

School Performance 2018 – National Curriculum Test and Public Examination Results

Lead Officer: Julian Wooster, Director of Children’s Services
Author: Dave Farrow, Head of Education Partnerships
Contact Details: dfarrow@somerset.gov.uk
Cabinet Member: Faye Purbrick
Member: All

1 Summary

This report provides a summary of the Somerset outcomes through Ofsted inspections and performance data for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Assessments, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), GCSE and A Level results for 2018. The report includes comparison to national data where available. It also reports on vulnerable groups against each Key Stage. This is not final validated data in some cases, so caution needs to be given to the accuracy of results as some national comparative data is still unavailable for some indicators. For comparison, information for statistical neighbours is also provided in places.

2 Issues for consideration / recommendations

The members of the Committee are asked to:

- (i) Note the educational outcomes for 2018
- (ii) Recognise the areas that still require significant improvement and the priorities for action to ensure that improvement is achieved
- (iii) Recognise the systemic challenges being faced across the authority by school leaders and governors
- (iv) Read the report in connection with the strategic education vision for Somerset ‘Achieving Excellence for All, 2016-2020: [Somerset’s Strategy – Achieving Excellence for All](#)

3. Background

- 3.1 This report contains a review of all available data to cover all the Key Stages mentioned above. The commentary reflects a summary of the key points for each Key Stage and the priorities for action in 2018/2019.
- 3.2 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) refers to children who at age five have completed their Reception year in Primary, Infant or First schools. Key Stage 1 refers to children who have completed Year 2 in Primary, First or Infant schools and are aged seven years old. Key Stage 2 refers to children who have completed Year 6 in Primary, Junior or Middle schools and are aged 11 years old. Key Stage 4 refers to young people who have completed Year 11 and are aged 16

years old. Key Stage 5 refers to young people who have completed Year 13 and who are aged 18 years old.

Whilst this report covers the attainment and progress outcomes in 2018, it is important to understand what is in place to support schools and settings with their improvement programmes. As more schools become academies the funding available to the Local Authority (LA) to support school improvement reduces but we remain committed to working with the whole sector to secure improved outcomes for children and young people.

In the academic year 2017/18 this included:

- The continuation of the Somerset Education Partners programme to support schools with their improvement priorities.
- All Primary schools have been risk assessed and allocated a category of Green, Amber or Red with Red being the most concerning. The information used to determine the risk category not only relates to academic performance but also reflects performance indicators relating to inclusive practice, e.g. number of exclusions, number of children leaving to home educate, attendance rates, financial management (where appropriate), parental complaints, stability of leadership. A similar model has been developed for Special schools and PRUs and will be applied to Secondary schools.
- The implementation of Phase Strategy Groups to monitor the performance of all schools in each phase of education (Primary, Middle/Secondary and Specialist provision) irrespective of status, broker support for schools causing concern and monitor the impact of that and identify phase-wide and cross-phase themes and develop programmes of support working with Teaching schools and other providers.
- In Secondary schools the Headteacher Association has been commissioned to support processes that will enable the LA to better monitor the performance of the sector which is predominantly academised. They have established strong links with local Teaching Schools and the Research School in Somerset to develop programmes of support for individual schools and address cross phase issues.
- The continuation of a focus upon SEND provision through the work of the Supporting Inclusive Schools Group, which has developed and implemented a set of Core Standards that give parents and education settings clear guidance about what should be on offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). The core standards explain about what is available at a universal level (for everyone) and at a targeted level (for some children and young people who need greater support). The Core Standards were developed with the Parent Carer Forum, Young People's Champions, Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education leaders. The Group also led on developing and implementation of an Inclusion Audit which enables schools to self-assess their approach to inclusion and develop improvement plans, leading on the refocussing on the SENCO Forum and SEND Network and is developing a Schools Information Pack which is due to

be launched later this month.

