**Education Standards Board**

**Standard Operating Procedures**

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1. **Introduction and Context**

We are ambitious for the future and for our children and young people across the place and neighbourhoods of North Lincolnshire. We are committed to ensuring that our children, young people and families are safe, well, prosperous and connected, and we want our children and young people to feel loved, to feel warmth and care and to feel included and happy.

Through our [One Family Approach](https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/people-health-and-care/one-family-approach/#:~:text=The%20Helping%20Children%20and%20Families%20in%20North%20Lincolnshire,other%20relevant%20partners%20on%20how%20we%20safeguard%20children.), with schools as the primary partner, the Council, wider partners and the community will work together to build on and further strengthen our integrated offer for all children and young people, so that they can **thrive in their families, achieve in their schools and flourish in their communities.**

Schools play a vital role in this shared ambition, embedded in the heart of their communities and working together as an interdependent, continuously improving community of excellence. Our ambition is for every child in North Lincolnshire to go to a good or outstanding, inclusive school which meets their individual needs, enabling them to achieve their potential in the heart of their community.

1. **Values and Principles**

Our partnership approach to meeting the duties set out in the context of legislative and statutory regulation is built on our values of equality of opportunity, excellence, integrity and self-responsibility. As a long-established integral part of the Council’s approach to improving outcomes for children, the Education Standards Board is founded on principles of professional generosity, transparency, mutual accountability, and commitment to the place of North Lincolnshire. Over time the Standards Board has been a key element in raising standards and performance in schools of all designations and improving outcomes for children. Our shared commitment to transparent accountability through the Education Standards Board, alongside our support offer for schools, form key elements in how we jointly assure and improve the education estate.

As part of the high challenge, high support approach in North Lincolnshire, the Education Standards Board sits alongside a bespoke school improvement offer which is matched to each school’s context, and is available without cost to every school in North Lincolnshire regardless of the school’s designation. Alongside this, North Lincolnshire’s approach to investing in leadership, and further developing transparency and mutual accountability, sits the Peer Leader programme; a sector-led approach to sharing best practice, building system leaders invested in school improvement whose professional generosity supports strong, self-sustaining schools.

1. **Legislative and Statutory Framework**

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to intervene with schools causing concern. The enactment of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 confers additional duties and powers of intervention to DFE Regional Directors. The details of these duties along with the wider legislative underpinning are set out in the DFE [Schools Causing Concern](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2) Statutory Guidance. The guidance sets out Local Authorities’ duties under the Act for monitoring, supporting, challenging and intervening with schools causing concern, and defines the criteria for intervention as:

* the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so
* there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing, or likely to prejudice, such standards of performance
* the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise)
* the governing body have failed to comply with a provision of an order under section 122 of the Education Act 2002 (teachers' pay and conditions) that applies to a teacher at the school; or have failed to secure that the head teacher of the school complies with such a provision

1. **Governance**

The Education Standards Board Governance, the scope of which is on a termly basis, is depicted below:

At the start of each term a Moderating Panel determines which schools will be called in for assurance, the selected schools then attend Assurance Meetings in the first half term. The full Education Standards Board is convened in the second half of every term and considers the depth of assurance that has been provided regarding the identified schools of concern.

1. **Terms of Reference** 
   1. **Education Standards Board Role and Purpose**

The Education Standards Board brings together local education, Council and political leaders, along with Ofsted, DfE and Diocesan representatives to ensure shared accountability and to work together to raise standards and champion inclusion, underpinned by high support and high challenge to drive forward improvements leading to better outcomes. Through the Education Standards Board, there is a collective endeavour to improve children’s outcomes and standards in education in North Lincolnshire, to embed universal school improvement, to further develop sector-led challenge and support through the Peer Leadership Programme; and to ensure transparent challenge of underperformance and mutual accountability.

In line with our commitment to listen, learn, review and adapt, the Education Standards Board is an opportunity for schools to share what they do well, to be open where additional help is needed, and to provide assurance that they know and are actively addressing the things that need to improve. Additionally, for schools called in a second time, where they can update on progress, impact and outcomes as part of their improvement journey.

Following stakeholder engagement during Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023, there are several key changes to membership and process.

The Education Standard Board:

* maintains oversight of performance and standards, and outcomes in their broadest sense, at school and at Local Authority level including Ofsted outcomes, children’s achievement and attendance, exclusions, outcomes for groups of children including SEND and ethnic minority achievement, children in care; measuring the impact of plans to improve outcomes, including the Education and Inclusion Plan and the SEND and Inclusion Plan
* underpins the use of statutory powers including warning notices, structural solutions through federation, amalgamation, or academisation and strengthened governance
* advocates school-to-school support, ensuring expertise is shared and standards improve, with highly effective local leaders or National Leaders of Education or Governance deployed to drive progress and ensure leaders’ evaluations are externally validated and benchmarked against excellence
* ensures that assurance is strengthened by strong connectivity with evaluations through school leaders and school improvement officers with an independent view undertaking school reviews
* provides opportunity through the Board for North Lincolnshire schools to share information and feedback at system level with the Department for Education and Ofsted

**Education Standards Board Membership**

The membership of the Education Standards Board consists of:

* Chief Executive, NLC (Chair)
* Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Communities
* Director of Children and Families, NLC (Vice Chair)
* Assistant Director Education, NLC
* Assistant Director Children’s Help and Protection, NLC
* Head of Education Standards, NLC
* Representative of the Regional Schools Commissioner, DfE
* Senior HMI, Ofsted
* Director of Education, Lincoln Anglican Diocese
* Two representatives, Primary Headteacher Consortium – maximum term 3 years
* Two representatives, Secondary Heads and Principals – maximum term 3 years
* Two (one primary and one secondary) school governor representatives
* Representative of North Lincolnshire Association of Governing Bodies
* Independent Chair of Fair Access and Inclusion Panel
* Chair of Schools Forum
* Headteacher of the Virtual School
* A rolling programme of invited Headteachers (observer role)

Other representatives may be invited into the Education Standards Board as appropriate, with prior agreement from the Chair.

The membership of the Board is reviewed bi-annually or in period as appropriate. Where membership is for a fixed term, changes will be made alternately so as to retain the organisational memory of the Board.

* 1. **Assurance Panel Meeting Role and Purpose**

The Assurance Panel Meetings will take a strengths based approach to assurance and in doing so, they will meet with the Headteacher / Principal and the Chair of Governors / Trustees, alongside the Lead Officer School Improvement who works with the school.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide assurance to the Board that leaders are sufficiently sighted on improvement, their evaluations are accurate, and that provision meets children’s individual needs; that the curriculum is sufficiently accessible and ambitious, and that actions which will have impact are being taken where children’s pupil need to improve.

**Assurance Panel Meeting Membership**

* Assistant Director Education, NLC
* Assistant Director Children’s Help and Protection, NLC
* Head of Education Standards, NLC
* Two representatives, Primary Headteacher Consortium – maximum term 3 years
* Two representatives, Secondary Heads and Principals – maximum term 3 years
* Primary Governance representative
* Secondary Governance representative
* Representative of the Board of Education, Lincoln Anglican Diocese

This is the core membership, though invitations are adjusted to best reflect the schools in scope.

* 1. **Moderating Role and Purpose**

The Moderating Panel considers the latest outcomes for all North Lincolnshire Schools and trends over time; outcomes for children in relation to national benchmarks including those for similar children in similar schools including for disadvantaged children, and children with English as an additional language or SEND, as well as evaluations of the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance, teaching, learning and curriculum, exclusions and other contra-indicators.

On the basis of this and wider intelligence about school standards, the Moderating Panel selects schools for further scrutiny and the Headteacher or Principal and Chair of trustees or governors of these schools are called to attend an Assurance Panel Meeting alongside their Lead School Improvement Officer.

**Moderating Panel Membership**

* Head of Education Standards, NLC
* Lead Officer School Improvement, NLC
* Two representatives, Primary Headteacher Consortium – maximum term 3 years
* Two representatives, Secondary Heads and Principals – maximum term 3 years
* Vice Chair of North Lincolnshire Association of Governing Bodies

