

# Milton Keynes School Improvement Framework

2024-2025

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## Introduction

Milton Keynes City Council believes that all children and young people should have access to the highest quality education. Whatever form of governance our schools choose, we regard them as our partners; central to our core work to improve educational outcomes.

Milton Keynes City Council takes this system leadership responsibility very seriously and is determined to hold all schools to account for their performance, including academies, acting as a strong local champion for children, young people and their families. As the 'local authority,' we also have specific duties and powers to monitor and intervene in maintained schools. These duties are set out in [Schools Causing Concern](#).

This School Improvement Framework document has two parts:

- **Part 1:** outlines the work we do to **support school effectiveness**, working with school leaders, governors and wider sector partners.
- **Part 2:** outlines how we carry out our statutory duties, including arrangements for **targeted challenge and intervention** where necessary.

## Rationale

In its entirety, the school improvement framework aims to:

- Keep a focus on the overall effectiveness of the Milton Keynes school system, supporting an ambition that all schools in Milton Keynes are at least good.
- Provide a high-quality, traded offer to schools: ensuring that gains in educational quality are not lost due to the removal of the Monitoring and Brokerage Grant in March 2023.
- Clarify for schools, and the council, the procedures and interventions that will be taken if concerns and/or risks are identified.
- Ensure a collaborative, co-produced response where schools require additional support to improve.

## Principles

We believe that certain conditions support the effective establishment and maintenance of an effective local school improvement system. They underpin all our work:

- Having a clear vision for the local school improvement system that is known and understood.
- Fostering strong, trusting relationships: between schools, the local authority and wider sector partners.
- Securing the engagement of the majority of schools and academies.
- Setting up structures that enable partnership activity and the co-production of local solutions to local problems.
- Working with a range of other system leaders: to promote and facilitate school to school collaboration and the sharing of best practice.
- Utilising the skills, expertise, and resources of local, regional and national sector partners.



## Part 1: Supporting School Effectiveness

### Background and context

In April 2022, central government cut the Monitoring and Brokerage Grant, used to employ the MKCC school improvement team, by 50%. This put strain on the team in terms of delivering 'funded' services to the maintained sector and fulfilling our ambition to work more closely with the academy sector. The grant was removed entirely at the end of March 2023.

In July 2022, we used our local quadrant model to consult with school leaders about how we could do things differently from April 2023. Leaders agreed that they valued the monitoring, evaluation, support, and challenge provided by the school improvement team: and that it was important to maintain a high-quality school improvement service in the city.

In Autumn 2022, school leaders completed a traded work survey to confirm 'agreement in principle' for the services they wanted to purchase in the 2023-2024 financial year. Information from this was used to sharpen and refine the traded offer from the MKCC school improvement service.

In January 2023, we announced our final service offer for 2023-2024. We were delighted to provide this valuable service, continuing to work with the sector to secure educational excellence for the children and young people of Milton Keynes.

Since April 2023, we have successfully delivered the traded service offer. One year on, in March 2024, we can see the continued positive impact of the service on outcomes across the city.

For this reason, this School Improvement Framework (for 2024-2025) remains consistent with the 2023-2024 version. Time will tell whether more far-reaching changes are needed beyond March 2025: taking account of changes over time within the maintained and academy sectors.

### The school improvement services traded offer – maintained schools and academies

The school improvement service traded offer can be found on the [Milton Keynes Professional Development Portal \(MKPDP\)](#).

Services, to maintained schools and academies, that are specifically related to school improvement, include:

- Annual evaluations
- Bespoke consultancy
- Headteacher appraisal
- Senior leader recruitment

Annual evaluations offer an important external view of school effectiveness: allowing leaders to reflect on the accuracy of self-evaluation and the rigour of school improvement planning and activity.

Where purchased, they can be shared with external partners such as Ofsted, Regional Directors and/or the Department for Education. They can also be used to support conversations between MKCC and school leaders if overall education quality is ever called into question under any of the processes outlined below.

Improvement Partners continue to offer bespoke consultancy, tailor made to meet the needs of individual schools and/or groups of schools. They also continue to support training for governors, trustees and governing/trust boards.

## **Wider partnership working**

We continue to be committed to ensuring that all our work with schools reflects national and local priorities. We proactively respond to these with effective strategies and collegiately work with national and local partners and agencies.

