# **Shropshire Education Excellence Strategy – Autumn 2025**

# **Foreword**

Shropshire Council is ambitious for all of Shropshire’s children, regardless of which setting, school, or provision they attend. All children have a right to a quality education in a setting that support their needs and keeps them safe. ‘Education settings’ refers to all providers in Shropshire, including maintained schools, academies, early years settings, alternative provision, post-16 providers, and out-of-school settings.

The role of local authorities (LAs) in England has undergone a profound transformation over recent years, shifting from direct operational control to a more strategic and facilitative function within the education system.

This evolution is largely due to the significant increase in the number of academies, which operate independently of local authority oversight. Despite these considerable changes in national education policy and school organisation, councils retain the majority of their statutory duties and continue to play a crucial role as champions of educational excellence for all children and young people in their areas.

Throughout this new strategy, we outline how our statutory duties and responsibilities will be discharged to support the best outcomes for Shropshire’s children and young people.

**Statutory Responsibilities for Educational Excellence**

Section 13a of the Education Act 1996 outlines the current statutory obligations of local authorities regarding educational excellence.

Local authorities must carry out their education functions with the aim of promoting high standards. This duty exists within a landscape where schools and education settings have increasing autonomy and where there is a shifting model of accountability. Crucially, there is an expectation that schools themselves lead their own improvement.

# “Local authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area, regardless of the types of educational settings they attend. There are a number of statutory duties under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts which make this clear. In order to fulfil these duties effectively, local authorities need to work in partnership with all schools (including independent schools), appropriate religious bodies and further education and sixth form colleges in their area” ([Support and intervention in schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2):p40).

# **Strategic Role in School Improvement**

# The Education and Inspections Act 2006 further defines the strategic role of the local authority in supporting improvement across schools and education settings. The Act establishes the local authority as:

* A ‘champion’ for the needs of children, young people, and their families.
* Responsible for planning, commissioning, and assuring the quality of educational services.
* Tasked with challenging schools and educational settings, commissioning support when necessary, and intervening in management and governance where appropriate.
* Required to raise concerns about the performance of academies/free/independent schools directly with the Department for Education.
* Obliged to refer concerns about Early Years settings to the childminder agency and/or Ofsted.

# **Responding to Concerns and Powers of Intervention**

The 2006 Act also gives local authorities a duty to respond to parental concerns about the quality of local schools. It grants new powers to intervene earlier in maintained schools that are underperforming. Specifically, Part 4 of the Act enables:

* Early action to address school underperformance before it becomes entrenched and leads to formal failure.
* Immediate provision of effective support and challenge when standards are found to be unacceptable, ensuring rapid improvement.
* Decisive intervention if a school in ‘special measures’ fails to make sufficient progress, in order to protect the education and life chances of pupils.

# **Use of Intervention Powers**

With respect to maintained school, the Act provides a clear responsibility on local authorities to intervene where schools are causing concern. These expanded statutory powers are designed to ensure every child receives the quality of education and opportunities they deserve. Shropshire Council will employ these intervention powers as appropriate. The Education Quality and Safeguarding team will work collaboratively with other teams across the local authority to gather evidence and information about schools’ vulnerabilities, ensuring timely and effective support or intervention when required.

This is part of an ongoing process built on strong relationships, respect and effective communication. Where schools are deemed to require additional support, this will be determined, when necessary, in order to ensure that swift action is taken to address concerns.

**Role of the Director of Children’s Services**

Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children’s Services. The DCS has professional responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children’s services. The DCS is responsible for the performance of local authority functions relating to the education and social care of children and young people. The DCS is responsible for ensuring that effective systems are in place for discharging these functions, including where a local authority has commissioned any services from another provider rather than delivering them itself.

