

Delivering Bold Steps for Kent

Education, Learning and Skills Vision and Priorities for Improvement

Vision:

Our vision is for Kent to be the most forward looking area in England for education and learning so that we are the best place for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve.

Kent should be a place where families thrive and all children learn and develop well from the earliest years so that they are ready to succeed at school, have excellent foundations for learning and are equipped well for achievement in life, no matter what their background.

In Kent we should have the same expectations for every child and young person to make good progress in their learning, to achieve well and to have the best opportunities for an independent economic and social life as they become young adults.

Every child and young person should go to a good or outstanding school, have access to the best teaching, and benefit from schools and other providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve.

Our strategic priorities in Kent Bold Steps are to ensure all pupils meet their full potential, to shape education and skills provision around the needs of the Kent economy and improve services for the most vulnerable young people in Kent.

Our Ambition

Central to our ambition is the desire to create the conditions in which pupils experience the best learning and teaching, and where pupils' moral and intellectual development and confidence can flourish. We want every child in Kent to achieve well above expectations and not to be held back by their social background. We want every young person to benefit from a broad range of pathways to further learning and employment, for their own achievement and for the success of the Kent economy.

We will do this by focusing relentlessly on improving standards and the quality of education and learning so that excellence is promoted across the system. We will ensure children continue to get a good start in life, by working alongside all the agencies who work with very young children and their families, particularly health practitioners and those providing services through our Children's Centres, so that we promote the highest quality early learning and childcare in the Foundation Stage. We will work tirelessly to ensure every child can go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places. And we will ensure every young person to age 18 is engaged in purposeful education and training, and they are well prepared for skilled employment and higher learning.

We will achieve this by learning from and spreading the influence of the best, whether locally, nationally or internationally and through working in partnership across all types of school and phases of education and learning and with partners across the business sectors, local government, health, social care, the voluntary and community sectors, and especially with parents, carers, local communities and the children and young people themselves.

We will support the best schools and school leaders to lead the system and drive improvement across all schools, settings and education and training providers, supporting and challenging each other in how we achieve our goals, so that we are able to transform outcomes for all of our children and young people. We will promote innovation and creativity in teaching and learning and the curriculum, so that Kent achieves a world class education system, greater social mobility and reverses the national trends of under performance for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups which hold back progress in our economy and our society.

We see learning as a lifelong process in which learners should always be able to progress to the next stage of their lives, with the necessary foundations for success, to develop their skills, training and qualifications both in and out of work and in informal and formal learning situations. We will give particular priority to improving the skills and employability of 14 - 24 year olds, so that they make a good start to adult life and their potential is not lost to the Kent economy.

The Challenge for the Future:

The world is changing fast, expectations are rising rapidly and a more diverse education system is developing quickly. The UK has to achieve a more educated and skilled workforce and cannot afford to lose the potential of so many young people who, if they are not educated well enough, will lead less productive and satisfying lives. The economic and social cost of educational failure is immense. In this mix the role of the Local Authority is changing to be more ambitious, focused and strategic in bringing about educational transformation for Kent by being a strong and influential partner with schools and other providers.

In particular our priorities are to :

- Develop a new partnership relationship with all schools and other providers, based on collaboration and shared effort, to build greater capacity in the system
- Focus relentlessly on raising educational standards and support and challenge lower performing schools and other providers to improve quickly
- Support greater choice for parents and families by commissioning a sufficient and diverse supply of places in strong schools and quality early years settings
- Make the most effective and efficient use of the available resources to support improved outcomes
- Move to a more strategic commissioning and oversight role which builds capacity for improvement and brokers the best arrangements for longer term sustainable success
- Support vulnerable pupils, including looked after children and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, so that they achieve well and make good progress
- Ensure every child has fair access to all schools

- Deliver an effective school improvement strategy and procure effective support and advice services for schools
- Promote and champion an education, training and skills system that delivers a range of options and pathways for all young people into higher levels of learning or employment to age 24
- Promote and champion educational excellence and provide vision and drive for a world class system

New ways of working are key to success in a more diverse educational landscape, with many different providers across the early years, schools and post 16 skills and employment sectors. This landscape requires us to drive change through strategic influence, highly effective partnership arrangements and networks in which there can be pooled effort and shared priorities, to achieve better outcomes, to increase capacity in the system and to create more innovative solutions at a time of reducing levels of resource. More successful delivery in Kent will see the emergence of new vehicles for joint working and partnership. Our priority will therefore be to ensure success for:

- School leaders to lead the system through the Kent Association of Headteachers, working at a local level through District school forums that have strong and purposeful working relationships with the Local Children's Trust Boards and Locality Boards in order to deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for their children and young people
- Schools to procure support services well, have real choice and be able to procure high quality services through EduKent
- Kent Challenge to deliver a school improvement model based on strong school collaborations and the development of a school to school support system
- Locality based working and commissioning to pool and target resources to local needs
- Our key strategic partnerships to maximise effort and increase our capacity to transform early learning, education in schools, and post 16 learning and training so that it is truly excellent.

