Education Improvement Framework
(Schools Causing Concern)

February 2026

We serve our communities and work for the public good

Education transforms lives for the better

We achieve more through collaboration and professional generosity

Great teaching leads to great learning

Disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils are given priority
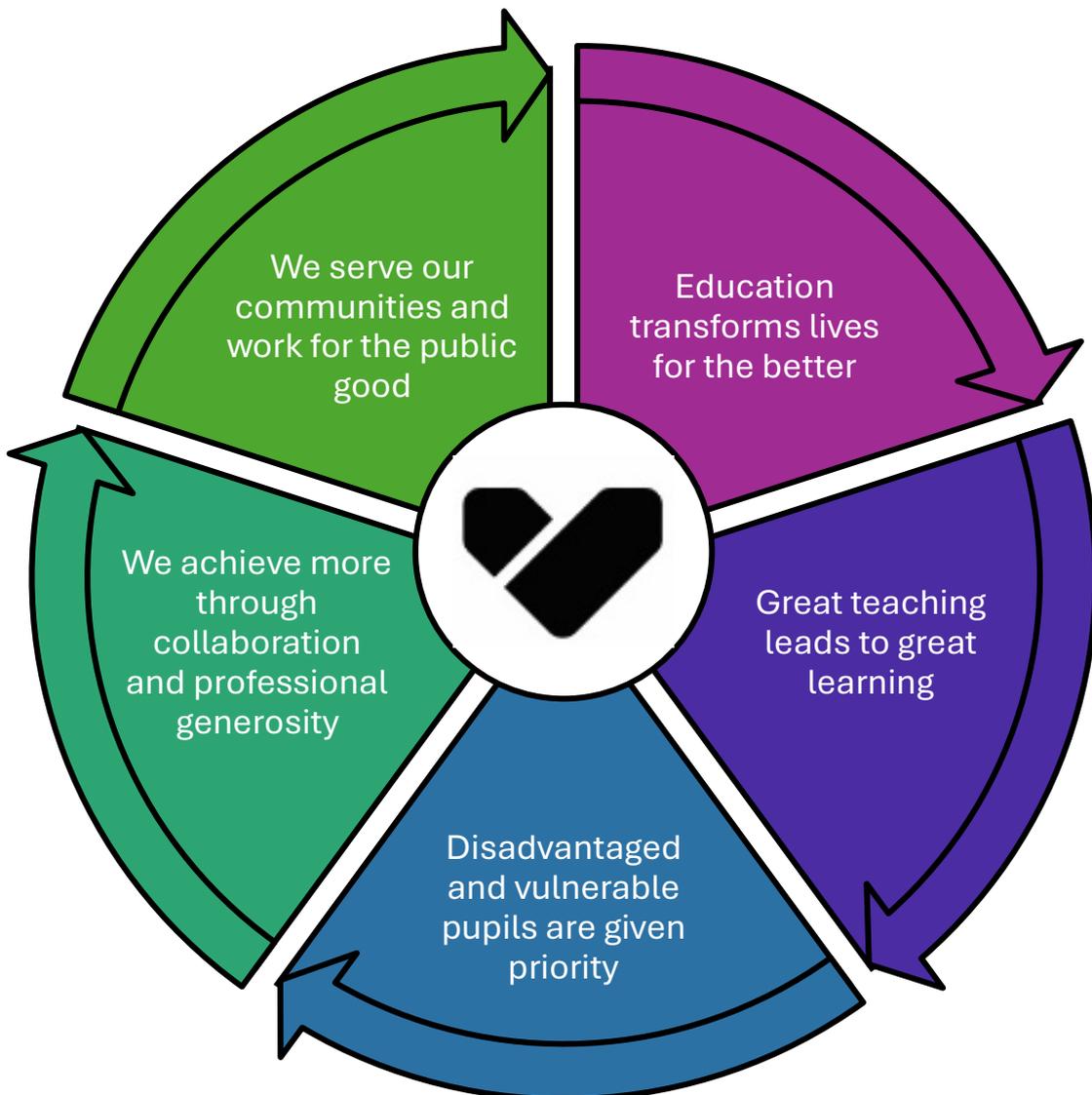
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Process of Collective Categorisation

The Local Authority (LA) is committed to ensuring that all Birmingham schools receive the appropriate support at the right time. To facilitate this, the LA employs the **Education Improvement Framework** to identify and assess schools that may benefit from additional support.