The Education Quality and Safeguarding team plays a pivotal role in supporting the Director of Children’s Services to discharge their statutory responsibilities effectively. This team works closely with schools, providing expert guidance, challenge, and practical assistance to ensure that educational standards and safeguarding practices are consistently robust. Through regular monitoring, sharing of best practice, and targeted support, the team helps to address areas of concern swiftly, foster school improvement, and ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet the highest standards across all settings.

**Core Principles**

Building positive relationships

We recognise that educational leadership is a complex and often demanding. In all our interactions, we are committed to treating educational providers with professionalism, courtesy, empathy, and respect, and we expect the same standards in return.

By promoting this mutual expectation, we foster an environment built on trust, understanding, and constructive partnership, ensuring that all support and challenge is delivered in a manner that values expertise and dedication on all sides—ultimately focussed on achieving the very best outcomes for children and young people.

Effective communication

Shropshire Council is committed to ensuring that school leaders receive timely and relevant information, with as much advance notice as possible, to enable effective planning and decision-making. Open communication will be supported through

* The weekly education update
* Termly headteacher briefings
* The publication of the directory of LA services
* Shropshire Learning Gateway.
* Maintained Headteachers’ Forum
* Schools Forum
* Various partnership boards and sub groups with education representation

We will aim to ensure that all schools and settings are kept informed of developments and opportunities. The LA will continue to seek new opportunities to support communication.

In return, Shropshire Council expects all schools and trusts to keep the local authority informed of key events in accordance with the ‘Notifiable Incidents Protocol’, and to share examination data promptly to facilitate robust cross-county analysis and collaborative improvement. This two-way approach to communication enhances transparency, accountability, and shared understanding across the education community.

Early identification of needs

Shropshire Council's approach is be built upon principles designed to ensure proactive engagement, be informed by data, and foster collaborative relationships with all setting and schools.

The primary aim is to identify potential issues at an early stage, enabling the provision of constructive challenge and support before concerns escalate.

This approach seeks to cultivate a culture of continuous self-evaluation and improvement within schools.

This allows for timely, supportive interventions to be deployed before issues reach a crisis level. As a result, this intervention minimises disruption to pupils' education and maximises the potential for school-led improvement.

The framework will facilitate a continuous process of reflection, leadership development, and collaborative practice, aiming to ensure that every pupil thrives and, as the Shropshire Plan articulates “lives their best life.”

Recognition of context

Shropshire is a diverse county. When school performance is examined, including the analysis of data, it is essential to recognise the unique context in which each school and setting operates. Factors such as demographic profile, community circumstances, local challenges, and resource availability can significantly affect outcomes and progress. For example, where schools are working hard to provide inclusive environments for pupils with the most significant needs, it is recognised that this might not be reflected in ‘headline’ data.

A nuanced understanding of context allows for a fair and balanced interpretation of data and actions, ensuring that the strengths and barriers faced by each school and setting are acknowledged and inform both evaluation and support strategies.

**Key Monitoring Areas and Data Sources**

The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team will co-ordinate the gathering and analysis of data across several key areas to gain a comprehensive understanding of school performance and identify areas requiring support.

This will include analysis of -

* Educational Performance
* Published and internal data with respect to pupil achievement
* Outcomes of Ofsted inspections
* Attendance data
* Suspension and Exclusion data
* Outcomes from safeguarding assurance activities or other information from other Local Authority teams relating to the safeguarding arrangements in education settings.
* Practice with respect to the management of off-site visits
* Financial health
* Provision for pupils who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
* Information provided by Shropshire HR
* Information provided by Children’s Services
* Use of non-school (unregistered) Alternative Provision
* Use and impact of non-statutory additional funding and support e.g. EYIAF, GSP, Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, outreach.

**Challenge and Accountability – Academies**

Shropshire Council is committed to fostering a collaborative partnership with academy CEOs and their schools, with the collective goal of ensuring high-quality educational provision for every child and young person in Shropshire.

Academies nurture their pupils; the Local Authority has a duty to all children.

The annual conversation

As part of the Council’s commitment to robust accountability and support, all academy CEOs are invited annually to engage in a strategic dialogue with Education Quality Advisers.

These annual conversations are designed to offer both support and constructive challenge to academy trusts, providing a forum to address areas of concern, promote open communication, and strengthen the relationship between the local authority and the trust. Key focus areas for these discussions include:

* Academy trust successes
* Ofsted inspection outcomes
* Pupil outcomes and achievements
* Attendance, suspensions and exclusions
* Support offered to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
* The trust’s capacity to support other schools
* Use and impact of non-statutory additional funding and support e.g. EYIAF, GSP, Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, outreach.
* Identified areas for development.

Monitoring visits to academies

The annual meeting will be used to determine the schools to be visited by Education Quality Advisers during the year. This will be informed by specific needs and risks in discussion with the CEO.

EQAs will aim to visit all academies in a two-year rolling cycle.

Where schools are receiving support through RISE advisers, the progress of this improvement work will be examined. EQAs will not seek to provide additional input where schools have been identified as needing support through RISE.

In circumstances where Shropshire Council identifies concerns regarding the performance of an academy, the Council will initially contact the individual academy and trust to raise these issues. This correspondence is shared with the headteacher or principal, the chair of governors, and, where relevant, the board of the single- or multi-academy trust, providing an objective external viewpoint.

If, after raising concerns, the Council concludes that sufficient progress has not been made to address them, it will escalate the matter to the Regional Schools' Director and Ofsted.

Additionally, should Shropshire Council’s safeguarding service identify issues relating to an academy’s safeguarding arrangements or procedures—either following investigations into individual children or through other means—these will be reported directly to the Department for Education and Ofsted.

To support academies further, additional services from the Education Quality and Safeguarding team may be procured, subject to negotiation, availability and team capacity.

**Maintained Schools**

To provide effective support and challenge, all schools maintained by the local authority will receive a minimum of one EQA visits per year from an Education Quality Adviser for school standards and an additional visit from an EQA or an associate headteacher.

These visits will support leaders with respect to school condition and standards with a second visit later in the year focus exclusively on standards. In both visits, the headteacher’s own agenda will be prioritised.

Records of visits will be maintained through the annual visit record. This will record areas of discussion relating to

* Safeguarding
* Inclusion
* Curriculum and Teaching
* Achievements
* Attendance and behaviour
* Personal development and wellbeing
* Leadership and Governance

And where appropriate

* Early years
* Post-16 provision

Where other Local Authority Education Quality and Safeguarding staff are involved in visits to the school, these notes will be appended to this record.

Where schools are deemed to require a higher level of support this will be identified through discussion with the headteacher.

Higher support may be deemed appropriate in response to

* Factors that affect the leadership and management of the school
* Concerns with respect to safeguarding
* Concerns with respect to inclusion and attendance
* Concerns with respect to pupil outcomes

To address the concern, the Lead EQA in consultation the headteacher will consider

* A local authority review (a 1 day on-site visit by EQAs)
* A School Performance meeting involving the school and diocesan representatives to support.

Programme of activities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Visit 1 – Standards and Condition | Visit 2 – School Standards |
| Local Authority Focus areas   * Areas of development for the academic year * Curriculum, teaching and pupil achievement * Financial health * Learning walk | Local Authority Focus areas   * Curriculum, teaching and pupil achievement * Learning Walk * Activities informed from previous visit/school priorities * Inclusion, attendance and behaviour * Personal development and wellbeing * Financial health |
| Checks on   * Staff performance management arrangements * KCSIE updates and safeguarding training * Premises checks (to include)   + Fire Risk Assessment and record keeping   + Health and Safety Audit   + Premises/condition needs | Checks on   * Desktop check of school website * Impact of strategies to support attendance of pupils. |

Local Authority Reviews

To support the school in addressing areas of concern within maintained schools, the LA may seek to determine an LA review. This will have a specific area of focus and work with the school in analysing more closely areas of need. This may include work scrutiny, lesson visits, viewing documentary evidence. School leaders will be involved in this process and the outcomes communicated through updating the annual visit record.

School Performance meetings

Both Local Authority Reviews and School Performance meetings are structured to provide schools with targeted guidance, rigorous evaluation, and actionable recommendations.

School Performance meetings, on the other hand, bring together school leaders, governors. relevant local authority representatives, and, where appropriate, diocesan representatives. These meetings enable a holistic exploration of pupil outcomes, trends in attendance and inclusion, and the overall quality of educational provision.

Discussion is both reflective and forward-looking, enabling stakeholders to jointly celebrate progress, address emerging challenges, and agree on support strategies. Action points from these meetings are tracked and followed up to ensure sustained improvement.

The school would work with EQAs to develop the plan of support. Where it is deemed that a school will require an additional level of support, consideration will be given to brokering support from associate headteachers.

Associate Headteachers

To strengthen this collaborative support, the Local Authority maintains a pool of highly experienced headteachers from maintained schools. These leaders are called upon to offer specialist advice, peer challenge, and direct support to schools identified as needing a higher level of intervention. The involvement of these associate headteachers is formally commissioned by the Local Authority, with funding arrangements negotiated between the schools requiring support and the LA. This ensures that schools benefit from relevant expertise while fostering a culture of professional collaboration and continuous improvement.

Acting Headteachers

The EQS team will maintain and train a pool of acting headteachers drawn from aspiring headteachers from across the county. This pool will support, in conjunction with School HR, the arrangements to support maintained schools at those times where an acting headteacher is required.

When a maintained school faces the long-term absence of its substantive headteacher, governors are advised to follow established protocols to ensure continuity and stability.

Initially, the governing body should consider whether cover can be provided using existing staff within a federation, if applicable. The substantive headteacher, during their absence, should not be expected to undertake leadership or management tasks, though limited contact with the school may be agreed upon following advice from medical professionals and with the support of Human Resources. The level of such engagement must be regularly reviewed.

An extraordinary meeting of governors should be convened to discuss the expected duration of absence, any ongoing or new initiatives, impending inspections, and to collate relevant policies and HR casework for the acting headteacher. The governors should also address next steps for arranging cover, with three main options typically considered: having a current staff member step up (usually the deputy headteacher), contracting a leader from another school or academy, or appointing an executive headteacher on a temporary basis. If a deputy headteacher becomes acting headteacher, arrangements must be made to cover their previous role, and adjustments to contracts and pay should be handled in liaison with HR.

Brokering arrangements between schools and trusts with respect to acting headships would be supported by the Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding.

Support for new headteachers

In recognition of the particular challenges faced by those stepping into headship for the first time, a structured support package is in place for all new headteachers. Central to this is the provision of three EQA (School Standards) visits during the first year, designed to offer guidance, assure quality, and reinforce positive leadership practices. Alongside this, each new headteacher is paired with a dedicated link associate headteacher, who serves as a mentor and sounding board.

In addition, where schools are identified as requiring further support beyond the core offer, additional capacity and expertise will be deployed as appropriate from the wider EQS team. This flexible approach ensures that schools have access to a breadth of specialist knowledge and resources tailored to their unique contexts and improvement priorities.

This mentor is an experienced, practicing headteacher, able to provide practical advice, share insights from their own leadership journey, and help navigate complex situations as they arise. The dual approach of regular, standards-focused visits and personalised mentorship ensures that new headteachers are well equipped to lead their schools effectively, fostering a culture of support, ambition, and continuous professional development.

Support for maintained schools during an Ofsted inspection

An Education Quality Adviser of the Local Authority is in a position to be the named responsible person for headteachers wellbeing at the point of school inspection. During the planning call by Ofsted, this will be established by the lead inspector.

Advisers will contact schools at the point of notification and work to provide support to school and discuss queries. Education Quality Advisers will contribute to the inspection in line with the requirements of the inspection handbook. This will usually be through an in-person meeting with the lead inspector.

Headteachers will have mobile phone access to the nominated EQA for use during the inspection process.

Where it is felt by the headteacher and/or LA that additional time on site is appropriate in order to provide support, this will be provided through an EQA or an associate headteacher.

The Local Authority will always attend the outcome meetings of Ofsted inspections in person.

**Supporting inclusive practice in schools**

Shropshire Council will co-produce a robust and sustainable Local Inclusion Specialist Support Offer that will build the capacity of all schools and settings to meet the needs of their pupils.

Shropshire Council is committed to ensuring children can be educated successfully and fully included within their local mainstream schools when appropriate to do so.

The Council offers a range of support, guidance and challenge to schools and settings to foster inclusion, including:

· A range of CPD and training courses

· SEND Reviews

· Specialist Outreach

· Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce

· Traded support packages from specialist SEND professionals

· Access to high needs top up funding without an EHCP, to support early intervention and a graduated response

· Access to capital and revenue funding through the Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, to support schools to develop their own setting-based approaches to SEND and inclusion to meet identified needs.

The Council endeavours to co-produce and co-deliver support by working with a wide range of local providers, including schools, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), Health colleagues and SEND specialists, to ensure the support on offer remains current, good value for money and of a high quality.

In addition, Shropshire Council is committed to further growing its network of SEN Units and Resource Provisions (SURPs) across the county, to extend the range of provision on offer within our mainstream schools, avoid unnecessary travel and promote belonging and inclusion within the local community.

**Safeguarding**

**Information sharing and intelligence gathering**

The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team have staff within it who take the lead role in offering training, advice, support and challenge with respect to the management of safeguarding to all educational settings.

**Training**

There is an expectation that all schools and settings use training aligned to local arrangements.

[Keeping Children Safe In Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2) and [Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory frameworks](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2) state that **all staff** working within a childcare or education setting should complete appropriate safeguarding and child protection training to enable them to recognise, respond to and report safeguarding concerns. This training should include online safety amongst which should ensure that staff understand expectations, roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring the use of online-enabled technology in the setting.

This training should be completed as part of the staff induction process and should be regularly updated (EYFS staff training should be updated a minimum of every 2 years).

In addition to this staff should receive safeguarding updates on a (minimum) annual basis. These updates should help staff to maintain basic safeguarding skills, keep up to date with any changes to safeguarding procedures or as a result of any safeguarding concerns that occur in the setting. These updates can come in various forms for example – Emails, staff meetings, online updates.

The Local Authority detail recommended core staff safeguarding training/continuing professional development. This is provided by

A responsive timely approach will be taken to address performance concerns related to safeguarding arrangements that arise in settings. This will include the provision of bespoke work as required.

The safeguarding areas of work include:

* Management and oversight of Statutory safeguarding audits.
* The quality assurance of safeguarding arrangements in schools (informed by Statutory safeguarding assurance and Education Quality Service performance monitoring activities). This can include exceptional short notice visits to ensure the safety of children where serious and urgent concerns are raised that indicate safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. Where such visits are organised, the purpose and rationale will be clearly explained to the provider on arrival.
* The provision of safeguarding consultancies (traded)
* The provision of safeguarding training and network meetings (further information outlined at [Safeguarding Team Information and Services | Shropshire Learning Gateway](https://www.shropshirelg.net/safeguarding-and-child-protection/safeguarding-team-information-and-services/).
* Investigation of safeguarding complaints on behalf of DfE and Ofsted.
* Co-Chairing of the Education Safeguarding sub-group.
* Safeguarding advice/ support (including template policies/​guidance)​
* Training and professional development (traded to education; provided to L&S Staff) ​
* Linking with other Council services relating to safeguarding in education.​
* Leading/ contributing to working group activities (e.g. pathway/ policy development)​
* Local Authority representation on strategic, working and operational groups/ processes.
* Support for the Shropshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership to facilitate the quality assurance of ‘training pool’ training.

