



Report to Children's & Education Select Committee

Date:	23rd March 2023
Title:	Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022-2027
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Anita Cranmer
Contact officer:	Simon James Service Director Education Simon.James@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	That members note the updated Education Strategy that was recently approved by Cabinet.
Reason for decision:	The Education and Skills Strategy that was approved in 2018 has been reviewed and refreshed following a consultation process in response to the changing landscape of education.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 A strategy for Education and Skills was developed for Buckinghamshire in 2018 through collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders, with the purpose of implementing continuous improvement in educational provision across Buckinghamshire until 2022.
- 1.2 Following further collaboration and engagement with a wide range of partners, the Strategy has been refreshed to show the progress made and to highlight the priority areas we need to focus on in the future.
- 1.3 The review of the Strategy is timely given the unprecedented period of change and uncertainty that has been experienced due to the Pandemic and wider economic and social events. The refreshed Strategy provides the opportunity to review and reformulate the vision for education for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

2. Content of report

2.1 Background

Children and young people are at the centre of the Education Strategy as well as that of Buckinghamshire's Children and Young People's Partnership Plan and the Council's Children's Services priorities.

The ambition and purpose of the Education Strategy is to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so they can realise their potential whatever their starting point, with the focus on addressing the differential of experience between the vulnerable children in Buckinghamshire and their peers.

2.2 Development of the Education Strategy -strategic review and stakeholder engagement

2.2.1 Preliminary review

A review of the Education and Skills Strategy began in Summer 2021. The following activities were undertaken to initially develop the Strategy:

- Key stakeholders including Early Years' settings, schools, governors, educational professionals, FACT Bucks, Bucks Skills Hub and partners in the voluntary community sector were invited to provide feedback through an initial evaluation exercise in September 2021
- Feedback was obtained from young people and parents and carers at the Shout Out for SEND conference in October 2021
- Internal reviews and strategic action plans within the Council's Achievement and Learning teams were evaluated and considered during Summer 2021
- Feedback was obtained from all the School Liaison Groups in November 2021

The preliminary feedback helped to shape and develop the refreshed Strategy with its key priority areas ready for wider public consultation in Spring 2022.

2.2.2 Public Consultation – Spring 2022

- A public consultation process was undertaken in order to secure feedback about the revised Strategy by seeking the views of all key stakeholders about the proposed changes to its key priorities. The consultation opened on Monday 14 February 2022, ran for 7 weeks, and closed at midnight on Sunday 3 April 2022, and generated 42 responses.
- Two online public engagement events were held during the consultation period in March 2022, with further responses being also submitted by email.
- An online survey was also made available to students in schools and ran from Tuesday 22nd March until midnight on Friday 8 April. There were 106 responses from

young people who were predominantly of secondary school age or in post 16 education.

- Various communication methods and channels were utilised to reach as many potential respondents as possible. The consultation was launched on social media (Facebook and Twitter) to reach parents/carers with additional posts on the Council's LinkedIn page to reach professionals and local community/voluntary sector. A Schools Web and Schools Bulletin article was used to inform education professionals of the consultation and in addition, a letter was provided for schools to share with students' parents and carers so that they could participate in the consultation. An article was published internally in the Council's staff newsletter, "Together News, as well as on the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BFIS) website; social channels and SEND networks (such as FACT Bucks) linked with BFIS were also utilised. Information about the Education Strategy consultation was also shared at key focus groups such as the Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Partnership Board and the Side By Side Board.
- There was a further consultation process held specifically for members to comment upon the draft Strategy, following an internal review of the document in summer 2022. The consultation was held online for members to comment upon along as well as by email to the designated mailbox. The consultation ran from Thursday 8 September until Monday 10th October 2022.
- Members were made aware of this consultation via email and also through the weekly update for members.

2.2.3 Key updates to the Strategy

- The information gained from the preliminary feedback in Autumn 2021 and the public consultation and engagement process throughout 2022 has helped to reframe the Education Strategy. The vision and aims of the Strategy will remain largely unchanged; being **ambitious collaborative and inclusive** will continue to be the key strategic intentions. The refreshed Strategy will focus on five priority areas against which its implementation and its expected progression will be monitored and assessed. The five priority areas are:
 - Priority 1. Access to and availability of high -quality educational places
 - Priority 2: Preparing our learners to reach their potential as adults
 - Priority 3: Collaborative school improvement to raise standards
 - Priority 4: Embedding a climate of inclusion
 - Priority 5. Supporting the emotional health and well- being of all children and young people
- The consultation process confirmed that the proposed priority areas were the right areas of focus. The actions and associated metrics that were set out to fulfil each

priority area were generally agreed with, and where appropriate, other possible measures that were suggested by respondents were incorporated.

- The consultation process also confirmed that overall, the way in which the Strategy had been set out and explained was either clear and easy to understand or partly clear and easy to understand.
- Key themes that emerged from the consultation included the need for more early years and secondary provision as well as specialist SEND provision, continued improvement of SEND services and therapeutic support, more opportunities for young people to develop transferable life skills, support for families and in particular parents, and the necessity to have a recruitment and retention strategy for teachers in the County with further support and training. Some of these themes were incorporated into the Strategy or are already being addressed through existing dedicated strategies such as the Education Sufficiency Strategy, the SEND Strategy and the recently refreshed Early Help Partnership Strategy. This reinforced the approach taken in the refreshed Education Strategy that it will be part of a suite of strategies to address a broader range of key themes that interface with education.

2.3 The Strategy aligns with the ambitions set out in the Green Paper relating to SEND and Alternative Education and to other key government initiatives such as the Levelling Up Agenda. The Strategy reflects the intentions set out in these key initiatives, which have been considered in terms of their impact on educational provision.

2.4 Appendices attached to this report include

- a) Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022 to 2027
- b) Equality Impact Assessment

3. Other options considered

3.1 N/A

4. Legal and financial implications

Legal advice was sought regarding the development of the equality impact assessment for the Education Strategy. It is not a statutory duty for the Council to have an education strategy, but it is advantageous to do so as it provides a blueprint as to how the Council as a local authority will deliver its statutory services and what the expected outcomes should be as a result for children and young people.

The proposed Education Strategy is an umbrella strategy, sitting alongside other key strategies that support our broader ambitions for children and young people in Buckinghamshire, and whilst impacts from its implementation are expected, it does

not require a full equality impact assessment. The expectation is that the equality impact assessments for the specific policies or strategies that referenced in the Strategy will cover the more specific details of potential impacts.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 This section will need to include the relevant corporate plan priority relating to this report and make reference to any other implication that need to be taken into account such as:-

- a) HR – A recruitment and retention strategy needs to be developed to ensure that the best teachers and support staff are attracted to working in our schools and that we are able to retain them.
- b) Equality - an equality impact assessment has been undertaken.
- c) Value for money – the Education Strategy will be delivered within existing budgetary parameters.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Please refer to section 2.2.2

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Please refer to section 2.2.2

8. Next steps and review

8.1 The Education Strategy will be launched at a dedicated event with schools in Spring 2023, as well as with Early Years Settings and other key educational providers.

8.2 An action plan will be drawn up based on the key performance indicators in the Strategy to track and assess progress against the key priorities and associated measurable indicators.

8.3 The Education Strategy Board referred to in the Strategy will provide oversight and governance regarding the delivery of the key strategic intentions of the Strategy.

8.4 The Education Strategy will be reviewed at least annually in order to gauge its overall progress and impact.

9. Background papers

9.1 Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022 to 2027