

WIRRAL **SCHOOLS STRATEGY**

Working together to enable all our children and young people to be the best they can be

THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP



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FOREWORD

Everyone in Wirral shares an ambition to inspire every child and young person to be the best they can be, to give them the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and independence they need to aim high and achieve their aspirations.

An excellent education is a crucial element of achieving this ambition.

By 2020 every child in Wirral will attend a school which Ofsted rate as good or outstanding. We made this Pledge in the Wirral Plan and we reaffirm it through this Schools Strategy.

We will work with school leaders and other partners to raise the aspirations of all children and young people and ensure they are well prepared to meet the challenges of the reformed curriculum. We will focus on Wirral's most vulnerable pupils, so they are ready to learn, are resilient to change and have the skills and confidence to lead successful lives.

We will work with all partners, parents and schools so that all Wirral's children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs. Children and young people will have knowledge, skills and resilience to be successful in anything they choose to pursue.

We want to be sure all children to achieve, regardless of where they live and their backgrounds.

We understand and value the role parents and carers play in the aspirations of their children. When parents were asked what would help them engage with their children's education, their greatest need was for advice and emotional support.

We will listen to what local children, young people and school leaders tell us, and we will use the best practice to do whatever we can to get it right for our young people. We know that children and young people's educational outcomes can vary depending on where they live or go to school. We want to be sure all children achieve well and are happy, regardless of where they live and their backgrounds.

I am proud of the work Wirral schools do, and I am delighted we have been able to work together to produce this Strategy – a collective, step-by-step plan to continue the excellent educational performance Wirral enjoys, and supporting every school and every child to be the best they can be.



Cllr Bernie Mooney
Cabinet Member for
Children and Families.

SNAPSHOT OF SCHOOLS IN WIRRAL



51,019
PUPILS

123
SCHOOLS



90



21



12

90% OF WIRRAL
SCHOOLS

RATED GOOD OR BETTER BY OFSTED

91% OF PRIMARY
SCHOOLS

RATED GOOD OR OUTSTANDING BY OFSTED



76%

OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS
RATED 'GOOD' OR 'OUTSTANDING'
BY OFSTED



52%

OF PUPILS AGED UNDER 11 FELT
'CARING FOR MY FAMILY' IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING IN THEIR LIVES



70%

OF OLDER PUPILS FELT, 'FUTURE
CAREER AND JOBS' IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING IN THEIR LIVES

INTRODUCTION

“ Our ambition: For all Wirral children and young people to be the best they can be ”

Achieving well at school is fundamental to improving the quality of life for all children and young people in Wirral. Our ambition is for every education setting in our borough to be rated as ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by 2020, and through the work of Wirral schools and the Wirral Partnership, we will enable our pupils to achieve their full potential and be encouraged to lead independent lives. This strategy has been developed to ensure there is an ongoing focus on improving the quality of education in Wirral and levels of achievement across the borough, and continuing our record of exceeding national averages for attainment for all students.

To achieve our vision, it is essential for the whole school community including pupils, parents, carers and teachers and the local community to work together to help Wirral's children and young people to achieve their full potential.

Our vision will be achieved through delivering the following aims:

- Ensure all of Wirral's children and young people attend schools which are judged as ‘good’ or better by Ofsted;
- Raise the aspiration of all children and young people, with a particular focus on Wirral's most vulnerable pupils, so they are ready to learn, resilient to change and have the skills and confidence to lead successful lives;
- Ensure all Wirral's children and young people are educated in the school which is right for them and which best meets their needs.

How has this strategy been developed?

This strategy has been developed in collaboration with Wirral schools, the Wirral Partnership, parents and young people. It has been developed to ensure through working together we can support all of our children to be the best they can be.

A steering group was established in July 2016 with a range of representatives including Primary Heads Consultation Group, Wirral Association of Secondary Head Teachers, Wirral Metropolitan College, Children in Care Council, Youth Parliament and Parent Groups and Wirral Council.

