



# **An Education for Life Strategy for Somerset 2023 to 2028**



# Ambition, aspiration and opportunity

From the Introduction to The Somerset Council Plan 2023

*“We launch our plan for the new Somerset Council with huge ambition - love for our beautiful county, faith in its amazing people and excitement that as one council we can achieve so much more for our residents, working closely with our partners and communities.....*

*Woven through all our plans are four threads: a determination to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies; a commitment to developing a fairer Somerset; the compassion to make Somerset a healthier and more caring place to live; and the ambition to create a flourishing and resilient county.....*

*Developing a fairer Somerset will mean reducing inequality. Too many of our families will struggle to put food on the table and heat their homes over the coming years. We need to increase aspiration and opportunity in our schools and ensure good local jobs when young people move into adulthood.....”*

# Our 5 year goals

**Goal 1** Improved access to support in the early years of life so that every child is ready to start school confidently

**Goal 2** Increased inclusion in all schools and in our communities so every child is included in their school 100% of the time

**Goal 3** Strong and supportive leadership capacity within and between Somerset schools so that improvement is sustainable, and educational outcomes are improved in every key phase

**Goal 4** Young people have access to further and higher education in the county where they can develop adaptable skills so they can join and progress in the workforce in Somerset.

# A child's world



# Current education outcomes for children in Somerset

- Somerset is in the top ten LAs nationally for the number of inadequate schools
- Outcomes at all key stages are low and in decline
- Outcomes for disadvantaged children are also in decline
- High percentage of exclusions, affecting disadvantaged children and those with SEND disproportionately

# How did we get here?

## Area Context

- Rural isolation and sparsity
- Geographic deprivation and lack of amenity
- Economic polarisation within many communities
- Poor road, rail, bus and digital connectivity
- Disproportionately large independent schools' sector



## Changing education landscape since 2014

- Local authority financial and performance pressures
- Academisation leading to fragmentation and too few strong trusts
- Three-tier 'islands'
- Declining birth rate
- Historic underfunding
- Post-pandemic impacts



## Impact

- Support infrastructure weakened
- School leaders feeling isolated, with protective infrastructure and support having been withdrawn
- System culture defined by fight, flight or freeze responses
- Reduced capacity for improving education outcomes

