

Hertfordshire's Strategy for School Improvement

School Effectiveness Plus

Promoting high standards, participation
and engagement of all young people



Children, Schools and Families
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The Strategy for School Improvement

Investing in Children and Young People

- Ensure that children and young people in the county are protected from harm and helped to realise their potential
- Increase learning, play and leisure opportunities and promote healthy lifestyles for children and young people, thus improving their life chances as the adults of the future
- Ensure that children and young people have equal opportunities for development and achievement
- Take forward the Preventative Strategy to ensure that children and young people receive effective help as soon as they need it
- Further develop joint planning and commissioning arrangements to promote co-operation to improve the wellbeing of all children

Herts Together - A
Community Strategy for
Hertfordshire 2002-2004

1. Vision

- 1.1 Our vision for education in Hertfordshire is based on the concept of keeping the child at the centre of all we do by providing services integrated into a coherent whole. It also identifies clearly the need to keep all adults working with children and young people up to date to ensure they are delivering high quality services.
- 1.2 The Local Strategic Plan for Hertfordshire identifies five key priorities through which the County will invest in its children and young people:
- Protection from harm and realising potential
 - Increased opportunities to pursue healthy lifestyles
 - Equal opportunities
 - A preventative strategy
 - Joint planning and commissioning
- 1.3 Schools have a central role to play in helping to fulfil all of these priorities and, with the support of the integrated CSF services, are well placed to do so.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Strategy for School Improvement seeks to align the school standards agenda and the wider promotion of children's wellbeing. The underpinning philosophy includes the belief that the efforts schools make to raise standards are reinforced by a school improvement strategy incorporating wider interventions with vulnerable children and their families, and in communities where there is significant disadvantage. The strategy, therefore, seeks to connect the focus on school standards and the holistic vision for children set out in the Children Bill. In particular, it aims to contribute to the five key outcomes identified as being most important to young people:
- **Being happy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
 - **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
 - **Enjoying and achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood

Our vision for children's services - to improve outcomes by giving every child the opportunity to develop their potential, spotting any problems and handling them effectively.

**Every Child Matter:
Next Steps**
DfES 2004

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**Every Child Matter:
Next Steps**
DfES 2004

- **Making a positive contribution:** being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- **Achieve economic well being:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life

2.2 There is a close synergy between the priorities established within the Community Strategy for Hertfordshire and the five key outcomes set out within the Children Bill.

3. Background

3.1 CSF was established in 2001 in order to place the child at the centre of its work and to secure an integrated and coherent service which meets the needs of children, their schools and their families.

3.2 Since its inception changes have occurred and these are now reflected in the process of Growth of Change which is considering all aspects of CSF. A key element of the work of the Growth and Change programme is a consideration of how CSF and schools can work even more effectively to promote the education and well being of all young people. The development of the School Improvement Strategy is part of the Growth and Change programme.

3.3 CSF has adopted a model for its development which aims to address the desired outcomes set out in the Children Bill, and the priorities for children and young people identified within the Community Strategy, by bringing together four key elements:

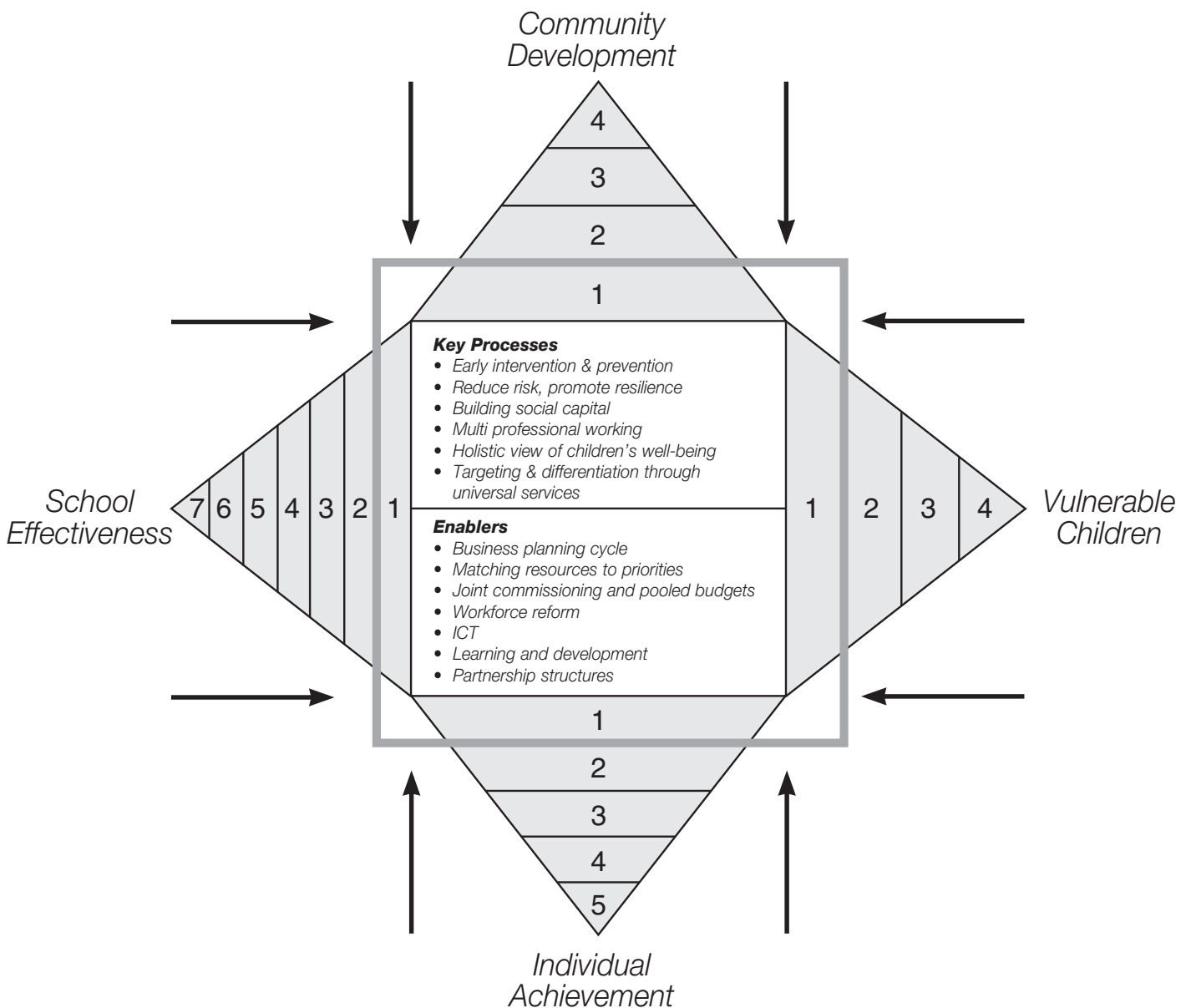


School Effectiveness - a framework to monitor, challenge, support and intervene in schools in order to improve their effectiveness and raise standards.

Vulnerable Children - the Hardiker Index of vulnerability for social care and health.

Individual Achievement - targeted action to improve the educational performance of under performing groups of individual children and young people.

Community Development - initiatives linked to issues such as regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.





- 3.4 This model allows CSF to integrate these four key processes and the functional relationship between different professional groupings and agencies. The model aligns services into a coherent approach to securing the wellbeing of children and young people while maintaining the focus on interventions to raise standards.

4. The National Picture

- 4.1 Self-managing schools have the key responsibility for raising educational achievement and promoting inclusion. The Education Act 2002 further increases the opportunities for autonomy and the development of diversity in the character and ethos of schools. Autonomy does not necessarily mean isolation and there is an increasing emphasis on collaborative partnerships between schools to bring about and sustain improvement through the dissemination of best practice and the promotion of innovation.
- 4.2 Local Education Authorities, or in the case of Hertfordshire the Children Schools and Families Service, have a responsibility to guarantee the infrastructure of a universal school system and have a central role to play in promoting high educational standards. The respective roles of schools and LEAs are set out in the DfES Code of Conduct for LEA-School Relations (February 2001), although this is about to be revised. Currently the role of the LEA is to promote and encourage improvement through appropriate monitoring, challenge, support and intervention. The procedures for carrying out these functions are set out in the 'Hertfordshire Learning Partnership'.
- 4.3 CSF has created a unique capacity to set a vision for, and provide leadership on behalf of, the local education community by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to achieve change and improvement. This is especially crucial for vulnerable children where cross-cutting work is required to maximise access, participation, engagement and achievement of young people.
- 4.4 Proposals to alter the balance of power between the DfES and LEAs means that further change is inevitable. The advent, for instance, of the single conversation about school improvement provides opportunities for headteachers to work together to challenge and support one another.

"CSF has arisen out of a set of principles and has been explicitly designed to realise those principles"

**Evaluation of the
Hertfordshire Children
Schools and Families
Service -
Professor Alan Dyson
(Autumn 2002)**

At the heart of the LGA's vision of how these challenges (raising standards) can be met is much closer collaboration between all the educational institutions in an area - schools, colleges, early years facilities and workplace training providers - to meet the needs of individual children and young people in diverse communities with differing needs.

**Councils and Schools
Driving Improvement**

*Local Government
Association 2004*

5. The Hertfordshire Context

- 5.1 Hertfordshire is a high achieving authority with many schools performing significantly in advance of national expectations. At both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 Hertfordshire performs better than most of its statistical neighbours. However, in the period 2002-2004 results plateaued and the rate of improvement slowed across most of the statistical indicators. In this period the Authority has been less successful than its neighbours in preventing schools entering Ofsted categories. As a consequence there are too many children achieving less than they should.
- 5.2 The structure of CSF with a strategic core and four quadrants that are the operational arm of the Directorate provides a system for directing the effort of CSF to support children and young people in local communities. This focus of effort is key to the success of young people. All sections of CSF contribute to this work.
- 5.3 Co-ordination of effort and alignment of support and challenge to schools are central ideas in the Strategy for School Improvement. A key role for the School Effectiveness Advisers is to "commission and co-ordinate support across CSF for schools, where necessary" The Hertfordshire Learning Partnership – June 2004.
- 5.4 Where information and data has been collated and used in a coherent and consistent manner there has been rapid improvement in the performance of schools. This is especially true for schools, that having been identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures or serious weaknesses, were provided with targeted and co-ordinated support. Better co-ordination of information should lead to swifter intervention and implementation of preventative strategies.

6. School Effectiveness Plus

- 6.1 School Effectiveness Plus (SE+) is the term that has been created to illustrate the process of improvement needed in Hertfordshire. The plus signifies the challenge to move high achieving schools to the next plane of achievement, underachieving groups to the next level of success and all schools and the LEA to the next area of excellence.

The following key strategies and policies contribute to School Effectiveness Plus:

- Code of Practice for CSF - School Relations
- Strategy for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention
- Strategy to tackle schools causing concern
- CSF Plan
- Induction of new teachers, headteachers and other staff including the strategy for continuous professional development
- Primary Strategy
- Secondary Strategy
- 14-19 Strategy
- Specialist schools
- Behaviour support
- CSF workers

- 6.2 In order to make a step change in school improvement and include the concept that “Every Child Matters” it is essential that a radical reappraisal of school improvement be undertaken. SE+ encompasses all those areas of school improvement, plus it includes the areas of CSF that impact on the work of schools in the support of individual pupils.
- 6.3 The underpinning philosophy for School Effectiveness Plus is to support high educational achievement, social inclusion and the full participation and engagement of all young people in their learning. Every learner in Hertfordshire is entitled to, and must be enabled to participate fully and appropriately in learning in schools and other settings, to achieve high standards in as many areas of educational life as possible.
- 6.4 SE+ is set in the context of CSF policies to keep the child at the centre. It embraces the ideas of:
- local delivery of services
 - collaboration of schools to provide access to courses for all pupils
 - extended schooling and the provision of a wider range of services than found in traditional schools
 - the participation and engagement of pupils with a diverse range of educational needs
 - integration of services across education, social services, and health to provide the most effective delivery of school improvement
- 6.5 SE+ is based on a set of principles that embrace the core concept of CSF – Keeping the child at the centre. The following set of principles set out the key ideas:
- A shared responsibility by CSF, headteachers and chairs of governors for the drive to raise standards of all pupils in Hertfordshire
 - A shared commitment to work with all appropriate agencies and staff to promote the well being of all young people especially those who are vulnerable
 - A shared responsibility for the improvement of teaching
 - Commitment and trust in schools as self managing institutions
 - Schools are responsible for raising standards and CSF support for schools should be matched to their individual needs

- A commitment to promote active collaboration between schools and their communities
- A commitment to partnership working with other groups of stakeholder professionals, agencies, employers and voluntary sector organisations to overcome the barriers to educational achievement and social inclusion
- A commitment to sharing knowledge, evidence of what works, and to celebrate the best
- The inclusion, participation and engagement of all children and young people
- A commitment to improvement and value for money

6.6 The above principles form the cornerstone of our work. It is around these principles that the organisation of SE+ has been developed in order to serve most effectively the needs of young people, their families and the educational settings in which they learn.

6.7 The Strategy for School Improvement encompasses all the actions of schools and other stakeholders which, taken together, can substantially improve the standards of achievement of children and young people in Hertfordshire.

7. Integrated Approach to School Effectiveness

7.1 An integrated approach to SE+ is based on strong leadership and management, high quality teaching and learning, participation and engagement of young people and access and learning for all. It provides a vehicle for improved transition from early years to school and from school to further/higher education.

Strong leadership & management of schools

- 7.2 Headteachers are key leaders in the community providing the drive and vision to place the child at the centre of CSF services. At the same time it is vital that all involved in the education of young people recognise that they have a vital leadership role whatever their position. This leadership role is exemplified through the work on the Primary Strategy, through the work of the Primary Leadership Programme and the Intensifying Support Programme in primary schools. It is continued through the Leadership Incentive Grant scheme operating in a group of secondary schools through to the secondary strategy. All of these schemes are designed to improve the quality of leadership and management in some of the more vulnerable schools. Central to all of these schemes is the support and training for prospective and serving headteachers and senior managers.
- 7.3 Linked to this is the need to develop stronger collaboration and co-operation between our schools. This can ensure that all the children and young people in an area are well served educationally and offered a learning environment that meets their individual needs. We need schools that have their own distinctive character but, at the same time, work together to provide a coherent and comprehensive education to pupils in an area.
- 7.4 The developing 14-19 strategy and the secondary strategy will be key drivers in the development of education. Much good co-operative work between schools and the Learning and Skills Council has led to innovative ways of working that are to the benefit of all young people in Hertfordshire. Underpinning this work should be a strong framework that enables learners to use ICT as a vehicle for learning in their place of work as well as working at a distance from their main place of learning.

Existing models of collaboration between schools have shown that all schools benefit from a wider range of teaching expertise and a shared commitment with other establishments to raise the quality of leadership, teaching and learning.

Federations -
DfES Guidance April 2003



High quality teaching and learning

- 7.5 High quality teaching is the cornerstone of good schooling. Personalising learning so that young people can progress as fast as they can is central to the drive to improve standards.
- 7.6 The vital work of the primary and secondary strategies and the development of 14-19 curriculum provide a clear way ahead and state what needs to be done to improve children's and young people's achievement. Assessment for learning is a developing aspect of schools and, along with accurate tracking of the progress of pupils, underwrites the way we manage the learning experience for all young people. Providing accurate, up to date and timely assessments of young people's work is central to the drive to improve standards, participation and improving the quality of teaching.



Participation & engagement of young people

- 7.7 While it is important that the quality of learning in our schools is high, we need to ensure that children, young people and parents are also engaged with education. Improving attendance and addressing pupil behaviour are areas for improvement in some of our schools and crucial in a few. Actions to achieve these improvements are set out in the CSF Annual Plan which identifies how support is focused and differentiated according to the needs of schools.
- 7.8 The co-ordination of effort from the integrated approach of CSF is planned to ensure that services are complementary rather than competing or overlapping. Ensuring that the local delivery of services is linked to the needs of schools is a key component.

Effective inclusion relies on more than specialist skills and resources. It requires positive attitudes towards children who have difficulties in school, a greater responsiveness to individual needs and critically, a willingness among all staff to play their part.

**Removing Barriers to Achievement -
The Government's
Strategy for SEN**
DfES 2004

Access and learning for all

- 7.9 The School Organisation Plan provides the analysis and strategy for improving provision and providing choice. This provides the framework for parents/carers to state their preference for the school of their choice in an organised and coherent way.
- 7.10 Through the asset management plan and the work to secure resources for Building Schools for the Future we will work with schools to improve the buildings and the quality of the learning environment.
- 7.11 Extended schools provide the opportunity to offer a broader range of services and opportunities for pupils, parents/carers and communities. We will work with schools to support the development of extended schools.
- 7.12 To deliver all of the above, CSF will work transparently enabling stakeholders to have easy access to the information and advice they require. An effective organisation is one which seeks continuously to improve its performance and that of schools and pupils. To do this will require:
- embedding the highest possible standards in all aspects of work
 - ensuring rigorous performance management and evaluation of all aspects of work
 - communicating with stakeholders in a clear, transparent and open way
 - ensuring that there is sound financial management, matching resources to need and that the allocation formula matches resources to needs

Benefits for pupils and schools:

- Higher levels of pupil achievement
- Increased pupil motivation and self-esteem
- Specialist support to meet pupils' wider needs
- Additional facilities and equipment
- Greater opportunities for staff for flexible working and career development
- Enhanced partnership working with the community and better school security
- Easier access to essential services for staff, helping staff recruitment and retention

Benefits for families:

- Improvements in child behaviour and social skills
- Greater parental involvement in children's learning
- More opportunities for local adult education and family learning
- Greater availability of specialist support for families

Benefits for communities:

- Better access to essential services
- Improved local availability of sports, arts and other facilities
- Local career development opportunities
- Better supervision of children outside school hours
- Closer relationships with the school

8. Delivery Structure for Hertfordshire

- 8.1 Key to the work of CSF and schools is the development of a delivery mechanism that co-ordinates and enables the development of policy and strategy to flow seamlessly from central co-ordination to local delivery. Local ownership of solutions, driven and supported by central policies, strategies and structures that recognise the need for simplicity and speed of process provides a robust vehicle for improved standards and the involvement of stakeholders.

Standards and School Effectiveness Board

- 8.2 A Standards and School Effectiveness Board – SSEB (appendix 1) will be responsible for school improvement policy and monitoring SE+. This Board will, on the education side, mirror the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. It is proposed that the SSEB will report to the CSF Board and present reports termly to Cabinet's Education Panel.
- 8.3 The SSEB will:
- be accountable to and report directly through the Deputy Director for Learning and School Effectiveness to the CSF Board
 - monitor the progress of schools and groups of pupils, e.g. the attainment of pupils in tests and external examination results
 - consider the work of the quadrant based School Effectiveness Boards
 - consider and approve policies and strategies for school improvement and inclusion, e.g. monitoring, challenge, support and intervention
 - commission and receive reports of work undertaken to improve schools e.g. specialist schools, federations and schools causing concern



- 8.4 It is proposed that the Board will be chaired by the Deputy Director for Learning & School Effectiveness. The SSEB will comprise senior officers from CSF as agreed with the CSF Board but is likely to contain representatives from:
- Finance
 - Planning
 - Personnel
 - Operations – SEN, Principal Educational Psychologist, all quadrant managers
 - Head of Standards and School Effectiveness Division and senior officers including the Heads of Primary and Secondary School Effectiveness, Head of Learning, Training and Research, Head of MECSS, Head of Governors and Head of SEN
- 8.5 To ensure that schools are fully involved in the process headteachers will be members of the Board – one from each phase.
- 8.6 Robust and sustained involvement in the work of the SEBs will be required. Integrity and, where appropriate, confidentiality will be touchstones for the discussions of the Board. We would, however, expect that members of the Board report back on the work of SSEB to their teams and representative groups.
- 8.7 The Board will meet once per half term. The meeting in the first half of the term will deal with major school improvement issues and other appropriate business matters. The second meeting of the term will be used to monitor the progress of schools especially the schools causing concern and the schools in the Ofsted categories.
- 8.8 The Board will, as appropriate, develop a number of sub-groups to oversee the operation of key areas of the work of CSF. The following illustrate some of the task groups that would report directly to the SSEB:
- Primary Strategy Steering Group
 - Secondary Strategy Steering Group
 - Schools Causing Concern Task Group

Quadrant School Effectiveness Boards

- 8.9 The local delivery of SE+ is a key component of the new strategy. The benefits of CSF – the connection between the care and support for all young people especially the vulnerable and their education – can best be realised by high quality local delivery of services. To address this and ensure that all the stakeholders have a real opportunity to be involved in the schooling and welfare of pupils each quadrant will have a School Effectiveness Board (appendix 1) that reflects the structure of the SSEB.
- 8.10 The Chair of the Quadrant SEBs will be either the Quadrant Manager or a senior officer of the Standards and School Effectiveness Division. This local representation is planned to ensure that there is a proper reflection of the needs of the different parts of the County and the distinct characteristics of the areas involved.
- 8.11 The purposes of the Quadrant SEBs will match closely to the SSEB but will focus more on the operational side of educational delivery and the practical task of improving school and pupil performance.
- 8.12 Alignment of the work of officers will ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to school improvement. Support for schools in a quadrant will be through a dedicated team of Advisers, Primary and Secondary Strategy Consultants, and other school focused staff of the SSE Division. This will provide a clearer geographical focus for their work and ensure that there is a closer and stronger working relationship between the quadrant based staff and the staff of SSE Division.
- 8.13 Sharing information about schools and pupils informs the support, challenge and intervention processes. It is essential that all partners in the quadrants share information about the schools they work with.

Excellent primary schools know that the work they do outside the classroom - with parents and the community - is critical to helping children get the best from their learning.

**Excellence and
Enjoyment - A strategy
for primary schools**
DfES 2003

Networks and Learning Communities

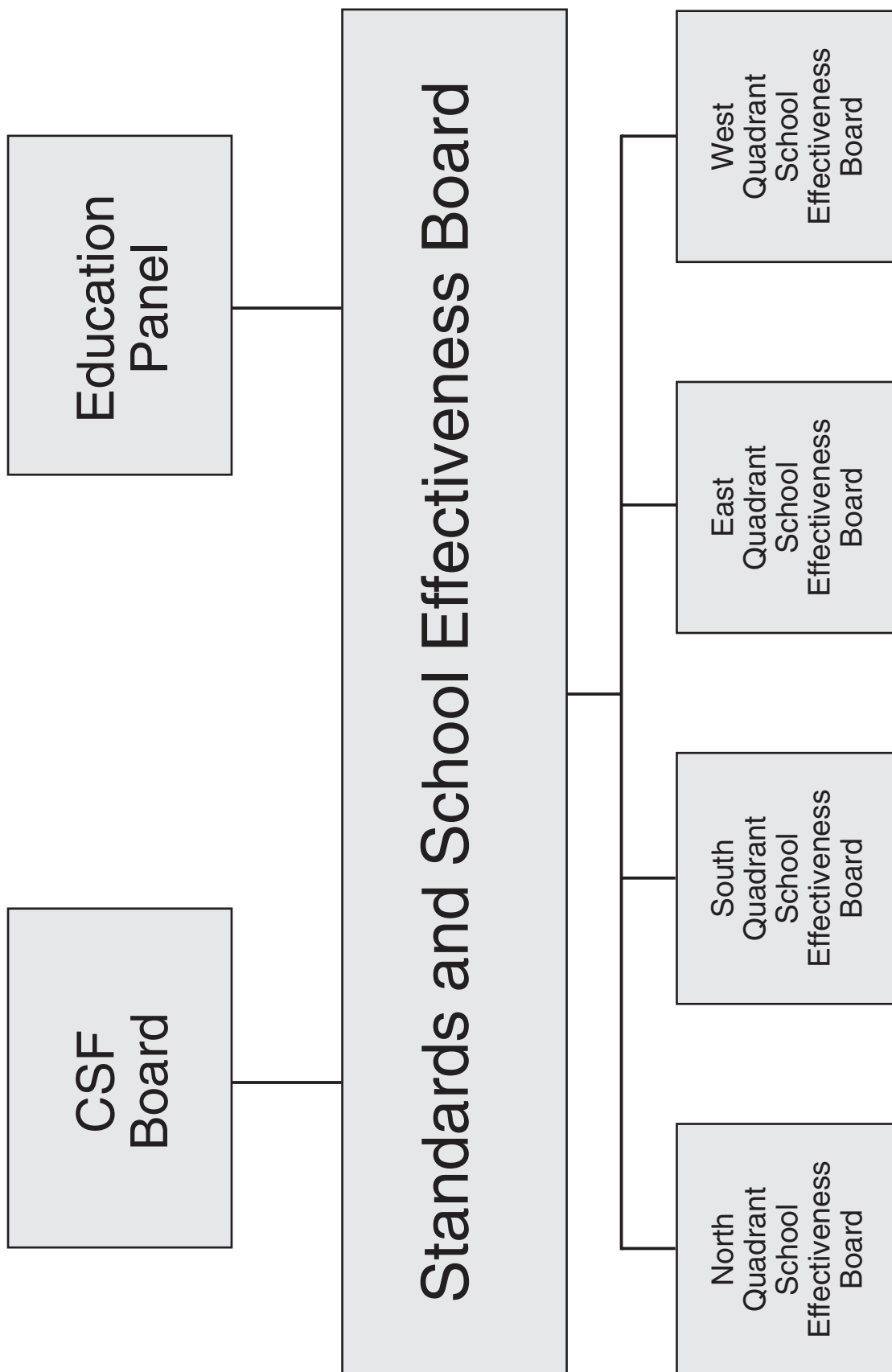
8.14 Closely linked to the idea of local delivery is the creation of Networks and Learning Communities to transform leadership, improve teaching and learning, tackle underachievement, and improve participation and engagement. Groups of schools in Hertfordshire are increasingly working together and with other organisations to share ideas and best practice. We seek to build on this culture of collaboration and take it to the next level by establishing networks – groups of schools with a formal agreement to work together to raise standards. Networks will enable schools to share expertise, good practice and ideas for innovation, to provide support and opportunities for developing leadership across a number of schools, as well as tackling issues of inclusion and helping to narrow the achievement gap.



8.15 CSF will also seek to link the development of networks with wider initiatives that build social capital in particular neighbourhoods or with particular groups at risk of exclusion. These Learning Communities would involve schools and community agencies in formal partnerships that would facilitate collaborative working focused on the locality.

8.16 Sustainable networks or learning communities can take many forms. Children's Trusts will provide a strong strategic framework for creating learning communities and will provide a forum for bringing together a wide range of groups involved with the education and development of young people. A protocol forming the basis for CSF's work with schools and stakeholders will be developed.

Appendix 1



**Hertfordshire County Council – making Hertfordshire
a better place to live by providing:**

- Care for older people
- Support for schools, pupils and parents
- Support for carers
- Fire and rescue
- Fostering and adoption
- Support for people with disabilities
- Libraries
- Admission to schools
- Road maintenance and safety
- Protection for adults and children at risk
- Trading standards and consumer protection
- Household waste recycling centres

These are only some of our services.
Find out more at www.hertsdirect.org

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE