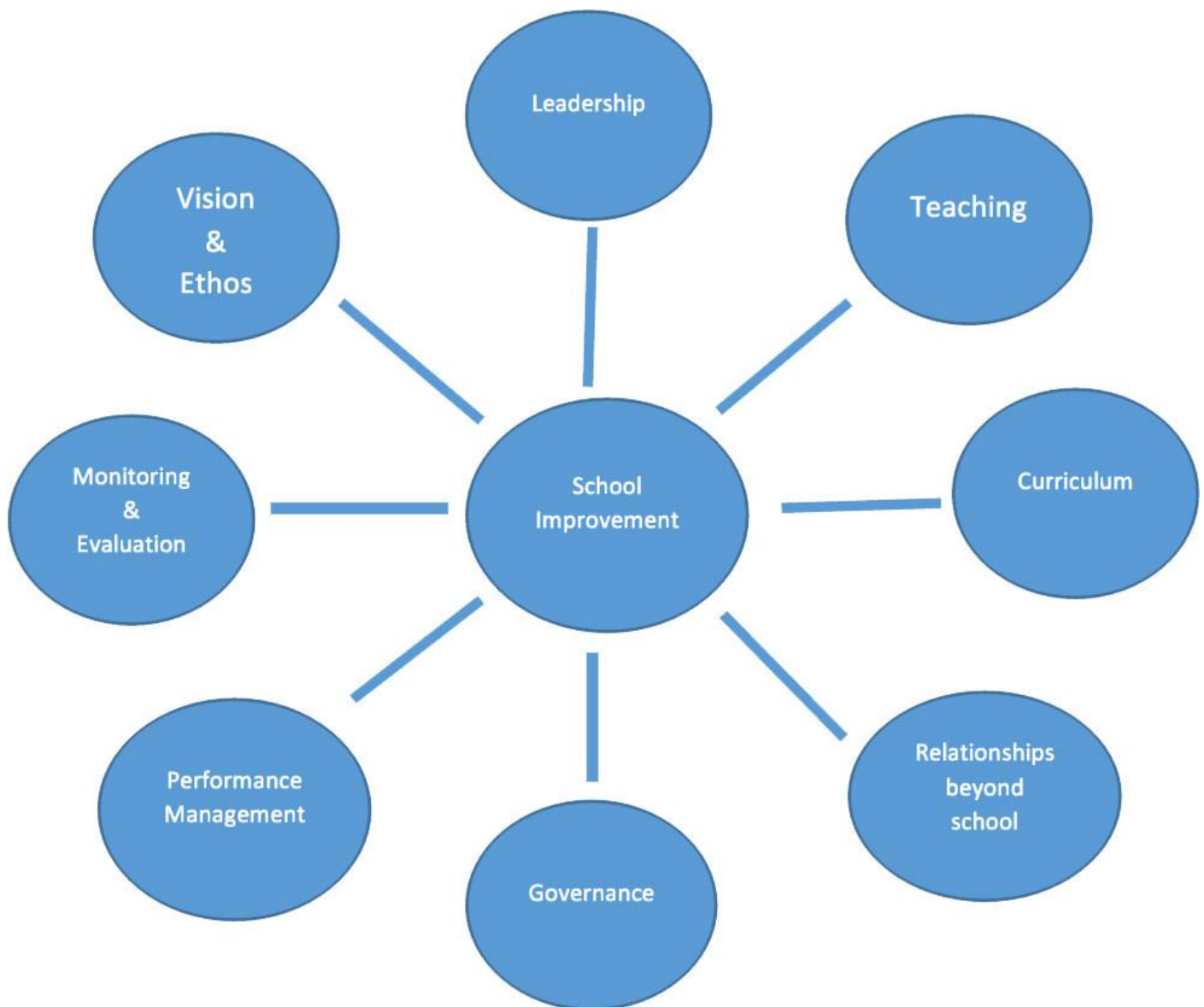
- through the Schools Standards and Progress Board, chaired by the Assistant Director of Education and Skills, effectively monitor all schools and categorise local authority maintained schools annually to ensure that council resources are targeted where they are most needed to make the biggest difference
- enhance the support provided by the three teaching schools to all schools and academies that are deemed not yet 'Good' by Ofsted

- in partnership with the teaching schools, use local and national data and intelligence to continue to develop school improvement services, which are available to all schools and settings through a comprehensive traded portfolio of continuing professional development
- work in partnership with Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner where schools are judged 'Inadequate' to support them to improve
- broker and commission National Leader in Education (NLE) in Thurrock and beyond to provide school-to-school support where necessary

9.3. School improvement policy

Thurrock Council has a statutory duty to promote high standards of care and education across Thurrock. In order to do this we need to work in strong partnerships within a sector led improvement system and with reducing national funds.

The council will work with all of those involved across the education system. We each have a different role to play, but will work together to make the biggest improvement for children and young people so they get the best start in life.



Academy trusts, governing bodies and leaders will:

- fulfil their responsibility to continuously improve outcomes for children
- lead a school that at least meets national expectations
- accumulate evidence for well-judged self-evaluation
- develop effective systems for self-improvement
- accurately evaluate the standards of the school against national benchmarks
- develop a highly skilled workforce with strong succession planning
- have high expectations of themselves, teachers, other staff and pupils
- effectively withstand external scrutiny
- seek to emulate best practice locally, borough-wide and beyond the borough borders
- work in partnership with other school leaders, teaching schools, DfE and the council to improve their school
- use any strengths and additional capacity they have to support other schools

Thurrock Council will:

- promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance
- ensure that all schools effectively safeguard children and young people
- challenge underperformance in leadership, governance and pupil performance
- support how school leaders effectively promote pupil health and care, including their mental health and well-being
- build effective relationships with school leaders and understand a school's strengths and areas for development
- work in partnership with leaders of the school-led improvement system, such as teaching schools, to support school improvement in any Thurrock school
- use statutory powers of intervention where there is evidence that this is needed
- work with school leadership and governance so that they can effectively withstand external scrutiny, such as inspection by Ofsted
- liaise with the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure academies and free schools provide high standards of education for Thurrock pupils
- support local authority maintained schools in delivering an appropriate and broad national curriculum
- work towards effective inclusive cultures and practice in schools and Thurrock Council

9.4. School improvement approach

The School Effectiveness Team provided by Thurrock Council consists of school improvement colleagues, early years' welfare and improvement team, educational welfare services, governance development team and as an appropriate body for newly qualified teachers.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services (CDCS), through a range of engagement opportunities including the annual conversation meetings, challenges and supports school leadership teams and governing bodies or boards so their schools are (at least) a 'Good' place for Thurrock children to enjoy learning so they have the best start in life. We aim for school leaders to effectively self-evaluate, self-manage and self-improve. The local authority has a strong data analysis function and uses this to identify performance concerns and issues in individual schools. The senior officers draw on this data pack and the knowledge from the Schools Standards and Progress Board (SSPB) when they make their annual conversations to schools to examine progress against targeted outcomes, strengths and priorities for the school or academy.

The SSPB is held termly to enable the Assistant Director for Education and Skills to carry out the statutory duty of the LA to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential. The board is a mechanism for the sharing of intelligence held within separate departments within Children's Services and identifying areas of strength and vulnerability. It forms part of the council's school effectiveness framework. Contributions from a range of officers support the CDCS conversations with the Regional Schools Commissioner, The Department for Education, HMI and Ofsted.

The use of data, Ofsted Framework and Outcomes, annual conversations and local intelligence also determines the Continuing Professional Development offer from the Early Years Team, Teaching Schools and commissioned partners.

The **Early Years Team** also sits within the School Improvement Team and consists of the 2 Year Old Entitlement Team, Childcare Sufficiency Team, 0-3 Learning & Development Officers, Welfare Requirement Development Officers and Early Education Improvement Officers. Alongside the Thurrock Brighter Futures Children's Centres, the team focuses on ensuring improved outcomes for children aged 0-5, ensuring a positive start to early education and childcare and school readiness. The **Thurrock Early Years Strategy**, when complete will evidence how this work is aligned to the Education Support Strategy.

The School Improvement Team will work with the teaching schools to host high quality conferences for Early Years, Governors, School Leaders, SEND and Inclusion, with national speakers at the forefront of their fields. We will continue to hold termly head teacher briefings to share and disseminate developments.

The governor development service provides support and training to ensure all governors have a good understanding of schools and the skills to both challenge and support their teachers and leaders. The team offers advice and training through the Thurrock Traded Services website. Governing Boards and Trusts can commission bespoke training to meet the needs of their school.

