

# EVERY BEDFORD BOROUGH CHILD CAN!



## Education Strategy 2024-2034

September 2024







CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES  
At the heart of everything we do

# OUR PROMISE



## Our Promise

### TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF BEDFORD BOROUGH...

This strategy has been created by education leaders in Bedford Borough. To create it, we listened to what children and young people want.

We know how much it matters that you have the best opportunities to learn, play and explore your interests as you grow up. We know you want to have access to opportunities to do the things you enjoy – music, technology, sport, drama and art. We know you want to feel safe.

We, as a group of professionals – your teachers, local councillors, staff working in the council, health workers and social care workers – believe that you deserve the very best education and opportunities.

We want you to leave school and college feeling **confident** and ready for what comes next, we want you to have all of the skills and learning that you need to **achieve** and we want you to feel safe and **nurtured**.

We believe that every child in Bedford Borough **CAN!** And we **WILL** work together to ensure that you have everything you need to do so.

We look forward to discussing this with you during the next few years and hearing your views. We are grateful to those who have already taken part.

Thank you.



**Councillor Jane Walker**

*Portfolio Holder for Families, Education and Children's Services*







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# OUR VISION & PRINCIPLES

## Our Vision and Principles

This education strategy is based on consultation we have carried out with our school and early years leaders, staff, pupils and partners supported by University College London's Centre for Educational Leadership.

We have chosen a ten-year period for this strategy so that we have time to make genuine and impactful change.

Together, we have created a **vision** for our local area that is both grounded in where we are now and also ambitious for a future in which all children achieve their potential. It is based on two principles.

**Firstly, every child who lives and learns in Bedford Borough CAN...**





EVERY BEDFORD BOROUGH CHILD CAN!



ALL OUR CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT, INCLUDED, NURTURED AND ENABLED TO THRIVE



EXCELLENT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENSURES PUPILS ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL AND ARE SET UP FOR SUCCESS IN THE MODERN WORLD

In order to make this possible, we know that every professional working in Bedford Borough will need to work together:

EVERY BEDFORD BOROUGH PROFESSIONAL WILL:

- WORK TOGETHER
- INNOVATE
- LISTEN
- LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER AND FROM BEST PRACTICE



A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM WHERE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER

**In order to achieve this we agree to the following principles on which this strategy and its delivery are based:**

### WE WILL PUT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO

We will ensure that we prioritise hearing from and respecting the voice of children and young people who are educated in Bedford Borough.

### WE WILL START FROM THE EVIDENCE

Understanding where we are and looking at what we know works here and elsewhere and learning from it.

### WE WILL BE INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE

Using our resources in the best way to ensure they are impactful and not being afraid to trial and learn from new ways of approaching improvement.

### WE WILL BE COLLABORATIVE BY DEFAULT

We will celebrate the diversity of our school and early years system and wider children's services organisations and work together to make the most of the strengths we have – sharing learning and resources.

### WE WILL THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Recognising that education is about more than just schools and that our local area is made up of different types of schools with different strengths and contributions to make. Together we can ensure the children who live and learn in Bedford Borough have access to the very best educational opportunities.







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WHERE ARE WE NOW?



## Where are we now?

### OUR LOCAL AREA AND POPULATION



Bedford is a **significant growth area** and approximately **27,000** new homes are planned by **2040** with expectations that the Borough's population will carry on growing well into the future

Bedford Borough is one of the **most cosmopolitan** in the UK, with some **60 ethnic groups** represented



- The **Borough of Bedford** was awarded Charter status by **Henry II** in **1166**
- Includes the county town of **Bedford**, the urban area of **Kempston** and **43 rural villages** - an area of around **120,000** acres



Bedford's population has experienced huge growth: **17% over the last 10 years**; the largest growth of any local authority in the East of England Region.

In **June 2023** there were **189,891** people living in Bedford

Source: ONS 2023





Bedford Borough has several areas in the **10% most deprived areas** in England. These are located within **Castle, Harpur** and **Cauldwell** wards.

**5,683** children aged 0-15 years old live in **relative low-income families**.

**15.3%** compared to **20.1%** across the United Kingdom.



**4.6%** of **16-17 years olds** (181 people) were **not in education, employment or training** in 2021.

This is **significantly less** than local authorities in the same deprivation decile in 2020.



In 2021/22 the rate of **Looked After Children** aged under 5 years was **52.4 per 10,000**.

This was an increase from **31.9 per 10,000** in 2017/18.



**71%** of **eligible two year olds** are accessing the funding entitlement and receiving up to **15 hours of early education**.

In 2024, there were **4,983** children and young people with a **Special Educational Need or Disability** in Bedford Borough.

**52%** of children with an **Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)** are **educated** in a **mainstream setting**.

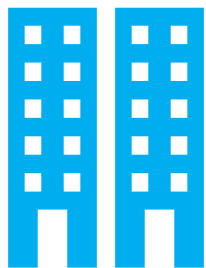
**2080 EHCPs** as of September 2024, a **52% increase** in 5 years.



The Borough has **1 LSOA** among the **0-10% most deprived areas** in England on the IDACI measure, **13 LSOAs** among the **10-20% most deprived**, and **11 LSOAs** among the **20-30% most deprived**



Across Bedford Borough, **15.1%** of all **children aged 0-15 years** are in **families with income deprivation** (IDACI 2019), which is better than England (**17.1%**)



However, smaller localities show **increased** deprivation, **predominantly** in **urban areas**, although **some rural pockets** are also **impacted** by deprivation



## OUR SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS

We are fortunate to have varied and high performing schools and early years sector in Bedford Borough.



Bedford Borough has **75** schools...

Type of School	No. of Schools
Nursery	2
Lower	2
Primary	53
Middle	1
Upper	1
Secondary	12
Special	5

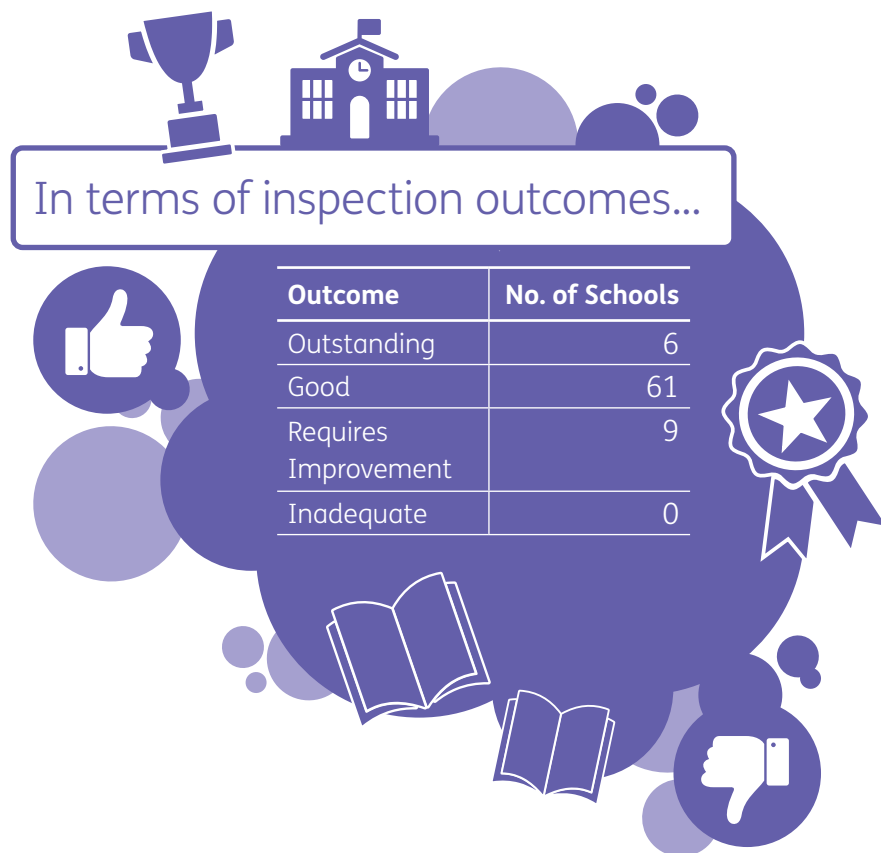
Of these schools...

