

<b>Scrutiny Board:</b>	Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board
<b>Report Title</b>	Educational Attainment
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday 5 January 2026
<b>Report Author</b>	Julie Andrews Assistant Director – Education Services
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Sally Giles Executive Director – Children and Education Services
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Identify exempt information and exemption category</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appendix 1 Committee and Boards Report January 2025 PEIA item</li> <li>2. Appendix 2 Educational Attainment 2024-2025 - Provisional</li> </ol>

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on educational attainment in Sandwell for the academic year 2024/2025 and any impact the Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA) programme may have had on this. The report also considers how schools and academies will be supported by the Local Authority to maintain and improve on any progress in their educational attainment now that the PEIA programme has ended. It complements the report presented to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board in January 2025 which is included as Appendix 1.

## 2. Recommendation

That the Board considers and comments upon the information presented and determines whether it wishes to make any recommendations to the Executive.

## 3. Background and Context

### 3.1 **Education Investment Areas (EIAs) and Priority Education Investment Areas (PEIAs)**

In February 2022, HM Government announced that it would be delivering a package of measures in 55 EIAs to further drive school improvement in England as part of the levelling up agenda. These were comprised of Local Authorities where educational outcomes at the end of both key stage 2 (KS2) and key stage 4 (KS4) were the weakest and others containing an Opportunity Area or areas previously identified for additional school improvement support.

Sandwell MBC was identified as a PEIA and as such received more intensive support. To this end, Sandwell was allocated £2.9m in Local Needs Funding to deliver the agreed priorities and improvements over the life of the programme which ended in March 2025.

At the beginning of the programme, a Local Partnership Board was established to work with Sandwell. Membership included representatives from strong trusts, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), DfE, curriculum hubs, the Local Authority (LA), headteachers from Sandwell schools and local dioceses. The Board was chaired by the CEO of Shireland Collegiate Multi Academy Trust.

### 3.2 **PEIA Support Programme for Sandwell Schools**

Sandwell's Local Needs Plan for the PEIA programme has been delivered via 5 strands which commenced in the spring term 2024. Following a procurement exercise and DfE sign-off, the Local Partnership Board selected delivery partners for each strand of the programme. In accordance with funding criteria, each strand was delivered by a multi-academy trust or a DfE approved provider rather than directly by the Local Authority. These were as follows:

- **Phonics** (delivered by the English Hub)
- **KS2 and KS4 English** (delivered by Shireland Collegiate Multi Academy Trust in collaboration with Whole Education and their 'Words for All' programme)
- **KS2 and KS4 mathematics** (delivered by the Maths Hub)
- **Metacognition and self-regulation** (delivered by Windsor Multi Academy Trust in collaboration with the Teach Like a Champion team)
- **KS2 and KS4 SEND** (delivered by Victoria Multi Academy Trust in partnership with Whole Education)

### 3.3 **Educational attainment 2024/25 (all schools)**

It should be noted that educational performance data for 2024/2025 is currently provisional and has not yet been published in the public domain. Consequently, a headline summary of unvalidated attainment data for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), phonics, Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) is provided as a restricted document (Appendix 1). Once this data is validated it may be released for consideration more widely.

### **3.4 Educational attainment 2024/25 (schools receiving support from the PEIA programme)**

At the time of the previous report to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board in January 2025 (Appendix 2), attainment data for 2024/2025 was not available. That report was therefore confined to development and qualitative impact to date.

Now that 2024/2025 attainment data has been released, a commentary based on an initial headline analysis of provisional data for the performance of schools receiving support from the PEIA programme can be provided and is detailed in Appendix 1 as a restricted document. However, it should be noted that a consideration of contextual factors which may have impacted on individual school results is beyond the scope of this report. The sample sizes for schools receiving support and those that did not are variable. Similarly, for some strands, there were a relatively small number of schools in the target group (for example, 5 schools for KS4 mathematics). These factors make it more difficult to make reliable comparisons for some strands where this applies.

Consideration of available data and taking the above factors into account leads to the conclusion that it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions at this stage. Whilst there may be an indication of improvement in outcomes for some schools receiving support from different strands within the programme, there is also evidence of improvement for schools not receiving support.

### **3.5 Local Authority support offer for Sandwell Schools**

Now that the PEIA programme has ended, the Local Authority is continuing to offer support to Sandwell Schools via its core and additional offer, including working with external partners. Schools across the borough can access this offer to help them to develop provision and practice and to sustain and improve on standards and progress achieved to date. Headline details for this are shown in the diagram below. A microsite which links to the full offer for each component is being developed so that schools can easily access support relevant to them. For Local Authority Maintained schools, much of the core offer would be at no cost to them. Ongoing discussions with schools will continue to shape the overall offer moving forwards to reflect identified priorities.



During the 2025/26 academic year, the Local Authority is offering several additional funded support projects for schools to target key areas of focus. These will be overseen and monitored by the School Improvement Team. For most projects, participating schools are typically asked to submit a project plan for approval detailing the project brief, success criteria and expected outcomes. This forms the basis for ongoing review and an evaluation on completion. It is anticipated that these will be available at the end of the current academic year. Targeted school-to-school support for individual schools typically links to the overall support plan for that school, monitored by the link School Improvement Adviser.

The projects are based on a collaborative learning approach with schools working together to share and develop practice and include the following:

- **KS4 mathematics project**

This is a pilot project which will review mathematics provision in the three Local Authority maintained schools to explore potential reasons for poorer performance in mathematics at KS4 across the borough over time, and to develop a programme of support to help to address this. The project will also include a focus on the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching and learning at KS3. Learning will be shared with other Sandwell schools, drawing on the findings of the initial pilot and expertise from colleagues involved.

