

**DRAFT**

## **Barnsley Alliance**

# **Improving Education Strategy 2016-18**

Version 3  
Sept 2016



## Introduction: Our Shared Vision for Education

**Vision** A BETTER BARNSLEY

Every child in a good school

Success in learning and work

Strong families, strong Barnsley

**Core Purpose** To work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families

The vision of the Council, The Children and Young People's Trust and The Barnsley Alliance for education improvement is based on the premise that we all work together to ensure the very best outcomes for young people in Barnsley. The three key priorities in The Council's vision are that Barnsley will become a **thriving and vibrant economy**; that **people achieve their potential** and live **within strong and resilient communities**. The Children and Young People's Trust has signed up to a vision for strong **families, strong Barnsley; every child in a good school**; and, **success in learning and work**.

Success in education and engagement in lifelong learning is the key to good employment prospects, good health and well-being, and to building thriving communities. Improving education quality and outcomes is a shared priority, fundamental to achieving our broader vision for Barnsley.

Our strategy is founded on high aspirations for all of our children and young people, regardless of starting points or challenges they may experience in their lives. We recognise that delivering a high quality education in contexts where there may be low aspiration, limited employment opportunities, and historically low education performance, is not straightforward. Barnsley has a steady trajectory of improving education outcomes, we recognise the need to pick up the pace of improvement in all phases of education.

While excellent teaching and school leadership is at the core of our response, this alone will not succeed in accelerating improvement to bring standards of achievement above national standards, and to achieve the excellence we aspire to. Our response needs to ensure that we support and strengthen families and communities where children may experience barriers to wellbeing and achievement, such as domestic violence, poverty, neglect, substance misuse or

parental mental health issues, so that we break the cycle of poor outcomes and quality of life that endure in some of our communities.

The high levels of turbulence in some young people's lives must not be used as an excuse for low achievement; however, it is a reality for significant numbers of young people that has to be recognised and mitigated by all partners if we are to achieve our ambitions for every child.

We are determined to provide all our children with an education that allows them to get the best possible start in life and as such we are committed to delivering the 7 core aims outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; that is, a child should:

- have a flying start in life;
- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
- enjoy the best possible health and be free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- be listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
- have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
- not be disadvantaged by poverty.

The work of The Barnsley Alliance is also underpinned by a commitment to the principles and working practices of the **I Know I Can** initiative, which believes in:

- building confidence
- creating dreams and aspirations
- raising qualification levels
- strengthening life skills
- using help and support
- taking ownership and developing a real "**I Know I Can attitude**"

Fundamental to the work of The Alliance is our belief that working together is the best way to ensure that we are providing education that is inclusive, and puts children and young people at the heart of what we do. We know that we are operating at a time of change in terms of national policy and within an environment

of economic constraint and as the traditional role of the council in the school improvement process is changing, it is only by embracing a sector-led model that we will achieve success.

## **What is the Barnsley Alliance?**

The Alliance is a strategic partnership between schools, academy Trusts and sponsors, and the local authority. Its purpose is to raise quality of education provision, and improve outcomes for children and young people across Barnsley.

The Alliance responsibilities are to:

- Agree the Barnsley Education Strategy for improvement to ensure that all children have access to good and outstanding educational opportunities
- Support the development of collaborations and partnership arrangements that are effective in enabling individual schools to secure good outcomes for their pupils.
- Contribute to and support the development of Early Help arrangements so that all children have the right opportunities to achieve their potential

A key role for the Alliance is to monitor education quality and performance and ensure all schools are receiving appropriate support and challenge in proportion to their success and effectiveness.

All schools, maintained and academies are equal partners in The Alliance and are represented on The Alliance Board, by a member of their local 'cluster' or network. The Alliance Board meets termly and, along with representation from all schools, it includes Barnsley Council's Executive Director –People, The Executive Member for Children and Young People, members of Barnsley Governors' Association and other key partners in education by invitation.

## **Governance**

The Alliance Board is accountable to the Children's Trust and reports to the Trust Executive group on strategies, action and progress in relation to improving education outcomes. The impact of the Alliance, and the success of its strategy, is dependent on the support and engagement of all Children's Trust partners in the work to improve quality of education provision and remove barriers to achievement for vulnerable children and young people.

The Alliance also is accountable to Schools Forum for the deployment and impact of specific funding streams devolved or directly allocated to the Alliance to support

education improvement priorities. Schools Forum, in turn, will have regard to improvement priorities agreed by the Alliance in making more general funding decisions, where those decisions may have an impact on Alliance priorities and objectives.

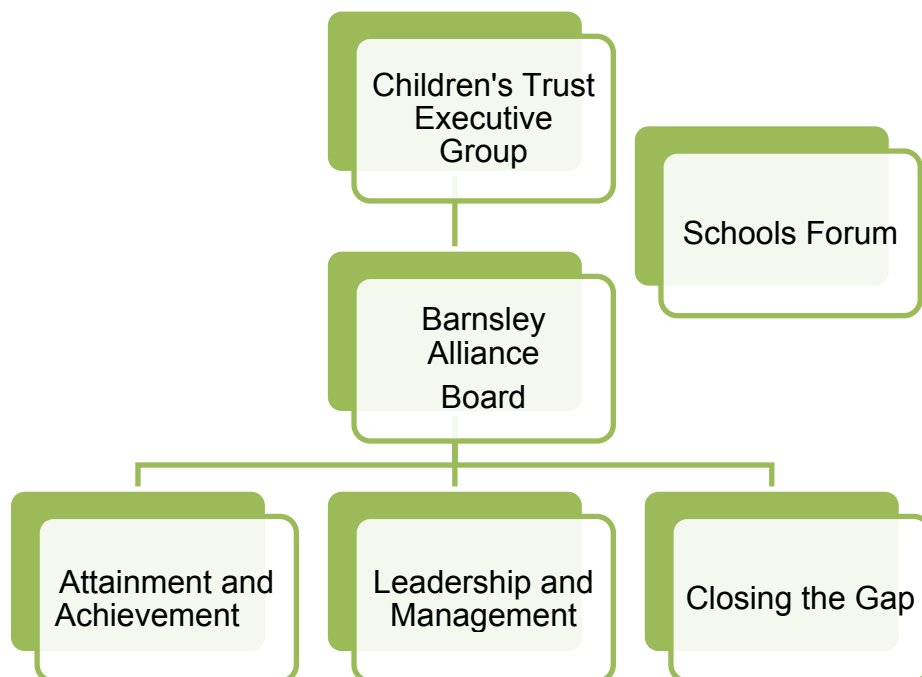
To ensure democratic accountability the Alliance will also periodically report on improvement plans and progress towards achieving improvement objectives to Council Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet committees.

The work of the Alliance Board is supported by three operational subgroups:

The *Attainment and Achievement* group maintains oversight of school quality and performance; agrees improvement priorities with individual schools; and brokers or commissions school to school support.

The *Leadership and Management* group maintains oversight of the quality of leadership and governance in schools; identifies priorities and develops strategies and action plans to build leadership capacity in schools

The *Closing the Gap* group acts as a champion for raising the achievement of vulnerable and underperforming groups; identifies priorities and develops strategies and action plans to raise achievement amongst target groups.



## Partnerships and the Contribution of Partners

Achieving our ambitions depends on the contribution of a range of partners. The Barnsley Alliance is at the core of a wider partnership and is responsible for leading the drive to raise quality and standards. The wider partnership includes members of the Children and Young People's Trust and the organisations or services they represent; pupils, parents and carers, and local communities. To achieve excellence in education we need all partners to play their role.

### The role of school governors and leaders

#### Governors:

- Develop, with senior leaders, a vision and strategic direction for the school
- Monitor progress and outcomes for pupils and hold school leaders to account for the quality of education in the school
- Make sure the school uses its finances efficiently and properly, particularly ensuring resources are well to support pupils' learning
- Ensure the school regularly evaluates how well it is doing, and oversee plans for improvement

#### School leaders:

- Provide leadership in school which focuses on securing excellent teaching and learning
- Are accountable for the educational outcomes for all pupils in the school
- Ensure there are good monitoring and evaluation systems in place so they know the strengths of their school and are clear about areas for improvement
- Develop and implement school improvement plans to support continuous improvement
- Ensure the resources in the school are managed well to support pupils' achievement

## **The role of families and communities**

### **Families**

- Encourage children to have ambitions for the future
- Ensure children attend school every day
- Show interest in what children are learning at school and celebrate their achievements
- Attend main school events and meetings to discuss children's progress
- Engage constructively with school if they have a concern about their child's education or experience at school

### **Communities**

- Promote the importance of education and school attendance
- Celebrate the achievements of young people in the community
- Support local activity that engages young people and raises aspirations
- Develop positive and constructive relationships with local schools

## The role of the council

The Council has some overarching responsibilities for education which apply across all schools and education providers.

### The Council's general responsibilities

All Local Authorities have a legal duty to promote high standards of education. This means it is a partner with all education providers in the area, including early years settings, maintained schools, academies and post 16 colleges. Within this partnership the council acts as a champion for children and parents to ensure all communities have access to and benefit from good education opportunities. To fulfil its responsibilities the council:

- Invests in strong partnership to shape the quality of education provision and improve standards
- Holds education providers to account for quality of provision and outcomes for children and young people
- Ensures that a range of multi-agency services work effectively to remove barriers to educational achievement for vulnerable young people and their families.

Under the Children Act 2004 the local authority must have a statutory Chief Officer and Lead Member with responsibility for education and children's social care services. In Barnsley the Chief Officer (Director of Children's Services) is fulfilled by the Executive Director, People. The Lead Member role is fulfilled by the Cabinet Spokesperson, People (Achieving Potential), and Cabinet Spokesperson People (Safeguarding). The Executive Director, People (as statutory Director of Children's Services must:

- Ensure there are arrangements of fair access to schools for every child
- Promote a diverse supply of good schools
- Promote high quality early years education
- Enable children and young people to participate in decision making
- Ensure the participation of young people in training or education
- Ensure there are arrangements locally, and across partners, to enable families to access early help when they need it – the right support at the right time

The council, as the local authority, also has some specific statutory responsibilities in relation to governance, finance and school improvement in maintained schools. In academies these responsibilities sit with the Academy Trust and its directors, but the council still has a role in monitoring education performance in academies, providing challenge across the system, and taking appropriate action where there are concerns.



## Providing Challenge and Support for School Improvement

It is recognised that schools are self-managing and largely autonomous and are therefore responsible for their own performance and improvement. Effective self-evaluation is the most important process of school improvement and it is expected that all schools should be able to make an accurate self-evaluation of their performance and take clear and decisive action to improve weaknesses.

While the Council has a role in supporting and challenging, in a sector-led system it largely fulfils this role through its participation in the Barnsley Alliance. The Alliance Board has, therefore, a defined role in securing high quality provision and standards in Barnsley schools and settings.

The four key aspects of this role are:

- **Monitoring** –The regular and systematic collection and analysis of performance data (quantitative and qualitative) and discussion with schools about the outcomes of their own self-evaluation processes. This will inform school and Alliance planning and prioritisation, provide opportunities for quality assurance and ensure that statutory requirements are met.
- **Supporting** – Working in partnership with schools to address identified areas for development through brokerage or commissioning of external support via Tykes Teaching School Alliance and The Barnsley Teaching School Alliance. The Alliance RAG rating/risk assessment process is designed to ensure that schools receive effective and timely support that is in proportion to need.
- **Challenging** – Within the process of rigorous self-evaluation, challenging schools to meet ambitious targets, make full use of the range of evidence available and ensure the ‘right’ questions are asked. The aim is to identify success, share good practice and determine appropriate actions to secure continuous improvement.
- **Intervening** – Where performance, self-evaluation and improvement planning are judged to be inadequate, the Local Authority is able to use its statutory powers of intervention to ensure that a maintained school’s performance improves. It is expected that academies and any future free schools will also engage in self-evaluation procedures and engage in the same way as maintained schools, to enable the Alliance to champion ALL pupils in the borough.

On behalf of the Alliance the Attainment and Achievement sub group undertakes school improvement functions and activity formerly managed by the local authority (for maintained schools) and supports The Alliance Board in fulfilling its support, challenge and quality assurance role. The subgroup analyses data and carries out a risk assessment of all schools. It also undertakes the brokering of individual

school to school support, commissions borough wide training and CPD where required. It evaluates the impact of support and ensures best value.

### Risk assessment process

The support and challenge process is underpinned by a number of key principles:

- That the criteria for risk rating are clear and understood by maintained schools and academies;
- When a concern is triggered, the Alliance Board Sub Group will communicate the precise nature of the concern to the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors at the earliest opportunity and that advice/guidance and support will be made available;
- That school-to-school support and partnership working is central to The Alliance's approach to ensuring effective support to all schools, but particularly those causing concern;
- In all circumstances, schools' individual contexts will be taken into consideration when determining RAG rating and risk assessment;
- That all schools, maintained and academies, will take part in the process order to ensure a level playing field for all Barnsley children to receive their entitlement to a good education, regardless of the status of the school they attend;
  
- Where the Alliance brokers or commissions support for individual schools the expectation is that the school will participate actively in peer-review or other review activity to support effective evaluation of that support.

In September of each year, a Risk Assessment will be completed for ALL schools based on information the local authority holds, and that a school has shared. Wherever possible, existing sources of information will be used to streamline the process, acknowledging that this may be provisional pre-publication data. Discussions with schools will highlight whether the information gathered is in line with trends or is atypical for specific reasons.

This analysis for Barnsley performance overall, and for each school, forms the basis of a report to The Alliance Board, along with the risk assessment rating of schools. The risk assessment categories are on a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) scale. Key indicators for determining risk will include:

- Attainment of pupils on entry
- Standards EYFS
- Standards KS1
- Standards KS2
- Progress KS1-2
- Standards KS4

- Progress KS2-4
- Standards KS5
- Accuracy of predicted outcomes
- Attendance and exclusion data
- Quality of Leadership and Management including governance
- Quality of school self-evaluation
- Trends of performance and quality
- Capacity to attain or sustain ongoing improvement
- Overall effectiveness
- Last Ofsted inspection judgments

Other Indicators -**This information will be gathered in partnership with head teachers:**

- School financial management
- Formal complaints about a school
- HR issues

These additional areas can act as an early flag of a school's vulnerability even where there is no decline in performance.

The risk assessment is carried out in September each year. Once the category has been agreed, a letter will be sent to Head Teacher and Governors by early October.

Where requested, or where the school disagrees with the risk rating the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors may meet with a member of the sub group or a senior officer to discuss the evidence base for that decision. If agreement still cannot be reached, the Executive Director will be asked to moderate, with the school in attendance; this decision will be final.

For some schools where there has been a history of continuous decline or improvement is slow The Alliance Board will recommend the implementation of an SISG or IR (School Improvement Strategy Group or Improvement Review) to ensure more rapid improvement.

Where performance continues to be a concern the Alliance Board will escalate the concern to the Executive Director, People, Barnsley Council. At this stage the action taken by the local authority will vary, depending on whether the school is a maintained school or an academy.

### **Local Authority Maintained Schools : escalation of concern**

The local authority has a statutory duty to intervene where there is a concern about standards in the school, a breakdown in governance or leadership, or where safety at the school is seriously compromised. Where there are such concerns the local authority will seek to work with governors and school leaders to address the issues.

Where there is not sufficient improvement as a result of the support and challenge provided by the Alliance, or a school will not engage with the support offered, the local authority will consider issuing a statutory warning notice. This requires the governing body to respond with an acceptable plan and proposal for improving the school. Where the governors do not respond to the authority's satisfaction, the local authority can also take other action, including removing the school's delegated budget; appointing additional governors; or applying to the DfE to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board. In these circumstances the DfE will expect the IEB and the local authority to work towards a structural solution, namely conversion to an academy.

Before issuing a statutory warning notice, the local authority will invite the school leaders and governors to a challenge meeting with the Executive Director, People, and will also issue a Pre-Warning Notice in writing. This Notice will set out, exactly as a warning notice would, the basis of the local authority's concerns; what it requires the governing body to do, and in what timescales. The main difference is the Pre-Warning Notice does not trigger statutory powers or intervention.

In maintained schools with low attainment, inadequate progress and in an Ofsted category or not improving, recommendation will be given to seek academy sponsors where this structural solution is deemed to be in the best interests of rapidly improving outcomes for children and young people.

### **Academies: escalation of concern**

Where there has been lack of sufficient improvement as a result of support and challenge provided by the Alliance, the concern will be escalated to the Executive Director, People. On behalf of the local authority the Director will write to the Academy Trust, outlining the concerns. Academy senior leaders and Trust representatives will be invited to a challenge meeting with the Director, and to share its plans for improving the school. The academy will also be asked to provide termly updates on progress against the improvement plan.

Where the Alliance and the local authority do not receive adequate assurance about the improvement plans, the concern will be escalated to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

A review of data and progress will take place in January and April each year, including updated predictions, termly releases of attendance and exclusions data, and any specific issues,. Should this result in a negative change in the school's RAG rating, discussions will be held with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. A letter will be sent to confirm a change in category by the end of each of those months and the appropriate support pattern will follow.

The LA will assess risks to academy performance on data analysis alone, and will write to academies where a concern has been identified, requesting that the academy shares its improvement plans. The concern will also be shared with the Alliance attainment and achievement operational group so that support can be offered to the academy.

## **Better Outcomes for All: Removing Barriers to Achievement**

### **■ Early Help and Prevention**

Early help is Barnsley's approach to providing support to potentially vulnerable children, young people and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. Early help may occur at any point in a child or young person's life, from childhood to adolescence, and includes both interventions early in life as well as interventions early in the development of a problem. It is about the way we can all work together, share information, and put the child and their family at the centre. Early help means providing effective support to help families solve problems and find solutions at an early stage so it avoids needs becoming so great that specialist statutory interventions are required.

Early help is everyone's responsibility. All practitioners need to understand Barnsley's early help approach and the family's entitlement to an early help assessment when appropriate with a plan that is regularly reviewed to meet their needs. Families can approach anyone working with them who will respond and begin to assess the need and start conversations with the right people to identify how help should be provided. Strategic leaders across Barnsley are committed to taking an early help approach and multi-agency partners are working together on an integrated early help action plan. Progress is reported to the Stronger Communities Partnership, Barnsley's Safeguarding Children's Board and the Trust Executive Group. Key priorities for the forthcoming year are:

- Establish, co-ordinate and communicate clear pathways for early help
- Engage partners in shaping and delivering the early help offer
- Embed the new model for family focused targeted support
- Develop effective systems for monitoring early help and capturing impact.

## ■ **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

Barnsley SEND strategy is intended to ensure that Barnsley is positioned to respond to some significant reforms to education, health and social care with regard to meeting the needs of disabled young people and those with SEN aged between 0-25.

The Strategy is a local area strategy and all partners are accountable for its delivery. All early years providers, mainstream schools and post-16 settings are expected to make effective provision for disabled children and those with SEN. Education, health and care services should work together to jointly commission services to deliver integrated support to children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND.

The strategy is based around three key aims which are:

- To improve educational, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for all Barnsley children with SEN and who are disabled. partners, and that the strategy is owned and supported by all partners
- To ensure Barnsley delivers the necessary changes to the assessment of needs and joint commissioning of provision, as set out in the Children and Families Act, so that children and their families have better integrated support across education, health and social care.
- To address gaps in provision and improve the quality across the full spectrum of provision for children and young people with SEND

[The SEND strategy can be accessed \(insert link\)](#)

## ■ **Virtual School for Looked After Children**

The core purpose of the Virtual School is to improve educational outcomes for children in care. Achieving this objective depends on the commitment of all partners to making the best provision for children in care and ensuring both their educational and wellbeing needs are met. The Barnsley Alliance will promote the interests of children in care, monitor outcomes and challenge and support partners to raise the achievement of children in care.

[The Virtual School Development Plan can be accessed \(insert link\)](#)

## ■ Targeted Support for Children, Young People and Families: Core Principles

In working to remove barriers to achievement and wellbeing a core principle is that we work with children, young people and families as active participants in ensuring the success of support and intervention and securing sustained improvement.

- In all our services, from universal to targeted, we are transparent in our communication and engagement with families; we listen actively to what they say, so that we can understand their perspective, their needs and their desired outcome
- Our starting point is identifying and building on strengths, our approach is non-judgemental and inclusive
- Our approach is family centred, recognising that the context individuals live in, and their important relationships, have an impact on actions and outcomes
- We involve families, children and young people in the decisions that affect their lives
- Our focus is on improving outcomes; making a difference that can be sustained
- We build capacity, resilience and independence, so that families can make choices that enhance their quality of life
- Services, pathways and processes are sensibly integrated, and families experience coherence and consistency in their engagement with services
- We provide continuity of support, communication and relationships at points of transition in families' lives

## Priorities

The Alliance Board has identified 5 areas of focus in order to realise our ambitions for young people across Barnsley. From 2015-2018 our key focus will be:

- To improve attainment and achievement

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better
- To close the achievement gap between vulnerable groups and their peers with a particular focus on those pupils who:
  - have special educational needs or disabilities
  - are eligible for pupil premium/ free school meals
  - are children in care
- To improve behaviour and attendance, and reduce the proportion of persistent absence
- To improve leadership capacity, empowering leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley schools

## **Evaluating the Impact of the Barnsley Alliance**

The success of the Alliance will be evaluated in terms of the impact it has on improving the following outcomes:

- The proportion of schools judged good or better by Ofsted
- The percentage of pupils achieving national expectations at each key stage of education
- The percentage of schools or settings achieving above national averages at each key stage
- The proportion of pupils achieving expected and better than expected progress at all key stages, closing the gap for pupils who enter education below expected levels
- The gap in outcomes for vulnerable learners, including pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium, SEND pupils and Children in Care, and outcomes for other pupils nationally
- Attendance and persistent absence from primary and secondary schools
- Exclusions from primary and secondary schools (fixed term and permanent)