**37** are **maintained** and **38** are **academies** (**7 standalone** & **29 within ten different trusts**)

**7 schools** also have **resourced SEND** or **Alternative Provision** within them







## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OUTCOMES

The main driver for the creation of this strategy is that currently Bedford Borough's overall attainment data is below national average in some key areas, including for learners from vulnerable groups.

There are signs of improvement, with the attainment gaps for disadvantaged children narrowing, which is bucking the national trend at some key stages. We want to build on this improvement and ensure we go even further. DfE defines disadvantage as being children who: receive free school meals or have been eligible in the past 6 years, are looked after by local authorities, are adopted, are the child of a family in the armed forces, receive pupil premium funding.

***It is our aim that in delivering this strategy, we will bring attainment in Bedford Borough in line with our statistical neighbours for all pupils and where possible, exceed them.***

Statistical neighbours are local authorities that share similar demographics and other characteristics with Bedford Borough.

There are already a number of interventions in place to improve educational outcomes for all children and these appear to be having impact. There are also some dedicated interventions and programmes in place specifically to support learners in vulnerable group categories (SEND, EAL, Disadvantaged etc). This strategy outlines these and also commits to a further set of actions.

**Appendix One: Our Performance and Outcomes** gives details on the current educational outcomes in Bedford Borough and will be updated annually. The key points and priorities are summarised below.

Key areas of focus at the point this strategy is published in Autumn 2024 are:

### Early Years

- Differences in attainment between different groups of pupils are of more concern than overall attainment (i.e. disadvantaged pupils, pupils from other white backgrounds, pupils with English as an additional language, pupils with an EHCP).
- The attainment gap between all pupils and disadvantaged pupils has narrowed since 2023 however Bedford is still in the bottom third of local authorities across most attainment gaps

### Year 1 Phonics

- Bedford Borough performance has improved significantly since 2023 and is now in line with the National average for all pupils. However, this is not the case for some specific groups including: pupils who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND.

### Key Stage 1

- Key Stage 1 was Teacher Assessed and the academic year 2023 was the last year of KS1 assessment. From the academic year 2024/2025 all progress measures will be measured from Early Years baseline to KS2.

### Key Stage 2

- Bedford Borough is below national average in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) combined measure at the end of Key Stage 2 and is ranked in the bottom 10 Local Authorities in the country at Key Stage 2.
- The KS2 attainment gap for children who use English as an additional language is beginning to decrease compared to their National Non-EAL peers. The gap for Bedford Borough disadvantaged pupils however, has increased compared with their National Non-disadvantaged peers.
- However, it was one of only 50 Local Authorities to post an improving score from 2022 and has made the joint 3rd highest improvement in RWM outcomes in the country over the past 5 years.



### Key Stage 3

- *KS3 education is vital for laying the groundwork for future academic pursuits, personal growth, and social development. It plays a crucial role in shaping well-rounded, knowledgeable, and capable individuals. Vitally, Key Stage 3 helps students transition from the more nurturing environment of primary school to the more independent and self-directed learning environment of secondary school. This transition is crucial for their social and emotional development.*
- *Although there are no standardised tests in this stage of learning Bedford Borough uses a number of strategies to assess and ensure teaching and learning is effective.*

### Key Stage 4

- *Bedford Borough pupils make rapid improvement from KS2 to the end of KS4, however attainment is below national.*
- *Differences in Attainment between different groups of Bedford Borough pupils, and for identified groups and their non identified peers nationally is of greater concern (i.e. for Bedford Borough disadvantaged pupils and their non disadvantaged peers nationally).*

### Key Stage 5

- *Bedford Borough's Performance in all Post 16 measures focused on achievement is below that of pupils nationally. This is especially pronounced for pupils who are disadvantaged, and pupils with English as an additional language.*
- *For the percentage of pupils achieving at least 2 substantial level 3 qualifications there is a 3% difference.*
- *The % point Gap between Bedford Borough Pupils and Pupils nationally widens further for achieving at least 2 A levels to 8% points and at the higher grades of AAB or better to 10% points.*

### Post 16

- *Bedford Borough is above the national figure for the rate of participation in education, training and employment post16 and has been for consecutive years. This continues to buck the trend where figures nationally have continued to decrease year on year.*

Another key area of focus in 2025 is levels of permanent exclusions which are above national average.

Our SEND strategy outlines our priorities and goals for ensuring all pupils with SEND are included and enabled to thrive.

## WHAT DO OUR SCHOOL LEADERS THINK?

In preparing this strategy, we commissioned University College London's Centre for Educational Leadership to produce two reports based on workshops with education leaders in Bedford Borough.



These are some of the areas they felt were strengths of the local area:

### Strengths

A PASSION TO NURTURE THE WHOLE CHILD

COMMITTED HEADTEACHERS AND STAFF  
WHO KNOW THEIR SCHOOLS AND AREAS

PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AND ENGAGEMENT

CO-PRODUCTION

SCHOOLS ARE AT THE CENTRE  
OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

QUALITY OF TEACHING IS IMPROVING

NEW FURTHER EDUCATION  
OPPORTUNITIES

EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS  
AND RESEARCH-INFORMED  
STRATEGIES TO CLOSE GAPS

ATTENDANCE IMPROVING

SUPPORTIVE PARTNERS  
AND THIRD SECTOR

INCLUSIVE AND WITH A  
RANGE OF SEND PROVISION

A GOOD RANGE OF DIFFERENT SCHOOLS WHO  
INCREASINGLY WORK TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

KEY STAGE 2 RESULTS  
IMPROVING

LOCAL AUTHORITY INCREASINGLY  
OPENING UP OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR INVOLVEMENT

CURRICULUM  
DEVELOPMENT

DIVERSE AND ENGAGED  
COMMUNITY

GOOD ENGAGEMENT IN 'EIGG'

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

When asked about areas for improvement they said the following:

### Areas for Development



### WHAT DO OUR PUPILS THINK?

Understanding what our children and young people think of their education and what they want from it is very important.

In February 2024, we held a Primary Pupil Voice Conference. As part of this we asked pupils what three words they would use to describe their school experience currently. The results are below:



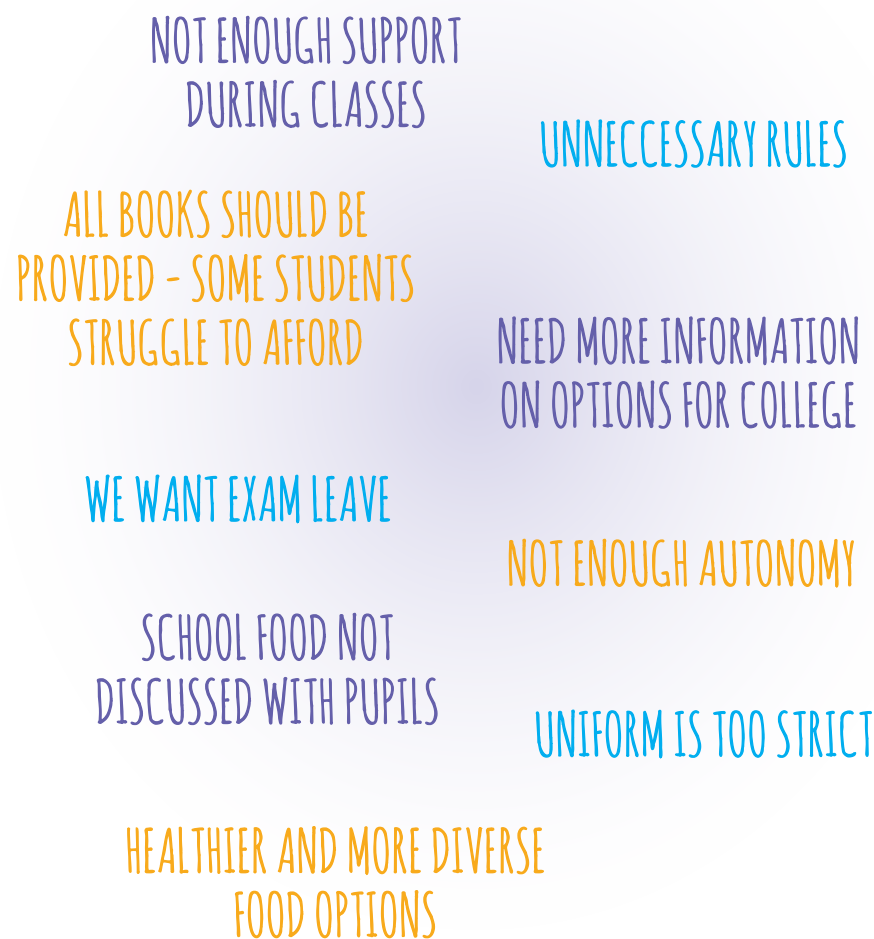


In June 2024, we held a Secondary Pupil Voice Conference where pupils were asked the same question:



Our Youth Cabinet also discussed education in March 2024. They identified the following as issues they felt were important to pupils:

### Issues



And they identified the following potential ideas to improve:

### Ideas for Improvement

CHEAPER AND BETTER SCHOOL MEALS

MORE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES  
SO PEOPLE CAN FIND THEIR INTERESTS

IMPROVED PSHE LESSONS

BETTER FUNDING FOR TEACHERS  
AND BETTER TRAINING

MORE SPORTING AND FITNESS OPPORTUNITIES

MORE OPTIONS APART  
FROM 'A' LEVELS

MORE SUPPORT FOR  
PUPILS IN LESSONS

INVOLVE PUPILS MORE  
AND DISCUSS RULES WITH THEM

ACCESS TO REVISION MATERIALS  
FOR LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

### WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?

It is important to us to track our performance data and to put in place interventions. To tackle the issues identified above, some of the actions we have taken as a local area so far are:

- *Early Years Support Projects to support early reading and communication and a review of the transition process from early years to primary.*
- *Reading, Writing and Maths Working Groups chaired by Headteachers to address under-performance.*
- *Focused CPD Programmes to develop teaching skills.*
- *Insights Into Excellence Community of Practice Programme – local school leaders have visited high performing schools nationally and then taken part in facilitated workshops.*
- *UCL Leading for Impact Community of Practice - A leadership programme for headteachers including visits to high performing schools and reflection sessions.*
- *Projects focused on narrowing the attainment gap - A suite of projects aimed at improving knowledge and practice around supporting disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language.*
- *Projects focused on increasing ability to support pupils with SEND.*

## OUR STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This strategy is one of a suite of documents that together ensure we are doing all we can as a local area to get the best outcomes for all children, young people and their families.

Other relevant documents include:

- [Children and Young People's Plan in place 2022-27](#)
- [SEND Strategy in place 2022-27](#)
- [Early Years Strategy in place 2024-26](#)
- [Early Help Strategy in place 2022-27](#)

We have ensured that the priorities from all of these strategies are aligned with those in this strategy and all of these documents share the same aim of placing children and their families at the heart of everything we do.

## OUR GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Currently our improvement activities are overseen by the Education Improvement Governance Group (EIGG).

EIGG is chaired by the portfolio holder for Children's Services and has 34 members including Headteachers from Maintained and Academy schools, CEOs of Multi Academy Trusts, Governors, representatives of local organisations, University of Bedfordshire.

EIGG was recently reviewed by University College London's Institute of Education and as a result has developed new terms of reference and a framework for effective working and system leadership.

The EIGG has contributed to the development of this strategy and has been pivotal in bringing together education leaders from across our family of schools.





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# OUR GOALS



## Our Goals

EVERY BEDFORD BOROUGH CHILD CAN!



ALL OUR CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT, INCLUDED, NURTURED AND ENABLED TO THRIVE



EXCELLENT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENSURES PUPILS ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL AND ARE SET UP FOR SUCCESS IN THE MODERN WORLD



A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM WHERE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER

In order to ensure that Every Bedford Borough Child CAN we have learned from the feedback from our school and early years leaders, partners and pupils and identified **three goals**.

This section outlines each of our goals in further detail.

We will then take a further term to work together with schools, other settings and professionals to create a detailed action plan for each goal. This will be published in **January 2025**.

These will be linked to delivery of existing strategies such as the SEND Strategy, Early Years Strategy, and Bedford Children's Plan.



GOAL: ALL OUR CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT, INCLUDED, NURTURED AND ENABLED TO THRIVE

### What will success look like?

#### By 2034...

- We will have designed ways to understand and track pupil wellbeing so we understand areas of strength and weakness and are able to respond accordingly across the local area to issues we know matter to our pupils including bullying, safety, online safety, inclusion and mental health. Pupil wellbeing will be improving.
- Attendance will have improved and persistent absenteeism will have reduced significantly and we will have a strategy in place to address emotional based school avoidance and intervene early to support schools to address it.
- Timely early intervention will lead to reduced Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions for all children, especially those with SEND. There will be no permanent exclusions of primary pupils or those with EHCPs.
- Together with partners we will ensure there are clear pathways for schools and settings, families and pupils who need additional support.
- Transition points will be more successful for all pupils especially those with SEND.
- Right from birth, families will be empowered to know the best ways to support and play a role in their children's learning.







GOAL: EXCELLENT TEACHING AND LEARNING ENSURES PUPILS ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL AND ARE SET UP FOR SUCCESS IN THE MODERN WORLD

### What will success look like?

#### By 2034...

- We will ensure that educational attainment and progress across key stages is in line with the best of our statistical neighbours for the cohort and where possible, exceeding.
- Every child in Bedford Borough will be a fluent reader by 7.
- The disadvantage gap will have reduced so that it is in line with the best of our statistical neighbours across all key stages and for pupils with SEND and with English as an additional language.
- Pupils will have access to opportunities in school and through work experience and informal learning to use and experience innovative technology.
- Children and young people understand their choices and have access to appropriate post-16 opportunities.
- Schools and Early Years Settings that are struggling to improve are identified, supported and fast-tracked for additional support.
- Alternative Provision is effective and a key part of the wider education system with early intervention and support pathways in place.





GOAL: A COLLABORATIVE SYSTEM WHERE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER AND LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER

### What will success look like?

#### By 2034...

- We will have refreshed our governance arrangements and created an independently chaired group that will oversee delivery of an action plan, hold annual progress reviews and bring organisations together and drive change.
- We will communicate effectively across organisations ensuring partners know where to go for support and knowledge sharing.
- We will develop a clear annual programme of events where we share best practice in our local area and invite in others we can learn from.
- We will collaborate to solve common problems such as recruitment and retention and the training and recruitment of governors.
- We will work with partners to ensure we are making the best use of funding and resources to deliver our shared priorities.
- We will continue to develop our CPD offer so that interventions are evidence based and meet need. Schools will be able to book through an online system.
- We will build on existing Headteacher and Teacher networks so that there are opportunities for school leaders at all stages of their career to connect, network, support and learn from one another.
- We will utilise all of the resources of our local area including universities, cultural institutions, libraries, employers, parks and green spaces – all of whom will play a role in delivering this strategy.
- Families will be key partners in their child's learning. We will involve families and children in co-production and design of any new services and ways of working that impact them.







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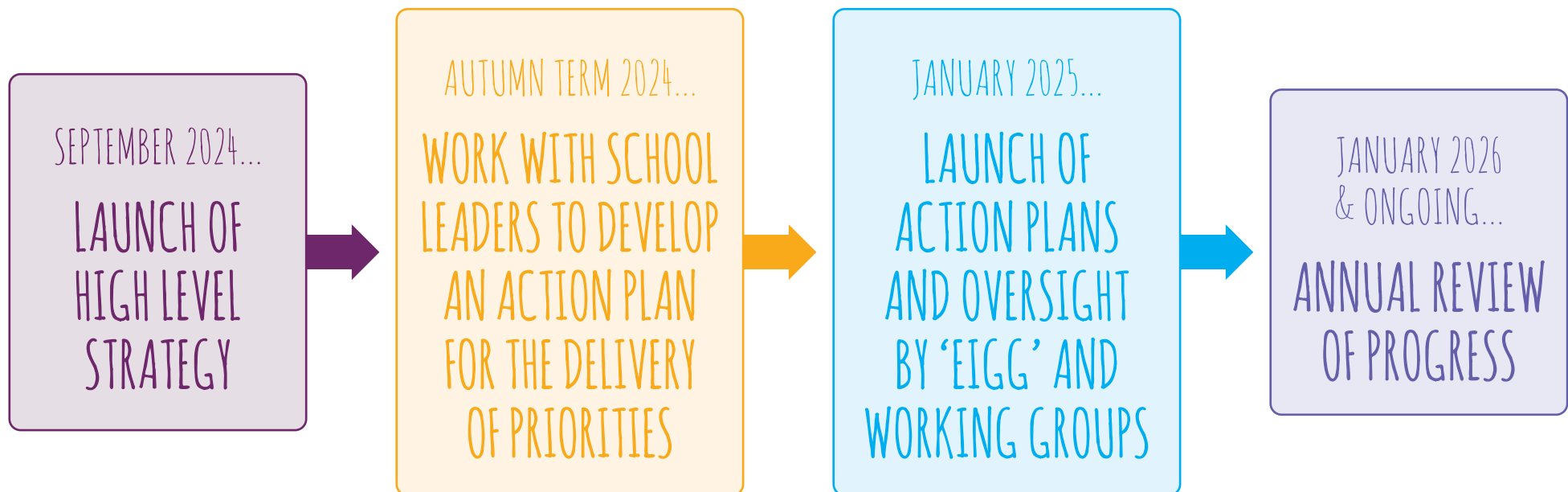
DELIVERY





## Delivery

This strategy, based on consultation with our pupils, leaders and partners is being launched as the first step towards ensuring all Bedford Borough children can achieve their potential. The steps we have planned are outlined below:



It is our intention to move swiftly from Strategy to Delivery as we know that every month matters when children are progressing through their education. We will hold annual progress checks to ensure accountability is clear.

This will be led by our Education Improvement Governance Group (EIGG) which as outlined in this document will be appointing an Independent Scrutineer to drive progress and hold all organisations to account for delivery.

We commit as a group of leaders to move forward at pace and work towards our shared goal of ensuring **Every Bedford Borough Child CAN!**



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# CONCLUSION



## Conclusion

We set out on the development of this strategy with the aim of creating an Education Strategy that belongs to all education leaders in our local area. We are very grateful therefore to all of the many leaders and children and young people who have taken time to give their views and contribute to its development and to the Education Improvement Governance Group for steering its development. The document is stronger for it and the delivery will be too.

Bedford Borough is a place with an enormous amount of opportunity and some real strengths that can be built upon – strong relationships, willingness to collaborate and learn, examples of excellence and a wealth of institutions.

Through working together across organisations – not just schools – we can ensure that education is something that happens in multiple places and that children and their families are supported to learn and thrive.

Finally, we restate our commitment that all Bedford Borough Children CAN and should achieve their full potential.

We, as a group of education leaders, will now work together to put this strategy into action.





## Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please contact us at our address below.

Për Informacion      معلومات کے لئی      برای اطلاع      Za Informacije  
ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ      Informacija      Per Informazione      তথ্যের জন্য      للمعلومات



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