Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy

2022 - 2027

Date: February 2022

Contents

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

Foreword

A strategy for Education and Skills was developed for Buckinghamshire in 2018 as a result of collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders. It was designed to act as a compass for implementing continuous improvement in educational provision in Buckinghamshire until 2022. Following further collaboration and engagement with wide range of partners, the Strategy has been refreshed to show the progress made and to highlight the priority areas we need to focus on in the future.

The review of the Strategy is timely given that we have been and are still working through an unprecedented period of uncertainty and change due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Recent events have had a significant impact on the education of our children and young people, and now is the time to review and reformulate our ambitions for education in a post pandemic world.

Since the launch of the Education and Skills Strategy, much has been achieved and improved upon, but there is much more that we need to do, together with our partners to secure the very best outcomes for children and young people in Buckinghamshire. This Strategy sets out the roadmap of how this can be achieved so that collectively, we can work together to secure a better future for all of our children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

Introduction

Our Vision for Education in Buckinghamshire for the next five years

Education is fundamental to improving life chances and can transform the lives of children and young people. It should provide an exciting journey of self-discovery and fulfilment that sets our children and young people up for a lifetime of learning, ambition, and achievement, made possible through an inclusive learning environment that is characterised by excellent teaching within a system that celebrates diversity.

The vision of this Strategy is to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so they can realise their potential whatever their starting point, with the focus on addressing the differential of experience between the vulnerable children in Buckinghamshire and their peers.

Children and young people are at the heart of our Education Strategy as well as that of the Council's Children's and Young People's Plan and children's services priorities:

Children and Young People's Plan priorities:

1. Keep children and young people safe and in their families wherever possible
2. Enable and support children, young people, parents and carers to overcome the challenges they may face
3. Improve children and young people's health and well-being
4. Provide opportunities for children and young people to realise their full potential.

Children's Services priorities for 2021/22:
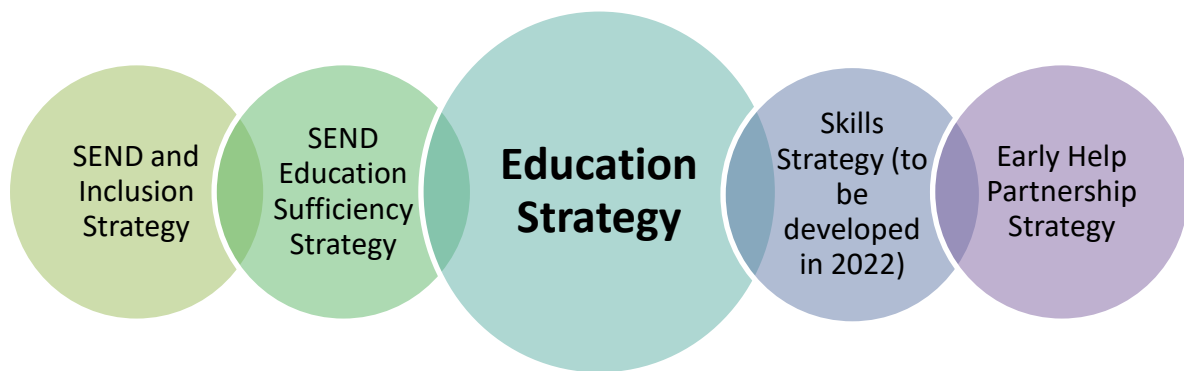
Children's Social Care:
1. Service improvement
2. Responding to the growing and unpredictable demand as a result of COVID 19
3. Recruitment and retention of social care workforce
4. Recruitment of in-house foster carers

Education:
5. SEND delivery and improvements
6. Improving education provision and educational outcomes
7. Work with schools to ensure that young people have access to good mental health support
8. Early help All children and young people should feel safe, respected, and valued in an education system which celebrates diversity

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

The strategy will sit alongside other key strategies that support our broader ambitions for children and young people in Buckinghamshire as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Re-positioning the Strategy

SEND and Inclusion Strategy • SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy • **Education Strategy** • Skills Strategy (to be developed in 2022) • Early Help Partnership Strategy

Principles of the Education Strategy

The Education Strategy is founded on four fundamental guiding principles:

- **Collaboration:** an ethos of collaboration and mutual respect between educational partners and a collective responsibility for the achievement of all children and young people, regardless of where they are educated or the status of establishment

- **Proactivity and prevention:** the need to anticipate issues early and develop the strengths and resources needed to proactively improve outcomes for children and young people, rather than relying on reactive and often expensive intervention

- **Inclusivity:** the ambition to have an education system where every children and young person is enabled to fulfil their potential regardless of their background, ethnicity, gender, race or need

- **Financial sustainability:** the necessity to provide support structures that are financially sustainable over the course of the strategy and beyond, increasing resilience and utilising excellence and expertise within the system

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

Achievements since 2018

Much in the educational landscape has changed since 2018 when the original strategy was published, particularly in the light of the COVID 19 pandemic. School closures, nationwide lockdowns, changes to the examination systems and the adoption of new ways of working have had a significant effect on the education of children and young people, and those who educate them.

The Education Standards Report 2020-21 for Buckinghamshire provides a detailed summary of educational progress, the most notable being:

- Attainment 8 scores in 2020 and 2021 were above both figures for statistical neighbours and nationally
- Attainment 8 for disadvantaged pupils in Buckinghamshire was above figures for statistical neighbours and nationally in 2021
- SEND pupils in Buckinghamshire both with EHCPs and those receiving SEND support performed above the national benchmark for Attainment 8
- Attainment 8 scores for pupils in Buckinghamshire were also above the national average for all main ethnic groups, both genders and for pupils whose first language was not English
- Overall permanent exclusions and suspensions were lower than the national average and have been so for the past 3 years
- The percentage of schools in Buckinghamshire rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED has increased over the period 2015-2019 from 82% to 90%. The percentage of Early Years providers in Buckinghamshire rated as good or outstanding by OFSTED has increased over the same period from 88% to 96%

Further details can be found within the Education Standards Report 2020-21.

Developing the Education Strategy 2022-27

The activities described below have been undertaken to develop this strategy:

- Key stakeholders including Early Years' settings, schools, governors, educational professionals, FACT Bucks, Bucks Skills Hub and partners in the voluntary community sector were invited to provide feedback through an initial evaluation exercise in September 2021

- Feedback was obtained from young people and parents and carers at the Shout Out for SEND conference in October 2021

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

- Internal reviews and strategic action plans within the Council's Achievement and Learning teams have been evaluated and considered

- Feedback has been obtained from all the School Liaison Groups in November 2021

These activities have informed the development of priorities for 2022 – 27.

The initial feedback also confirmed that:

A) The Strategy must be closely aligned to specific existing strategies, policies and approaches

B) The Strategy needs to have clear and measurable indicators so that its effectiveness and intended outcomes can be assessed

C) The Strategy must take into account the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on education and identify the measures necessary to mitigate this

What are children, young people and families telling us?

Preliminary feedback from children, young people and their families was collected at the Shout out for SEND conference in October 2021. There was some follow up work with the student representatives (Reps) who were asked about their education and whether their hopes and aspirations have been altered because the pandemic.

The Reps were asked what their experience has been like in education over the last couple of years and whether their learning has been affected by the pandemic.

Everyone agreed that the pandemic had affected their learning in some way. The Reps explained what they learned about their approach to learning, the importance of socialising, their own wellbeing, and new opportunities created from the pandemic.

Key themes noted were:
- Some students found online learning difficult and learning in general less enjoyable, whilst others found the use of technology to support learning beneficial
- Many missed the social interaction with other pupils and teachers; some felt isolated and felt that their learning had been hampered by the experience of the Pandemic
- Some reflected on what school and education meant to them and began to realise its importance to their future lives

Parents and carers raised the issue of having access to vital information that would support their child as they prepare to leave education i.e. information about opportunities such as apprenticeships.

Key priorities for 2022-27

The information gained from the preliminary feedback in Autumn 2021 has helped us to reframe the Education strategy. The vision and aims of the strategy will remain largely unchanged; being ambitious collaborative and inclusive will continue to be our strategic intentions. The refreshed strategy will focus on the following priority areas (see figure 2) against which its implementation and its expected progression will be monitored and assessed.

Figure 2: The key priority areas of the Strategy

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027
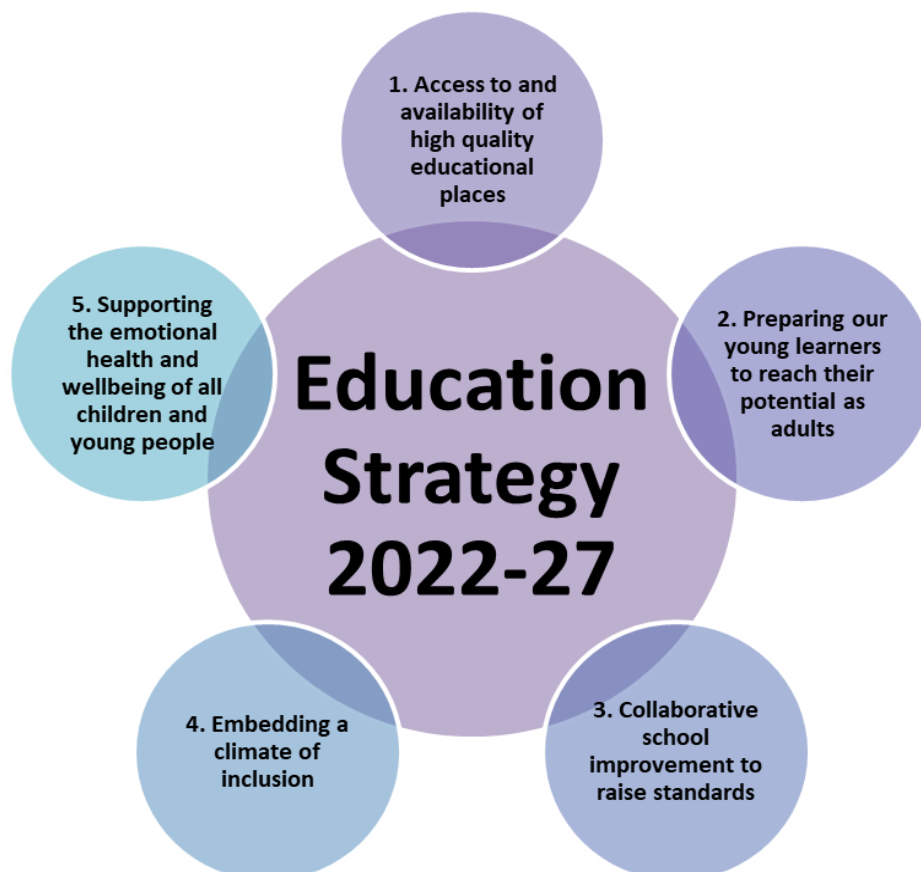
Priority 1. Access to and availability of high-quality educational places

We need to:
a) Ensure there are sufficient high-quality school places to meet demand through continuous monitoring and review of population projections
b) Work proactively in partnership with schools, particularly where there needs to be re-organisation or change to existing provision to meet need
c) Increase provision locally for our more complex young people, particularly with regards to alternative educational provision
d) Ensure accurate and coordinated school place allocations are completed according to the national timelines for primary /secondary allocation
e) Ensure that there is sufficient early years education through strategic planning and support to the local childcare market
f) Support the development and long- term sustainability of early education and childcare provision, and where there is clear evidence of need, develop new and extended quality provision within the sector

Measures:

- Total number of school and early years places available in comparison to number of places in demand.

Priority 2: Preparing our young learners to reach their potential as adults

We need to:
a) Provide the best start for all our young learners by ensuring there is sufficient high-quality nursery and childcare provision available for parents and carers to access
b) Ensure high parental take up of Early Years government funded places for eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds
c) Continue to build upon the Early Years' Side by Side partnership improvement journey across all sectors of early years education to facilitate a culture of collective responsibility, inclusion and collaboration across sectors.
d) Work with families to support the most vulnerable children into Early Years provision
e) Work with safeguarding partners, including Ofsted and the DfE, to monitor proactively and take action to ensure providers remain compliant and keep children safe in their early years and childcare placement.
f) Work with schools and other educational settings to promote high standards of education and the development of key life skills such as resilience and independence
g) Support the development of a wider range of pathways that will enable school leavers to progress their learning and secure positive labour market outcomes

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

Measures:
- Increase in percentage of eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds taking up Early Years government funded places
- Increase in percentage of children from disadvantaged backgrounds taking up the fully funded places for 2-year olds
- Percentage of early years settings that are OFSTED rated as good or outstanding
- Increasing the percentage of pupils achieving 5 Grade 4's at GCSE
- Decrease the number of percentage of pupils that become NEET

Priority 3: Collaborative school improvement to raise standards

We need to:
a) Continue to address narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and their peers
b) Continue to develop the Side by Side model of school improvement so as to develop expertise within the school community to drive up standards
c) Increase the support for school leaders and governors to ensure national and local priorities are addressed, with a focus on closing the attainment gap and supporting a culture of safeguarding. This will be achieved through the development of traded services to ensure the continuity of support for schools beyond statutory functions
d) Continue to build and develop collaborative networks through engaging school leaders and governors to develop a self-sustaining, system led model
e) Ensure that schools who are at risk of falling into an Ofsted Requires Improvement/Inadequate category are proactively supported to avoid this outcome

Measures:
- Percentage of schools are OFSTED rated as good or outstanding
- Percentage of children and young people attending a good or outstanding school
- Reduction in the attainment gap of disadvantaged pupils in comparison to their peers