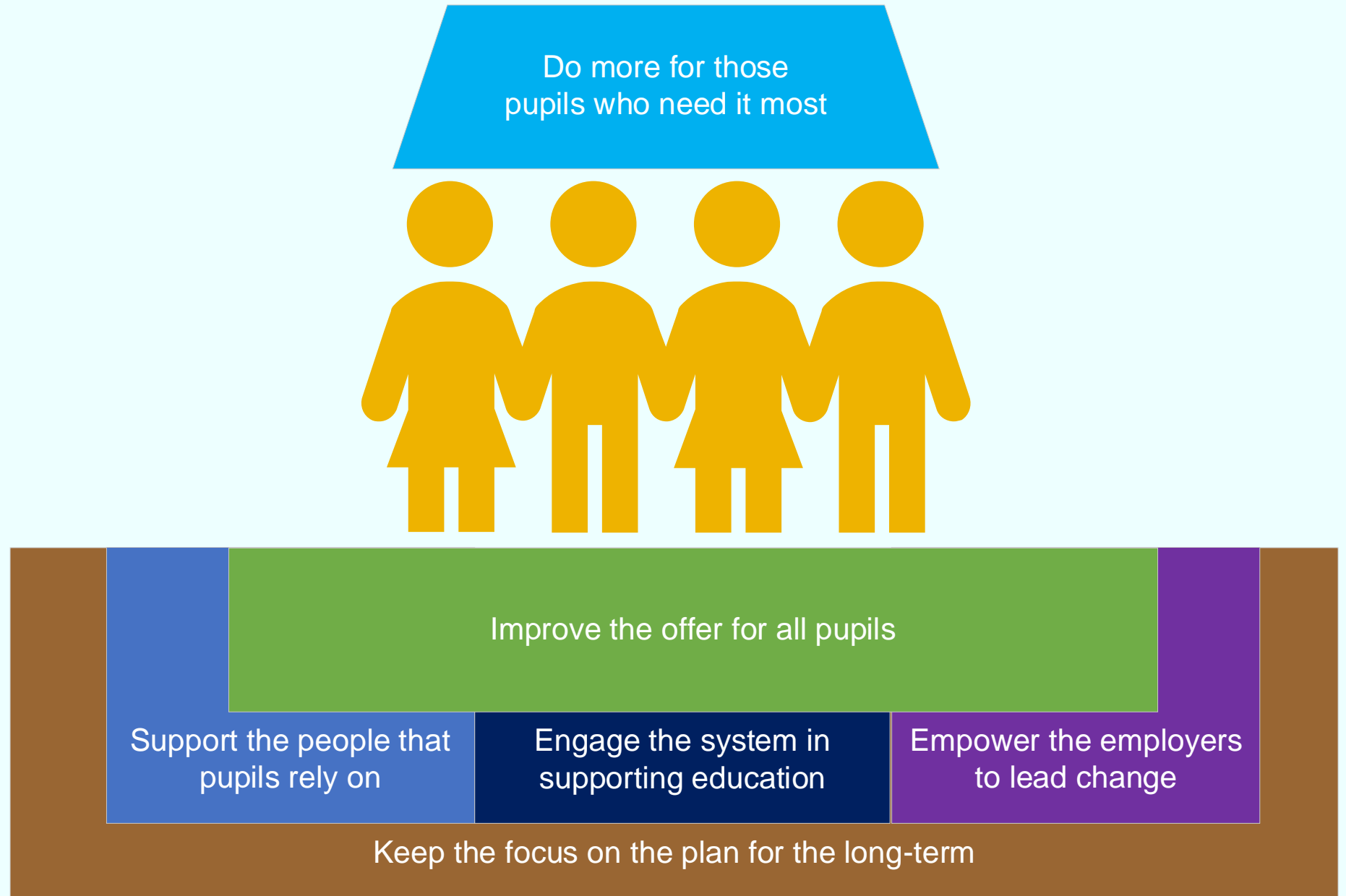
# What steps do we need to take?

“It takes a village to raise a child” – our local history tells us what happens when we fail to work together effectively to improve children’s experience of learning from babyhood to their early adult life.

**Our commitment now has to be that all the stakeholders in the education system - the Council, the Regional Director’s Office, both Dioceses, MATs, SATs, LA maintained schools, early years settings and colleges will work coherently and openly in accepting where we are and agreeing what our immediate priorities will be, alongside partners in our communities.**



# Now what?





# The Implementation Plan

Priorities are set for year one only because:

- We all recognise that relationships across the system and between some stakeholders are growing from a fragile base. These relationships need time to consolidate and thrive in order to set a long term vision for the education and wider landscape in Somerset and the outcomes and experiences we want for our children.
- There is much to do in year one to establish strong foundations upon which to build in later years - a shared understanding of what key metrics mean, identifying good practice in key areas in education and facilitating better support around schools, settings and their communities

**Once these foundations are in place, longer term actions from year 2 onwards will be agreed and implemented to support our 5 year goals**

# Three pillars of work



# The Best start in life

## Year one proposed priorities

- Increase % of pre birth and post birth public health nursing checks
- Implement integrated early years provider and public health nursing checks for all 2 year olds
- Ensure children whose development is delayed at 2 are prioritised for early support with focus on improving development potential
- Analyse 2 year old checks for themes in relation to developmental delay, mapping the current resources available to these families and future need
- Develop a preschool year school readiness assessment (trial this in self-nominated schools)
- Work with libraries and local booksellers to improve availability of appropriate phonic books in every community



**Activity and implementation led by:** Public Health, Maternity services, ICB children and families team, early years providers, Communities Directorate (libraries), high performing primary schools

# Thriving Schools

## Year one proposed priorities

- Trust and LA school group led projects setting out good practice in the basics of education eg safeguarding, curriculum, reducing exclusion, phonics and supporting a small number of schools to improve in the identified school practice area
- System support to schools working with up to 60 children at risk of permanent exclusion, to keep them in school and to understand what is needed to support schools more widely to reduce exclusions
- Online recruitment resource to support schools, marketing Somerset as an attractive place to live and work