- The continued development of the Team Around the School (TAS) model of working with more emphasis on assessing impact of interventions.
- A greater engagement with transition between schools and colleges through the regular Transition Panels in readiness for education choices post 16 with a particular focus on those students at risk of being Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

3.3 Outcomes through Ofsted inspections

The table below shows the number of inspections of Somerset schools in the academic year 2017/18. Those schools judged as requiring special measures are required to become sponsored academies with a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). Working in partnership between the LA, MATs and the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) is becoming a growing work stream for LAs. Whilst it is the responsibility of the RSC to secure sponsors for these schools, the LA will always seek to influence these decisions to ensure a cohesive strategy is in place to minimise the number of Trusts working in the County.

Phase	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Special Measures
Primary		55	12	3
Secondary		11	1	2
Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)		1		
Special	1	5		
Total	1	72	13	5

As of March 2019, overall, 82.6% of Primary schools are judged Good or better which is below both national and regional averages of 86.8% and 84.1% respectively. For Secondary schools 81.6% are judged Good or better which is above the national and regional averages of 78.5% and 75.1% respectively. All Special school and PRUs are judged Good or better.

Overall 81.3% of pupils in Somerset attend a Primary or Secondary school that is judged Good or better. That said there is a degree of caution that needs to be exercised as some schools currently judged Good or better have not been inspected for many years (in some cases 10 years), and the judgements were made under a different, less robust inspection framework. We are aware of those schools that have not been inspected for some time and that may be subject to an adverse judgement if they were to be now and have brokered appropriate support to enable them to address any areas of concern.

3.4 Academy Conversions

3.4.1 During the academic year 2017/18 10 schools converted to academy status and all were Primary schools. Of these three were as a result of an Inadequate Ofsted judgement; the others were as a result of decisions made by individual governing bodies. With academisation comes different responsibilities for their Trustees to maintain a strong standard of education alongside the LA and RSC roles.

3.4.2 As at March 2019 38% of all schools are academies, with 29% of Primary schools, 81% of Middle/Secondary schools and 22% of Special schools.

3.4.3 Whilst there is no national policy that states that all schools must become academies there is an expectation that over time all schools will go down this route. For now the focus of the RSC is on those schools that have been judged as Inadequate by Ofsted and the development of strong MATs in all areas of the county to support those schools. Whilst these decisions rest with the RSC the LA always seeks to work in partnership with the RSC office to ensure that academy and MAT developments meet the needs of Somerset pupils.

3.5 Early Years Foundation Stage

3.5.1 The main overall indicator for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the percentage of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) for which they need to achieve Expected or Exceeding in all prime Learning Goals (including Literacy and Mathematics). In Somerset 71.8% of children achieved GLD in 2018. This is 8 percentage points higher than in 2017 and continues a 7-year improvement trend. This is in line with the national average of 71.5%. Our top Statistical Neighbour is East Sussex at 76.5%; Somerset is currently ranked 4th out of 11 of our top statistical neighbours.

3.5.2 Literacy, including Reading and Writing remain as weaker areas of performance. The strongest area assessed is Technology followed by health and self-care. Each of the seventeen Early Learning Goals as assessed across Somerset all sit just above national average outcomes. There is a recognition from Ofsted that the pressure of assessing so many goals is considerable.

3.5.3 Girls continue to outperform boys in all Early Learning Goals and on most indicators, including the GLD indicator. The gap between the performance of girls and boys has widened for the first time in 6 years. It now stands at 13.5 percentage points. Somerset is now on a par with the national performance gap between boys and girls however nationally the gap continues to close.

3.5.4 The inequality gap, which measures the performance of those children in the bottom 20% of the cohort against their peers, has also risen for the first time in 5 years to 27.0%, however this remains less than the national gap at 31.8%.

3.5.5 Children in early years with SEND make a good level of progress with the rate being above both regional and national averages.

3.6 Priorities for Action

3.6.1 To further develop collaborative partnerships through the Early Years Community Model to provide the highest quality support and opportunities for all children and families leading to self-improving communities.