Priority 4: Embedding a climate of inclusion

We need to:
a) Share best practice and ensure the effective sharing of information between key partners so that every child or young person's need or situation is accounted for and supported
b) Continue to work with schools and settings to address the attainment gap for our most vulnerable children and young people

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027

c) Proactively increase support for children at risk of permanent exclusion or suspension through developing our offer of alternative education

d) Effectively identify, track and support our "Hidden Children"- cohorts of children and young people who are more likely to fall through gaps in provision and therefore have increased vulnerability (the numbers of which are likely to increase due to the after-effects of the pandemic)

Measures:
- Rate of permanent exclusions at both primary and secondary level continue to remain low
- Rate of fixed term suspensions at both primary and secondary level decrease
- Maintain high levels of school attendance, especially for the most vulnerable cohort of pupils
- Reduction in the number of exclusions and suspensions for pupils with SEND
- Reduction in the attainment gap of disadvantaged pupils in comparison to their peers (see Priority area 3)

Priority 5. Supporting the emotional health and well- being of all children and young people

We need to:
a) Ensure that schools and Early Years settings can access training and support to address particular behaviours that are becoming evident in pupils as a result of the pandemic

b) Ensure early identification and proactive intervention for pupils with behaviours resulting from anxieties that have emerged

c) Improve availability and access to therapeutic services throughout the County for all children and young people who need them

d) Develop a recruitment and retention plan to ensure there are sufficient staff in schools and settings to support pupils and young learners

e) Deliver key initiatives such as the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, and ensure outdoor education and other extra-curricular activities are promoted to vulnerable groups of pupils to support emotional health and well being

Measures:
- Increase in the take up of eligible children of places provided through the Holiday Activity and Food programme during school holidays
- Decrease in acute presentations at paediatric services due to earlier recognition and referrals of children and young people in crisis
- Succession plans are developed in every schools/setting

Governance

The Side by Side Reference Group will provide governance and oversight of the Education Strategy. This group includes representatives from Early Years settings, primary and secondary schools (from maintained schools and academies), Bucks College Group and school governors and reflects the collaborative approach to achieving the vision set out in this strategy. The group also has links with a number of other bodies as set out below, who work together to support and deliver education in the county. The group will receive reports on progress and provide support, scrutiny, and challenge to ensure the implementation of the strategy leads to improved outcomes for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.
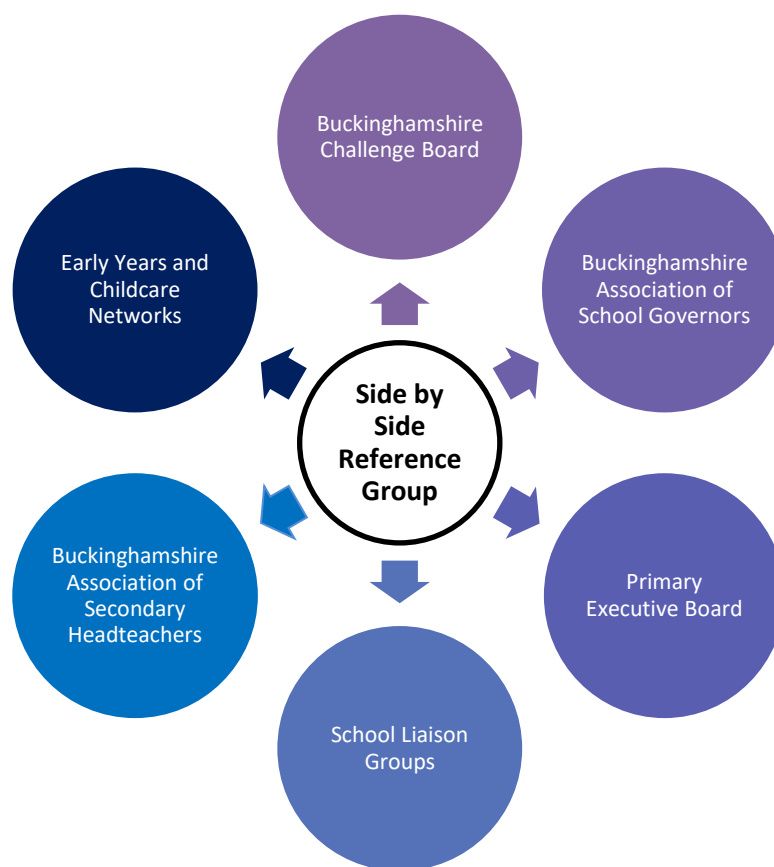
Appendices

Appendix A: Interdependencies:

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 2023
The Buckinghamshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Education Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 2027
Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022 – 2025 (due to be published later in 2022)
Education Standards Report 2020-21

Draft Buckinghamshire Education Strategy, 2022-2027