

Our ambitions for your child's education in Southend Education Offer for your Child from Southend Borough Council

Our ten ambitions

The ambitions set out below indicate what we, Southend Borough Council, hope for your child from when they are born to when they leave school. We recognise that we, the Council, are **not** the prime educators of your child, that responsibility falls to **you** and to **schools**. We do however retain a number of key statutory functions that we are pleased to carry out. We will continue to work with schools to support them in their duty to provide the highest quality of education they can.

The ambitions are deliberately challenging, we may not achieve them all, but our aim is try and ensure that you and your child receive the best deal that we can offer.

They are written from the perspective of what it is we, the Council, do for you and your child. Schools will have their own individual "contract" that sets out their part in the process.

Introduction by Executive Councillor

I am delighted to commend this set of ambitions to you from my role as Executive Councillor for Education, Schools and Learning for Southend Borough Council. I fully recognise the importance of giving children the best start in life, and continuing to ensure that we can do what we can to support you and support schools in providing them with the best education we can. The intention is for you to hold us to account for how we meet these ambitions.

Introduction by Director of People

There is no current policy or vision for education in Southend. This document rectifies that position, and sets out what it is we are employed to do on your behalf. In my role as lead officer for children and young people, including schools, I am proud of the achievements of our learners, and proud of the professionalism of our staff employed in all settings who give so much to support your children. We cannot do this alone, and rely on you as parents and on schools as educators. Together, the three of us will continue to ensure that we do our best for children and young people in our Borough.

Outline of the context of education in Southend

We currently have 53 state funded (funded by the government) schools in Southend, both academies and maintained schools, a smaller number of independent schools (funded by parents/trusts directly), a very wide range of early years providers, and the Southend Adult Community College, the South Essex College and part of Essex University based in Southend.

Education is the responsibility of either the Council for maintained schools, but increasingly in the case of academies, by trusts or sponsors. In Southend, these have very recently come together under the Education Board, a group of individuals who oversee, monitor and where needed intervene in schools where they are required to do so.

Currently our performance in Southend is good compared to the national average, but we are determined to improve it further. Nearly nine out of ten learners in Southend attend a good or an outstanding school.

Statutory duties places upon Southend Borough Council

The government places a range of duties upon Local Authorities for all schools and pupils. These relate broadly to:

- Making sure there are sufficient good school places for learners in Southend when and where they are needed;
- Making sure children are safe at school;
- Ensuring that where they have special education needs these are identified and met.

In addition, the Council and the Academy Trusts share the responsibility for ensuring that the quality of education provided is good.

Purpose of this policy

This document is unique; no other similar document exists in Southend. Its single intention is to set out, clearly, unambiguously and measurably what Southend Borough Council set out to achieve for learners and for families attending schools in Southend.

Scope of this document

This ambition sets out what it is that Southend Borough Council seeks to achieve for all children, young people and their families in Southend schools and settings. Our ambitions can only be achieved by working in close partnership with **families** and with **schools**, who work directly with your child.

Each section repeats one of the ambitions, then sets out what we commit to in the form of measurable outcomes; what we ask from you in return; and then what it is the service actually provides for you, and what we hope to do differently over the next few years. Each section ends with a contact name at the Council.

In this ambition:

- "school" refers to any school or setting, irrespective of their status;
- "child" is used for any infant, pupil, learner, young person or student;
- "family" makes recognition of families, parents and carers.

Contents

Page	Aspect
1	Out Ten Ambitions Introduction by Executive Councillor Introduction by Director of People Outline of the context of education in Southend Statutory duties places upon Southend Borough Council
2	Purpose of this prospectus Scope of this document Contents
3-4	The Ambitions
5	Better start in the early years
6	Better communications
7	Easier school admissions
8	Great schools
9	The best teachers
10	Early intervention
11	Effective pathway to work or further education
12	Overcoming barriers to learning
13	Keeping your child in school

Valuing individuals	By the way we work we want to prove to you that your child's education is important to us, and that they are valued as individuals.
Better start in the early years	We recognise that even before birth you are the main people who give your child the best start in life, and will support you in encouraging the highest aspiration for your children towards their education. We want to work with our early years settings to ensure that your child gets a "better start" in life (we are one of three key partners delivering this national programme), building a strong foundation for school. We want to make the transition to school, and between schools, as smooth and as easy as possible.
Better communications	We will make our processes clearer, and you should feel supported when you need to access them. We will be responsive throughout your child's education, listening to your views and those of your children, and working with you and their school to try and meet your wishes where we can. We will always involve you when decisions are needed for your child. We will make sure our communications with you are clear, relevant and accessible.
Easier school admissions	We will do our best to ensure that your child receives a place at a local school of your choice, which best suits their needs. We will make applying for a school clear and simple for you, and make it clear when and what you need to do. When your child moves on to secondary school, we will work with schools to make application to a school understandable and stress free, including when applying to a selective school.
Great schools	We will know Southend schools as well as we can, and continue to work with all schools to make sure they are all good or outstanding. We will continue to work with school leaders and governors, supporting them in their aspirations for every child to reach their full potential. We will work with schools to make sure that children feel safe, included, confident and happy and are enthusiastic to attend. You should be made aware of the progress your child is making. We want your children to quickly develop a genuine lifelong passion for learning.
The best teachers	We will continue to encourage the best teachers and the best leaders to work in Southend schools. We will work with school leaders to support them in promoting an environment that inspires your children and allows them to thrive, realising just how much they can achieve.
Early intervention	Where schools do not meet the high standards they set for themselves, we will intervene quickly to ensure that they address any aspects that need attention.