The Appropriate Body – the council acts, on a service-level agreement basis, as the appropriate body service for newly qualified teachers. It jointly commissions training, support for mentors, advice, quality assurance and accreditation.

Moderation – as part of the council's statutory duties, Statutory Assessment Test administration monitoring and moderation of EYFS, Phonics Screening Checks, Key Stage 1 and 2-teacher assessment will continue to be undertaken by the School Improvement Team and LA external moderators. All LA external moderators and School Improvement colleagues must undertake and successfully complete the national Standards and Testing Agency (STA) training and standardisation exercise annually. The School Improvement Manager is the designated Moderation Manager for the council and therefore is responsible for ensuring all moderation activities comply with the all DfE statutory guidance.

Academies are required by the DfE to have a written agreement with their chosen moderation provider. The agreement is circulated to all primary schools and academies within the Moderation Handbook each autumn term. Headteachers / Principals are required to sign and return the agreement before the first informal moderation session in the autumn term. The Moderation Handbook clearly sets out the moderation process within the borough.

When instructed by the STA, on behalf of the DfE, Officers from the School Improvement Team may undertake maladministration investigations. These will be carried out in accordance with the maladministration guidance from the DfE and will serve for the sole purpose of fact-finding. The officers will not be asked to make a decision as to whether a maladministration has occurred. This

is the role of the STA maladministration team. Where a maladministration has occurred the CDCS will send a letter of expectations to the school leaders, including governors, requesting what changes the school has made to reassure the council that there will be no repetition of maladministration. Should maladministration occur in a local authority maintained school, the council will work with governors to understand why and to ensure that it will not happen again.

The **Education Welfare Service** will provide support for schools and families to ensure all children and young people on school rolls attend school every day. It is understood that there is a correlation between poor attendance and under achievement and possible safeguarding concerns. It is essential therefore, that poor attendance is addressed by schools at the earliest possible opportunity. Thurrock Council is committed to supporting schools and welcomes contact from partner agencies who have concerns about a child or young person who may not be in the receipt of an education.

The service will continue to support schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996. Statutory action will be considered in order to protect children's rights to an education.

Education Welfare attendance management work is a traded service to academies, however the council is committed to ensuring the cost is easily affordable to all academies.

They will also work to ensure children missing education are located and in receipt of a suitable form of education. Children and young people of compulsory school age can be considered missing from education if they are not attending full-time education.

This includes children who are:

- not on a school roll
- not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school

Children not receiving full-time education are often amongst the most vulnerable in Thurrock. They are at increased risk of harm from exploitation, including sexual exploitation, and are more likely to engage in criminal and anti-social behaviour.

We will ensure that these children and young people can receive a suitable form of education as quickly as possible. However, it is important that all professionals who have contact with young people work together to find and place children missing from education.

The Education Welfare Service will maintain robust processes and procedures to reduce the risk of children missing education. A central register of children missing education, which is maintained by the Pupil Tracking and Child Employment Officer, supports these.

The Education Welfare Service will also issue work permits, child performance licenses and chaperone licenses using a responsible and considered process ensuring children's education is a priority.

The Education Welfare Service also monitors that home education sometimes known, as elective home education EHE is efficient, full-time and suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude in line with the Education Act 1996. They also monitor the number and frequency of requests to EHE in order to ensure schools are not encouraging pupils with difficulties to EHE.

A well-established **Recruitment and Retention Strategy Group**, which was formed as a result of a Thurrock Council commissioned Recruitment and Retention strategy that has the following aims:

Thurrock will lead the way in developing a learning culture across partners that will ensure it attracts, develops and retains a highly motivated, inspirational, diverse teaching workforce, which will make the major contribution in achieving Thurrock's ambitious vision for the young people who live and are educated here.

Thurrock schools understand that the quality of Teaching and Learning is the factor that has the greatest impact on the achievement of pupils and young people. It is vital; therefore, that Thurrock attracts, recruits, develops and retains high quality teaching staff. Schools, the Local Authority and other key strategic partners need to work together to offer high quality training opportunities to those interested in joining the profession and to attract, recruit and develop newly qualified and experienced teachers, and to retain those who can contribute to raising standards in Thurrock schools.

Improving the efficiency and equity of schooling in Thurrock largely depends on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, their teaching is of high quality and all students have access to high quality teaching. The issue is not simply recruiting teachers, but recruiting appropriate teachers. Thus, Thurrock will commit to adopt strategies, which will recruit and retain the right staff at the right time, for the right roles. This is at the heart of improving the education of young people in Thurrock - as well as being the key to flourishing schools.