**Activity and implementation led by:** MATs, LA Schools, Children's Social Care/early help, ICB, Strategy, Workforce and Localities Directorate (communications and HR teams)

# Great Futures

## Year one proposed priorities

- Work with FE Colleges and the county business community to explore the key areas of employment demand in Somerset now and in the future and the skills and qualifications needed to train our workforce

## Leading to possibilities in Year 2 and beyond of:

- Curriculum development in schools linked to FE Colleges and businesses to support workforce recruitment in high demand employment areas
- Industrial recruitment and retention strategy – focussing on school to college to work pathway
- College partnerships with a wider range of universities to bring more Higher Education opportunities to Somerset, linked to employment demands.



**Activity and Implementation led by:** Climate and Place Directorate ( economic development and Adult Skills services), FE Colleges, local business community

# Years 2 to 5 – Education for life - embedding better life opportunities

## **The Headlines**

**Education improvement – improving outcomes for all children at all key stages**

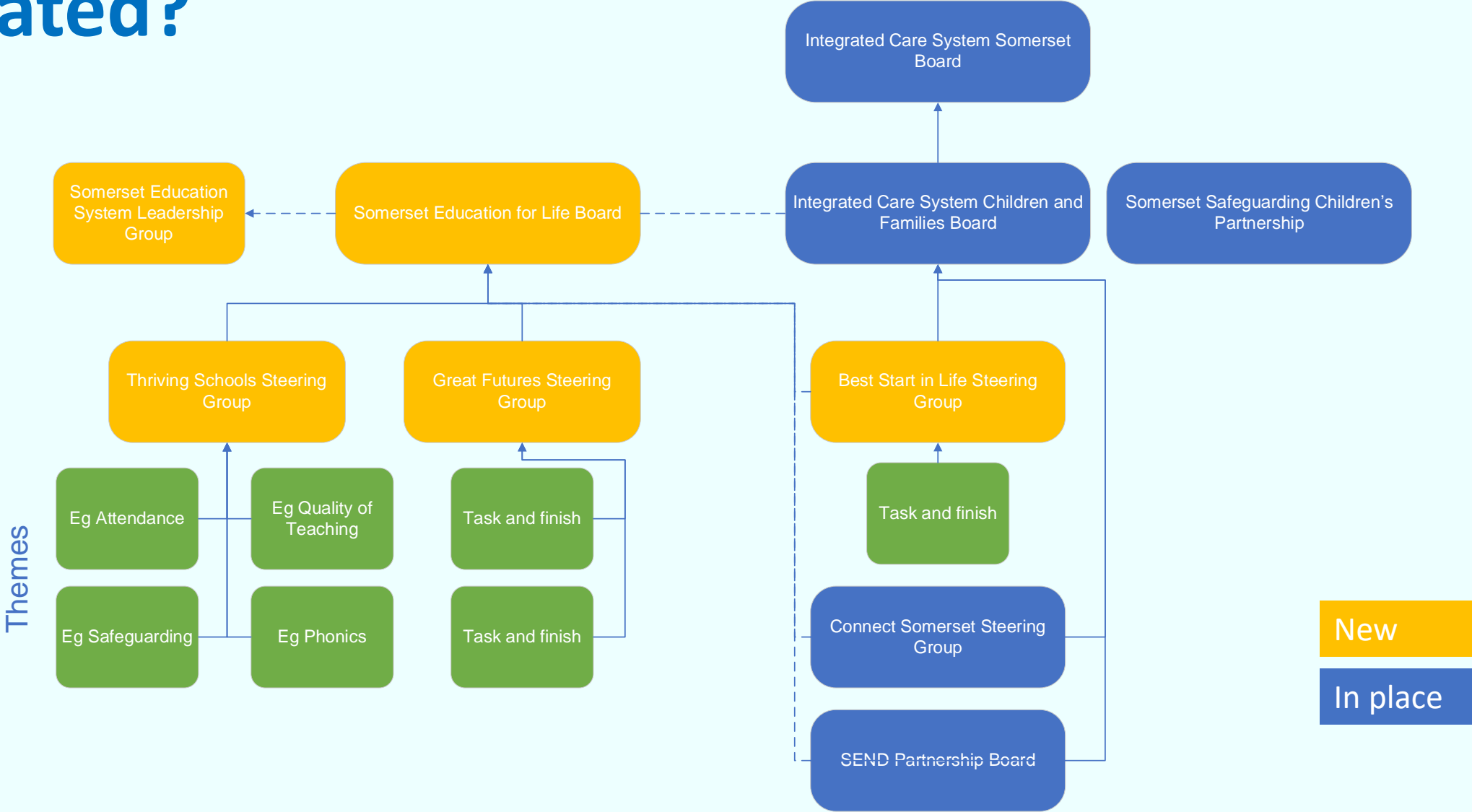
Housing – minimum standards for accommodation where children live