<p>Effective pathway to work or further education</p>	<p>Before they move on from school, we want your child to know about pathways that suit their particular talents and aspirations, and we will continue to work with school and college leaders to ensure that students achieve the best outcomes in order that they are both ready for and enthusiastic about employment or further education.</p>
<p>Overcoming barriers to learning</p>	<p>If your child has particular needs, or finds school difficult, we will work with you to identify this as early on as possible in an attempt to overcome these barriers. We will make sure you and your child understand what it is you can expect from us, keeping you informed and involve you throughout the process. We will work with schools to make sure that your child receives the best and most appropriate provision. This means that for the vast majority of children, they will remain included in their school alongside their peers. This is especially important to us if your child has Special Educational Needs, is Looked After, or is in receipt of free school meals.</p>
<p>Keeping your child in school</p>	<p>We will work with all schools to ensure that your child succeeds at their school. Where a school no longer feel that they can meet your child's needs, you will be involved at the earliest opportunity in trying to resolve the problem, and seeking the best solution, in an open and clear way. We will endeavour to make exclusion a rare and last resort.</p>

Better start in the early years

We recognise that even before birth you are the main people who give your child the best start in life, and will support you in encouraging the highest aspiration for your children towards their education. We want to work with our early years settings to ensure that your child gets a "better start" in life (we are one of three key partners delivering this national programme), building a strong foundation for school. We want to make the transition to school, and between schools, as smooth and as easy as possible.

We will:

- Increase the take-up and participation for two year old funded places (currently 73%);
- Ensure there are sufficient places across Southend to offer 30 hours for children of eligible parents (new measure)
- Continue to deliver support to early years settings in Southend to help them provide good or outstanding quality early years education and childcare (Currently over 90%)
- **INSERT a Better Start KPI**

In return we ask that you:

- Help your child to be "school ready"
- provide us with the information we need so that we are able to best support you and your child

What the service provides

- High quality information advice and guidance
- Appropriate challenge monitoring and targeted interventions by our dedicated Early Years team
- Professional development opportunities to all early year providers
- Support and challenge to local early years providers to ensure they maintain good or outstanding Ofsted judgements.

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Provide sufficient affordable and easily accessible childcare to help create more opportunities for parents who wish, or need, to work and raise children at the same time
- Build a stronger and better-qualified early years workforce
- Support early intervention from pre-birth to three years old
- Ensure the delivery of 30 hours of early education for eligible children

Contact name: elainehammans@southend.gov.uk

Better communications

We will make our processes clearer, and you should feel supported when you need to access them. We will be responsive throughout your child's education, listening to your views and those of your children, and working with you and their school to try and meet your wishes where we can. We will always involve you when decisions are needed for your child. We will make sure our communications with you are clear, relevant and accessible.

We will:

- Initially respond within a day when you contact us

What the service provides

- Our key function is making information available to School leaders

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Explore the best ways to ensure that we listen to and act upon the voice of parents and young people
- Make it easy for you to find out what is happening in education in Southend

Contact name: alisongellett@southend.gov.uk

Easier school admissions

We will do our best to ensure that your child receives a place at a local school of your choice, which best suits their needs. We will make applying for a school clear and simple for you, and make it clear when and what you need to do. When your child moves on to secondary school, we will work with schools to make application to a school understandable and stress free, including when applying to a selective school.

We will:

- Increase the number of children getting into a school of your choice (currently 96% primary and 93% secondary)

In return we ask that you:

- Apply, if at all possible on line, by the deadlines set nationally
- Make use of all the available information to make the best choice of school for your child
- Make sure that your child attends school, and is on time

What the service provides

- Clear information on the availability of school places
- Information on in year and school admissions applications in various formats
- Enough school places for every child though planning well ahead of time
- Working with other Local Authorities to make it easier to apply for a school place outside of Southend
- Support for you in considering options if you are finding it difficult to get the place of your choice

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Work to reduce the number of late applications
- Make sure there are sufficient secondary places
- Work directly with schools to help them support you in the admissions process

Contact name: chrissyappas@southend.gov.uk

Great schools

We will know Southend schools as well as we can, and continue to work with them to make sure they are all good or outstanding. We will continue to work with school leaders and governors, supporting them in their aspirations for every child to reach their full potential. We will work with schools to make sure that children feel safe, included, confident and happy and are enthusiastic to attend. You should be made aware of the progress your child is making. We want your children to quickly develop a genuine lifelong passion for learning.