This categorisation process is grounded in the principle that school leaders are best placed to make decisions that improve outcomes for children and young people. Simultaneously, the LA must balance these professional judgements with its statutory responsibilities for maintained schools, as outlined in *Support and Intervention in Schools: Statutory Guidance for Support and Intervention Action in Schools (September 2025)*[1].

The framework adopts a **'best fit' model**, using a **green/amber/red** categorisation system to determine the level of support required. This model is designed to be transparent and collaborative. The process begins with the school's own **Self-Evaluation** and **Improvement/Development Plan**, and is informed by a wide range of internal and external data sources, including indicators in the following key areas:

- Quality of education

- Attainment and progress of different pupil groups

- Attendance, suspensions, and exclusions

- Leadership, management, and governance

- Safeguarding culture

- Financial health

Evaluations are further supported by information from professionals and agencies working with schools, such as Ofsted, the Department for Education's Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence Team, the Regional Director, and the Regions Group.

Where the LA is able to validate and align with the school's self-assessment, a mutual agreement can be reached regarding additional support and/or opportunities for the school to contribute to wider sector improvement.

Where the LA cannot validate some or all of the school's judgements, a collaborative support programme will be developed. This will include clearly defined **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** and appropriate timescales. The support plan will address both the school's improvement priorities and the LA's deployment of resources to facilitate progress.

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[1] [Support and intervention in schools statutory guidance](#)

Education Improvement Framework

Categorisation Characteristics

Established	Developing	Causing Concern
Quality of Education		
Leaders have a clear understanding of curriculum and teaching quality, using this insight to guide staffing, resource allocation, and improvement strategies. The curriculum is well-structured across subjects and year groups, with clear end points and logical sequencing that builds on prior learning, including a well-sequenced EYFS curriculum identifying key knowledge. Teaching is generally strong and informed by pupils' starting points and evidence-based practices. Leaders ensure staff have or develop the necessary subject and phase-specific expertise, including in early years. Pupils at the early stages of reading are taught through systematic synthetic phonics. Leaders are attentive to securing foundational skills in communication, language, and literacy. Leaders prioritise early years, ensuring high-quality education and care matched to children's developmental stages. EYFS statutory requirements are met, and staff engage in purposeful, high-quality interactions to support learning. The physical environments enhance learning. Students are well prepared for later life and proceed to highly appropriate settings	Leaders have appropriate ambitions for curriculum and teaching, including early years. However, inconsistencies in practice limit pupil outcomes. Physical environments do not yet fully support a well-sequenced, ambitious curriculum, and adult interactions are not consistently effective in promoting children's development. Leaders have begun to address weaknesses in whole-school and early years provision, but actions are recent and their impact is not yet clear. Adaptations for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and others facing barriers—including in early years—are not consistently well matched to individual needs or evolving circumstances. There is a disconnect between curriculum intent and effective implementation, particularly for vulnerable groups across the school and in early years. Support strategies and reasonable adjustments require improvement to better meet pupils' and children's learning and well-being needs. Leaders have appropriate ambitions, but inconsistencies or weaknesses have detrimental impact on students	Leaders lack an accurate understanding of curriculum and teaching quality and are not effectively addressing significant weaknesses. Across the school and in early years, the curriculum is poorly structured, lacks ambition, and fails to prepare pupils and children for future learning and success. Expectations for pupils and children—especially those who are disadvantaged, have SEND, or face other barriers—are too low. Adaptations and support are either ineffective or reflect limited aspirations. Leaders do not ensure staff have the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum effectively. In early years, weak understanding of learning areas and poor staff-child relationships hinder emotional well-being and development By the end of Reception, children are not ready for Year 1. They lack age-appropriate skills in communication, reading, spelling, and basic numeracy, indicating serious gaps in early years provision. The curriculum does not ready the students for the opportunities, responsibilities or experiences they may encounter in their next steps.

