



Committee

Cabinet

Date and Time

8th July 2026 10.30am

Public

Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026 – 2029 (Previously referred to as the Education Excellence Strategy)

Cabinet Member:	Andy Hall
Lead Director:	David Shaw
Service Area:	Children and Young People
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Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Key Decision?	Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	Yes 18 th May 2026
Report considered by	<i>People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14th January 2026 and 22nd April 2026</i>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report sets out the ambitious strategy to ensure children and young people achieve and thrive in education in Shropshire. It clarifies Shropshire Council's approach to education quality and safeguarding standards and seeks Cabinet endorsement of the strategy and the recommendation of adoption by Council.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider and endorse the final draft Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026-29 attached as appendix A and recommend its adoption to Council in September.
- 2.2 Refer the impact of the strategy for regular review by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and for this committee to receive regular reports on its implementation.

3. Background

- 3.1. Reflecting the national context, the local education system is increasingly diverse and autonomous, with most education settings in Shropshire, including schools, now operating outside direct Council control. Children attend a range of settings including non-school alternative provision where it is in their best interests to do so. The Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026 – 29 (“the Strategy”) sets out how Shropshire Council will exercise its system leadership role as a champion for children, young people and families whilst ensuring robust assurance and accountability across all settings, in line with the legal duties on the Council.
- 3.2. The Strategy brings together the Council's duties to promote high standards of education (under the Education Act 1996) and to safeguard and promote welfare for all children in the area (under the Children Acts 1989/2004), alongside the Council's responsibilities to challenge and intervene in maintained schools and to escalate concerns about academies, independent schools, early years providers and non-school alternative provision to the appropriate regulator and inspection bodies.
- 3.3. The Strategy seeks to develop a consistent countywide ‘line of sight’ through agreed monitoring areas and data sources. It sets out clearer thresholds for support, challenge and intervention; and transparent expectations for leaders about how concerns will be raised, how improvement support will be brokered, and how progress and impact will be reported through governance and scrutiny. This all aligns with the

key national safeguarding framework, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2026.

- 3.4. The Strategy sets expectations and monitoring arrangements for achievement, attendance, behaviour, inclusion and SEND, and safeguarding. It introduces a countywide framework using regular data analysis, targeted visits and structured strategic conversations with leaders (including academy trusts) to identify risk early, provide challenge and broker support.
- 3.5. The Strategy defines and enhances the support available to maintained schools. It sets out the support provided to new headteachers and the support afforded to maintained schools at the point of Ofsted inspection.
- 3.6. Recognising that most of Shropshire's children and young people are educated in academies, where multi-academy trusts are the responsible body, the Strategy makes provision to ensure the routine monitoring of multi-academy trusts to ensure the quality and safety of the education provision they receive. This supports the legal duties on specific areas of performance across individual academy sites. Principally this is determined by the Children and Families Act 2014 (with respect to the monitoring of SEND provision) and the Children Act 2004 (with respect to safeguarding responsibilities) and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (with respect to the Admissions Code). Additionally, the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Support for Intervention in Schools' makes clear that, 'should a local authority have any concerns about an academy's standards, leadership or governance, they should raise these directly with Regions Group [of the Department for Education].'
- 3.7. The Strategy seeks to outline the support and challenge provided to schools and settings to support the most vulnerable children and young people, including those who have SEND or are looked-after by the Council.
- 3.8. The Strategy ensures a consistent expectation across all phases and education types, including early years, post-16, alternative provision, educational visits, out-of-school settings and complaints, ensuring consistent oversight across the full range of provision.
- 3.9. The Strategy builds on the Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy by strengthening inclusive practice, early identification and joined-up support across schools and settings.
- 3.10. Details are provided about how the Education Quality and Safeguarding team works with the Virtual School and other Children's Services teams to support vulnerable children with coordinated oversight.
- 3.11. It includes clear governance and reporting arrangements, with progress and impact overseen through partnership boards, scrutiny and senior leadership structures.
- 3.12. The Strategy supports the new mechanisms for school improvement instigated by the Department for Education including the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) programme. It complements the well-developed relationships between the Department and other agencies, including Ofsted.

3.13. Consultation on this Strategy took place through updates at Headteacher Briefings (from Summer 2025), individual meetings with CEOs (throughout 2025-26 academic year) and the Education Partnership Board meeting (Autumn 2025). The Strategy has been subject to an Ongoing consultation exercise on SLG [Shropshire Education Excellence Strategy 2025-29 | Shropshire Learning Gateway](#). A meeting with regional representatives of trade unions also took place in Spring 2026. Changes implemented as a result of this consultation are outlined on page 30 of the strategy

4. Summary of Main Proposals

4.1. Cabinet is asked to adopt the Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026-2029 to set a clear, consistent Local Authority framework for promoting high education standards and safeguarding for all children and young people, regardless of education provider.

4.2. The role of educators is critically important, there are many settings, schools and colleges delivering excellent work across our county and the Council has a role to support them to deliver this. This is a statutory requirement, but this strategy is seeking to ensure that there is clarity about how we do this working with them through a clearly defined offer.

4.3. The Strategy clarifies the accountability which is critically important across a system which is diverse within a mixed economy of private childcare, schools and colleges which are both academies, maintained and other settings, including those that are unregistered.

4.4. It seeks to strengthen early identification of risk through agreed monitoring and escalation routes, and describes how the Council will support, challenge and where necessary intervene (including raising concerns with the Department for Education (DfE) and/or Ofsted where required).

4.5. By strengthening and formalising the process of school and setting challenge and support we are seeking to be open and transparent so that an environment can be fostered that supports all children and young people to flourish in Shropshire, regardless of the provision that they attend.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 Lack of clarity with respect to education monitoring risks impoverishing schools and pupils through a system that would ultimately lack cohesion. Consideration could be given to a wholly sector led monitoring solution whereby schools provide challenge and support to schools within minimal oversight by the Council. This is challenging and would not sufficiently discharge the duties of the Council. It risks developing a system whereby support is variable and the lack of connectivity to Council systems means that opportunities to intervene early are missed.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

6.1. Strategic Risk:

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Response</i>
Lack of safeguarding oversight of education settings.	Failure to meet statutory duties. Children and young people being at risk of significant harm due to inadequate procedures and practice.
Lack of challenge and support for education settings	Failure to meet statutory duties. Weak pupil outcomes. Limited evidence of improvement activity.
Increase proportion of schools and academies with weak Ofsted outcomes	Increase the risk of reputational damage to the council, and the county as a whole.

7. Council Priorities

- 7.1. The strategy strongly supports the council priorities set out in the Corporate plan.
- 7.2. The strategy is referenced, albeit under its working title of the Education Excellence Strategy, under the ambition for ‘Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and thrive at every stage of life’ but also aligns with the ‘Safe inclusive places with homes that meet their needs’.
- 7.3. The policy supports the articulation of the Council’s statutory education responsibilities and work with schools and partners to support improved outcomes, including enabling children and young people with SEND (EHCP) to be supported in mainstream education.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The cost of educational failure is significant for individual children, for schools, for the community and for the county in economic terms. It is therefore evident that the role of the Council in enabling raising standards in all schools and settings will result in economic benefits for the county.
- 8.2. Since the removal of the School Monitoring and Brokering Grant, there has been no specific resource to support specific school improvement work in schools. Whilst the Dedicated School Grant can be used to support elements of school monitoring and support work, the regulations provide limitations.
- 8.3. The development of this Strategy has limited financial impact beyond the current budgets within Learning and Skills and specific grants received. This Strategy, for the first time, determines and clarifies ways of working as the previous 'Education Improvement Service' changes to the 'Education Quality and Safeguarding Service'.
- 8.4. Strengthening support for children and young people with SEND will lead to more effective provision and promote early intervention which will support the ambitions of the

SEND and AP Strategy. Through strengthening inclusive mainstream practice in line with ambitions of the National reforms in SEND and the implementation of the Local Area SEND Reform Plan.

- 8.5. Any costs of implementing the Strategy will be contained within current budgets, whether Council or Grant funded, such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) or through the top-slice to maintained schools. As an example, this resulted in maintained schools de-delegating a proportion of their delegated funding (to a total of £112,480 across the county) to support specific activities with respect to maintained schools.

9. Legal and HR implications

- 9.1. There are no Human Resource implications beyond the existing arrangements.
- 9.2. The legal basis supporting the accountability for schools are noted in the draft Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy at Appendix A.

10. Electoral Division Implications

- 10.1 There are no implications for specific electoral divisions, however this Strategy applies to all electoral divisions across Shropshire.

11. Health, Social (including “Child Friendly Shropshire”) and Economic Implications

- 11.1. The Strategy contributes strongly to all of the ambitions of ‘Child Friendly Shropshire’ and the 4 key rights. It places as a priority the aspiration for all children in Shropshire to be educated in effective and safe provision where decisions are taken in children’s best interests. It also enables delivery of non-discrimination, the inherent right to life, survival and development along with respecting the views of children and young people.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1. Some children and young people, schools and settings face greater challenges in achieving educational success; there are therefore equalities implications to the Council and to schools in ensuring that every child and young person achieves their full potential and every school and setting secures good educational outcomes.
- 12.2. Analysis of performance data, as part of Education Quality Advisers’ allocation of time for schools, enables a thorough review of outcomes for pupils across the range of vulnerable groups including gender, disadvantage, ethnicity and prior attainment. This also informs the bespoke and targeted offer of support and development to schools. It is referenced in the document in the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR).
- 12.3. The work of Education Quality Advisers and safeguarding includes providing support and challenge with respect to the legal responsibilities on school with respect to duties under the Equality Act 2010.

12.4. Work is developed digitally to promote the opportunity to use assistive technology.

12.5. Schools and settings have been consulted as part of the development of this strategy. Feedback has been incorporated into the revisions of this document.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1. Where we are able to use Microsoft Teams for meetings to reduce climate impact, this takes place.

13.2. The nature of work by the Education Quality and Safeguarding team does require face to face visits to schools and settings. This does necessitate travel where remote visits are not possible. Consideration has been given to the deployment of staff to, where possible minimise travel distances.

14. Background Papers

14.1 The policy was referenced in the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 22nd October 2025 plus in the meeting on the 14th January 2026 along with sharing an early working draft for comment by the committee. The comments received directly informed the development of the final version.

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy – 2026-29