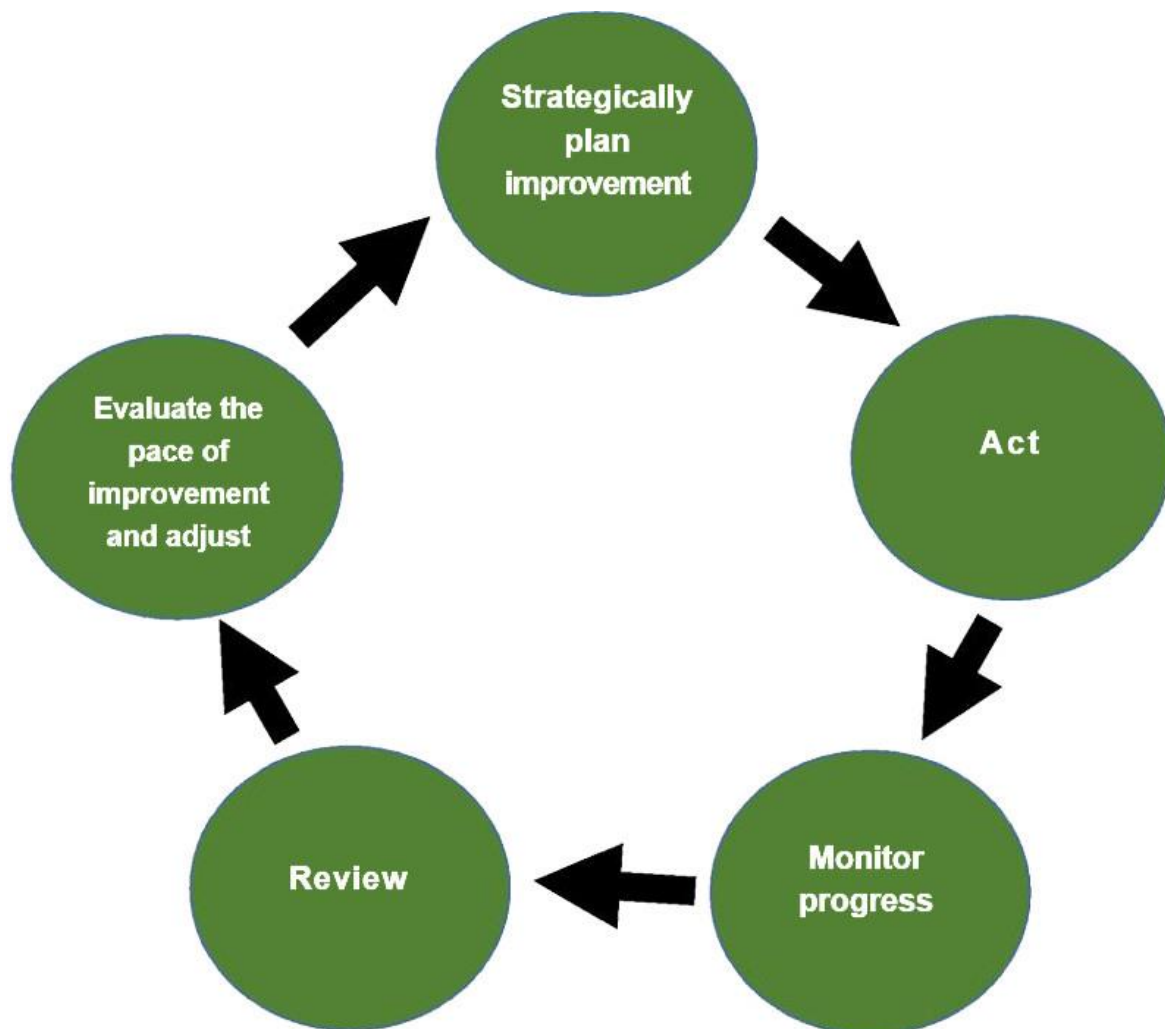
The council is working with all three teaching schools to ensure the best quality candidates are attracted to train and teach in the borough. The strategy group has partners with a preferred agency who will work with the council to attend university fairs across the UK to promote Thurrock as a place to train, teach and work. The teaching schools will continue to deliver high quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT), whilst researching and developing innovative ways to develop ITT and continuing professional development (CPD) which has been shown to be a driver for the retention of staff.