We will:

- Aim to ensure all of Southend schools are judged by OFSTED as good or outstanding (currently 86%)
- Work with schools to help them improve outcomes at Key Stage Two and Four (currently 80% primary and 64.7% secondary)
- Narrow the achievement gaps between disadvantaged learners and their peers (currently 22% primary and x% secondary)
- Improve attendance at primary and secondary schools (currently absence is 3.8% primary and 5.0% secondary)

In return we ask that you:

- Support your child's school
- Make sure they attend school on time
- Help your child with their studies at home

What the service provides

- We monitor the performance of all schools on a regular basis
- We make sure that schools do what they are required to do by law
- We check on a range of things in order that schools remain safe places to work and study
- We either provide or help schools find a range of services that help them to continue to improve
- Where we need to we intervene directly to ensure improvement

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Work directly with schools and other organisations to both provide and check up on the services above
- To work further with all schools to enable them to work together

Contact name TBC

The best teachers
We will continue to encourage the best teachers and the best leaders to work in Southend schools. We will work with school leaders to support them in promoting an environment that inspires your children and allows them to thrive, realising just how much they can achieve.
We ask that you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your child to achieve their best throughout school • Respect the work of schools
What the service provides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work with school leaders and governors to help them recruit the best staff and Headteachers to schools • We work with schools to make sure that teachers continue to receive the best training they need to make them even more effective
Key priorities for the service in the next few years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep on tracking the numbers of staff in our schools • Think of ways to make Southend a great place to teach
Contact name TBC

Early intervention

Where schools do not meet the high standards they set for themselves, we will intervene quickly to ensure that they address any aspects that need attention.

We will:

- Monitor the performance of all schools on a regular basis

What the service provides

- We work with school leaders to ensure that we know schools as well as we can, but recognise that school leaders are ultimately responsible for what goes on
- Where we need to we will hold school leaders to account for how the schools perform
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Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Establish a group of school leaders alongside the council to ensure that Southend schools continue to thrive
- Ensure everyone knows and understands what is expected of them
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Contact name TBC

Effective pathways to work or further education

Before they move on from school, we want your child to know about pathways that suit their particular talents and aspirations, and we will continue to work with school and college leaders to ensure that students achieve the best outcomes in order that they are both ready for and enthusiastic about employment or further education.

We will:

- Increase the number of students who are in education, employment or training (currently 95%)

In return we ask that you:

- Support your child in making the right choices about their future

What the service provides

- Advice, information and guidance to any young person on their career
- Education and training courses at a range of levels
- Particular support for those young people with particular difficulties
- Apprenticeships

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- A greater range of choice in courses
- Better matching of employment opportunities for the particular skills of young people
- Specific employment projects for Southend young people

Contact name SueHasty@southend-adult.ac.uk

Overcoming barriers to learning

If your child has particular needs, or finds school difficult, we will work with you to identify this as early on as possible in an attempt to overcome these barriers. We will make sure you and your child understand what it is you can expect from us, keeping you informed and involve you throughout the process. We will work with schools to make sure that your child receives the best and most appropriate provision. This means that for the vast majority of children, they will remain included in their school alongside their peers. This is especially important to us if your child has Special Educational Needs, is Looked After, or is in receipt of free school meals.

We will:

- Improve the educational outcomes for Looked After Children and those with Special Educational Needs (currently 36% primary and 23.1% secondary)

In return we ask that you:

- Contact us as soon as you have concerns
- Work with our teams to best support your child

What the service provides

- Early identification and possible assessment, leading to advice and recommendations about possible options for your child
- We support children that we know have additional needs in when they are very young
- Help children to get the best start in life, especially in preparing them for school
- We work with you to make sure you understand what is in the best interest of your child in order to meet their needs
- We support schools in allowing them to best meet the needs of your child whilst at school;
- We will act as a champion for your child, and ensure that as far as we can provide exactly the support that they need and when they need it

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- Support schools in becoming more confident to meet the increasing needs of SEN pupils at their school, with or without formal Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Have better plans and better communications between everyone concerned when your child moves between schools
- Make sure you and your child get what it is they are entitled to
- Consider how best to meet the needs of children not entitled to an EHCP

Contact name ianmcfee@southend.gov.uk

Keeping your child in school

We will work with all schools to ensure that your child succeeds at their school. Where a school no longer feel that they can meet your child's needs, you will be involved at the earliest opportunity in trying to resolve the problem, and seeking the best solution, in an open and clear way. We will endeavour to make exclusion a rare and last resort.

We will:

- Reduce the number of pupils excluded from school (currently 0.83% primary and 6.04% secondary)

In return we ask that you:

- Support your child in ensuring that they behave and study well

What the service provides

- Our service helps you access the support that is available to you
- Our information is available on the SHIP website
- We organise specific interventions to support your child if they are at risk of being excluded, including working with them face to face to help them before it gets too late
- If there is no alternative other than to exclude them, we will work hard to ensure that they can receive their education as best and as soon as they can

Key priorities for the service in the next few years

- To make sure that we increase access to all children for suitable full time education, recognising that any missed hours are too many
- To make sure that we have a clear picture across all schools, and respond according to need
- To work further with you to help you access help to improve your child's behaviour if that is the cause of their problems at school

Contact name cathybraun@southend.gov.uk