Some examples of partnership working include:

- Quadrant meetings
- Headteacher and chair of governor briefings
- Annual conferences for headteachers and governors
- Engagement with secondary and special headteacher groups
- Engagement with local safeguarding partners
- Engagement with Designated Safeguarding Lead forums
- Work with the MKCC early years team
- Work with the Virtual School and Designated Teacher forums
- Work with the Milton Keynes Music Hub
- Work with the EMA Network, SACRE and supplementary schools
- Liaison with Chiltern Teaching School Hub and local English and maths hubs
- Liaison with Milton Keynes Education Partnership (MKEP)
- Liaison with relevant diocesan representatives
- Statutory assessment and moderation



## Part 2:

### Targeted challenge and intervention

#### Maintained schools

A desk top analysis of headline performance data will be undertaken for all maintained schools in late summer/ autumn. (*\*Special schools and maintained nursery schools see below*). The desk top analysis will always be considered in the light of wider information the local authority gathers about strengths and risks in maintained schools – especially, but not exclusively, recent Annual Evaluations.

Having reflected on all the information available, the Head of Education Outcomes will contact any schools at risk of being Grade B, rather than Grade A. (Grade A and Grade B are defined on Page 10.)

#### Grades A and B

Most maintained schools in Milton Keynes are likely to be Grade A schools. This assertion is based on analysis of Annual Evaluations undertaken from September 2022 – Spring 2024.

A few maintained schools in Milton Keynes will be Grade B schools. Where Grade B is considered a potential outcome:

- The Head of Education Outcomes and Assistant Director of Education and Learning, with input from the Improvement Partner or Key Education Contact, will assess each school on a case-by-case basis before confirming the grade.
- The assessment will consider any representations that leaders and governors choose to make.
- An opportunity to discuss the representations, at a face to face or virtual meeting, will be offered before a final decision is made.

If, after considering all the evidence, the local authority decide that a maintained school requires additional support to improve several aspects of provision (because it is confirmed as Grade B), a School Performance Board (SPB) will be put in place.

- Membership of a SPB will be established based on need. SPBs will always include; senior leaders, some governors, The Head of Education Outcomes and/or the Assistant Director of Education and Learning and the Improvement Partner/Key Education Contact. Membership may also include colleagues from MKCC's finance, human resource, health and safety, and/or access to education, employment and training teams as appropriate.
- Decisions regarding interventions and milestones will be proposed by the SPB and agreed at the Education Performance Board.
- Review of the effectiveness of the interventions and the decision to close a SPB will be agreed at the Education Performance Board.

If school leaders are unable to ensure appropriate school improvement, despite ongoing support and intervention, and do not have capacity to take this forward quickly enough, the following will be considered:

- Interim leadership arrangements
- Pre-warning notices and/or warning notices
- Discussions with/ involvement of the Regional Director (RD).

If a school governing board is unable to ensure appropriate school improvement, despite ongoing support and intervention, and does not have capacity to take this forward quickly enough, an Interim Executive Board (IEB) will be considered.

Leaders and/or governors of maintained schools can contact the Head of Education Outcomes if they become concerned about the quality of provision at their school. The Head of Education Outcomes and Assistant Director of Education and Learning will consider any such contacts on a case-by-case basis: focussing on whether a School Performance Board (SPB) could be appropriate or whether a different model of support and challenge should be considered.

### **Maintained special schools and maintained nursery schools**

It is acknowledged that a desk top analysis of headline performance data will not work as a starting point for special schools or maintained nursery schools.

Instead, the process for these schools will start with a short face to face, or virtual, meeting. The meeting will focus on pupil outcomes over time and the impact of the curriculum/pathways on learners.

All other parts of the process outlined above will apply to maintained special schools and maintained nursery schools.



## **‘Schools that are not making necessary improvements’**

If an academy order is issued by the Regional Director, because a school has been judged to be less than good by Ofsted at its last two inspections, a Project Board will be established. This will include members of any previous School Performance Board (SPB) as required, but also any other relevant personnel who can support the academisation process.

The project board will undertake to:

- Ensure that enough interventions are in place to improve the quality of education while academisation takes place.
- Check that the legal ‘due diligence’ procedures are being followed and completed in a robust and timely manner.
- Work with the Regional Director to bring about swift academisation.

## **Maintained schools judged to be ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted**

If a maintained school is inspected and judged to be ‘inadequate’ a Project Board will be established. This will include members of any previous School Performance Board (SPB) as required, but also any other relevant personnel who can support the academisation process.

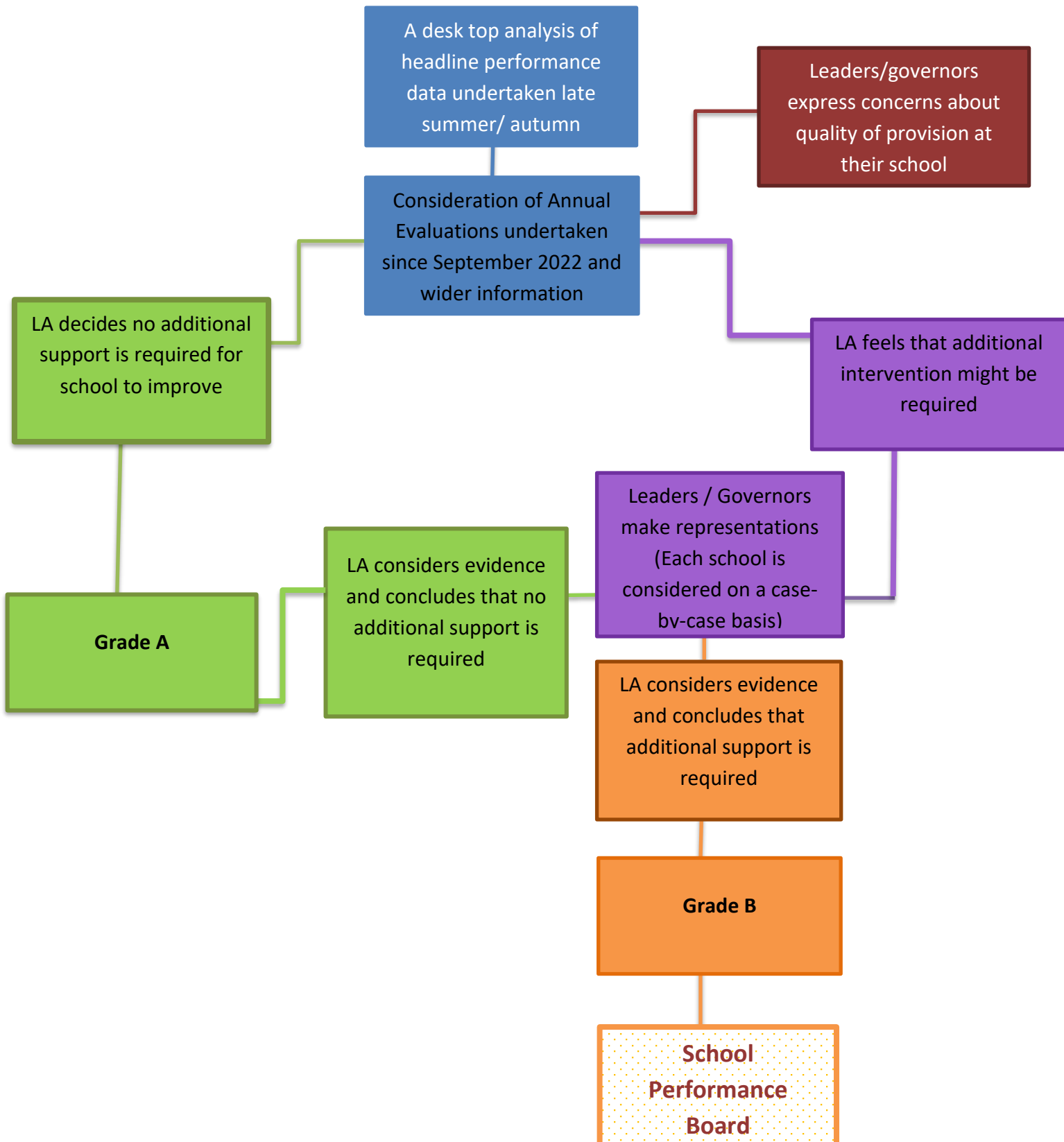
The project board will undertake to:

- Review and agree the local authority statement of action.
- Ensure that enough interventions are in place to improve the quality of education while academisation takes place.
- Check that the legal ‘due diligence’ procedures are being followed and completed in a robust and timely manner.
- Work with the Regional Director (RD) to bring about swift academisation through the Statement of Action.





## Targeted challenge and intervention



## Local Authority Grades

Grade	Description
<b>Grade A</b>	<p>All the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupil outcomes are secure and/or are strongly improving.</li><li>• There are few if any risks. Where minor risks exist, evidence suggests that they are understood and are being strongly mitigated.</li><li>• Leaders demonstrate capacity for self-improvement.</li></ul>
<b>Grade B</b>	<p>One or more of the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are safeguarding concerns.</li><li>• Pupil outcomes are weak. They are declining and/or historically low and are not improving.</li><li>• Several wider risks/ issues have been identified. (Quality of education, behaviour and relationships, stability and/or effectiveness of leadership, financial difficulties, high pupil mobility, rapid growth, governance.) These are more serious and/or evidence suggests that they are not being tackled and/or mitigated.</li><li>• Leaders demonstrate limited capacity for self-improvement.</li><li>• There is a clear risk of a requires improvement or inadequate judgement at the next inspection.</li><li>• There is a clear risk of being deemed a school that is 'not making the necessary improvements.'</li></ul>

*LA officers are clear that data is only a starting point. They know that data is not always comparable with that from earlier years and understand the uneven impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pupils and schools. They will therefore be sensitive in their use of data and will not make decisions based on one piece of information alone.*