As part of the recruitment and retention of the highest quality leaders, teachers and support staff in Thurrock Educational Establishments, the annual **Thurrock Education Awards** will continue to recognise the quality of teachers, leaders, support staff and partners who contribute to the education of the children and young people in Thurrock. The council is committed to ensuring the event celebrates and awards the very best in the borough

Thurrock Council will continue to work with the education establishments and cultural partners to support the Cultural Entitlement. Through the Royal Opera House and Bridge, the Local Authority has and will continue to encourage all Thurrock schools to take up the Cultural Education Challenge, to connect more children and young people with great art and culture and really make a difference to their educational achievement and progress.

The **Thurrock Trailblazer** Programme was established following detailed research into how to achieve Thurrock wide cultural entitlement to enrich the lives of young people in Thurrock, raising their attainment and aspiration through opportunities to engage with a rich Programme of high quality cultural activities. Thurrock Trailblazer is an innovative Programme of high quality arts and cultural activities, visits to heritage sites and specialist teacher training, that boosts creative learning in schools and accelerates pupils' development.

The council has committed to part-funding Thurrock Trailblazer until 2020 and is actively working with the Trailblazer steering group to develop a Thurrock Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP) that is informed by the values of Trailblazer.



Five steps in the continuous cycle of improvement:

- **strategically plan improvement**
- **act**
- **monitor progress**
- **review**
- **evaluate the pace of improvement and adjust**

Within this cycle:

- **plan by asking how 'good' is the school against the national standards for schools, embedded in Ofsted's inspection framework**
- **plan taking account of school, local and national priorities**
- **use evidence-based approaches to improvement strategies and monitoring**
- **compare improvement to national standards of pupil outcomes for all pupils and vulnerable groups**

All teams will work in close partnership with the head teacher and staff of the Virtual School so that children and young people in the care of the Thurrock Council find success in learning, care in schools and a parental response from us all so that they achieve and make at least expected progress in all Thurrock schools and beyond.

10. The role of governance in schools

'Good' or 'Better' schools require good or better governance. School governors are vital to school improvement and to secure the educational outcomes for Thurrock children and young people. Governors' carry out a strategic role and are required to fulfil three strategic functions:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- holding the head teacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

In order for schools and their pupils to thrive, governors must fulfil their responsibilities to create a strong school vision, appointing strong leadership teams and challenging them to improve. They also have a duty of care to the head teacher so that they can fulfil their role effectively.

The governance of schools in Thurrock takes a wide variety of forms, mainly dependent upon whether they are an academy or local authority maintained. A governing body of a voluntary aided or controlled school will be constituted to reflect their relationship with the Dioceses.

School Governors are vital in the decision making for taking their institution into a MAT or converting a school to academy status. Thurrock Council will work closely with governing bodies (and the Diocese) when options are being considered. At the earliest possible moment, consideration needs to be given on how schools can respond to the organisational challenges outlined in this strategy.

We will expect governors to understand future challenges of funding, curriculum and leadership and what this means for them and nearby schools. It is expected that they will engage in the process of consultation, considering the future prospects of the school and how it fits in the local family of schools:

- we will develop a strong group of expert governors to spread good practice
- we will expand the range of services available to buy that are offered by the governor development service
- we will challenge governors to effectively withstand external scrutiny as inspection changes and monitoring by the local authority increases
- we will work with all schools and academies to recruit and develop strong governors and clerks

11. Schools Standards and Progress Board (SSPB) - Using Data to Drive Improvement

The Assistant Director chairs this Board for Education and Skills along with various LA children's service educational leads. The Board meets every term to scrutinize progress of all schools to identify any emerging concerns or areas of good practice to share more widely. This Board will also look to identify school-to-school support around Ofsted inspections, and actively brokers' opportunities, for example mock Ofsted inspections.

The Board identifies support and resources to maintained schools and considers broader issues – for example, trends on school attendance. Where an academy is considered vulnerable appropriate action is then taken to address any further needs in line with the school led improvement system; resources are commissioned/identified through the teaching schools and the deployment of SLEs, NLEs and school-to-school support is brokered.

The local authority has a strong data analysis function and uses this to identify performance concerns and issues in individual schools. The senior officers draw on this data pack when they make their annual conversations to schools to examine progress against targeted outcomes, strengths and priorities for the school or academy.

