School Improvement Policy for Worcestershire Schools 2016-17

Aiming for Outstanding

Delivered on behalf of Worcestershire County Council
This policy provides information for schools, Worcestershire County Council members and officers and Babcock Prime colleagues to ensure clarity, consistency and quality. The policy identifies the appropriate support and challenge for all schools so they are able to improve further and share their expertise with others. The policy also recognises that successful school improvement relies on effective multi-agency working, with expertise and support provided by a range of partners. For church schools, this includes communication and partnership with the relevant local Diocese.

This document has taken into consideration views and comments from a range of stakeholders. It is also based on the most recent local and national policies and priorities relevant to the work of school improvement and reflects the pace of change in the local and national educational context.

The Worcestershire School Improvement Policy is intended to be fully inclusive of all state funded schools within Worcestershire including LA maintained schools, academies and free schools. The term ‘school’ is therefore used to include all types of state funded schools except where explicitly stated.

**Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1 – Structure of the School Improvement Service</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2 – Overview of Services Provided to LA Maintained Schools</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3 – Overview Support Schools</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4 – Focused and Intensive Support Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5 – Working with Academies and Free Schools</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6 – Supporting a Self-Sustaining School Led System – Working in Partnership</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7 – Headteacher Performance Management</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8 – Recruitment and Induction of New Headteachers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 9 – Supporting Governors</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 10 – Quality Assurance Commitment</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 11 – Schools Causing Concern – Statutory Duties</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 12 – Governance and Reporting</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment Matrix</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 – School Improvement Journey Model</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 – Frequently Asked Questions</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

Following the commissioning of Learning and Achievement Services by Worcestershire County Council to Babcock Training (Education Services) Ltd, known locally as Babcock Prime, we are pleased to present the revised School Improvement Policy for 2016-2017. The title of this policy is ‘Aiming for Outstanding’ and together we want to work with schools to improve the outcomes for all Worcestershire pupils in order to be world class.

‘Aiming for Outstanding’ brings together three main strands:

- working in partnership to share effective practice and make best use of the resources and expertise across all Worcestershire schools;
- enabling all pupils to make good progress but especially focusing on those from vulnerable groups such as looked after children or pupils eligible for pupil premium;
- working to support the development of effective school leaders and governance to ensure the future sustainability of high quality provision.

The policy is based upon the belief that improvement in the educational provision and outcomes for all children and young people in Worcestershire schools is primarily brought about by headteachers and staff in schools, supported by their school governing bodies. The role of the local authority and Babcock Prime is to work in partnership with all maintained schools, academies and related educational settings, providing and commissioning appropriate professional support and challenge, and to enable schools to build and develop their own capacity for improvement.

Worcestershire Children’s Services wants to enable children, young people and families to achieve their potential in a safe environment so that they lead successful lives. We believe that the way in which we will achieve this is by ensuring that needs are clearly defined so that the right services are delivered by the right people to the right children, young people and families at the right cost at the right time. We will focus our resources on those children, young people and families that need them most.

Within an ever changing educational landscape, the continuing role of the local authority in monitoring and evaluating schools’ progress aims to enable us to know and understand the progress each school is making and the performance it is achieving. This is seen as particularly important as schools become increasingly autonomous and self-managing and to ensure they are excellent places of learning and teaching.

Babcock Prime will continue to review, develop and improve systems and processes in order to ensure that the School Improvement Service focuses on effective challenge and support for schools.

John Edwards
Strategic Commissioner for Education and Skills
Worcestershire County Council

Catherine Crooks
Lead for Schools and Settings Effectiveness
Babcock Prime

April 2016
Introduction

The quality of education provided by schools in Worcestershire has improved significantly over recent years with over 87% of all schools now judged to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. This compares well to national (85%) and regional (83%) figures (as at 31st August 2015).

Worcestershire currently performs at or above the national average in many key measures, for example, at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4. In particular, Worcestershire ranks in the top quartile of all local authorities for the proportion of pupils who achieve 5 or more good GCSEs including English and Mathematics.

However, there remains more to do, particularly in relation to narrowing the attainment gap and ensuring that we eradicate inconsistencies and inequality for our most vulnerable pupils. In addition, we are in a changing (and often uncertain) education landscape.

From October 2015, Babcock Prime has been commissioned to provide many of Worcestershire’s education services for at least the next five years. It is our ambition for every school in the Local Authority to be providing at least a good level of education for their pupils. The School Improvement Policy ‘Aiming for Outstanding’ sets out how we intend to work with all schools within the Local Authority to achieve this outcome.
The vision for Babcock Prime is to improve outcomes for all children and young people. This is in alignment with Worcestershire County Council’s vision.

Our aim is for every Worcestershire school to be good or outstanding through working in partnership, ensuring progress for all and developing sustainable, high quality leadership. In the context of the national picture, in order for schools to be successful they need to:

- **operate within a framework of autonomy and accountability**
  The prime responsibility for school improvement is with the Headteacher and the senior leadership team, supported by rigorous monitoring from the Governing Body. Schools are autonomous organisations accountable to their children and young people, the parents and the wider community.

- **carry out rigorous self-evaluation which leads to well-structured development planning**
  All schools need to be clear about the criteria which define good to outstanding provision to enable them to undertake robust and accurate self-evaluation and to take clear and decisive actions to improve their performance as necessary.

- **be inclusive schools**
  Highly effective schools have high aspirations for all of their learners, irrespective of ability and background. Barriers to learning are identified as early as possible and steps are taken to minimise or overcome them.

- **work in partnership with others to enhance school improvement.**
  School improvement is enhanced by schools working in partnership with each other to share effective practice and build capacity.

- **make use of the expertise which already exists within their school**
  Workforce development is a central aspect of school improvement. The most successful schools are highly skilled in auditing the needs of their staff (and the governing body) based on an analysis of pupil outcomes in order to provide professional development opportunities which are underpinned by robust appraisal (performance management) procedures.

- **have inspirational leaders**
  Senior and middle leaders have an ambitious vision for their school; they are reflective, work collaboratively with other schools and agencies and are actively looking to learn from best practice elsewhere.

- **have a highly effective Governing Body**
  The Governing Body is clear about the school’s strengths and areas for development. They monitor and evaluate robustly, holding leaders to account for achieving good pupil outcomes.

**Raising the achievement of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils in Worcestershire**

While outcomes for children in receipt of Pupil Premium are improving, the attainment gap between vulnerable groups and their peers remains significantly wider than national. In particular, pupils who have a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) and are entitled to Pupil Premium make less progress than their peers both in Worcestershire and nationally.

Therefore we plan to focus specifically on outcomes for vulnerable groups and work in partnership with schools. We will continue to use robust data to identify schools where outcomes for vulnerable groups are not strong, and challenge and support these schools. We will also continue to promote the awareness and adoption of best national practice and the sharing of practice that has been demonstrated to be effective and improve outcomes.

In order to achieve our aim and to enable all schools to be successful we have identified four key priorities for the service:
Key Priorities

Raise standards of attainment and improve rates of progress for all pupils:
• improve the achievement of pupils, particularly in KS2;
• work with schools to help ensure teacher assessments are accurate; school tracking systems are robust; any underperformance is identified swiftly and interventions implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Close the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils:
• work with schools to help ensure interventions are appropriately targeted and effective in order to enable underperforming pupils to make accelerated progress.

Increase the proportion of schools that are providing a good or better education for their pupils:
• continue to strengthen the quality of leadership at all levels;
• continue to strengthen the accountability role of governors to ensure robust and independent monitoring and evaluation.

Strengthen partnership arrangements to increase school to school support:
• continue to work in partnership with headteacher representative groups, Teaching School Alliances and other system leaders to share effective practice and broker school to school support;
• promote the sharing of effective practice through an annual health check, partnership projects and the Effective Practice website.
Section 1 - Structure of the School Improvement Service

For 2016-17 the School Improvement Service has been restructured and will consist of the following roles:

There will be two Area Schools Managers who will take responsibility for overseeing all schools in the North (Bromsgrove, Redditch, Wyre Forest) and South (Malvern Hills, Worcester City, Wychavon) of the county respectively.

Each LA maintained school will have a named School Improvement Advisor (SIA). School Improvement Advisors will be allocated predominantly on a geographic basis but this may vary depending on individual school needs and partnership arrangements.

The SEND and Vulnerable Pupils Advisor will have a particular focus on working with schools to improve outcomes for their most vulnerable pupils especially Looked After Children, those eligible for pupil premium and/or those with special educational needs/disabilities. However, all members of the team will take every opportunity to support and challenge schools in relation to the progress of these pupils.

In addition to the structure outlined above, we also have a pool of Education Associates to provide additional capacity and expertise.
Worcestershire County Council has commissioned Babcock Prime to deliver a range of core school improvement services to all LA maintained schools. In the main, these are statutory services but Babcock Prime have listened carefully to the views of headteachers from around the authority and have undertaken to provide some additional services during 2016-17.

All Worcestershire LA maintained schools will therefore receive access to the following:

- named School Improvement Advisor to provide guidance, support and challenge;
- additional support and challenge dependent on level of need (tiered support);
- School Improvement Service involvement during Section 5 or Section 8 Ofsted inspection*;
- support for headteacher recruitment and induction of new headteachers;
- statutory moderation processes;
- support for brokering school to school support;
- regular communications e.g. via websites, newsletters.

*As part of the support for LA maintained schools, a member of the School Improvement Service, usually the School Improvement Advisor linked to the school, will be available to talk to the HMI or Lead Inspector during a Section 5 or Section 8 Ofsted inspection. They will also attend the inspection feedback whenever possible.

Identifying the level of need within a school

All schools are ultimately responsible for their own performance and must develop their own capacity for improvement. However, Babcock Prime, working on behalf of Worcestershire Local Authority, is statutorily required to provide challenge and support to schools in line with their current progress and circumstances. In order to distinguish between highly effective schools and those schools requiring additional support to effectively meet the needs of all their pupils, we have identified a number of criteria by which we will monitor schools.

We will undertake an initial Risk Assessment following which schools will be categorised into one of the following three groups:

- ‘Overview Support Schools’ – likely to be a ‘good or outstanding school’ at next Ofsted inspection;
- ‘Focused Support Schools’ – at risk of being judged Requiring Improvement (RI) at next Ofsted inspection – currently RI, or good/outstanding schools facing particular challenges;
- ‘Intensive Support Schools’ – at risk of being judged inadequate at next Ofsted inspection – currently judged as inadequate or facing significant risk/s.
Risk Assessment

The Risk Assessment will begin with a desk top exercise based on information known to Babcock Prime and the Local Authority. A number of factors will be considered. These can be broken down into four key areas:

1. **School Capacity** - includes effective leadership and governance; quality of teaching and learning; current Ofsted grade; information from visits by Babcock Prime and LA personnel.

2. **Universal Standards** - includes attainment, progress and trends over time.

3. **Outcomes of disadvantaged/vulnerable groups** - includes progress towards narrowing any gaps, especially in relation to Looked After Children, those eligible for Pupil Premium and SEND.

4. **Safety, behaviour and welfare** - includes attendance and exclusions data; safeguarding matters and information relating to complaints.

Further detail can be found in Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment Matrix

Categorisation: Overview Support Schools

Overview Support Schools are schools that are performing well and outcomes for children and young people are good or better. These schools have a strong track record in managing their own improvement and are likely to be judged as a 'good' or 'outstanding' school at their next Ofsted inspection. The majority of Worcestershire LA maintained schools will sit in this category.

For 2016-17, these schools will be allocated 1 day support/challenge from a School Improvement Advisor. This will provide the school with an external annual health check. This offer is in line with the principles underpinning the Annual Performance Review process with which schools will be familiar.

Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units do not have published data in the same way as mainstream schools; therefore all Overview Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units will be allocated two days per year to be supported by a School Improvement and/or Learning and Teaching Advisor.

In 2016-17 Overview Support Schools can choose to access their allocation in one of two ways:

- Single School Option
- Partnership Option

Details can be found in Section 3.

As part of their ongoing improvement work, schools may seek high quality support beyond that provided through core commissioned services. In these instances schools may choose to purchase this additional support from Babcock Prime via a Service Level Agreement. Any school wishing to purchase additional support should contact a member of the School Improvement Service to discuss their requirements or visit the e-store http://www.babcockeducationstore.co.uk/prime

Categorisation: Focused Support Schools

Focused Support Schools are schools at risk of being judged as ‘requiring improvement’ (RI) at their next Ofsted inspection. They may currently be RI, good or outstanding but there are one or more concerns which may lead to an RI judgement. For example, leadership concerns including governance; quality of teaching; pupil progress; performance issues of a specific vulnerable group.

For 2016-17 Focused Support Schools will be able to access the following:

- Progress meetings with their Area Schools Manager and School Improvement Advisor to review progress against the school action plan, identify any barriers and agree next steps including brokering of school-to-school support. As well as the
Headteacher and Chair of Governors, these meetings may also involve other members of the school’s leadership team as appropriate. The frequency and agenda for these meetings will be agreed by the Area Schools Manager and the Headteacher. These meetings were formerly known as project boards.

- Additional School Improvement Advisor or Learning and Teaching Advisor (LTA) time (up to 3 days) to support the implementation of the school action plan.

As part of their ongoing improvement work, schools may seek high quality support beyond that provided through core commissioned services. For example, focused support schools may identify the need for middle leadership development or the need to address a specific subject gap. In these instances schools may choose to purchase this additional support from Babcock Prime via a Service Level Agreement. Any school wishing to consider purchasing additional support should contact a member of the School Improvement Service to discuss their requirements or visit the e-store http://www.babcockeducationstore.co.uk/prime

Where appropriate, we will look to broker support for a Focused Support School from schools with recognised effective practice. Information about partnership working and school-to-school support can be found in Section 6.

**Categorisation: Intensive Support Schools**

Intensive Support Schools are schools at risk of being judged ‘inadequate’ at their next Ofsted inspection. They may currently be judged as outstanding, good or requiring improvement but often these schools are dealing with a number of serious concerns such as significant changes in leadership; outcomes below floor standards; downward trends; poor performance of vulnerable groups and/or staffing issues.

Following an Ofsted Section 5 inspection, any school judged as having ‘Serious Weaknesses’ or ‘Special Measures’ will automatically be classified as an intensive support school up until the point of conversion to a sponsored academy.

For 2016-17 Intensive Support Schools will be able to access the following:

- Regular (at least half termly) progress meetings with their Area Schools Manager and School Improvement Advisor to review progress against the school’s action plan, identify any barriers and agree next steps including brokering school-to-school support. As well as the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, these meetings may also involve other members of the school’s leadership team and governing body as appropriate. These meetings were formerly known as project boards.

- Additional School Improvement Advisor time (up to 6 days) to support implementation of school action plan and to include a termly review of progress in a style, and with a focus, agreed in a progress meeting.

- Additional support from Learning and Teaching Advisors and/or Teaching Schools, National Leaders in Education, Local Leaders in Education, as determined by school action plan (up to 6 days).

As part of their ongoing improvement work, schools may seek high quality support beyond that provided through core commissioned services. In these instances schools may choose to purchase this additional support from Babcock Prime via Service Level Agreements. Any school wishing to consider purchasing additional support should contact a member of the School Improvement Service to discuss their requirements or visit the e-store http://www.babcockeducationstore.co.uk/prime

Wherever possible, we would want to broker support for an Intensive Support School from schools with recognised effective practice. Information about partnership working and school-to-school support can be found in Section 6.
Section 3 - Overview Support Schools

Following a risk assessment, a LA maintained school that is performing well and has good outcomes will be designated as an Overview Support School. As part of the commissioned service, Overview Support Schools will be able to choose one of the following options:

**Single School Option – Annual Health Check**

The school’s named School Improvement Advisor (SIA) will, in negotiation with the Headteacher, undertake an annual health check (formerly known as an Annual Performance Review). This will take the form of either one whole day (six hours) or two half-days focused on validating the school’s self-evaluation, including the impact of leadership and the progress and attainment of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. This will offer senior leaders and governors a framework for continuous school improvement through rigorous professional dialogue.

The timing of the health check will be agreed by the Headteacher and the SIA in order to best facilitate the school’s annual review cycle and support the school’s own evaluation processes.

The SIA will discuss in advance with the Headteacher any specific foci for the visit(s).

**The annual health check is designed to:**

- validate the school’s assessment of strengths and areas for development;
- risk assess the school’s capacity to sustain their Ofsted judgement of at least ‘good’;
- support and challenge the school to identify and secure continued improvements;
- celebrate areas of good practice and provide opportunities for continued support and guidance;
- ensure that there is an appropriate focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, especially those who are looked after or who are eligible for pupil premium.

The SIA will complete a summary of strengths and areas for development during their time in the school and will include recommendations to support the school’s on-going improvement.

The school may use its delegated budget to buy additional time from an SIA or LTA to provide a more detailed review, including a full review of the school’s performance data and/or to plan any subsequent school improvement activities.

The annual health check may recommend that the school moves to Focused Support. In these circumstances, the school will receive a visit from an Area Schools Manager to discuss next steps.

**Partnership Option**

As an alternative to the single school option, schools can choose to work in a partnership – this might be a group of federated schools, neighbourhood schools or schools with similar characteristics. To ensure that this is in the best interests of each school, this will be arranged in conjunction with the relevant SIA.

As a group, the schools will be allocated the same SIA who will allocate the equivalent of one day per school to the partnership. The SIA will initially meet with the partnership to agree the group priorities and how best to use the available time to drive continuous school improvement for all of the schools. Activities might include:

- analysis of data across schools;
- supported Peer Review – see below for more detail;
- identification of strengths within the partnership;
- focus on an agreed aspect – e.g., progress of vulnerable pupil groups, middle leadership, assessment, parental engagement;
- Professional Development sessions across the schools.
Where LA maintained schools and academies work closely together, academies may buy into the partnership option. A group of academies may also purchase this option.

**Supported Peer Review (SPR)**

Evidence shows that the strongest model of school improvement is one that builds capacity and creates self-improving schools. The Supported Peer Review (SPR) is designed to support this and provides a sustainable approach to school improvement for all schools, particularly on the journey to excellence. It recognises the importance of partnership working to school improvement and supports schools in working together to self-evaluate, celebrate, challenge, support and learn together.

The SPR is a process designed specifically for groups of schools, working together as a School Improvement Partnership, to enable them to collectively improve outcomes for all pupils.

The purpose of the Supported Peer Review is to:

- offer external validation of the school's self-evaluation judgements and capacity of the leadership and management to continue its improvement journey;
- celebrate strengths and identify future challenges;
- exchange ideas and strategies;
- provide development for staff at all levels.

The review is conducted by peer reviewers from within the partnership of schools. Experience suggests that the optimum size for a group of schools working together to conduct the Supported Peer Review process is three schools. Where a school improvement partnership is larger than this, it is suggested that the group breaks into two or more subgroups for the actual review process and then reports back to the larger group.

The outcome of the SPR would be a short report, written by the Lead Reviewer, highlighting strengths and areas for further development. This will include whether or not the team considers that the evidence collected during the review supports the school's self-evaluation judgements.

Schools that opt into a SPR will be supported through the process by their SIA who will negotiate the nature of that support with the relevant headteachers. This may include documentation, training and Quality Assurance (QA) of the process to ensure that it is appropriately challenging and robust.

**Outline of the Process**

The reviews are carried out by the headteachers of the schools in the partnership. Each review will have:

- a Lead Reviewer (LR) – a headteacher from one of the partnership schools;
- one or more Associate Reviewers (AR) from the partnership schools;
- a self-reviewer – the headteacher from the home school.

The exact make-up of the review team will depend on the size of the school and the number of schools in the partnership but at a minimum there will be a team of three.
The Supported Peer Review Process consists of three elements:

**Pre-Review**
- **half-day onsite**
- **LR (ARs optional)**
  - Data review
  - Desk top governance review
  - Website review
  - School Self-evaluation

**Review**
- **one-day**
- **LR/ARs**
  - Learning walks or joint lesson observations (as agreed with staff)
  - Meetings with key personnel depending on foci (senior and middle leaders, governors, staff)
  - Work scrutiny
  - Pupil voice
  - Verbal Feedback

**Post-Review**
- **half-day offsite**
- **LR**
  - Report Writing
  - QA

---

**Role of SIA in Supported Peer Review Process**

The SIA will provide:
- a preparatory session / training to all reviewers;
- a Quality Assurance (QA) visit to the first partnership review;
- QA of all SPR reports;
- advice and guidance during the process;
- a post-review meeting to facilitate identification of partnership priorities and next steps.

---

**Using the Outcomes from the Reviews**

Following completion of the reviews, the partnership will meet together with their SIA to discuss the outcomes and determine how they can best work together to capitalise on their strengths and address their areas for development. This should inform and highlight how a partnership will use any remaining SIA days and how, as a group, they will work together to support each other's on-going development.

As part of their ongoing improvement work, all Overview Support Schools may seek high quality support beyond that provided through core commissioned services. In these instances schools may use their delegated resources to purchase support from Babcock Prime or other providers.
LA Maintained schools identified as requiring focused or intensive support will receive a package of support linked to their identified needs. In addition to the School Improvement Service, this is likely to include support brokered from Education Associates, Teaching Schools and System Leaders including National, Local and Specialist Leaders in Education.

Support available to focused and intensive schools will be determined according to the level of need:
**Progress Meetings**

Focused and Intensive Support Schools will be expected to host Progress Meetings, the frequency of which will be determined according to the complexity of their needs. Progress Meetings are chaired by the Area Schools Manager and attended by the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and the School Improvement Advisor. Progress against the key priorities in the school's improvement plan will be discussed and evaluated. Barriers to progress will be identified and actions to minimise or overcome these agreed. Other colleagues from across Babcock Prime may be invited to attend these meetings as appropriate, for example, representative/s from Early Years, Post-16 or Learner Services. Where there are risk indicators such as finance or staffing, relevant LA officers may be invited. This wider ‘team around the school’ methodology will help to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to the needs of the school.

The frequency of progress meetings will alter depending on the needs of the school and where they are in relation to their school improvement journey.

**The School Improvement Journey Model**

Support for schools requiring improvement will be bespoke to the individual school as the relevant issues can be very different from one school to another. However, we will implement the School Improvement Journey Model for all Focused and Intensive Support Schools. This model helps to ensure that progress is rapid and sustained and has proven to be effective in supporting work with schools causing concern. Details can be found in Appendix 2 – School Improvement Journey Model.

Where a school requires intensive support, it is likely that the School Improvement Service will ‘front load’ support in order to ensure rapid progress. As a school becomes more stable and capacity for self-improvement increases, the level of input will reduce accordingly.

In addition to the input that can be provided through the core commissioned services, it is highly likely that focused and intensive support schools will need to access additional support. This can be brokered through a Teaching School, Babcock Prime or another provider. Where possible, the School Improvement Service, working with National Leaders in Education, will seek to identify additional funding streams to help schools purchase this help. Where a Teaching School, National or Local Leader in Education is actively involved in a focused or intensive support school, they will also be invited to attend Progress Meetings.
Section 5 - Academies and Free Schools

The legal responsibility for an academy’s improvement sits with each Academy Trust which has a direct responsibility to the Secretary of State for Education. However, Babcock Prime, on behalf of the LA, has a role as champion for children and parents which applies to all schools regardless of their status. Whilst the LA/Babcock Prime have no statutory responsibility to intervene in academies causing concern we retain responsibility for challenging the performance of academies and free schools where this is necessary.

If there are concerns relating to an academy or free school, one of the Area Schools Managers and/or the Lead for Schools and Settings Effectiveness will contact the Headteacher, informally in the first instance, outlining the nature of the concerns and requesting information about the actions that are being taken to achieve the required improvements. Should the level of concern increase or there is no response from the school, contact will be made with the relevant Governing Body.

The School Improvement Service will help academies to broker support from other schools and providers as necessary.

In line with DfE guidance, unresolved concerns will be referred to the appropriate body, for example, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Education Funding Agency or Ofsted.

An annual meeting will take place with academy sponsors to review pupil performance data and progress of each school against key priorities.
Section 6 – Supporting a Self-Sustaining School Led System – Working in Partnership

Effective, collaborative networks of schools underpin a self-sustaining school improvement system, providing a strong platform to secure excellence in all schools. Babcock Prime and Worcestershire County Council are committed to working in partnership and it is our intention to build on those partnerships already in place to help secure improved opportunities and outcomes for children and young people.

The following principles for school-to-school support will be the basis of our work:

- relationships will be informed by a sense of moral purpose and integrity;
- we will work together to anticipate and respond to need;
- we will collaborate in the quality assurance of our joint working;
- we will work together to secure effective school improvement in order to build capacity and ensure consistency;
- shared intellectual property and associated activities will be secured through a written agreement.

Types of school-to-school support

School-to-school support is an integral way of working for the majority of Worcestershire schools, whether informal or formal, through local pyramid or cluster groups, phase or faith groups; links with teaching schools or system leaders or sharing effective practice at a range of network meetings.

There is a wide range of provision in Worcestershire, including:

- system leaders such as National Leaders of Education (NLEs); Local Leaders of Education (LLEs); Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs); National Leaders of Governance (NLGs);
- Teaching School Alliances;
- sponsoring organisations and academies;
- headteachers and staff from outstanding schools;
- other school-to-school support, e.g. schools which have completed a rapid improvement journey.

School-to-school support can take a wide range of forms including:

- sharing professional practice;
- continuing professional development (CPD);
- subject reviews;
- pre-Ofsted reviews;
- joint planning;
- mentoring;
- coaching;
- peer-to-peer support;
- leadership development – at all levels;
- acting Senior Leaders and Executive Headship;
- support and training for governance.

The process of brokerage

The support on offer will differ for each school as it will be tailored to the school’s needs. Once identified, school-to-school support will be brokered between Babcock Prime and the relevant parties.
The principles underlying the choice of support are:

- **capability** - match of support to the specific needs and context of the supported school;
- **locality** - to facilitate the highest levels of collaboration;
- **acceptability** - of both partners to each other and ability to establish professional trust;
- **capacity** - of the supporting school balancing its own needs and effectiveness.

Babcock Prime colleagues will work with the schools to:

- confidentially share intelligence and data;
- coordinate their first meeting to agree the key priorities which will form the focus of the support and agree lines of accountability;
- define the roles and responsibilities of all partners;
- agree funding arrangements;
- agree lines of communication;
- agree timescales for support and evaluation of impact;
- agree review dates and an exit strategy.

From time to time, for schools causing concern, additional school improvement funding becomes available from external sources, for example the National College for Teaching and Leadership. Babcock Prime colleagues actively support Teaching School and NLE colleagues to co-ordinate and secure these new funding streams. This funding enables system leaders to provide additional school-to-school support and maximise the opportunities for schools to benefit from school improvement expertise.

Partnership success is dependent on clarity of expectations and effective communication. Where external support is brokered by Babcock Prime, it is imperative that all parties use the key documentation and follow the protocols. Please see the ‘Brokering School-to-school Support’ Protocol for more detail.

Where an Intensive Support School is expected to become an academy sponsored by another school, it is likely that this school will be approached to provide the support from the outset.

### Sharing Effective Practice

The Effective Practice Webpages are located on the Babcock Prime website and can be found in the School Improvement area.

The database contains:

- more than 800 examples of effective practice within Worcestershire schools. These are categorised under specific headings and schools can identify particular examples to meet their needs. All of the examples have been validated by senior leaders in school and in many cases as a result of Ofsted inspections. Entries are reviewed regularly by schools and are no more than three years old. Older entries are archived and those that the schools or colleagues in the LA feel are no longer relevant are deleted;
- case studies (prepared by schools) which give more detail about the innovative and leading practice they have developed. Contact details are provided for any school wishing to find out more;
- guidelines and protocols for staff wishing to visit a school to find out more at first hand. A visit can be brokered by the database administrator if necessary;
- information about, and hyperlinks to, national award schemes. There is also a list of the schools in Worcestershire who hold these awards along with contact details;
- a news section to inform schools about the latest award schemes and application deadlines as well as celebrating any recent achievements.
Section 7 - Headteacher Performance Management

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to appoint an external advisor to support and advise them in the headteacher’s appraisal process. It is for the governing body to decide who they wish to use as an external advisor, having satisfied themselves that the advisor has the skills, experience and objectivity needed to fulfil the role. Ideally the appointment is made with the agreement of the headteacher. The role of the advisor is to:

- assist the governors review panel in setting meaningful but achievable targets and in reviewing outcomes;
- attend the review meeting and offer advice and support to governors;

The advisor is not responsible for determining a recommendation to the pay committee on whether increment(s) should be paid to the headteacher following the review; this is a matter for the governors’ panel alone. However, governors can ask for advice and should take account of any advice offered.

Members of the School Improvement Service can undertake the role of external advisor. This input can be purchased via a Service Level Agreement, contact a member of the School Improvement Service to discuss or visit the e-Store http://www.babcockeducationstore.co.uk/prime

Section 8 - Recruitment and Induction of New Headteachers

As part of the services commissioned by Worcestershire County Council, the School Improvement Service will continue to support LA maintained school Governing Bodies with the recruitment of a headteacher as, and when, necessary. We are able to offer up to 3 days support for this process. This may include support in preparing for the recruitment process, shortlisting and involvement on the day of the interview. Should a Governing Body require any additional support over and above this allocation, it may be purchased via a Service Level Agreement.

The School Improvement Service will continue to lead an annual induction programme available to all new headteachers. This will consist of a welcome meeting, a needs audit and a range of cpd events to address identified needs. Inputs will draw on colleagues from across a range of both Babcock and Worcestershire County Council Services.
The role of the Governor Services Team is to provide statutory and locally determined services for Governing Bodies.

The statutory duties and core tasks of Governor Services include:

- advising on, and making the instrument of government for all LA maintained schools;
- appointing additional governors for schools causing concern if required;
- liaising with elected members and governing bodies for local authority governor appointments for maintained schools;
- advice and guidance for Chairs, clerks, governors, local authority officers and elected members on governance structures of maintained schools, instruments of government, the appointment of local authority governors, other governors including parent governors;
- linking to and working with the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Schools Commission, School Improvement Service colleagues and associates working with schools on governance issues;
- maintaining a database of governors with terms of office for maintained schools;
- the incorporation of any temporary Governing Body arrangements and coordination of the process;
- support to new governors of LA maintained schools including appointment letter and induction packs;
- offering a portfolio of training for school Governors;
- providing Governor Welcome packs for new governors of LA maintained schools;
- providing clerks appointment packs for new clerks of LA maintained schools;

A range of additional support can be purchased via the Governor Services Service Level Agreement:

- partnership forum (Chairs, Headteachers and Clerks);
- communication network via clerks mailings;
- database of clerks;
- governor and clerk appointment packs for use by non-LA maintained schools;
- user access to our password protected webpage, including access to Notes of Guidance;
- helpline support, advice & guidance from experienced governance advisors on all areas of governance;
- inclusion in Clerks' mailings;
- half- termly Newsletter;
- termly 'Hot Topic' briefings at venues around Worcestershire;
- access to premium content within Better Governor website;
- updates on changing legislation & policy which may affect your school and role as a governor;
- access to discounted comprehensive training and development programmes;
- 11 monthly editions of the Bristol Notes of Guidance available at a discounted rate.

Governor Services also offer:

- a comprehensive training and development programme;
- bespoke governor training for a governing body; MAT/MAC or cluster of schools;
- reviews of governance – 2/3 day consultation resulting in a report and an action plan offering clear advice on improving the effectiveness of the governing body.
The School Improvement Service is committed to ensuring that the support provided to schools is of high quality and has effective and appropriate impact. There is a high correlation between local authority categorisation and Ofsted inspection outcomes which the service strives to maintain and which provides reassurance to schools.

Babcock Training (Education Services) Ltd has its own Quality Standards for consultancy and training that have been developed to ensure consistently high quality provision of services. These standards form a core part of the performance review process in which evidence of performance is collated, including feedback from schools, to evaluate effectiveness and inform the setting of objectives.

A number of specific activities contribute to the quality assurance of the work of the School Improvement Service:

### Written Reports and Reviews

We are keen to ensure consistency of practice in our work and provide schools with clear, quality assured reports. To deliver this standard, a random sample of reports and reviews are subject to quality assurance through a process of shadowing and moderation of reports.

### Focused and Intensive Support School process

Managers regularly sample and moderate action plans, notes of visit, records of support and progress meeting notes. Area Schools Managers review judgements evaluating the impact of the support received. In addition, they provide on-site quality assurance via ‘shadow’ visits.

### Regular reporting and monitoring

The Strategic Commissioner for Education and Skills and Babcock Prime School Improvement Leadership Team review schools causing concern on a monthly basis. This allows for timely and early additional intervention and support to be put in place.

### External review

Ofsted and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) provide feedback about the quality of support for schools in a category of concern or those that ‘Require Improvement’.

Babcock Prime will also seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders on an annual basis to ensure Worcestershire’s School Improvement Policy is implemented consistently and effectively.

### Complaints

If a school or governing body considers that there is an issue in relation to the quality of service being provided, then this should be raised in the first instance with the relevant Area Schools Manager or the Lead for Schools and Settings Effectiveness.
Schools are ultimately responsible for their own performance and must develop their own capacity for improvement. Local Authorities (LAs) are statutorily required to provide challenge and support to schools in line with their current progress and circumstances. However, the Department for Education (DfE), on behalf of the Secretary of State, publishes guidance relating to maintained schools causing concern.

Section 72 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all LAs in England, in exercising their functions in respect of schools causing concern as set out in Part 4 of the 2006 Act, to have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

The 2006 Education and Inspections Act set out that a (maintained) school is ‘eligible for intervention’ where:

- a school has failed to comply with a warning notice to the satisfaction of the LA
- a school requires significant improvement or
- a school requires special measures

Where a school is eligible for intervention, the local authority may exercise its power to:

- require the governing body to enter into specified arrangements with a view to improving the performance of the school;
- appoint additional governors;
- suspend the delegated budget of the school;
- appoint an Interim Executive Board.

Where a school is eligible for intervention, the Secretary of State has the power to:

- appoint additional governors;
- appoint an Interim Executive Board;
- or direct the local authority to close a school.

Warning notices are used as an early form of intervention that is issued to the governing body of a maintained school by the local authority where one or more of the grounds in section 60(2)(a-c) are satisfied:

- unacceptably low standards of performance of pupils;
- serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed that is prejudicing (or likely to prejudice) standards of performance (this could include where there is evidence of very poor financial management);
- safety of pupils or staff of the school is threatened.

The DfE define “unacceptably low standards of performance” as: standards below the floor, on either attainment or progress of pupils; low standards achieved by disadvantage pupils; a sudden drop in performance; sustained historical underperformance; performance of pupils (including disadvantaged pupils) unacceptably low in relation to expected achievement or prior attainment; or performance of a school not meeting the expected standards of comparable schools. In these circumstances, it is the expectation that the LA should issue a warning notice unless there is a particular reason not to do so.

Where a school has significant difficulties in bringing about the required improvements, fails to respond as required or if the pace of progress is too slow, the Lead for Schools and Settings Effectiveness will inform the Strategic Commissioner for Education and Skills, Worcestershire County Council, who, in the first instance, will invite the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to attend a monitoring meeting to discuss next steps.
If the school is subsequently judged to be making insufficient progress, likely to be after two terms of focused or intensive support, the LA will consider whether it needs to issue a warning notice.

There is a clear expectation by the DfE that where the school has been judged by Ofsted to have ‘serious weaknesses’ or require ‘special measures’, conversion to an academy with a strong sponsor will be the route to secure improvement.

More details and statutory guidance for this legislation is available at:

Section 12 - Governance and Reporting

The majority of schools in Worcestershire are LA maintained schools and as such the Local Authority (LA) has statutory responsibilities for the performance of these schools. The funding for school improvement provided directly by the LA is only used to support maintained schools. The LA is, however, strongly committed to working with all schools to improve provision and outcomes for children and young people.

Therefore the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the Worcestershire Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) are based on all Worcestershire schools. These KPIs are reported on quarterly as part of the SDA review for Worcestershire County Council. The key method of governance is through the SDA review. A quarterly report on the progress of schools on the Focused Support programmes is also produced.
## Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment Matrix

(Note: for exemplification purposes only and is not an exhaustive list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY INDICATORS</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL CAPACITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted Inspection Judgements</td>
<td>Special Measures / Serious Weaknesses / Requires Improvement / Two consecutive RI judgements and/or pending Ofsted</td>
<td>Ofsted reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
<td>Ofsted (G3,4) School Reviews Interim/acting headteacher New headteacher</td>
<td>Ofsted reports School SEF Reviews / Local knowledge Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Ofsted (G3,4) School Reviews Statutory responsibilities are not being fulfilled</td>
<td>Ofsted reports Reviews / Local knowledge Governor Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teaching</td>
<td>Ofsted (G3,4) School self-referral Retention and recruitment issues High staff absence rate High proportion of NQTs Competency issues</td>
<td>School monitoring &amp; performance data Ofsted reports Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Deficit budget In-year deficits High ratio of staffing costs</td>
<td>LA Financial Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Numbers</td>
<td>Pupil numbers significantly below PAN Pupil numbers declining</td>
<td>Admissions Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIVERSAL STANDARDS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement – attainment and progress</td>
<td>Below Floor Standards Eng &amp; maths progress below expected Attainment declining over last three years Data specific and relevant to school phase</td>
<td>Performance Data Ofsted reports Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups</td>
<td>Closing the Achievement and progress gaps esp. in relation to LAC; pupils eligible for pupil premium and SEND</td>
<td>Performance Data Ofsted reports Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion issues</td>
<td>SEN Statutory duties not fulfilled High rate of parent/carer complaints Provision not based on ‘Ordinarily Available’ guidance</td>
<td>Reviews SEND Reports Local knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAFETY, BEHAVIOUR AND WELFARE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safeguarding</td>
<td>Safeguarding concerns Safeguarding incidents</td>
<td>School Alert LA / Babcock officer alert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusions</td>
<td>High/rising levels of permanent /fixed term exclusions</td>
<td>School alert LA / Babcock officer alert LA Exclusions Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Low / falling rates of attendance High or rising levels of persistent absence</td>
<td>School alert LA / Babcock officer alert LA Attendance Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incidents</td>
<td>Emergencies and critical incidents which impact on the safety of pupils and staff in school.</td>
<td>School referral LA / Babcock Officers Governing Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/carer complaints</td>
<td>Significant number and/or pattern of complaints</td>
<td>Letters received by WCC; DfE; Ofsted etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2 – School Improvement Journey Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 Up to 4 weeks (4 wks)</th>
<th>Phase 2 Up to 10 weeks (14 wks)</th>
<th>Phase 3 Up to 14 weeks (28 wks)</th>
<th>Phase 4 Up to 14 weeks (42 wks)</th>
<th>Phase 5 follow up year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish concern and priorities</td>
<td>Implementation of improvements</td>
<td>Capacity building consolidate and embed practice</td>
<td>Self sustained improvement. LA exit strategy</td>
<td>Monitor sustained improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of concern:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Raised by SIA through school data analysis, visits and/or completion of health check</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inspection outcome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Completion of Risk Assessment form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discuss at SI Team meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Produce summary report, identifying issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Establish priorities and priority order - emphasis on outcomes for pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clarify roles and responsibilities for school, LA, Brokered Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hold first Progress Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check and balance of support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regular (frequent) SIA contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Evaluative reports from LTAs on teaching, subjects, aspects as appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Evaluative reports from Brokered Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progress Meetings – at least half termly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regular contact from SIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regular Progress Meeting which provides formal summary to date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- RAG rate progress on improvements including internal and external views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Monthly contact from SIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Half termly Progress Meeting which provides formal summary to date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- RAG rate progress on improvements including internal and external views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Term 1 SIA half termly visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Term 2 SIA visits once a term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Term 3 SIA visits once a term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progress Meeting triggered if concerns raised at any time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Periodic monitoring continues until next inspection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### On track to IMPROVE OUTCOMES and RAISE STANDARDS

- **LOW** School Capacity / Sustainability
- **Intensive support**
- School autonomy. Improved outcomes
- **Minimal support** LA exit strategy
- **High School Capacity / Sustainability**
- School identifies and provides its own support and challenge
- School supports other schools through outreach work

---

**School Improvement Policy for Worcestershire Schools** 23
Appendix 3 – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who decides whether a school is an Overview Support School, a Focused Support School or an Intensive Support School?
A: The Lead for Schools and Settings Effectiveness works with Area Schools Managers, School Improvement Advisors (SIA) and Local Authority (LA) Officers to undertake a risk assessment to decide whether a school requires focused support or intervention to secure good provision and outcomes for pupils. They use information and performance data under the criteria defined in the Risk Assessment Matrix (Appendix 1) to assess the level of intervention, support or challenge.

Q: If we are a Focused Support School can we also be part of a School Improvement Partnership with Overview Support Schools?
A: Yes – Focused Support Schools can use one day of their support towards partnership working. Where possible we will try to ensure the SIA involved in the partnership option will also be the Focused Support School’s SIA. Advantages can be that the other partnership schools can help support the Focused Support School. The priority however will be that the Focused Support School retains the level of support/challenge required in order to ensure a rapid rate of improvement.

Q: If we opt into the Overview Support Single Option can we move to the Partnership Option at a later stage?
A: Yes – if the other schools in the partnership agree or you wish to form a new partnership.

Q: Can a School Improvement Partnership include a mix of schools – e.g. academies and maintained schools?
A: Yes – however, where a school is an academy they will need to buy into the partnership option.

Q: Can a school refuse to be a Focused Support School?
A: Schools are ultimately responsible for their own performance and they must develop their own capacity for improvement. However, intervention and support may be needed to help the leadership of the school address key issues, develop skills and expertise and monitor progress. Babcock Prime will provide this support to LA maintained schools as outlined in this policy. In the unlikely circumstance that a school refuses this input, it is likely that the LA will issue a warning notice.

Q: Who will know which schools are Focused or Intensive Support Schools?
A: The designation of schools to Focused or Intensive Support is confidential to the LA, Babcock Prime and the schools concerned.

Q: Who will see reports written about the school as part of this strategy?
A: The LA has a statutory responsibility to address underperformance in any school. Babcock Prime, on behalf of Worcestershire LA, retains ownership of all reports written about a school, although the Headteacher will always have the opportunity to comment on any draft report/evaluation. The detailed contents of reports will remain confidential to the school, Babcock Prime and LA officers working with the school. However, a summary of judgements/evaluation may be shared by the school as part of an Ofsted inspection.
Q: We have been designated as an Overview Support School. We want to have a full review and additional support. Can we have this?
A: As part of normal improvement work, access to high quality support, other than that provided through core commissioned services, is required by all schools from time to time. Schools can use their delegated resources to purchase support from Babcock Prime or other providers. This can include full reviews and a wide range of other support outlined in the Babcock Prime directory of services for schools.

Q: If we are a Focused Support School will we need to become a sponsored academy?
A: In most cases the answer is no. However, if a school is in an Ofsted category of concern it is expected to become a sponsored academy. In addition, there will be a small number of other schools where a sponsored academy solution is appropriate.

Q: Do we have to use part of the school budget to deliver the school action plan?
A: It is expected that a school will take responsibility for its own improvement and it would therefore be highly likely that a school would use a proportion of its budget to support identified school improvement needs. If an LA maintained school is in financial difficulty and meets specific criteria, an application can be made to access funding via the School Specific Contingency Funding. Further information regarding the criteria is available from the Area Schools Managers.

Q: Do we have to use Worcestershire County Council / Babcock Prime support to support school improvement?
A: No. The school improvement policy is clear in its understanding that schools are self-managing and accountable for their own improvement. Worcestershire County Council’s expectation is that appropriate action is taken by the school to quality assure any external source of support. However, for a Focused or Intensive Support School, Babcock Prime will need to have an oversight of the school’s action plan, and monitor and evaluate its implementation and impact with the school. This will also include evaluating support for the action plan.

Q: What happens if the school does not improve in the timescale identified by Ofsted, Worcestershire LA and/or Babcock Prime?
A: All evidence to date shows that the vast majority of schools do meet their target date for improvement having made effective use of available support. However, where Progress Meetings reveal that leadership capacity is not improving and is preventing the school from meeting its agreed targets, Worcestershire LA will consider serving a warning notice which enables it to use the full range of its legal powers.

Q: Do parents / carers and the full governing body need to know the school is a Focused or Intensive Support School?
A: The full governing body has a clear role as critical friend to the headteacher and leadership of the school so it is important that it is made aware of areas for improvement, and the strategies such as those implemented as part of Focused and Intensive Schools programme, to address them. Parents and pupils have both a right and a responsibility to be part of the school improvement process, although the school will need to exercise its judgement in relation to identifying itself as being a Focused or Intensive Support School. It is not always appropriate to share widely all the factors causing concern.