3.6.2 Ensure communication and information is relevant, clear and accessible to parents, carers and providers.

3.6.3 Identify and recognise the number of transitions points a child has in their first five years and ensure timely, multi-agency strategies to guarantee positive transitions and continuity across the 0-5 age range.

3.6.4 Improve the quality of Teaching and Learning across all settings and schools in the EYFS through working closely together as part of the Early Years Communities.

3.6.5 Secure high quality and resilient leadership and governance in every school and setting and strengthen workforce development through ongoing self-improvement.

3.6.6 To further improve our GLD data through effective and supportive Moderation training and updates from the LA.

3.7 Key Stage 1

3.7.1 In 2016 a new assessment system was implemented for the first time in Key Stage 1. Children are now assessed as reaching an Expected Standard (ES) or a Higher Standard (HS). This assessment is used for all indicators of performance either as a combined result or separately as Reading, Writing, or Mathematics (RWM).

3.7.2 The combined RWM ES for Somerset was 66.9% against a national average of 65.4%. This performance ranks the LA at the 40th percentile nationally where 1 is the highest. Those children gaining the HS were 13.1% against a national average of 12%. This ranks the LA at the 30th percentile nationally. Somerset is therefore in line with the national performance and this represents a statistically significant rise from the performance of 2017.

3.7.3 In terms of progress this is now measured on a scale where 0 is average. Anything below 0 is slightly below or below average, and anything above is slightly above or above average. For RWM ES, Somerset was 0% and for progress at the higher standard we were -2%. Ofsted would describe both these results as in-line with national average.

3.7.4 In Reading, Writing and Mathematics viewed as individual subjects, there was a statistically significant upturn at both the Expected and Higher Standards in all three subjects. Performance as measured is statistically above the national outcome in Reading at the higher standard, Writing at the expected and higher standard and Mathematics at the expected standard.

3.7.5 In 2018 the Phonics result for the 6,054 Year 1 pupils assessed was 81.0% against a national performance of 82%. This is an improvement on 2017.

3.7.6 The gap between children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and their peers on the RWM combined indicator increased slightly this year from 18% in 2017 to 20.3% in 2018, despite the significant upturn in the overall result.

3.7.7 The performance of the 768 pupils identified with SEND increased overall this year by 3 percentage points to 22.3% and is better than both regional and national averages. Somerset remains on all vulnerable groups and are determined to narrow the gaps further through supporting and challenging our schools.

3.8 Priorities for Key Stage 1

3.8.1 Continue to support improvement in the quality of provision in Key Stage 1 overall and ensure that the direction of improvement is maintained as well as performance which is statistically above national average.

3.8.2 Work alongside Teaching Schools to ensure that opportunities for professional development focussed upon Key Stage 1 are made available, through joint funding bids, where possible.

3.8.3 To ensure that with the introduction of Assessment without levels that schools are confident in tracking the progress of all children, by maintaining the assessment moderation process currently in place.

3.9 Key Stage 2

3.9.1 In 2016 a new assessment system was implemented for the first time in Key Stage 2. Children are now assessed as reaching Expected Standard (ES) or Higher Standard (HS). This assessment is used for all indicators of performance either as a combined result or separately for areas such as Reading, Writing or Mathematics (RWM).

3.9.2 The combined RWM ES for Somerset was 61.5% against a national average of 64%, a regional average of 63% and a statistical neighbour average of 82.6%. This ranks the LA at the 78th percentile nationally. Whilst the expected standard measure in RWM at 61.5% is below the national outcome, there has been a statistically significant improvement since 2016, when the Somerset outcome was 52%.

3.9.3 The percentage of pupils gaining the HS in 2018 was 8% in Somerset against 10% nationally, 9% regionally and a statistical neighbour average of 8.8%. This measure ranks the LA at the 79th percentile nationally.