**Support with respect to Educational Trips and Visits**

The Outdoor Education Adviser provides comprehensive support to schools and settings, ensuring that educational trips and visits are both enriching and safe.

Drawing on the principles and best practices of OEAP (The Association of Advisers for Outdoor Learning and Educational Visits) this includes an annual review of LA Policies and procedures guidance which links to an online visits form called ‘eVisits’. This supports the submission by schools and settings of all offsite visits (this incorporates an approval system for Quality Assurance purposes).

The eVisits software enables trip leaders to link in with OEAP National Guidance website for additional information when organising an offsite trip. The Outdoor Education Advisor also has a management responsibility for Schools Forest School programmes and approval of Duke of Edinburgh’s Award expeditions.

To support schools effectively, the Outdoor Education Adviser’s activities encompass the following:

Training and Capacity Building:

* Delivering a structured programme of training for Educational Visit Coordinators (EVCs), group leaders, and accompanying staff. This training is regularly updated to reflect current national standards and includes modules on risk management, emergency protocols, effective supervision, legal responsibilities, and specific topics such as inclusion, medical needs, and adventurous activities.
* Facilitating induction sessions for new staff involved in visits, as well as refresher training to ensure ongoing competence and confidence.
* Providing specialist workshops on topics such as overseas visits, residentials, and high-risk environments, tailored to the needs of individual schools or groups of settings.
* Supporting whole-staff briefings to promote a culture of safety and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities during off-site activities.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

* Regularly reviewing schools’ visit policies and procedures to ensure alignment with OEAP National Guidance and statutory requirements.
* Auditing a sample of educational visit records, including risk assessments, consent forms, and post-visit evaluations. This helps to identify areas of good practice and opportunities for development.
* Conducting monitoring visits, which may include observing pre-visit briefings, accompanying visits to evaluate practice in real-time, and providing detailed feedback.
* Offering constructive recommendations following audits or monitoring, supporting continuous improvement in the planning and delivery of visits.

Advisory and Emergency Support

* Serving as a key point of contact for schools, offering advice on risk management, trip planning, and the use of external providers, including vetting of providers and venues.
* Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of sector developments, disseminating updates, and sharing case studies or learning from incidents to promote best practice.
* Providing real-time support in the event of an incident or emergency during a visit, assisting with incident management, communication, and post-incident review.

Development of Resources

* Creating and updating guidance documents, checklists, exemplar risk assessments, and templates to assist schools in their planning and record-keeping.
* Facilitating access to OEAP National Guidance resources and supporting schools in interpreting and implementing this guidance in their local context.

Through these activities, the Outdoor Education Adviser ensures that all aspects of educational trips and visits—from initial planning and risk assessment to delivery and evaluation—are robustly supported.

This approach helps schools provide safe, inclusive, and high-quality outdoor learning experiences for all pupils, in line with the expectations set out by OEAP National Guidance.

**Early Years**

The Early Years Education Quality Adviser and the Early Years Quality Improvement and Learning Co-ordinator provide a comprehensive programme of support and challenge to group and school-based providers and childminders, designed to raise standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for children aged 0-5.

Their support role includes:

* Visiting group and school-based providers and childminders to offer hands-on guidance and personalised feedback tailored to the individual context and needs of each provider.
* Modelling high-quality practice across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), demonstrating effective strategies for teaching, learning, assessment, inclusive provision, and positive interactions with children and families.
* Facilitating access to targeted professional development, including training workshops, coaching, and peer networks, to build practitioner confidence and expertise.
* Advising on the effective use of assessment and observation to inform planning and meet the learning and development needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
* Providing resources, toolkits, self-evaluation frameworks, and practical materials to assist settings in quality improvement and reflective practice.
* Providing advice, guidance and challenge to group and school-based providers and childminders drawing upon the Ofsted framework for the inspection of the Early Years, and schools. This includes supporting group and school-based providers and childminders with inspection preparation, supporting action planning in response to feedback, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

In addition, the Early Years team (Education Quality Adviser, Early Years Quality Improvement and Learning Co-ordinator, Early Years Safeguarding Officer and Education Quality Adviser (AP and SEND).