Where are we now?

We need to be very ambitious because there is much to do to bring about the necessary improvement. Kent has a mixed economy of early years and school provision serving diverse communities. This ranges from outstanding and good provision to a significant amount of underperforming provision which is letting down children and communities, some of whom are the most disadvantaged in Kent.

There is mostly good or better provision in early years settings and outcomes for children at the end of the Foundation Stage are above average, with the achievement gap narrowing for the 20% most disadvantaged children at age 5. As a result most children in Kent are ready to make a good start at school as they approach their fifth birthday. The challenge is to improve the satisfactory provision and narrow the achievement gap even further by the end of the Foundation Stage so that more children make a good start at Primary school. Our Children's Centres, working closely with early years settings and their local Primary Schools, are vital in

ensuring that the most disadvantaged children and their families receive the targeted early support they require in order to prevent escalation of potential problems and children are eager and able to learn well when they start school.

In Primary education we have significant challenges. Only 55% of our schools are good or better, fewer than in similar areas and much less than the national average. There are 62 outstanding primary schools that can and do help to lead the system. Key Stage 2 standards are in line with similar areas, and just below the national average (74%) and, while there was some improvement in 2011 with 72% achieving level 4 in English and mathematics, our expectation should be for a far higher percentage of pupils to be able to start secondary education with level 4 attainment. At present Kent is 120th out of 152 local education authorities for performance at Key Stage 2, which is far from being the world class education system we aim to be. We are in the bottom quartile and we should be in the top quartile for local authority performance in Primary education.

We have seen limited improvement in the overall effectiveness of primary schools, there is too much satisfactory provision and wide variation across schools, ranging from 23% to 100% of pupils attaining level 4 outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2. There is significant under-performance and over 90 schools have been performing below the floor standard of 60% of pupils attaining level 4 in English and mathematics by age 11, for several years. Many of these schools have remained no better than satisfactory for two or more Ofsted inspections. This means that the gaps in pupil attainment and progress at Key Stage 2, and the wide variation in the quality of schools, result in poorer outcomes for many children including the most vulnerable children. The challenge is to improve this situation quickly and achieve greater capacity for sustained improvement.

At Secondary level the overall effectiveness of schools has steadily improved and Secondary education is mostly good or better (69%), which is in line with the national average. 26 Secondary schools are outstanding and Key Stage 4 standards have improved year on year and are just above similar areas and in line with the national average for five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics (58%).

However the gaps in Secondary school performance at Key Stage 4 are wide, and again are worse amongst those young people who face the greatest disadvantage. Only 28% of pupils on free school meals attained five good GCSEs in 2011, which is well below average. In 2012 there are potentially 29 secondary schools that may perform below the floor standard of 40% of pupils attaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. The challenge is to improve standards in these schools quickly and ensure more Secondary schools are at least good schools.

It has been a priority for Kent County Council to develop a system of learning that recognises the different aspirations of young people. We have delivered a good 14-16 vocational programme, and the work of schools, colleges and the Vocational Skills Centres across Kent have enabled 8,500 14-16 year olds to undertake vocational courses, helping many young people to move into an apprenticeship. However the challenge now is to re-design that offer quickly in response to the recent government changes to vocational qualifications, so that

young people continue to have an improving vocational offer with good pathways to meaningful learning and qualifications post 16.

Special education is a strength. Special schools are almost all good or better, (four are satisfactory) and whilst almost all the sixth forms are also good or better not all schools have post 16 provision. There is insufficient quality provision, therefore, for nearly half of the Year 11 pupils who need appropriate post 16 education, work based learning and training. And many young people with learning difficulties and disabilities at age 19 have poor opportunities for employment and independent living. This will be addressed as a priority in our 14-24 strategy.