Transport – prioritising easy access to school, leisure activity and work

Leisure – all children have somewhere safe to play and access to organised activity outside school

Early support – Families can access support quickly and locally to where they live, so family life can be sustained with children's education and emotional well being prioritised.

# How will the work be driven and evaluated?





# New governance groups

## Education System Leadership Group

Purpose:

- To set the strategic direction for the Somerset education landscape
- To establish ongoing priorities for the strategy which are developed, implemented and evaluated by the EFL Board
- To provide advice about spend that is not sector base funded
- To establish and monitor an education for life risk register

Attendees: Somerset Council CEO/DCS, Regional Director's office, Somerset Council, Diocese of Bath and Wells, Somerset Parent Carer Forum

Frequency: half termly

## Education for Life Board

Purpose:

- To implement collective priorities and the required actions across partners (expertise, opportunity and capacity)
- To offer robust peer challenge and support
- To evaluate the impact of the implementation plan on the ground in improving schools and the community support available to the children and families in the area
- To hold the system to account for agreed activity

Attendees: Leader of the Council (Chair)  
Steering group chairs, CEO MATs, Regional Director's office, Somerset Council, ICB representative, other members co-opted as required

Frequency: half termly

# Somerset Education for Life Strategy

## Launch Event

Fleet Air Arm Museum, near Yeovil.

21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

# Theme projects – expressions of interest

As part of the initiation of the first year's work on an Education Strategy, we are proposing a series of projects with the aim of:

- a) Tackling identified areas of underperformance in schools
- b) Empowering employers to lead change within the county
- c) Providing clear ownership of 'what good looks like' to underpin future improvement
- d) Preparing for future activity to scale good practice across schools

Trust and school leaders are the serving practitioners who have the insight and expertise to identify and codify 'what good looks like'. There are areas that have already been identified as needing improvement, and therefore projects in these areas will be prioritised. However, recognising that trusts and schools have their own insight into improvement, projects on other themes will be considered.

# Areas for improvement from recent Ofsted reports (all phases)

- Environment and resourcing for continuous provision in the early years
- Early reading using phonics and the matching of books to phonic development
- Documenting and understanding core knowledge in the curriculum
- Culture of safeguarding and compliant safeguarding practice
- Diversity and tolerance in the curriculum and in school culture
- Tackling low level disruption and disrespectful language

# Expressions of interest

- We are seeking expressions of interest from organisations with the track record and capacity to credibly establish what good looks like.
- This would ideally include consideration of what 'small steps' progression looks like for an organisation that may not have established practice and needs to move from low performance through to higher performance.
- There is no assumption about how a lead organisation would go about this.
- We will expect any organisation named as a lead to give an introduction at the launch event on 21 March to their project, setting out at a high level:
  - who they are
  - what their success has been in this theme area
  - why they believe this theme will improve children's experience of education and their ability to achieve.

# Your submission

In order to express an interest, please send a brief (max 400 words) outline of your proposal settings out:

- a) The theme you would like to lead on
- b) Why your organisation has credibility to establish what good looks like for this theme
- c) The evidence you have that the theme represents an improvement need in Somerset schools (if theme is not listed above)

**Please send your expression of interest to [andrew.hedges@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.hedges@somerset.gov.uk) by Friday 10 March 2023.**