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Established	Developing	Causing Concern
Leadership, Management and Governance		
Leaders, including governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths, areas for improvement and use this and an evidence-informed approach to drive the actions they take.

The vision and ethos for the school are based on high expectations and aspirations for all, regardless of starting point, and is well shared by all children, parents, staff and stakeholders.

Staff wellbeing is high priority at all times when making leadership decisions. Staff feel highly valued and able to make positive contributions to these decisions. Complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and follow school procedures.

Engagement with other Local Authority services is appropriate and used as required.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently well across all 16 to 19 study programmes.

Performance management is well embedded and evaluated and aligns well with key school priorities. | Leadership and management require additional external support, or capacity is limited to impact positively upon school improvement. This includes the need to develop capacity of the Governing Body. Self-evaluation is not accurate and/or does not provide evidence of the impact of enhanced support.

Vision and ethos are not yet well established across the school although work is under way to address this. Staff wellbeing is not always considered when making leadership decisions which can lead to some staff feeing undervalued or unsupported.

Justifiable complaints are rising and/or the policy needs updating and/or training is needed to implement the policy.

There is some engagement with other Local Authority services.

Staff capacity is limited due to high turnover with staff vacancies, recruitment and/or retention issues.

Performance management is effectively established. Persistent vacancies on GB and/or meetings are not quorate.

Parental and family perceptions are negative or deteriorating.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the 16 to 19 study programme and are addressing any inconsistencies in a timely way. | Leaders, including Governors, do not have an accurate view of school's strengths and weaknesses and do not identify the right priorities and take suitable or timely action to address them.
Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties.

There is not yet a clear vision and ethos for the school. There is a general feel in the school that staff morale is low, with high rates of staff absence.

There are a high number of complaints and policy is not applied consistently and/or requires review.

Transition at key points is ineffective.

Pupils do not feel a sense of belonging.
A poor climate for learning where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive or do not feel safe.
Many parents/ carers hold a negative view of the school .
Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve the post-16 provision.
Performance management is not effectively established. |

Education Improvement Framework

Established	Developing	Causing Concern
Inclusion		
The **(OAG)** is generally well implemented across the school. Leaders generally identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs. This includes the needs of vulnerable pupils. Leaders have a secure understanding of these pupils' needs and their progress. They use appropriate evidence to inform their pupil premium strategy, including when selecting approaches to take. The strategy and approaches are generally understood and implemented by staff. Leaders are committed to, and understand, their role in the local area partnership's strategy to improve the experiences of, and outcomes for, pupils with SEND. Where appropriate, they ensure that local partnership strategies have a positive impact on pupils at the school. Leaders support pupils who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, including looked-after and previously looked after children, well. Staff work effectively, including with the virtual school, so that pupils' personal education plans generally improve their learning opportunities and experiences. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and is used in pupils' best interests. Leaders take responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils who are placed in it.	The setting is in the process of implementing **OAG**. Action plans are addressing aspects that are not already in place. Leaders have only recently started to take appropriate action to identify and assess pupils' needs or reduce barriers to pupils' learning and/or well-being OR this is not yet consistent across the school. The progress of these pupils is not tracked as effectively as it needs to be, meaning that not all gaps are identified and acted upon quickly enough. Weaknesses or inconsistencies in practice have a negative impact on a particular group of pupils. Leaders' use of alternative provision has limited positive impact on pupils' learning and/or well-being. The school is in the process of ensuring provision mapping is clear and thorough and that strategies for SEND identification are in place and understood by all staff. The Pupil Premium Strategy is not fully aligned to school improvement priorities or identified gaps in attainment and is not widely shared with staff.	The setting has little understanding of the **OAG;** as a result, effective provision is not yet being provided for pupils. Leaders do not identify and assess pupils' needs effectively. This has a significant negative impact on how well the school supports pupils' learning and/or well-being. Support for vulnerable pupils is ineffective. Leaders do not meet statutory requirements for pupils who are disadvantaged and/or those with SEND and/or those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. Key documents such as provision map and Pupil Premium Strategy are incomplete.