Only just over half of the Pupil Referral Units in Kent are good or better, fewer than in similar areas and below the national average. There is too much satisfactory provision in place which cannot secure good progress for the very vulnerable pupils who attend. The challenge is to review and re-organise this provision to secure better outcomes and expand the range of alternative provision at Key Stage 4. Our aim needs to be to have more flexible provision, fewer exclusions, better support for reintegration into mainstream schools and improved outcomes for the pupils aged 14-16 who follow alternative curriculum pathways by attending college or work based learning providers.

School sixth form provision is mostly good or better (69%), but only 2 of 5 FE colleges are good or better. A-Level results have steadily improved and the number of young people achieving level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is in line with similar areas. However the percentage of young people progressing to higher education (55%) has not increased in recent years.

As with every other area of education in the County the standards and skills achieved by young people aged 19 from low income backgrounds, while improved post 16, are below the national average for this group and the gaps for the most vulnerable young people are not closing quickly enough. This significantly reduces their employability and access to apprenticeships and other vocational qualifications.

We have been successful in engaging young people (16-18) in education and training, and have kept the figure for those not in employment, education or training (NEET) at a relatively low level compared to levels nationally. However the NEET figures are increasing and earlier success does not appear to be carrying through to the 18 to 24 year olds. Youth unemployment figures for Kent reinforce the need for further action with 18 to 24 year olds accounting for 28.6% of all unemployment in Kent. There needs to be closer alignment between young people's ambitions and learning pathways and the opportunities that exist in the local economy. We need to develop new models of school and employer partnerships, step up the number of apprenticeships and guide young people to participate in learning and training that will lead to better employment.

At present in Kent there is no part time employment with training for post 16 students, there are no pre-apprenticeship programmes, no vocational and technical qualifications with meaningful work experience and no academic courses with meaningful work experience.

These are significant gaps in our provision. It is essential therefore to increase work based learning to secure better routes to employment and the challenge overall is to improve outcomes for this age group by improving learning pathways 16-19 and the quality and range of vocational education, including enabling more young people to take up apprenticeships. If these opportunities do not become more available and lead to better outcomes, we will not succeed in ensuring that all young people participate in learning and work based training to age 18 by 2015.

We are also working to develop programmes that will create employment opportunities for 18 to 24 year olds who are currently in receipt of Job Seeker Allowance, building on our successful experience in delivering 890 additional jobs for this group of young people through the Future Jobs Fund. We will continue to work with training providers to align our programmes with the National Youth Programme funding and other funding opportunities in order to direct as much resource available within the system to create employment opportunities for our young people.

Our Future Targets and Priorities:

As there is much to do we are aiming for outcomes that are outrageously good, are worth pursuing and we believe we have the ways to achieve them. Following discussion with Headteachers and other partners at a range of meetings we have a good level of shared ambition to achieve the following improvements by 2015

To ensure all pupils meet their full potential, we will achieve the following by 2015:

- Foundation Stage outcomes for 5 year olds will continue to improve so that the percentage of children achieving the expected level 6 + in all aspects of learning will improve by 5%, especially in language and literacy and in emotional and social development.
- In the Foundation Stage the number of children achieving at least 78 points will improve to 70 % of children in Kent working at the expected level, which is above the current national average.
- Key stage 2 attainment will be amongst the best for our statistical neighbours and improve to at least 80% of pupils attaining level 4 in English and mathematics
- Key stage 4 attainment will be amongst the best for our statistical neighbours and improve to at least 70% of pupils attaining 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics

- The achievement gaps at key stages 2 and 4 will be less than the national gap figures and pupils from low income backgrounds, looked after children and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in Kent will be achieving better progress and outcomes than similar groups nationally.
- No KCC schools will be in an Ofsted category of concern
- There will be more good schools, with at least 85% of primary and secondary schools judged as good or outstanding. All special schools will be good or outstanding.
- At least 90% of secondary schools and 95% of primary schools will be performing above the floor standards
- All schools will either be succeeding, by achieving good outcomes for all groups of pupils, or where there has been a history of underperformance the schools will be improving and performing above the floor standards as part of a sponsored academy arrangement or federation with good leadership capacity.
- In nearly all schools (90%) teaching will be consistently good.
- We will reduce the number of pupils requiring a statement of special educational needs by developing more effective early intervention, 95% of SEN statutory assessments will be completed within timescales and pupils with statements will be making good progress and achieve above average outcomes when compared with national benchmarks.
- We will reduce the number of independent and non maintained special school placements by 10% to ensure the needs of more Kent children are met in their locality, by developing our SEN strategy to provide more local and cost effective provision.
- No looked after children will be excluded from school, fewer than 10% will be persistently absent and their attainment will be in line with the targets in the Kent Pledge to Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- Following our review and improvement programme for the PRUs, and the further development of alternative provision for pupils aged 14 and above, there will be fewer than 50 pupils permanently excluded from school.
- We will help parents to access a preferred school place for their child by increasing online admission applications to 95% and increase the number of parents who get their first preference of school to above 85%. First and second preferences combined will improve to 95%.

