

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

08 July 2026

Title	Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2024/2025
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report author	Brian Grady, Director of Education
Lead councillor	Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the position regarding school standards and attainment as set out in the attached report2. Endorse the priorities identified in this report to further improve attainment, with a focus on reducing inequalities.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Education is a strategic priority for Reading Borough Council. The Annual School Standards report sets out how Reading Borough Council supports statutory duties regarding education and school standards in support of Reading Borough Council strategic priorities and policies. It uses verified examination data and so relates to the previous (2024/25) academic year, not the current academic year.
- 1.2. This report builds on the School Standards report presented to the July 2025 ACE Committee report and the identified strategic priorities set out in that report.
- 1.3. The Annual School Standards report 2024/2025 report confirms that schools are implementing research informed approaches to improve standards, with schools being judged positively by Ofsted and in findings from school effectiveness assurance activities. This report informs the Education Partnership Board strategic priorities for action.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council has high ambition to provide opportunity for all of our children and young people to thrive in education and succeed. The strategic approach to supporting improved educational outcomes and school effectiveness has been strengthened through the establishment of the Reading Education Partnership Board, which oversees and drives improvement action on standards and achievement.

- 2.2. School governing boards and their executive leaders are ultimately accountable for the standards and achievement in their schools. The roles and responsibilities of Reading Borough Council are:
- a) To act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences institutional and societal discrimination, have a social worker, are a survivor of trauma and or have physical or mental health needs
 - b) Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress
 - c) To be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
 - d) To identify schools causing concern and to rapidly intervene where a school is at risk of decline or failing standards, working closely with the DfE Regional Director, diocese, and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve.
 - e) Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.
 - f) Exercise relevant powers to intervene in locally maintained schools causing concern and to work with the Department for Education Regional Director where there are concerns about school effectiveness in academy schools and settings

3. Overview of school standards and attainment

- 3.1. The enclosed school standards report sets out a detailed overview of standards and attainment.
- 3.2. The School Effectiveness team leads on the work with schools to deliver improved outcomes and standards. The team undertook and recorded eighty official visits to Locally Maintained schools in term one including effectiveness, safeguarding, English monitoring and curriculum reviews. The team also completed HTPM for schools and provided training for headteachers, subject leads, individual school staff teams, behaviour leads, safeguarding leads, School Business Managers and Governors.
- 3.3. Outcomes across Reading show positive momentum at key transition points, most notably in Early Years, where Good Level of Development continues to rise, reflecting the impact of early intervention, workforce development and partnership working. We have also seen a strong improvement at narrowing the gap in Key Stage 2 and 4 for disadvantaged pupils, a key council plan priority.
- 3.4. However, these headlines mask substantial variation between schools and pupil groups, with persistent gaps remaining for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND, and those experiencing poor attendance.
- 3.5. The data shows that Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is a driver of variation in outcomes at every phase. Children without SEND in most schools perform at or above national benchmarks, indicating that core curriculum and teaching quality is benefiting many children in many schools. However, pupils with SEND—particularly those on SEN Support and with EHCPs—continue to experience significantly weaker outcomes and higher absence and suspensions than their peers. Many of these children fail to secure foundational learning knowledge by the end of KS1. Strategic focus on providing children with the best start in life and reforming SEND and school organisation are essential if we are to drive change in these outcomes.

- 3.6. Attainment also varies across global majority heritage groups, with headline outcomes ranging widely and differences significantly influenced by the inclusion of SEND pupils. Some groups continue to underperform relative to national expectations even without SEND, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, indicating that factors beyond SEND contribute to these gaps. Overall, the data suggests that while improving SEND provision remains important, there is also a need to address persistent ethnic disparities that are evident within the non-SEND population.
- 3.7. Attendance remains a key limiting factor on attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Elevated levels of persistent absence are disproportionately concentrated in highly inclusive schools that serve our communities most impacted by disadvantage and intersectional vulnerability. Poor attendance is strongly correlated with weaker KS2 and KS4 outcomes and higher post sixteen disengagement. The data reinforces that attendance challenges are often structural and contextual, linked to poverty, health, housing instability, and unmet need, rather than school practice alone. Improving attendance for vulnerable groups therefore requires integrated, multi-agency responses, rather than punitive or school only solutions.
- 3.8. Most young people in Reading continue into post-sixteen education, and the authority performs well against national benchmarks for participation and the September Guarantee. However, retention and progression to Level 3 qualifications remain significant challenges for vulnerable learners. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are far more likely to leave school-based sixth forms at 16 and enter FE or become NEET. This reflects earlier attainment gaps, limited access to academic pathways, and insufficient preparation for adulthood. The findings reinforce that post-16 outcomes are shaped well before Year 11, requiring stronger KS3 foundations and clearer vocational and technical pathways that include all children, aligned to the national White Paper reform ambitions

3.9. Strategic priorities for 2026/27

- 3.10. The Annual Standards report has identified focused and targeted school improvement activity priorities and priorities regarding improving school attendance. We will secure these actions through the oversight and governance of the Education Partnership Board, our strategic governance arrangements which involves and represents all 61 schools and all early years settings in Reading.
- 3.11. The Annual Standards report identifies the following strategic priorities across partnerships and agencies:
- 3.12. It is important that we deliver the national SEND reforms and local area SEND Strategy at pace, focusing on early identification, adaptive teaching, attendance, and Preparation for Adulthood across all phases, to ensure that children with SEND have access to the highest quality of education.
- 3.13. We must continue to prioritise the Best Start in Life strategy, recognising early years as the most effective lever for long-term improvement and equity.
- 3.14. The Education Partnership Board will explore opportunities to strengthen Multi Academy Trust and Local Authority collaboration to strengthen and rationalise provision and school improvement across our 61 schools and co-design inclusive pathways across Key Stage 4 and post-sixteen pathways.
- 3.15. To support improvements for global majority heritage groups who experience poorer outcomes, including Black Caribbean children, some mixed heritage pupil groups, and Irish Traveller pupils, building on engagement with parents and community leaders over the past year, Education Partnership Board will be agreeing targeted action to address identified disparities.
- 3.16. Proactive work on school place planning and financial modelling and management to promote sustainability underpins our approach, an update on the Reading Borough

Council School Place Planning Strategy will be presented to ACE Committee in October 2026.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. Council and partnership wide work on improving school standards and outcomes for children supports the Council's strategic priority to 'Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children', improving outcomes for children and families through a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention. In addition, helping children fulfil their potential through education supports the Council's ambitions to secure Reading's economic and cultural success, and to promote more equal communities in the borough.
- 4.2. The work undertaken with Reading schools helps secure access to consistently high-quality education for all Reading children, to help them succeed and thrive as full participants in Reading's inclusive economy.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. Ensuring high quality education available local to all residents would be expected to reduce carbon emissions from unnecessary travel. There are no direct environmental and climate implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. As set out in the report, engagement with schools is critical to deliver improved outcomes for Reading children through a self-improving school to school support system. School leaders will be attending alongside Council officers to present this report and to engage further with committee on relevant aspects of the report, including the context of current standards and attainment, and priority improvement actions.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The actions set out in this report are intended to have a differential positive impact on people with protected characteristics, who experience a risk of disproportionately poor educational outcomes: specifically, as identified in the outcomes data on this report: disability, race and sex (gender).

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. No other relevant considerations have been identified related to this report.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The Education Act 1996 establishes the fundamental legal framework for local authority education duties. Section 13 places a general duty on local authorities to "contribute

towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary education, and secondary education are available to meet the needs of the population of their area". In this way, it is assumed that any child learning within the borough is a Reading pupil regardless of the form of governance of the school. Reading Borough Council (RBC) is therefore responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools and local education provisions.

- 9.2. Reading Borough Council has statutory duties (Children Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006) to:
- a) to promote cooperation between itself and other relevant organisations in order to improve the well-being of children in its area". This includes both "protection from harm and neglect as well as positive duties such as promoting physical and mental health". In this was the Council can act as the champion for all children and young people in the borough but especially those who are: Looked after by the local authority, have additional educational needs, are from a minority group that experiences discrimination, or have a social worker.
 - b) be responsible for maintaining an overview of the effectiveness of all schools including academies, free schools, local colleges, registered early years settings and registered training providers.
 - c) exercise its education functions to promote high standards
 - d) exercise its powers to intervene in schools causing concern (in line with the DfE Schools Causing Concern 2022 statutory guidance).

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. With the removal from Local Authorities by HM Government of the School Improvement and Monitoring Brokerage Grant, the work of the Local Authority with Reading schools to support and challenge improved standards and attainment is funded solely through community and maintained school funding of the Dedicated Schools Grant. There are no direct financial implications regarding this report, which reports on the current funded activity.
- 10.2. Jo Collis-Heavens (Strategic Finance Business Partner (Children's Services) has cleared these Financial Implications.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. Action to deliver school improvement activities will be undertaken through the Education Partnership Board across the 2026/2027 academic year. Updates will be provided in the next Annual School Standards report.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- 1. Annual School Standards Report 2024/2025**