Yearly data analysis at the start of the autumn term provides the basis upon which the priorities for the borough and its community of schools are made. These priorities are shared and discussed at SSPB and where, in the case of a maintained school funding, will be allocated to commission the appropriate services offered by a range of partners and driven by the Teaching Schools Alliance to deliver the desired outcomes. In the case of an academy being identified as in need of support, the SIM will discuss with the Teaching School Leads who will identify the appropriate support.

11.1. Letters of expectation

The local authority effectively identifies, intervenes and will use formal powers in schools where necessary. Where school performance is causing concern there remains a statutory responsibility to provide support, challenge and, where necessary, intervention to bring about rapid improvement. Thurrock works closely with the school and all relevant partners when considering these issues.

If a school's standards drop, or Ofsted judges a school, academy or free school to be less than good, a letter of expectation will clarify the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health expectations of that institution.

11.2. Power of Intervention

The local authority follows the statutory guidance for local authorities given by the Department for Education, on behalf of the Secretary of State. Section 72 of the Education Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all local authorities in England, in exercising their functions in respect of maintained schools causing concern, to have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Where an academy is a cause for concern the Assistant Director for Education and Skills will inform the Academies Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to discuss the level of support required.

The RSC will address underperformance in academies on behalf of the Secretary of State in line with the statutory guidance for Schools Causing Concern (February 2018) and the ESFA funding agreements.

If a school does not improve or show significant signs of improving to 'Good' by the end of six half terms, consideration will be given to the use of the power to intervene by the local authority. This includes, but is not limited to, using warning notices or the installation of an Interim Executive Board (sections 67 to 69, Education and Inspection Act, 2006).

A discussion may be held with the Regional Schools Commissioner's office about whether school governors should meet with academy trusts who may be able to rapidly improve the school.

Warning notices

A warning notice can be issued, in relation to performance standards and safety or teachers' pay and conditions, to a maintained school by either a Local Authority or the RSC (on behalf of the Secretary of State). Warning notices to academies will be issued by the RSC.

We will consider the guidance in respect of warning notices and liaise closely with both the LA and the RSC. If the LA feels that a warning notice should be issued, and the school is a maintained school, it will seek to issue a warning notice. If the school is an academy then it will discuss the concerns with the RSC, who has the power to issue a notice if they feel one is appropriate.

When considering the statutory guidance relating to warning notices, the LA will also consider the engagement of the school with the support and challenge process. In a situation where the level of engagement is limited there will often be a smaller evidence base upon which to make an interpretation of the guidance. In these cases, a warning notice is more likely to be recommended to the Local Authority, in the case of a maintained school, or discussed with the Regional Schools Commissioner, in the case of an academy.

Specific intervention powers

Other forms of intervention will be considered in a similar way. Thurrock LA will consider the guidance in relation to requiring a governing body to enter into arrangements, the appointment of additional governors, appointing an Interim Executive Board (IEB) or suspending the delegated budget as required, liaising closely with the LA and the RSC. If we feel that an intervention power should be used, and the school is a maintained school, it will make a recommendation to the LA. If the school is an academy then it will discuss the concerns with the RSC, who has the power to act if they feel it is appropriate. It is clear in the Schools Causing Concern Statutory Guidance that the RSC may act independently of the LA in relation to maintained schools if it chooses to do so.

Thurrock Council's School Improvement Manager will continue to work with regional colleagues to develop regional practice in a peer led system.

12. External peer review support

Thurrock Council plans to work with the three teaching schools to develop a system-led school improvement process to build upon previous peer-to-peer support brokered by the school improvement team.

- in year 1 (2019/20) we will develop a limited number of pilots and examine the benefits of the processes already used in some schools or MATS
- in year 2 we will roll out a peer review model across Thurrock to all schools in a like for like, reciprocal, no cost offer

There may be a variety of peer review models, but typically, three school head teachers / principals will review each other's schools supported by an LA Officer. One head teacher / principal will take a lead and write up the findings from the review. The external adviser will act as providing quality standards and rigour.

The following principles will be applied:

- does it have external support from someone who has a wide view of standards (TIC, LA Officer Ofsted Inspector or is a National Leader in Education)?
- how rigorous is the process, does it cover all areas of standards (or do a thorough job of a focused area)?
- the process should not be burdensome to participants, but provide enough time for a thorough review and feedback
- the process should be cost neutral to the council and minimal to schools
- is it challenging and supportive of senior leadership so they know why they are doing well and what they need to improve?
- does leadership develop a further ability to withstand external scrutiny (most likely inspection)?
- do all parties find it very useful and worthwhile?