* Monitor and evaluating the quality of provision through a range of mechanisms, including learning walks, scrutiny of documentation, and analysis of data such as Ofsted outcomes, EYFSP results, and attendance patterns.
* Identify underperformance, gaps in provision, or safeguarding concerns, and addressing these promptly through clear, evidence-based recommendations and agreed action plans.
* Support settings with respect to ambitious but achievable improvement targets and providing robust follow-up to ensure progress and impact are sustained over time.
* Encouraging a culture of high aspiration, reflective practice, and accountability, supporting leaders and practitioners to embrace challenge as a catalyst for positive change.
* Escalating persistent concerns or significant safeguarding issues to the local authority and other relevant agencies to ensure swift and appropriate intervention.

Collaboration is central to the Early Years Team approach: they work closely with group and school-based providers, childminders, local authority teams, and other partners to foster networks of support, share best practice, and ensure that early years provision is inclusive, safe, and responsive to the needs of every child and family. Where issues are identified, they keep clear records of visits, actions agreed, and progress made, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the process.

Work is focused on empowering early years providers to deliver consistently high standards, nurture children’s development, and build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

**Post 16**

The Post 16 team plays a crucial role in supporting young people as they transition from secondary education into further education, employment, or training. Central to their work is the tracking of pupils who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), as well as those whose post-16 destinations are not known. This involves systematic monitoring of attendance, engagement, and progression data, enabling early identification of students who may require additional support.

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) professionals within the team provide tailored support to students and their families, helping them to explore post-16 options and make informed choices about their future pathways. Transition Support Workers collaborate closely with schools, colleges, and external agencies to facilitate smooth transitions, ensuring that vulnerable students are connected with appropriate resources and support networks.

In Year 11, the team works proactively with school careers and safeguarding staff to identify vulnerable students who may be at risk of disengagement or who face barriers to successful transition. This is achieved through effective data sharing and analysis of risk factors, and individual casework. We also share the pen portrait of their transition support needs to the confirmed provider in early September to ensure that places are successfully maintained by enabling early interventions to occur.

**Education Settings Outside the Local Area and Independent Special Schools**

To ensure the highest standards of provision and safeguarding across all education settings, EQAs will coordinate periodic visits to Independent Special Schools within the local area and to education settings situated outside the immediate local area when commissioned for Shropshire CYP. These visits are designed to provide an objective evaluation of the quality of education, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the overall well-being of pupils.

During these visits, EQAs will undertake a range of monitoring activities. This may include reviewing safeguarding protocols, examining documentation, meeting with school leaders, and conducting learning walks to observe classroom practice. Particular attention will be paid to how well the school responds to the needs of its pupils, inclusivity, and attendance patterns. Findings and recommendations from these visits will be communicated promptly to SEN commissioners and be used to inform decision around future placements Before and after visits to education settings outside of the local area, EQAs will communicate with the Local Authority within which the setting is located. Visits may be dictated by commissioners in response to concerns or complaints.

# **Monitoring and Safeguarding in Out-of-School Settings (OOSS)**

Shropshire Council’s commitment is to ensure that all children and young people in the area, regardless of the setting they attend, are safe and supported.

Shropshire Council acknowledges that OOSS—such as tuition centres, supplementary schools, sports clubs, dance classes, religious education, and youth organisations—play a significant part in the lives of children and young people in the county. While many of these settings provide enriching educational and social experiences, they are not regulated under the same statutory safeguarding frameworks as registered education settings.

The Council will work closely with the Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted, statutory safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies to ensure that children attending OOSS are as safe as possible and receive a suitable education. The Council’s approach will include the following key actions:

* Mapping and Understanding Local Provision: Shropshire Council will take steps to identify and understand the range of out-of-school settings operating in the area. This will involve gathering basic information, engaging with local communities, and establishing or strengthening processes for reporting concerns about specific settings.
* Promoting Good Safeguarding Practice: The Council will encourage OOSS providers to implement and maintain robust safeguarding policies and procedures. Where possible, the Council will condition any lease, hire, or funding agreements for local authority premises or financial support on compliance with minimum safeguarding standards, as outlined in DfE guidance.
* Support and Training: The Council will consider offering guidance, training opportunities, and information on voluntary accreditation schemes (such as Ofsted’s voluntary childcare register) to OOSS providers. The Education Quality and Safeguarding team may provide advice, share best practice, and facilitate access to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as appropriate.
* Engagement with Families: The Council has a duty to provide parents with information about available services and facilities, including guidance on what safeguarding measures to expect from OOSS providers. The Council will promote awareness among families so they can make informed decisions about their children's participation in these settings.
* Identifying and Responding to Concerns: The Council will work to proactively to identify OOSS of concern—those lacking appropriate safeguarding arrangements or potentially operating as unregistered independent schools. The Council will establish or publicise clear reporting mechanisms for concerns and collaborate with schools and other local authority teams to share information about high-risk or unsuitable provision.
* Enforcement and Escalation: In cases where settings fail to meet safeguarding expectations or are suspected of operating illegally (for example, as unregistered independent schools or as unregistered childcare providers), the Council will act promptly and proportionately.

To support this, the Local Authority will periodically make checks on OOSS providers to ensure that procedures are in place to keep pupils safe.

* This may involve notifying Ofsted, the DfE, the police, the Health and Safety Executive, the Fire and Rescue Service, or other relevant bodies, and supporting any subsequent investigations or prosecutions.

**Alternative Provision**

* The local authority (LA) maintains close communication with LA commissioners to ensure robust quality assurance of non-school (unregistered) alternative provision (AP). Regular updates and collaborative reviews are held to monitor the effectiveness, safety, and suitability of such placements, with feedback from EQAs informing these discussions. Commissioners are kept informed of any concerns or areas for improvement identified during monitoring visits, and joint action plans may be agreed where necessary to address specific issues.
* Responsibility for the oversight of the alternative provision used always rests with the local authority or school that commissioned the placement.
* Schools should always inform the local authority when they commission a placement in alternative provision for a child to ensure the local authority maintains oversight of sufficiency and safeguarding. This is an expectation of the Department for Education. The Education Access Service will maintain a register of all AP placements of which they have been notified.
* Guidance for schools commissioning AP emphasises the importance of thorough due diligence before making any placement. Schools are advised to seek assurances regarding safeguarding, health and safety, curriculum quality, and staff qualifications, and to maintain ongoing oversight throughout the child's time in AP. The LA provides schools with practical checklists and support materials to guide their selection and monitoring of AP providers, ensuring that placements meet both statutory requirements and the individual needs of pupils.
* The Local Authority will publish and maintain an up to date AP Directory which will guide schools in their choice of AP placements, while making it clear that the school retain responsibility for undertaking their own QA prior to commissioning.

The Council will continually review and strengthen its processes for monitoring, supporting, and, where necessary, intervening in out-of-school settings, working collaboratively with partners, families, and communities to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding and educational quality

**Oversight and Governance**

The impact of this plan will be systematically monitored and reported through several key governance forums. Specifically, progress and outcomes will be shared with the quarterly People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ensuring thorough oversight and accountability. Additionally, updates will be provided to the SEND and AP Partnership Board, the Children's Safeguarding Board of the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership, and the Shropshire Education Partnership Board along with its sub-groups. This multi-layered approach guarantees that all relevant stakeholders are kept informed and involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the plan and driving continuous improvement.