- We will maintain at least 5% to 7% surplus capacity in school places and ensure we keep pace with demand for school places in each District by providing places of good quality that parents want for their children.

To shape education and skills around the needs of the Kent economy we will achieve the following by 2015:

- There will be full participation in education and work based training for all 16-18 year olds following year on year reductions in the NEET figures
- The employability skills of 19 year olds will have improved, especially in English and mathematics, so that level 2 attainment at age 19 is above the national average
- There will be fewer young people who achieve no improvement in qualifications between the ages of 16 and 19, so that this number reduces to less than 5%.
- The outcomes for 19 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds will be above the national average and the achievement gap between this group and other students will have reduced by 10%
- We will have an established and successful pre-apprenticeship and level 1 programme for our 17 year olds who are unable to achieve a level 2 apprenticeship
- The number of level 2, 3 and 4 apprenticeships offered in Kent key sectors will increase by 10%
- The uptake of apprenticeships and level 2 and 3 vocational training in skills shortage areas will increase by 10%
- The Kent Success apprenticeship scheme will continue with at least 88 apprentices taken on each year, totalling 350 successful apprenticeships delivered by KCC by 2015
- At least 50% of schools will have provided one or more apprenticeships which have been taken up successfully by the young people
- There will be a significant impact on unemployment among 18-24 year olds so that current levels reduce by 4000 to below 2008 levels
- The number of assisted employment opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will increase by 10%

- All learners with learning difficulties and disabilities aged 16-19 will be able to participate in education and training, with year on year increases in the number of vulnerable learners supported into work based learning
- All looked after children and care leavers will be in education and training, with assisted employment opportunities for those that need them.
- Through Skills Plus the number of adults with basic employability skills will have improved year on year and participation in basic skills training will have increased by 20%
- Participation in higher education and higher level apprenticeships will mean that the percentage of 19+ year olds engaged in continuing education and training will increase to above 60%.

Getting There

In order to bring about these rapid improvements we will put most of our effort into doing the following:

- Build improvement and increase capacity in the Kent education system by ensuring the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are strengths and perform above average, with year on year reductions in achievement gaps
- Support all schools to achieve well in the basics of literacy and mathematics, especially in reading and writing by age 6
- Bring all schools up to minimum quality standards
- Use high quality performance data to identify and learn from rapidly improving trends
- Focus on improvement and innovation in teaching and learning so that satisfactory teaching improves to good very quickly
- Recognise the best schools, teachers and leaders and use them effectively across the system
- Encourage peer led creativity and innovation in schools
- Promote peer based learning and school to school collaboration which is designed to bring about rapid learning, professional development and improvement

- Support system wide innovation and experimentation, especially in the design of the curriculum, the development of new provision and better models of support for vulnerable learners
- Develop and support system leaders to lead and support change beyond their own schools including the development of the Teaching School model, the school partnership model, the federation model and the multi-academy trust model

System leaders build partnerships of support that focus effort and energy in the same direction to ensure improvement is sustained and the pace of change increases. In world class systems 'poor to fair' schools become good schools quickly and performance gains are significant in a short time because the influence of the best performing schools is effectively spread around the system.

A more effective and longer term sustainable strategy for school improvement and developments in teaching quality and leadership capacity requires these kinds of collaboration within and between schools, and it is a key role for the local authority to support and facilitate this way of working.

These ambitious improvements in children and young people's educational outcomes and employability, and in the quality of Kent schools, early years providers and post 16 learning and skills providers, are supported by detailed service plans with year on year milestones and performance measures.

Delivery plans will be set out in the 14-24 Strategy, the Early Years and Kent Challenge School Improvement plans, the Education Commissioning Plan, the development plan for the Kent Association of Headteachers, the business plan for Edukent, the SEN strategy and the improvement plan for the PRUs.

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