13. Developing young people's skills

Strong education for young people is important in ensuring Thurrock is a prosperous place to live and work. The development of skills in preparation for further learning and the world of work start at a young age. The new primary national curriculum places an increased emphasis on skills such as reasoning, application and effective communication. This is continued and expanded upon in the new GCSEs. As young people prepare to enter the world of work, they should do so with confidence, knowing they have received a consistent and high quality education.

Comprehensive and impartial career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is the corner stone of the provision of post-16 options for young people in Thurrock.

As part of the education provision in Thurrock, the council in partnership with all the Thurrock secondary schools has signed up to the Young Person's Entitlement based on the Gatsby Benchmarks and offering the following to all the young people in the borough:

- a programme of careers education and preparation for adult life within the curriculum, from Year 7 to age 19 supported by a named careers leader
- information about the full range of options available in education, training and programs to prepare for adult life at each point of transition, and about the progression of opportunities from those options
- up to date information about the job market and future choices
- opportunities to have direct contact with employers and employees offering every young person seven encounters with employers – at least one each year from Year 7 to Year 13, including Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) employers
- opportunities to hear from, and visit, other Post-16 providers, sixth form and further education colleges and universities to inform pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships
- first-hand experiences of the workplace
- regular reviews of young people's achievements and progress, and emerging career plans
- individual impartial careers guidance, from an appropriately qualified careers adviser, at times when young people need it, from Year 8 to age 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities)
- opportunities for young people to feedback comments and suggestions on the careers education, information, advice and guidance provided

Thurrock Council and schools are committed to delivering high quality apprenticeships to provide formal on-the-job training and practical experience with qualifications.

Inspire Thurrock Careers (ITC) delivers a robust offer of support to all young people at risk of becoming NEET by rigorous tracking of all young people throughout Year 11 (in close partnership with the schools). The September Guarantee offer of an educational/training place to all Year 11s has been consistently 100% for the past few years underpinning the Post-16 work that allows Thurrock Council to reliably report on '0' Unknowns' to the DfE. Thurrock is ranked as 1 out of 152 LA's in the LA Unknown ranking.

The combined Unknown and NEET figure of 1.7% puts Thurrock in 4th place in the country in the LA ranking. For Raising of Participation Age statistics Thurrock Council is ranked 13th in the country for the Year 12s whilst the Year 13s Participation (97.7%) is higher than all statistical neighbours.

This data demonstrates the commitment of the service to work with 16-18 year old young people in need of support to timely identify those at risk, put support measures in place during the Year 11 transition, procure necessary tailored training provision where gaps are identified; continuously support the vulnerable young people in their choice of training, education or employment. A strong focus on Labour Market Information (LMI) through strong partnership with Thurrock's Regeneration Department keeps the career advice relevant and up to date.

The EET figure for the Looked After Children is on the right trajectory at 67% (target 70%). Innovative solutions include employing a Maths and English tutor to engage with those young people who are not ready for full time learning provision, delivering a course on Life Skills by a personal adviser.

Trialling a DofE provision specifically for this cohort has increased engagement resulting in five looked after young people completing all elements of the programme which culminated in a two day successful expedition. By promoting the benefits of the Prince's trust programme through a Careers Personal Adviser, six looked after young people have completed the Prince's Trust Programme with strong positive results.

ITC organise a range of inspirational assemblies, projects, hand holding sessions and parent events to support progression of Thurrock young people into HE and especially into Russell Group universities where appropriate and increase access to HE in Thurrock as a whole.

Grangewaters, providing outdoor education to Thurrock young people, made a profit for a second year running with ambitious plans for 2019-2020 having achieved the AALA, ROSPA and RYA inspections that have raised the status of Grangewaters as a well-respected Outdoor Education Centre with a strong commitment to Health and Safety. A new scheme 'Sail Thurrock' is being implemented through Active Essex funding and in partnership with the Thurrock Yacht Club, which will aim to revive sailing in the borough.

On Track, a Youth Employment Initiative programme for young people aged 15-29 in Thurrock; part funded through the European Social Fund and managed by the Department for Work and Pensions, has successfully met its targets and is seeking further investment in the model for the next three years.