1. **Arrangements and Process** 
   1. At the start of each term, information and data regarding school outcomes, trends, Ofsted inspection information, attendance and exclusions are sent to the Moderating Panel for consideration. Using this and wider intelligence around quality of leadership and governance, teaching and learning, curriculum, inclusion etc. based on school improvement and governance intelligence, the Moderating Panel will select the schools to be called in for assurance. The Assistant Director Education will write to the Headteacher / Principal and the Chair of Governors / Trustees to ask that they submit relevant information and attend an Assurance Panel meeting. The letter will include the areas likely to be considered as part of the assurance discussion. Where a school is part of a Multi Academy Trust, the CEO of the Trust and the Regional School Commissioner’s Office will be copied into any letters; where it is a church school, the Diocese will be copied in.
   2. The Headteacher / Principal and the Chair of Governors then submit their completed School Level Report (see Appendix 1) and a Signatures of Risk (see Appendix 2), their school improvement plan and school self-evaluation document within the timescales laid out in the letter. All papers are sent to Assurance Panel Meeting members, following which the Assurance Panel Meeting will be held.
   3. The Assurance Panel meets with the Headteacher / Principal and the Chair of Governors / Trustees and their Lead Officer School Improvement to ensure that a balanced, well-rounded assurance discussion takes place. The Assurance Panel will draft recommendations which will be sent to the main Education Standards Board, together with the School Level Report.
   4. At the main Education Standards Board Meeting, members of the Assurance Panel report on the schools which were called in, and taking account the information available, Board members make recommendations to the leaders and governors/trustees of schools, which may include the decision to remove a school from scope, to continue to monitor, and occasionally to recommend the local authority utilises its statutory powers of intervention.
   5. After the main Education Standards Board meeting, feedback forms and letters are sent by the Head of Education Standards to the schools which have been called in for assurance with recommendations for improvement where required and clarity regarding the proposed package of support. Schools in scope of the Education Standards Board will remain in scope until the Board has determined that they meet the criteria for removal from scope.
   6. The Board monitors the pace and impact improvements of schools in schools through a Progress Team. The Progress Team will consist of the Headteacher/Principal and Chair of Governors/Trustees of the school, the Lead Officer School Improvement, and will be chaired by an officer or external chair who is not associated with the school. Meetings will be clerked by governor services. The progress and impact of actions being taken by the school and the effectiveness of external and LA support will be evaluated by the Progress Team through a range of meetings and visits, and the Progress Team will evaluate evidence and impact of progress against the school’s improvement plan.
   7. During the period in scope, the school may be recalled for further assurance, this may be as a result of escalating concern or to determine the pace and impact of improvements. Where the criteria against which a school has been brought into scope is no longer available, the Education Standards Board may seek assurance to determine whether there is sufficient evidence that improved standards have been secured
   8. The Education Standards Board will determine when a school is to be removed from scope on the basis of the pace and impact of improvements. Following the decision to remove a school from scope, a formal letter of notification will be sent to the Headteacher / Principal and the Chair of Governors / Trustees. Where a school is part of a Multi Academy Trust, the CEO of the Trust and the Regional School Commissioner’s Office will be copied into any letters; where it is a church school the Diocese will be copied in.
   9. Where the Education Standards Board does not receive sufficient assurance about the school’s capacity to improve, the Local Authority will escalate concerns in line with the guidance contained in the [Schools Causing Concern](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2) Guidance. This could include any or all of the following steps:
   * issuing a warning notice
   * intervention including through strengthening governance, structural solutions or an interim executive board
   * a formal letter of concern to the Regional Schools Commissioner
   1. Where concerns are urgent and rapidly emerging, from time to time the Local Authority may issue a warning notice without first bringing the school into scope of the Education Standards Board however, to ensure transparency all use of statutory powers will be reported to the Education Standards Board
2. **Evaluation and Monitoring of Standards**

The Education Standards Board and the associated Assurance Panel Meetings and Moderating Panel will consider a wide range of available intelligence, evaluations of standards, outcomes and performance, however a key determinant for consideration by the Education Standards Board is focussed on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school. This will include strength and capacity in leadership at all levels. Consideration will be given to whether there is sufficient improvement or maintenance of high standards over time, the role and impact of governors in strategically supporting and challenging leadership of the school, and the effectiveness of relationships between leaders and governors. This will also include whether the school has responded robustly or rapidly enough to recommendation for or from an external review of SEND, governance or pupil premium.

Evidence used to evaluate these strengths will include:

* leaders’ and governors’ concerns about the standards in their school, based on their own evaluations
* safeguarding information, including from reviews and complaints
* evidence of inequalities visible through admissions, attendance, exclusions, managed moves and part-time timetables
* concerns about the effectiveness of provision for vulnerable children including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Looked After Children
* wider concerns about school effectiveness, including use of funding and / or management processes,
* wider information from specialist teams about the quality of leadership, support or provision in place to meet children’s individual needs
* information from school improvement/peer leader challenge and support and reviews of schools including teaching and learning, leadership, management and governance, inclusion and safeguarding

Additionally, schools will be brought into scope if at least one of the following triggers applies:

* overall effectiveness is judged Requires Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted
* a school’s sixth form or early years provision is judged to be Inadequate by Ofsted
* there is a breakdown in the way that the school is led, managed or governed
* the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened

1. **Training and Support**

Training and support will be available for heads and governors who are involved in the Education Standards Board process to enable them to engage positively in the context of ongoing listening, learning, reviewing and adapting leading to better outcomes.

Training and support will be provided through the School Improvement Team. In addition, there will be the opportunity for peer-to-peer support for schools from others who have experienced the process, which can be brokered through the School Improvement Team.

1. **Business Support**

The Education Standards Board is administered by the Democratic Services Officer, Governance and Communities, NLC.

All other business support for the arrangements is undertaken by relevant officers in Children and Families, NLC.

1. **Confidentiality**

All information provided by a school to the Board remains the property of that school and is received on a basis of strict confidentiality.

All records, papers and documentation of the Board are ‘OFFICIAL SENSITIVE’ and all contents of such are strictly confidential unless marked ‘Public’

**APPENDIX 1: School Level Report Template**

Updated school level report to be embedded once agreed

**APPENDIX 2: Signatures of Risk Evaluation Template**

Updated signatures of risk template to be embedded once agreed