3.9.4 In terms of progress, again the new national average is 0. For RWM at the ES for Key Stage 2, Somerset achieved -2%. This is below the national average and ranks the LA performance at the 90th percentile nationally.

3.9.5 Whilst attainment in Reading at the Expected and Higher Standard, Writing at the Higher Standard, Mathematics at the Expected and Higher Standard and

Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling at the Expected and Higher Standard, all show statistically significant improvement between 2016 and 2018; progress made by pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 remains mixed.

3.9.6 In Reading, Writing, Mathematics combined attainment girls continue to do better than boys, though both groups made statistically significant progress between 2016 and 2018. The measure for girls achieving the combined ES rose from 63.2% to 65.8% and for boys the measure rose from 55.4% to 57.5%. Therefore the gap between girls and boys widened slightly in 2018 at the end of Key Stage 2.

3.9.7 The gap between children in receipt of FSM and their peers for those achieving the ES in RWM is 25.8%. This has risen from 25.2% in 2017. However in 2017 only 37.4% of pupils in receipt of FSM achieved the combined ES compared to 38.6% in 2018. Therefore the rate of improvement for the pupils in receipt of FSM in Year 6 in 2018 was good but not as rapid as the overall national improvement for all pupils.

3.9.8 There was a statistically significant improvement in the combined ES outcome in 2018 for SEND pupils in Year 6 in 2018. This was the same as the regional average but below the national average. The improvement in this Key Stage included an increase for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) but showed a reduction in relation to progress from early years.

3.10 Priorities for Key Stage 2

- To continue to support and challenge all schools to secure further improvement, especially given the current changing leadership patterns.
- To continue to develop the Categorisation process and the Phase Strategy Group to enable more effective early identification of schools causing concern and the brokering of appropriate support.
- To further work with schools to ensure that all vulnerable groups are making accelerated progress and that rates of exclusion are not allowed to rise.
- To further develop the school to school support network to ensure the sharing of best practice, knowledge and skills in conjunction with Teaching Schools.
- To work with the regional Teaching School leads to deliver programmes of support to address specific priority areas identified through data analysis.

3.11 Key Stage 4

3.11.1 In 2016 the assessment arrangements for Key Stage 4 changed, with further changes made in 2017. There have been changes in headline measures, as well as the grading of English and Mathematics moving to a 9-point scale. There is continued interest nationally in the validity of these new measures. These changes also mean that for the majority of indicators it is not possible to look at trends overtime and it is necessary to consider Somerset's performance against the national and regional attainment and achievement.

3.11.2 The main headline measure of whole school performance is 'Progress 8'; additionally, the performance of schools is measured through the 'Attainment 8' score, by the percentage of students achieving a Grade 5 or above in English and Mathematics GCSE and the final measure of the English Baccalaureate. For the sake of simplicity here the focus is upon Progress 8 and Attainment 8.

3.11.3 Key Stage 4 progress which measures the value that Secondary schools add from the Key Stage 2 data, showed a Progress 8 score of -0.14 which is below national average of -0.02, the regional average of -0.07 and a statistical neighbour average of -0.02 and is slightly lower than last year's score of -0.12. The percentile rank of the LA was at the 70th percentile. Suffolk was the highest scoring statistical neighbour with 0.08 and Somerset's outcome ranked it as the lowest of our statistical neighbour group.

3.11.4 The Attainment 8 measure was 44.9 which is down on last year's score of 45.7 following a significant rise in 2016. This year's outcomes are below both regional, national and statistical neighbour averages which stand at 46.7, 46.6 and 46.37 respectively, ranking the LA at the 68th percentile nationally. The highest ranking statistical neighbour was Gloucester at 49.6% and Somerset's outcomes again ranked it as the lowest of our statistical neighbours.

3.11.5 Higher performing groups in Progress 8 included first language not English, Indian, Chinese, Other Asians, and Girls. The performance of all of these groups is statistically significantly above the national average.

3.11.6 Lower performing groups in terms of Progress 8 include those pupils with an EHCP, students in receipt of FSM, SEN support and FSM in the last 6 years and those that joined in Year 10 or 11.

3.11.7 The gap in the performance of Gender in Progress 8 terms, shows the 2,219 girls assessed last year performing significantly above the national average with an average score of +0.13. Conversely, the performance of the 2,387 boys achieved a significantly below average score of -0.38, against national outcomes.

3.11.8 Pupil Premium Attainment 8 has declined slightly to 3.4 overall. The progress being made by this group of pupils and disadvantaged students more generally remains a concern locally and nationally, with much to learn from pockets of good practice where they exist.

3.11.9 SEND pupils, either in receipt of SEN Support or with an EHCP, do not attain as well as their peers, with overall Attainment 8 scores of 2.8 and 0.8 respectively (compared to an average of 4.8 for those with no SEN). This is equally true for progress indicators and remains a key concern for school leaders and within the LA.

3.12 Priorities for Key Stage 4

- All schools to be categorised according to level of risk and action plans to be developed for each school causing concern to address the specific concerns.
- To work with Headteachers to continue to develop the work of the Phase Strategy Group and Local Providers Group of Teaching Schools and the research school (The Blue School, Wells) to develop programmes of work

around strategic priority areas identified as science leadership, curriculum leadership, leading learning and raising teacher expectations.

- To work with the Assistant Director Inclusion to support the development of programmes that will contribute to reducing the gap in performance between vulnerable learners and their peers.

3.13 A Level

3.13.1 In 2018 there were 2,310 students completing their Key Stage 5 education studying at least one A Level course. 851 were in state schools or academies with sixth forms and the remaining 1,459 were at the four colleges.

3.13.2 The average point score (APS) per entry for those attending Somerset schools was 30.77. This was slightly below the national average (for state-funded schools) of 32.35. For Somerset, overall when combining college and schools results the APS per entry was 31.87, broadly in-line with the overall national average of 32.12.

3.13.3 For those taking A levels in Somerset, 12.2% achieved grades AAB or better in at least two qualifying subjects which are commonly needed for entry to leading universities, which was below the national average of 13.7%.

3.13.4 The overall APS per entry expressed as a grade was a C+ which was exactly in line with the national average. The average grade for a student's best 3 A levels was a C+, and again this was in line with the national average.

3.14 Priorities for Key Stage 5

- Continue to promote the raising of standards in sixth forms and colleges, working with leaders to ensure that sixth form provision remains viable especially in more rural settings, given recent funding changes.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning, student progress, tracking and provision, especially for more vulnerable students, so that suitable post-16 options are widely available.
- Work with academy providers and the RSC to ensure that students are able to access courses and chosen pathways through post 16 settings.

3.15 Children Looked After - The Virtual School

3.15.1 The Virtual School (VS) is a national construct designed to improve the educational outcomes of Children who are Looked After (CLA). A consultation is currently underway to restructure the VS, increase the capacity, and build on the existing links with children's social care, Access and Additional Learning needs as part of Inclusion Somerset. The proposed new structure will facilitate closer working with Children's social care to ensure education is a pivotal aspect in reviewing children and young people's placements, any potential moves as well as transitions in schooling terms.

The results for the VS can be difficult to interpret as many factors interrelate, such as small cohorts in age groups, time spent in care, special educational needs as well as significant trauma. All impact on the ability of children to be able to learn appropriately and to achieve in the same way and timeframe as their peers. As well as a focus on the data available, it is important that we understand the narrative and the stories of our young people in care. We will also be developing ways to track and recognise their progress outside academic achievement, for example attendance and engagement in school, ability to interact with peers, and emotional resilience.

However, the potential complexity of these children and young people applies to all CLA nationwide and therefore it is important that we look to compare Somerset's performance against the national indicators. It is also important that we monitor the performance of the VS through analysis of trend data and develop an understanding of effectiveness and impact of interventions for improving attainment and progress.

3.15.2 EYFS: Somerset had only 10 CLA in the Foundation Stage for this reporting period. Of those 10, 40% of them achieved a Good Level of Development. The six children within this cohort who had been in care for a period greater than 12 months report 0% good level of development.

The priority for this group is to look at the children taken into care below statutory school age. Through liaison with the Designated Teachers for Early Years, who are also our EY SENCOs, we need to identify what measures can be taken to ensure children are ready to start school in a strong position to achieve a good level of development by the end of Foundation Stage. This may be through supported transition into school, or closer work with early years and pre-school settings.

There is an absence of data available for Year 1 Phonics screening which can be interrogated by vulnerable groups. This will need to be looked into, particularly in light of the attainment of CLA at Foundation Stage.

3.15.3 Key Stage 1 (8 children): 50% of 7-year-old CLA achieved the expected standard in Reading (compared to a regional average of 65%); 25% in Writing (regional average 35%); and 50% in Mathematics (regional average 37%). In these combined subjects 25% of CLA achieved the expected standard. This compared to 67% of their peers, all children in Somerset. In response to this data, we need to understand why our CLA are able to perform well in Mathematics but less well than our South West neighbours in Reading and Writing.

Priorities: the relatively low attainment in Writing indicates that this needs to be a focus for development for CLA – with a rigorous audit of Personal Education Plan (PEP) targets, better understanding of the barriers to Writing, and a further breakdown of which groups of CLA children are finding Writing particularly difficult (i.e. boys with SEND)

3.15.4 Key Stage 2 (17 children): 41% of 11 year old CLA achieved the expected standard in Reading; 41% in Writing; and 29% in Mathematics. In these combined subjects, 24% achieved the expected standard, against 62% of their peers. It is important to note that the majority of the cohort (76% = 13 children)

had some form of SEND. We are able to compare this data with the regional and national data for 2017. In the combined category, which indicates the number of pupils who reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Somerset CLA achieved 25%, the regional average for 2017 was 27%, and for CLA nationally 32%. This demonstrates that Somerset CLA do less well than their regional and national peers at Key Stage 2.

We need to look more closely at the Mathematics data which indicates that CLA perform well at KS1 but not at KS2. PEP targets will need to be reviewed across Key Stage 2 to ensure sufficient focus on Mathematics attainment. Additionally, the work we are currently undertaking to support pupils in Year 6 will need to start much earlier next year to ensure those who are borderline Age Related Expectations are boosted appropriately through Pupil Premium funding.

3.15.5 Key Stage 4 (38 students who were eligible for testing): 8% of CLA achieved GCSE standard passes in English and Mathematics, against 63% of their peers. It may be noted that more than half of the CLA cohort (20 students) attended a special school or pupil referral unit (PRU). Perhaps more relevant is how this compares with our regional neighbours, who, on average, report 21% of CLA achieving a standard pass (9-4) in Mathematics and English GCSEs.

68% of the cohort (26 pupils) obtained at least one GCSE pass. Of those not entered for GCSEs, attainment included a range of Entry Level, Functional Skills, and Preparation for Working Life qualifications.

National comparative CLA attainment statistics are due to be published by the DfE in late-March. In line with DfE measures, the above figures relate to long-term CLA (those continuously looked after for at least a year).

Year 11 pupils are a current focus for the VS and are now being offered additional support to help during exam time. All Year 11 pupils will be given revision packs over the coming weeks. Next year, in line with the Year 6 priorities, we aim to start this focussed work earlier in the year, identifying those pupils who could benefit from additional support. We are also proposing to provide Summer Holiday activities for Year 11 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET, and will look at how we can develop skills to support entering employment as part of this programme.

3.15.6 General priorities for the Virtual School: the key priorities, as detailed in the Corporate Parenting Board Education Sub-Group are as follows:-

Priority 1: to ensure all Somerset CLA and PLAC are in appropriate educational provision and receiving their full education entitlement and able to achieve and make progress

Priority 2: to ensure a high quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place for all Somerset CLA, scaffolding provision that meets needs and maximise the opportunities to make progress and achieve academically.