We have ensured that the voices of school head teachers and pupils have helped shape the priorities within this strategy. We have also completed surveys with Wirral Head Teachers and over 4,000 young people to ensure there has been wide involvement and engagement on its themes.

What will success look like?

- Every family will have the opportunity to send their child to a good or outstanding local school, full-time education provider, or college.
- Children who are looked after and those who have left care will achieve well and receive good support to gain employment or access training or further education.
- The gap in educational achievement between different groups of students will be significantly less than national averages.

- Mainstream schools will be equipped to support more children and young people with additional educational, mental health or physical health needs.
- All schools in Wirral will strive to achieve the benchmark standard when compared to similar schools.
- Using the national benchmark figures more pupils than expected pupils in Wirral will achieve good levels at GCSE in English and mathematics.
- Every young person will leave school with nationally recognised qualifications and a clear destination to continue their development, through an apprenticeship, further study or employment.
- Every young person is equipped with the skills so they are ready for transition into training, work or further study.
- School attendance rates will increase so that it is line with the national average.
- Wirral's school community, including parents, carers, governors and the local community, will work together, with a wide range of other professionals to develop and support the health and wellbeing of our students resulting in good educational achievement.
- Effective collaboration and networking with Teaching Schools, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), standalone academies and all other schools raises pupil outcomes.

Who is the strategy for?

Children

This strategy will enable all our children and young people to be the best they can be. This means educating all our children in supportive environments which inspire them to reach their full potential. Parents and carers will work with schools to ensure they have access to the right information to help them decide the school which best meets their child's educational needs.

Schools and School Leaders

This strategy has school to school support at the heart of system wide school improvement helping to ensure a good school for every child in each locality. It is the responsibility of schools to be excellent at what they do. As a champion of young people schools provide a curriculum which challenge learning. Working in effective partnerships with parents and carers will give young pupil the optimum opportunity to be the best they can be.

Parents

This strategy will enable parents to support and appropriately challenges their child's setting or school to continuously raise standards and to meet the needs of their child. It means empowering parents to debate about how well their aspirations for their children are met and listening to their views on local need in terms of educational outcomes, access, inclusion and employability.

Local Authority

This strategy will enable Wirral Council's transition from one of leading and managing a service to one of system leadership, facilitating school leaders to lead school improvement and school to school support. During the transition from the current system the Local Authority will have four key strands in school improvement with schools and academies; to act as champion for families, as commissioner of key services, as partner with all agencies working with families and as a provider of a small number of statutory services.

Partners

Partners have a key role in enabling children and young people to be the best they can be. Feedback from employers on the qualifications, skills and attributes young people need to be successful in the workplace. The innovative work of organisations such as the Young Chamber of Commerce contributes to developing the aspirations of young people. Business partners have a key role working with schools. The Sixth Form College and Wirral Metropolitan College have key roles in providing aspirational courses which guide young people to career paths and employability.

In addition, Public Health's priority of working with all young people to reduce risk taking behaviour is crucial as is the commissioned work of the Clinical Commissioning Group in the early identification of mental health issues and the consequential support to improve to improve mental health.



OUR PRIORITIES

1

All pupils in Wirral attend schools which are good or outstanding

There has been major progress in recent years to improve the quality of schools in Wirral, with 91% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools currently assessed as good or outstanding. It is important to build on this positive picture and work with those schools which still require improvement to provide the right level of support.

National research shows schools in need of improvement make better progress when supported by peers who have substantial experience of improving assessment, learning and leadership. There is a strong history in Wirral of informal school to school support, currently led through school cluster groups working with local head teachers. It is important to continue to develop this collaboration between schools and maximise the benefit to Wirral's children and young people.

Analysing our schools survey, virtually all respondents (93.9%) stated schools working collaboratively was the most productive way in improving teaching and learning. Nearly three quarters (73.5%) highlighted the importance of developing links with schools in Wirral.

What do we already know?

- 91% of primary schools have been judged by Ofsted as good or better, a small number (11) still require improvement. Two schools are currently in special measures.
- In the secondary phase seven (33%) schools judged outstanding and seventeen (80%) schools now judged good or better by Ofsted. One school is in special measures.
- At the age of 5, 70% of Wirral children attained a Good Level of Development (GLD). This is in the top quartile for the North West local authorities.
- Progress and attainment measures for 11 year olds have shown year-on-year improvement for the last 5 years until 2016

when attainment was below the national average of 53%. 48.5% of Wirral pupils attained the expected standard.

- 66% of pupils currently achieve A*-C grades in English and mathematics at GCSE. Wirral ranks 3rd out of 23 North West local authorities.

How are we going to get there?

- We will build on recent success of improving the quality of schools in Wirral.
- We will continue to develop collaboration between schools and maximise the benefit to Wirral's children and young people.
- We will facilitate opportunities for school leaders to identify and share best practise.

What's already happening in Wirral?

Locality School Improvement Boards

Locality Boards were set up in September 2015. Volunteer headteachers agreed to sit on the Boards. Collectively the Boards identified the strengths in each locality as well as the areas for development. Projects were initiated to address areas of underperformance. Using the 'Through the Lens' model headteachers evaluated the impact of key performance indicators in each other's schools through observing lessons, looking at students' work, and talking to staff and students. Where schools needed to improve outcomes headteachers were supported as well as challenged. The programme resulted in true collaboration and the sharing of expertise. The model was further developed to ensure cross phase working between primary and secondary school leaders.

Locality Boards determine key projects where a number of schools work collaboratively; for example the Wallasey Locality developed a Mathematics training programme to encourage pupils' deep learning and mastery of mathematical concepts and skills. The South and West locality focused on leadership development projects.

A recent consultation exercise has resulted in redesign of the locality boards with opportunities for more headteachers to become involved in the strategic design and delivery of school improvement.

Teaching schools

Teaching schools are outstanding schools that work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff. They are part of the government's plan to give schools a central role in raising standards by developing a self-improving and sustainable school-led system. Three schools became designated teaching schools. All offer very different opportunities to support schools both locally and further afield. Initially each school advertised their offer and schools choose whether or not to engage in the training and support.

With the creation of localities a teaching school was allocated to each one. This did not preclude schools choosing support outside their own locality. Headteachers of the teaching schools were invited to sit on the School to School Partnership Board. The main purpose of the Board is to have a strategic overview of the strengths and areas of development at each key stage so that training and support can be appropriately coordinated, planned, delivered and the impact evaluated.

As a result of the significant reduction in the Education Services Grant which Local Authorities use to improve schools, the Locality Board model will play a greater role in school improvement. The Boards in partnership with teaching schools and the Local Authority are able to bid for funding from the Strategic School Improvement Fund. This demonstrates a significant shift from Local authorities determining priorities to facilitating change.

2

All children are supported to achieve their full potential, with a particular focus on our most vulnerable pupils

All children and young people in Wirral should be ambitious about their futures and enabled to feel happy, fulfilled and able to achieve their full potential. There must be a particular focus on our most vulnerable or disadvantaged children, who may be at risk of underperformance, to ensure all pupils receive the appropriate level of support to meet their needs.

Although Wirral schools perform strongly in many areas, the attainment of pupils in receipt of free school meals is lower than other pupils and this gap widens at the end of Year 11. Attainment gaps start early in life and tend to widen throughout a pupil's time in school. Research shows low income can have a negative impact on a pupil's attainment at school, which in turn results in young adults earning a low income.

Educational attainment for Children Looked After (CLA) in Wirral at the end of Year 11 was 14% in 2016 a gap of 48% with their Wirral peers. Pupils who are looked after achieve better in a local school than they do if they attend school further away and we will do all we can to ensure they are educated in the borough. We will work in partnership to improve the educational attainment of all of our pupils who are looked after.

A challenge for Wirral schools is to improve the attainment of our disadvantaged children, and there is strong commitment from school leaders to address this and ensure pupils from low income families achieve their full potential.

What do we already know?

- All pupils surveyed in the 2016 Pupil's survey claimed 'good attendance', 'extra support' or 'someone to talk to who can help with my problems' would help them to do better at school or college.
- Authorised absence for Wirral school pupils has reduced but still above the national average (primary schools 3.6% compared with the national average of 3.1% - secondary

schools 4.3% compared with the national average of 4.0%.)

- White British boys in receipt of free school meals do not achieve as well as girls and non-free school meal pupils. The attainment gap can be seen at the age of 5 and is at its widest by the age of 16.
- Boys do not attain as well as girls at the end of Reception. Whilst the boys make progress they do not catch up with the girls in reading and writing until secondary school.
- Nationally, permanent exclusions in secondary schools have increased which mirrors the Wirral picture. Most permanent exclusions are pupils in either Year 10 or 11. Permanent exclusions in primary schools have remained low nationally. Locally permanent exclusions in primary schools are very low.

What have schools told us?

- Early intervention / family support (55.5%) were highlighted as the best way to support vulnerable pupils. Services which were felt could make the biggest impact were: parenting support, education psychology, speech and language therapy and advice and support from the Early Help team.
- Mental health issues, change of placement, low aspiration of foster carers and low number of contact visits were ranked as the main barriers for Children Looked After (CLA) to progress.
- A significant number of respondents highlighted pupils in receipt of free schools meals (81.6%) being an important priority group, followed by pupils with special educational needs/ disabilities (67.3%).

How are we going to get there?

- We will improve the attainment of our disadvantaged children, and encourage school leaders to address this issue in Wirral schools.

- We will continue to prioritise educational progress and attainment of our pupils who are looked after and those with child protection plans.
- We will support pupils who have been excluded to access learning in an appropriate educational setting.

What's already happening in Wirral?

Get Real Intervention for Care Leavers

The objective of the Get Real intervention programme is to support young care leavers to move towards employment or to re-engage with education or training. The programme is designed to deliver the following:-

- To raise young adults' aspirations, confidence and self-belief
- To increase young adults' motivation and attainment
- To help young adults recognise their own strengths and skills, and how to use them in a positive way
- To support young adults in identifying personal clear pathways for education, employment and/ or training.

European Social Funded Supported Employment Programme – 'Ways to Work'

The programme offers employment grants to support the recruitment and employment of young people currently not in employment, education and/or training (NEET) and those with a special educational need and / or disability. This programme is known as an intermediate labour market opportunity (ILM) Ways to Work. The programme offers you people guaranteed employment for at least 7 to 13 months with the hope that the young person gets the opportunity to have their employment made permanent and progress to an Apprenticeship at the appropriate level.

Since April 2016, 104 vulnerable young people aged 16 to 25 have started on the programme with local Wirral employers and 55 percent have secured permanent employment year to date.

Young Chamber of Commerce

The Young Chamber programme has actively engaged with 19 out of 22 secondary schools. Recent successes have included, 'The Big Debate' hosted by Birkenhead High School Academy (BHSA) featuring 5 senior private sector employer representatives plus the BHSA headteacher making up the Question Time style panel. There have been a number of 'behind the scenes' events designed to encourage students to consider a number of varied career opportunities. Behind the scenes at Tranmere Rovers Football Club enabled students to see potential career opportunities in finance, catering, medical careers and hospitality. Behind the scenes with Contessa Hotels enabled students to gain insight into career opportunities in hospitality and customer services. The Wirral Skills Show which show cased 'have a go' employer led activities for young people.

The Young Chamber delivered Wirral Careers and Skills Show took place in March 2017, at Tranmere Rovers. The event was attended by over 600 young people from across Wirral primary, secondary and post 16 education institutions. Young people attending were met by more than 40 local employers and training providers offering excellent careers advice and 'have a go' activities. Feedback from the young people and teaching professionals has been excellent.

14-19 Skills Team

For the last three years the proportion of Wirral young people aged 16 to 18 Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) has been progressively reducing, from 8.9 percent in 2011 to 4.5% percent in 2015. Wirral NEET is therefore a very positive news story set against reducing Liverpool City Region youth unemployment and new employment/ replacement opportunities for young people. The actual number of young people aged 16 to 18 NEET has also been reducing. The number of young people in the 16

to 18 year old NEET cohort was 467 (August 2016) compared to 1,089 (August 2014).

Support Programme for Young People at Risk of NEET pre 16 – 'Unlocking Potential'
The Youth Engagement Fund is a cross-government payment by results fund that aims to reduce the number of young people who become NEET by improving the education and employment outcomes of disadvantaged young people and those at risk of disadvantage aged 14 to 17 years of age in England. The programme is funded by Cabinet Office, Department of Work and Pensions and Ministry of Justice as a social investment bond initiative. Wirral Council have invested significantly into the programme as part of its upstream activity to stem/ reduce NEET post 16.

Career Connect are delivering the Unlocking Potential programme in Wirral and it is aimed at 14/15 year olds and 16/17 year olds developing their individual resilience, raising their aspirations, coping with stress and supporting students to achieve key goals and outcome. The key focus is on developing good mental wellbeing, improving attitude to learning, behaviour and attendance. To date the programme has engaged 474 young people across 17 secondary schools with programme outputs (as at October 2016) including, improved attitude to learning (+54%), behaviour (56%) and achievement of a first level 1 qualification (30%).

3

All children and young people attend the school which best meets their needs

Improving outcomes for all of Wirral's children so they have the optimum opportunity to be the best they can be will require involvement from schools, parents and carers and pupils. When young people make the transition to secondary school, parents should be able to make informed decisions to determine the most appropriate learning environment for their child. The current educational provision in Wirral includes single sex grammar schools, all ability mixed faith schools, single sex non-selective schools, secondary schools with small base provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and special schools.

Special educational needs or disability will never be a barrier to children and young people thriving and achieving in Wirral. Our aim through this strategy is to educate more children and young people with special educational needs in our mainstream schools and ensure they receive high quality education which allows them to work towards their long term aspirations.

It is essential for parents and carers to have the right information to help them decide which school will best meet their child's educational needs. This information will ensure they are confident to send their child to the school that is right for them, to help them to be ready to start school and to continually support them throughout their education to be healthy and well so they are able to attend school.

What do we already know?

- 17% more children and young people with SEN in Wirral are educated in special schools or special academies than nationally. Comparative data suggests that Wirral has 280 more young people in special school provision than the England average.
- When comparing Wirral with its 10 statistical neighbours Wirral has the 3rd lowest (9.8%) of young people with statements or Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) in mainstream schools.

- There are 16.8% of pupils with a statutory plan of Special Educational Needs and Disability. This compares to the national average of 13.7%.

What have parents told us?

- Parents believe that the 'right' school builds on pupils' academic, social and emotional skills, gathers a diverse group of classmates and potential friends, and helps to prepare children for the world of work later on.
- Although parents value academic achievement highly they are often more concerned about the safety and environment of the school.
- Parents value factors such as good discipline, the happiness of their child and good communication between home and school.

How are we going to get there?

- We will work in partnership to ensure the needs of Wirral pupils are met in a modern and appropriate setting.
- We will educate more children and young people with special educational needs in our mainstream schools and ensure they receive high quality education.
- We will ensure parents and carers have access to the right information to help them decide which school will best meet their child's educational needs.

What's already happening in Wirral?

Wirral Met College / Wirral Council Careers & Skills Support Programme for young people with SEND

Currently there is a bespoke pilot careers and skills education support programme for young people

in Key Stage 4 and 5 who attend a Wirral special school. The programme takes a holistic approach with this cohort of young people engaging both

young and parents / carers. The programmes aim to: to raise aspirations, challenge stereotypes, introduce employment opportunities. The programme also considers the identification of skills requirements and future development through the production of the 'My employment handbook'.

There are currently 4 special schools engaged in this project: Meadow side, Foxfield, Clare Mount and Wirral Hospital School.

Approximately 200 young people have benefited from work experience opportunities. They have also accessed career interviews, advice and guidance and had the opportunity to work with local businesses via enterprise days.

HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS STRATEGY?

The School Strategy will provide a clear framework for partners to work collectively and make a real difference in each of the areas outlined within the strategy.

The following actions will be delivered over the lifetime of this strategy with detailed projects plans to be developed to ensure there is regular review and monitoring of the actions. An annual review of the strategy will take place assessing progress on each of the actions and reporting outcomes that have been achieved through the delivery of the strategy.

ACTION PLANS

1 All pupils in Wirral attend schools which are good or outstanding

What we plan to do	By when?	Lead Organisation
Implement new Locality Boards to move towards a self improving model	September 2017	Headteachers & School Improvement Locality Board Members
Review the Local Authority Schools Causing Concern policy in consultation with headteachers to take into account the move to peer to peer accountability	September 2017	School Improvement Officers
Facilitate work with headteachers and other system leaders to provide challenge and support to underperforming schools	June 2017	School Improvement Locality Boards
Facilitate opportunities for school leaders to identify and share best practice	October 2017	School Improvement Locality Boards
Facilitate opportunities for leaders to challenge one another regarding the implementation of the new revised curriculum and assessment processes	July 2018	School Improvement Officer through the Locality Boards

2 All children are supported to achieve their full potential, with a particular focus on our most vulnerable pupils

What we plan to do	By when?	Lead Organisation
Challenge schools to reduce authorised absence so that pupils spend more time in school	July 2018	Education Welfare Service
Review the Fair Access Protocol so that young people access education and alternative provision swiftly	October 2017	Local Authority
Embed the Guild for Wirral Alternative Education so that partnerships between schools, Alternative Provision providers and the LA are robust	December 2017	Local Authority
Facilitate challenge to schools to diminish the achievement gap by focusing on the attainment of more able disadvantaged pupils through the work of the School Improvement Locality Boards	September 2018	School Improvement Locality Boards
Explore ways in which Children Looked After can be best supported so that they make good progress and attainment	September 2018	Virtual Headteacher & LACES team
Improve the educational outcomes for Children in Need	September 2018	Schools
Review strategies to ensure that young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities make good progress from their starting points	July 2018	School Improvement Locality Boards
Ensure more young people make a successful transition to further education, employment or training	September 2018	Local Authority 14-19 Team

3 All children and young people attend the school which best meets their needs

What we plan to do	By when?	Lead Organisation
Establish a Local Authority Support Service that can respond effectively to schools' request for advice and guidance	March 2018	Local Authority
Develop expertise within mainstream schools to support a wider range of children and young people with special educational needs	September 2018	SEND Department
Review the LA finance model so that more pupils with SEND can be supported in mainstream schools	September 2018	SEND Department
Work with parents, carers and families to ensure that their child's needs can be met in their local mainstream school.	September 2018	SEND Department

CONCLUSION

Throughout its development, a key aim of the steering group has been to keep the voices of our children and young people at the centre of this strategy, to enable them to reach their full potential. We have worked collaboratively as a broad range of partners to provide as much representation of the many community groups and challenges that exist in Wirral and to enable us to gain insight and access to all relevant information. In addition, we have carried out detailed research to ensure that our objectives are fully supported with evidence.

Through partner networks and stakeholder consultation, we have engaged with the education sector and listened to their feedback to help develop an action plan, designed to meet Wirral's children and young people's current and future needs. We will ensure that Wirral's pupils are supported to reach their full potential, regardless of circumstances and attend the school which is right for them.

REFERENCES

1. Department for Education (2015): Special Educational Needs in England; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2015>
2. OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (2015): PISA Results in Focus Survey; <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>

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THE WIRRAL PARTNERSHIP