Education Improvement Framework

Established	Developing	Causing Concern
Attendance, Exclusions and Suspensions		
Attendance levels are at least in line with national and close to thier statistical neighbours via the comparative school attendance report. Barriers to attendance are identified with strategies in place to address which are monitored for effectiveness regularly. Part Time Timetables (PTTTs) are deployed effectively, with a clear timeline for review and full-time reintegration to school. Behaviour, personal development and safety are strong features across the school and leaders regularly refer to them in strategic meetings. Exclusions and suspension levels are low and certainly below national averages. Effective strategies promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Attendance is low or declining and/or persistent absence is high and/or rising. PTTTs are more numerous and/or lengthy than would be expected. Exclusion and suspensions rates are rising for some groups of pupils and are above national averages.	Attendance is very low and policies and expectations are unclear or do not effectively support pupils with persistent or severe absences. PTTTs are not used appropriately. Attendance is not prioritised, and staff do not understand their responsibilities. Data is not regularly analysed to inform strategies. Exclusions and suspensions are above the national average and rising.
Attainment and Progress of different groups		
Pupils' outcomes are consistently at least in line and often above national averages including for disadvantaged, global majority groups and SEND. There are no significant gaps between the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils. Any small gaps are closing swiftly.	Attainment and/or progress in reading, writing and mathematics are below national. Attainment is below average and/or progress across key stages has dipped or is on a downward trend. Groups of pupils, including disadvantaged those with SEND, CiC, make slow progress and/ or there are significant and widening gaps between groups.	Outcomes for SEND and other Disadvantaged pupils are well below national and Local Authority average Attainment is significantly below national across key stages. A Formal Warning Notice is in place.

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Education Improvement Framework

Established	Developing	Causing Concern
Safeguarding Culture		
Safeguarding systems and processes are robust.	A culture of safeguarding is not yet fully embedded.	Safeguarding procedures are not securely in place. A culture of safeguarding does not pervade across the school, so children/young people are not safe at all times.
Financial Health		
The school produced a balanced budget in the last financial year and has not encountered any significant financial issues in the last three years.	Effectiveness of budget monitoring procedures are not yet as effective as they need to be. This is evidenced in the last three years through budget deficits that have not yet been recovered. Budget pressures are impacting the quality of education and leaders require support in managing a budget deficit	Systems for monitoring the budget are ineffective. Budget deficits have been accrued year-on-year for a three-year period. The school has not delivered an effective budget deficit recovery plan. Governors have not fully held the school to account.

Criteria for Embedded:

This is the criteria which will be used to identify if a school is in a position to provide school-to-school support to others.

Quality of Education
Leaders use insight and evidence to make strategic decisions about curriculum and teaching, ensuring it evolves to meet pupil and child learning needs.
The curriculum is consistently strong across subjects and phases, beginning in early years, with deep understanding of progression. Teaching is highly effective, supporting language, vocabulary, and reading development.
Teachers make well-informed decisions about what and how to teach, tailored to subject, phase, and pupil needs. Leaders ensure staff have the expertise required, from early years.
The school's approach to supporting disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, and others facing barriers is consistently applied to remove obstacles to achievement from the Early Years Foundation stage upwards.
Leaders are highly knowledgeable about early years and quality assure provision effectively. Children are highly motivated, eager to learn and co-operate well. Staff engage children in high-quality interactions, and children— particularly vulnerable groups—develop strong vocabulary and understanding across all areas of learning, leaving Reception exceptionally well prepared for Year 1.
High quality programme that gives students knowledge and skills to succeed in life or the next stage of education Training or employment