Priority 3: to strengthen partnership working, positioning the work of Somerset Virtual School prominently on the agenda of all stakeholders.

Priority 4: to celebrate achievement for our CLA and those who support their education.

Priority 5: to support effective transitions for Somerset CLA across all phases to encourage aspiration and achievement.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The data shows that, whilst outcomes for children at the end of the EYFS and Key Stage 1 are good and in many cases exceed national and regional averages (continuing a trend of the last 5 years), the situation declines as we move through Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. This is to the point where, on average, pupils are achieving lower and making less progress than their counterparts nationally, across the South West and when compared to our statistical neighbours. This picture is compounded by the fact that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is not closing and neither is the gender gap.

4.2 That said, whilst it is important to understand the headline data, it masks the good performance of many schools and the excellent work that all schools do with children and young people which should be celebrated. The data gives an overall position of the academic performance of children and young people across the County and the effectiveness of our schools and does not reflect what we would want them to be, particularly at Key Stage 4. It does however give key indicators for areas of improvement and exception that can be worked with.

4.3 Achieving Excellence for all sets ambitious targets for 2020 which, even when taking in to account changes to assessment methodologies, we are not on target to meet. We will be reviewing our priorities over the next few months recognising that education is critical to the economic, social and well-being of Somerset communities. The revised Strategy will focus on the Council's three main interlinked strategic functions:

- Facilitating partnerships of all stakeholders to support all schools, irrespective of status, and other education institutions as system leaders to raise education achievement for all.
- Specific duties relating to: admissions; outcomes for vulnerable pupils; pupils with special education needs and disabilities; the provision of good quality school places; and school standards in the maintained sector.
- Identifying schools causing concern irrespective of their status, relating to the education outcomes of the above groups of pupils; safeguarding of pupils including attendance and exclusions; and any issues relating to concerns around governance including the rate of progress to address school standards where there is an Ofsted judgement below 'good'.

4.4 Education Partnerships

Despite continuing reductions to local authorities' funding, the County Council remains committed to supporting all schools, irrespective of status, and other education institutions as system leaders to raise education achievement for all.

The County Council, although having a leading role, is only one stakeholder. Schools, local and national government bodies and other representatives, including employers, higher education institutions and parent groups have a similarly critical role.

4.5 Provision of Good Quality School Places

The Council has an extensive education capital investment programme to support the expansion provision of school places in parts of the County with a growing need. Other parts of the County are experiencing a decline in pupil numbers. In addition, all schools are facing a real terms reduction in their funding.

To address these challenges, it is essential that schools:

- Meet the school place needs of their local area including those children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Are financially viable and able to deliver the extensive curriculum required to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge to access higher education and the work place, either on their own or working with others.
- Provide good or better education as judged by Ofsted.
- Provide choice for families, where possible.
- Improve the outcomes for all pupils by reducing transition points between education provision as these are known to adversely impact on vulnerable pupils and those with SEND.

To achieve this, the Council will work with all schools, irrespective of status, and other stakeholders to:

- Encourage schools to federate to make better use of the resources at their disposal.
- Encourage the development of viable MATs of sufficient capacity, while at the same time seeking to secure choice for families.
- Take steps to avoid both monopoly schooling arrangements and multiple Trusts operating in areas of the County, as evidence from other areas suggest that these detrimental to improving educational outcomes, particularly for vulnerable pupils.

4.6 Meeting the Council's Education Duties

As part of the Education Strategy, and where funding permits, the County Council will commission support and challenge in collaboration with schools and other stakeholders to reflect the commitment to system leadership as set out above. Only by working together as a whole system, with system strategies for improvement and support, can all stakeholders expect to see the outcomes for the young people of Somerset that we all strive for.