- **Teaching and Learning Network**

The purpose of the network is to support senior leaders in primary and secondary schools to implement and sustain improvements in teaching and learning over time. The networks were launched in summer term 2025 and included an introduction to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) implementation guidance. Based on the feedback from schools about their areas of need and focus, four collaborative inquiry groups have been established. These are metacognition and self-regulation, adaptive teaching, feedback and challenge. The groups will meet half-termly from autumn term 2 and the end of the academic year. Sessions will be run by Staffordshire Research School using EEF input and guidance, supporting senior leaders to implement and sustain improvement strategies within the context of their settings.

- **Peer-to-peer improvement programme**  
As part of this programme, headteachers will work in groups of 3 schools on an agreed improvement focus. This will be supported by School Improvement Advisers who will also provide a level of quality assurance for the groups.
- **Targeted school-to-school support**  
This will enable headteachers or senior leaders from one school to work with leaders in another school to develop and improve areas of provision and/or practice. Typically, school-based colleagues providing the support would work alongside a School Improvement Adviser and provide additional capacity related to agreed areas for development.
- **Learning Community projects**  
Sandwell schools are organised into 7 learning communities across the towns within the borough. This project is a learning community collaborative improvement programme based on an agreed focus for development pertinent to their cluster of schools. It will include opportunities for schools to share practice with each other with a view to learning from one another in order to improve provision and/or outcomes for their children and young people.

### 3.6 Support linked to PEIA project areas

The following support offer, linked to the original PEIA strands, is available to Sandwell Schools now that the PEIA programme has ended.

- **Phonics:** St John Bosco English Hub continues to offer intensive school support and training programmes. The Hub also provides support for schools via self-referral for intensive phonics interventions and through ongoing programmes of professional learning. This is either match funded or fully funded depending on the programme.
- **English:** Shireland Collegiate Multi Academy Trust will continue offering networks and supportive provision for KS2 and KS3 English, with specific details of this offer to be confirmed.
- **Mathematics:** The Central Maths Hub continues to offer a full complement of CPD programmes for Sandwell schools, teachers and senior leaders. Schools are encouraged to take part in professional learning and/or workgroups according to individual need. This support includes specialist knowledge courses, mastery programmes, support for teaching assistants and phase specific input. In addition, the Local Authority will be launching a KS4 mathematics project as a pilot, as detailed above.
- **Metacognition:** The Teaching and Learning Network was launched in June 2025 and includes a metacognition collaborative enquiry group, as detailed above.
- **SEND:** Sandwell's Inclusive Learning Service will continue to offer a support for SEND Leadership through the SEND Leaders Network.

## 4. Consultation

- 4.1 The PEIA programme was established in consultation with members of the Local Area Partnership Board. Membership included representatives from multi-academy Trusts, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), DfE,

curriculum hubs, the Local Authority (LA), Sandwell headteachers and local dioceses. Wider consultation was also carried out with schools across the borough via the Joint Executive Group and Headteacher Partnership groups.

## **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Local Authority funding has been agreed to support the following projects up to the end of the 2025/2026 financial year:

- KS4 mathematics project.
- Teaching and Learning Network
- Peer-to-peer improvement programme
- Targeted school-to-school support
- Learning Community projects

In total this amounts to £128,000. Impact will be monitored by the School Improvement Team and the Assistant Director - Education Services.

## **6. Legal and Governance Implications**

6.1 Close monitoring of progress towards key performance indicators will need to take place to ensure that the expected improvement is achieved and can be evidenced.

## **7. Risks**

7.1 Some of the specific school-related projects detailed above will need to be completed by the end of the financial year. Consequently, there is an associated risk of staff absence within that timescale. To mitigate against this, we would look to ensure that there is a designate identified to take the lead where needed.

7.2 To consolidate development to date, the Local Authority currently has a School Improvement Team who are able to lead the support offer to Sandwell schools. Further consideration is being given as to how this offer could be developed in the future, including increased partnership working across the Directorate and with external partners. This is likely to include a continued focus on peer-to-peer and collaborative ways of working to help to sustain improvement to date.

7.3 Consideration as to how future funding could be provided, and / or sourced to support ongoing improvement work within Sandwell schools, particularly to facilitate ongoing peer-to-peer and collaborative ways of working.

## **8. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)**

8.1 The PEIA programme addresses entrenched underperformance, including in literacy and numeracy, in areas with some of the highest rates of disadvantage in the country. Ongoing support will aim ensure that educational provision is inclusive for and accessible to all children and young people in order to meet

their needs and ensure that they make sustained progress throughout their educational career.

## **9. Other Relevant Implications**

### **9.1 Corporate parenting**

The ongoing support offer aims to help schools to improve provision and standards for all pupils, including all vulnerable groups. This also aligns with the Council's ambition to ensure that Sandwell's care experienced children and young people can access high quality educational provision to enable them to progress to further / higher education, training and employment of their choice.

### **9.2 Social Value**

The support offer will support children and young people to progress fairly to further education, training and employment. It will also help to address any remaining the of the disruption to their studies caused by COVID 19.

### **9.3 Health and Wellbeing**

As a result of timely and targeted support and intervention for children and young people, schools can ensure that they receive the right support sooner and at the right time to meet their specific needs, including any that may relate to their health and / or wellbeing.

## **10. Background Documents**

N/A.

## **11. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?**

This report will mainly support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes:

- Growing up in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach

11.1 The provision of support to Sandwell schools to develop provision and standards across the primary and secondary phases aims to help them sustain and improve attainment and progress. This will help to enable them to be better prepared for the next stage in their education or employment and to ensure that children and young people can have the best start in life. A collaborative approach between teams across the Director and external partners underpins the approach to achieving this.