14. School Wellbeing Service (SWS)

The School Wellbeing Service is a universal service that will be accessible to all school aged children. The service focuses on the importance of early intervention and prevention in regards to promoting positive wellbeing, with a key focus on mental health. The School Wellbeing Service will work in partnership with schools, academies, local communities and services to help 'tip the balance', so that children and young people have the best start in life and are able to thrive. The service will work with schools to extend and deepen their existing work on promoting good mental health by strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors.

The aim is to transform the way that emotional wellbeing and mental health support is delivered in schools by; tackling problems and difficulties more quickly, working preventatively and intervening at an earlier stage. We recognise that capacity is already stretched within schools and that teachers and head teachers are juggling a broad spectrum of competing demands. The service will provide a significant additional resource in the form of School Wellbeing Practitioners that will work directly with teaching and non-teaching staff.

The School Wellbeing Service will share evidence-based resources and interventions with schools, so that they feel confident and competent to support students who are experiencing emotional distress, highlight those who are experiencing mental health difficulties and are then able to signpost and refer them to the appropriate services.

Some direct work with children, young people and their parents/carers will be part of the service, however, the emphasis will be placed on working with school staff to enhance their current knowledge and skills on how to best support their students mental health as well as promoting positive wellbeing for all and developing a mentally healthy school. The service will integrate, embed and strengthen existing commissioned initiatives on mental health within the existing offer for children, young people and their families and provide training and support to school staff.

The model for the new Thurrock School Wellbeing Service is based on the recommendations set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):

- focus on early intervention and prevention – building strengths and reducing risk factors
- promote protective factors that keep children and young people mentally well
- highlight and reduce the risk factors that can increase the risk of mental ill health
- develop a new partnership model with schools
- gather and share information on what is already being done to improve children and young people's mental health
- improve mental health data and track effectiveness of the service by empowering and supporting schools to complete the Brighter Futures survey

The service aims to deliver a tailored approach that meets the needs of each school within Thurrock, recognising that every school and the population it serves will have differing needs and that 'one size' will not fit all. The School Wellbeing Service team consists of six practitioners and a team administrator; the key functions of the service are as follows:

- in conjunction with schools, to oversee a schools-based mental health assessment and develop an individual mental health action plan to improve and protect the wellbeing and mental health of their students
- to work with schools to complete a mental health action plan
- facilitate implementation of a tailored package of support programmes that protect and improve the wellbeing and mental health of pupils and staff within the school

- provide training and continued professional development for staff within schools in order to increase knowledge and confidence in promoting and protecting their pupil's mental health. Training will be refreshed as needed to reflect changes in policy or practice both locally and nationally
- direct delivery of specialist mental health training programmes to children and young people – creating a Wellbeing Youth Forum
- provide support in developing whole school mental health policies and strategies
- provide support and practical resources to develop and enhance the school's PSHE curriculum, ensuring that it fully promotes emotional and mental well-being, as well as tailoring the curriculum to the needs of each individual school
- to ensure that the mental health offer for CYP is mapped accurately against the THRIVE model (reference JSNA, 2018), clearly illustrating what services are available to support CYP, families and schools
- assist schools to promote, raise awareness and signpost to existing commissioned mental health programmes and services – for example, through the THRIVE mapped offer, ensuring these are all embedded within school's policies and frameworks
- sharing best practice on mental health and wellbeing promotion, creating a network for schools and children and young people to promote and share the work they have been developing within their School or Academy
- engage with schools around existing relevant public health programs including the Brighter Futures survey

The School Wellbeing Service will provide schools with resources that focus on promoting positive wellbeing, programs and interventions will include:

- anxiety awareness and management
- anger management
- building and sustaining resilience
- responding to self-harm
- mental health awareness workshops

In order for all the schools in Thurrock to become mentally healthy schools, each school will appoint a Mental Health Lead; the SWS will support schools in doing this and provide the relevant guidance, support and training.

The service will be available throughout the year; the appointed member of the SWS will work with their cluster of schools to identify interventions and support that will be available during school holidays.

Appendix 1 – references: legislative and policy framework

Changes to legislation and statutory guidance means that a local authority has to be agile and proportionate as responses are required in a changing political environment.

- 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 (2015)
- 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)
- The Schools' Causing Concern Guidance – Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools (February 2018)
- Policy Agreement for Education in Thurrock 2016-2019

The Department for Education's statutory guidance publications for schools and local authorities is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools