

Response to Question from Mr Baines – Minute Number 678 Discussion Item ii)

A local authority must exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards (Section 13A of the Education Act 1996). Local authorities should act as champions of high standards of education across their schools. The 2017-18 Prioritisation and Entitlement document (included in the Council papers) outlines the school improvement activity that we undertake with all of our schools, maintained or academies.

Key within school improvement is routine 'risk assessments' based on clear criteria which have been shared with, and agreed by, our school leaders. As an outcome, all schools are notified of their current risk assessment outcome and congratulated if 'green'. If 'amber' or 'red' they will be informed of this and the reasons for our assessment. If this is a maintained school, this will be followed up by an arranged meeting with Head and Chair of Governors; if this is an Academy, the head teacher will be asked to invite us in to talk about the areas identified and to discuss actions they are taking. All actions at this level are at no charge to maintained schools or academies because this is a key aspect of our statutory role for ensuring children and young people have access to good education provision. To date, we have had good engagement at this level with maintained schools and academies whose assessment identified there was a potential risk to their effectiveness.

Following the autumn term prioritisation activity, 2 schools (one academy and one maintained) were notified that they had been assessed as a high risk and two (one academy and one maintained) as medium. In each case, the head teacher was informed and offered an opportunity to discuss our assessment outcome and to identify what was being planned/ actioned to address concerns raised. Meetings were held in each of the schools identified as high risk; the academy demonstrated that procedures were already being established through school to school support; school to school support was brokered by the LA for the maintained school. In the case of the medium risk maintained school, a programme of school to school support was brokered; the academy provided evidence that the issues being identified as concern were being addressed through leadership changed.

Spring term prioritisation processes are currently being completed.

Where it is identified that external support would be of benefit, school to school support, or wider Teaching School Alliance support, would be recommended as appropriate. This would be an independent arrangement for academies, and LA would not cover their costs or complete that work, therefore 're-charging' would not be required. We would, of course, continue to provide this level of support for maintained schools.

Wider support, the Sustained Sector-led Improvement Programme, is a commissioned programme which has just commenced. This has been offered to all maintained schools and academies because this is a key driver in the future of school improvement within the current national education landscape. Key funding for this was through last autumn's £50,000 DfE School Improvement Grant to LAs. This is central to the LA's statutory duty to set high expectations for school performance and ensure that the education sector is taking shared accountability for the performance of schools within the authority. This is central to current national education strategies.