Leadership and Governance
Leaders and governors have strong capacity to provide support to other schools and work closely and effectively across other Local Authority service areas.
School improvement priorities are aspirational, research-informed and implemented effectively according to the changing needs of the school. The school establishes strong and supportive relationships with pupils and their parents/carers. Transition in year and at all key points is effective.
High quality support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a supportive environment. Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on the outcomes and experiences of all groups of students.

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Inclusion
The **Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)** is consistently well embedded across the school. Leaders and staff establish successful strategies that consistently enhance the learning and wider opportunities and experiences of vulnerable learners. Leaders and staff rigorously monitor the progress of these pupils and consistently ensure that any barriers to success are swiftly and effectively addressed. Strategies are systematically and skilfully adjusted as needed, so that they make a sustained difference to outcomes for vulnerable pupils. Evidence of review and impact of interventions informs the ongoing development of provision for vulnerable pupils. School provision mapping clearly identifies all SEN support, taking account of the full notional SEN budget. The SEND identification process in school is clear and well used by all staff. The school's Pupil Premium Strategy is research based and well aligned with school improvement priorities and the needs of all disadvantaged pupils to ensure maximum impact. All staff have ownership of this and contribute to its successful implementation.

Attendance, Exclusions and Suspensions
Attendance is above national average. Attendance is everyone's business and a prominent priority at whole school, group, and individual levels - driven by regular data analysis and the effective implementation of strategies that improve attendance. There is a strong shared culture of positive behaviour. Leaders have a variety of pathways for young people who are struggling.

Attainment and Progress of different groups
Pupils' outcomes over time are consistently above or well above national. The attainment gap for different groups of pupils, including e.g disadvantaged, global majority and SEND is at or lower than national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND achieve well and their achievement is sustained over time. Highly effective leadership leads to consistently high standards, particularly for disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. These standards are sustained over time.

Birmingham City Council

Safeguarding Culture
There is a strong culture of safeguarding with effective systems to keep children safe.

Financial Health
The school has budget reserves they can draw upon.

The Education Improvement Framework offer

Universal Offer

The LA is committed to providing a single point of contact, training and Headteacher induction for **all** schools regardless of where they are on the improvement journey. This includes building capacity to create a self-improving system.

Framework of Collective Support

The level of support provided to a school is determined by its categorisation within the framework:

- **Causing Concern** – Tier 3 Support

- **Developing** – Tier 2 Support

- **Embedded/ Established** – Tier 1 Support

The support offer is shaped through a collaborative process, considering the following factors:

- The level of risk, support, and challenge required to secure improvement

- Commissioning, brokering, and allocation of resources

- The school's capacity to contribute to sector-wide improvement

- Early identification of issues and timely intervention

- Building capacity for self-improvement

- Ensuring the LA has the necessary information to fulfil its statutory duties

Support is brokered through a two-way dialogue between school leadership and the LA's School Improvement Team. The **School Improvement Advisor (SIA)** plays a pivotal role in identifying best practice, promoting evidence-informed approaches, and fostering collaboration across schools and with other education providers.
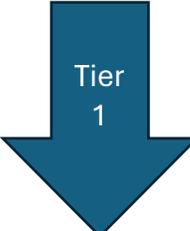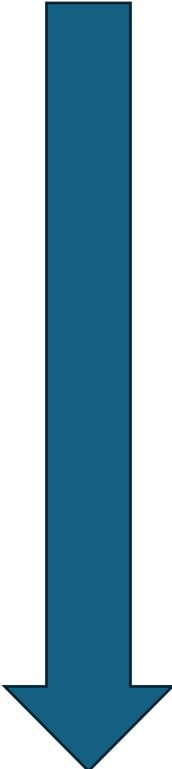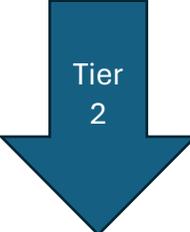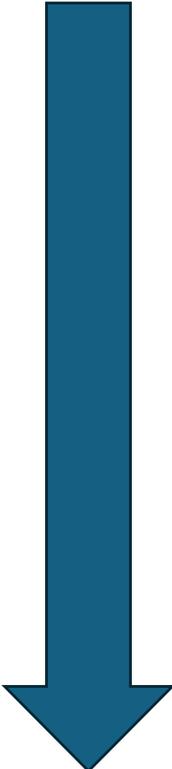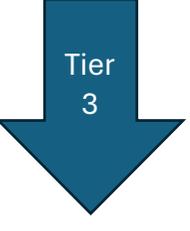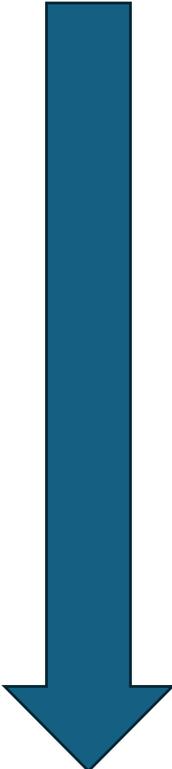Where appropriate, the SIA will also liaise with other LA directorates, including:

- School and Governor Support

- Finance

- SEND

- Safeguarding

- Attendance and Inclusion Pathways

The LA acknowledges that this represents a new way of working with schools across Birmingham. As such, it is committed to developing a collaborative approach during this transitional year and will undertake an **annual review** of the framework to ensure it remains effective and fit for purpose.

School Improvement Support

We understand that schools are at various stages or phases of development. So, although the phases and steps of this generic improvement model all need to be followed, they also have to be adapted to the context or stage of development of the individual school. We will evaluate and adapt to the evolving needs of schools. The Local Authority recognises that there are many reasons which might make a school become vulnerable at a particular time and the anticipated level of support needed would necessitate a change in the assigned support level. The agreed support level can be changed at any time in partnership with the school.

Level	School Improvement Support	Universal	
Tier 1	One day school improvement visit carried out by the end of the academic year with a focus on validation of priorities arising from the school's own self-evaluation (SEF), capacity for continuous improvement, identifying support and challenge to deliver the School Improvement Plan o Sharing of evidence of strong or exemplary practice in an area which may then lead to being a 'capacity giver' and providing school to school support o Up to an additional half day visit if the school: in the Ofsted window: has a leader new to headship; had a significant decline; has had a dip in statutory performance or any other context specific challenge		• Single Point of Contact • Support at the time of an Ofsted inspection and/or HMI monitoring visits, to attend the keep in touch (KIT) meetings or feedback sessions as required by the school • Support from other Local Authority officers, for example Finance, attendance, SEND Adviser, Governance, Safeguarding etc. • Partnership work with the RISE team (where applicable) • Support with Headteacher Recruitment • Professional Development
Tier 2	Up to three days of school improvement support per academic year, that could consist of: o a context specific school improvement review (one day) o identification of priorities arising from the school's own self-evaluation (SEF), o evaluating capacity for continuous improvement, o identifying opportunities and barriers to the effective implementation of the school development plan o time with school leaders to develop a strategic plan identifying school needs, capacity and potential support; and review progress of actions termly o commissioning of additional support		
Tier 3	Up to six days of school improvement support per academic year, that will consist of: o a context specific school improvement review and assurance o A bespoke package of support and scrutiny linked to the school's particular circumstances will be developed linked to a strategic plan reviewed regularly o brokering or commissioning of targeted support o school improvement board evaluated by Director for Schools and Employability *Support and Intervention Meetings with* School Improvement and additional services within the directorate to evaluate the pace and effectiveness of the improvement strategy.		

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