

# SWINDON CHALLENGE



Maximising the  
achievement of  
vulnerable learners





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## Acknowledgments

Jon Reid, Bob Linnegar, Marie Horton, Victoria Flynn, Kate Atkins and Rob Webster

## ● Foreword

This work was commissioned because it directly supports the delivery of Swindon Challenge.

Swindon Challenge Board is a partnership arrangement which takes collective responsibility for driving improvement for pupils in Swindon schools and colleges.

It is committed to ensuring all children and young people in Swindon have the chance to achieve their full potential. It is ambitious of every child and young person and seeks to provide the appropriate support and challenge within a school-led system of school improvement.

Rosendale Research School has visited every secondary school in Swindon and reviewed their practice for vulnerable pupils.

This report supports the delivery of the following:

### Swindon Challenge aims

1. To ensure that a common purpose of securing excellence and equity for all young people underpins all education provision in Swindon with an ambition to enhance the aspirations of children and families across the Borough.
2. To make a step change improvement in the educational outcomes for all young people aged 4-19.
3. To ensure that disadvantaged pupils, Looked-after Children and pupils with SEND receive high quality support, make at least good progress from their starting points and significantly narrow the gap with their peers.

### Swindon Challenge objectives

1. To underpin Swindon's educational vision by bringing leading educational research and practice into Swindon to shape and influence leadership and practice.
2. To develop stronger partnership work both with national education influencers (including leading

*"It is ambitious of every child and young person and seeks to provide the appropriate support and challenge within a school-led system of school improvement."*

educational researchers and practitioners) to improve outcomes across all Swindon 11-19 providers.

3. To ensure that every school in Swindon is judged good or better by 2020 including special schools.
4. To ensure that outcomes at GCSE level and Post 16 indicators at least meet national averages against national benchmarks for all pupils including those with SEND.

Swindon Challenge Board values the support and commitment of all Secondary School Leaders and Rosendale Research School in the production of this report.

#### **MARIE HORTON**

*Education Commissioner*

*Children's Services*

*Swindon Borough Council*

## ● Data

### Education for vulnerable pupils in Swindon in 2016 in numbers

Key Stage 2: 2016 data	Pupil Premium Swindon	Non-Pupil Premium Swindon	SEND Swindon	Pupil Premium National	Non-Pupil Premium National	SEND National
RWM ARE+	31%	52%	7%	39%	61%	14%
Attendance	95.5%	97.0%	96.5%	NA	NA	NA

Key Stage 4: 2016 data	Pupil Premium Swindon	Non-Pupil Premium Swindon	SEND Swindon	Pupil Premium National	Non-Pupil Premium National	SEND National
E+M A*-C	42.2%	66.1%	21.1%	43.2%	71.0%	24.2%
Percentage point difference to national	1%↓	4.9%↓	3.1%↓			
English Baccalaureate	7.3%	20.2%	4.5%	11.7%	29.8%	4.9%
Percentage point difference to national	4.4%↓	9.6%↓	0.4%↓			
Attendance	89.9%	95.1%	96.5%	NA	NA	NA

## ● Maximising the achievement of vulnerable learners

The purpose of this report is not to make simplistic judgements based on a snapshot. Rather, it aims to:

- Assess the progress schools are making in providing their most vulnerable pupils with a high quality education, based on a range of evidence.
- Provide recommendations as to how schools can take this work forward sustainably.

In the past year, there has been a great deal of progress in Swindon's secondary schools. The processes schools are adopting to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners are changing. They are becoming more evidence based. There is some very high quality practice. However, more needs to be done before the authority is a beacon of excellence

that Swindon's young people deserve, whichever school they choose. Reviews found:

- Schools are developing high quality overarching strategies based on evidence, understanding that access to teaching and learning will have a disproportionately positive impact on disadvantaged learners.
- Vulnerable pupils are a high priority and focus for all schools. The vast majority of teaching and support staff recognise the importance of this.
- School leaders are increasingly recognising that barriers to learning can be categorised as (a) pupils and their families barriers, (b) community barriers and (c) in-school. However, more evidence is needed about growing up as a disadvantaged young person in Swindon to inform strategic planning.

- There is a growing confidence within schools about the most effective, high impact approaches and 'best bets'. However, more work is still needed to ensure that activities are targeted through early intervention and at pupil need.
- There is a sharp improvement in the quality of Pupil Premium strategies from 2015/16 to 2017/18. However, in some schools, more work needs to be done to ensure that additional resources for vulnerable learners are sufficiently targeted on their barriers to learning (rather than labels).
- In some schools, more work needs to be done to ensure that the day-to-day learning experiences of vulnerable learners are of consistently high quality and underpinned by the highest of expectations.
- Understanding of how to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health barriers in schools is not yet in place system-wide. This is a significant challenge for schools within the context of diminished resources and a possible increase in need.
- Effective impact evaluation remains a challenge. Time and capacity are often a constraint. There is often an overreliance on end of year tests or even GCSE results as a measure of the effectiveness of interventions. Correlation and causation are mixed up at times.
- The need for robust process evaluation is increasingly understood, and is increasingly present in 2017/18 strategy plans.

The strengths and areas for further development do not apply to all schools. Each individual school has areas of excellence and more to do. Each has received and individual visit reports with recommendations for further action.

In terms of next steps, it is important to avoid looking for simplistic solutions. It is important to avoid looking at the local school that is currently the highest performing and try to replicate it. Avoid a 'batesian mimicry' approach to school improvement.

The variety in Swindon's secondary schools forms a rich tapestry. Inclusion is excellent at Commonweal School and Lydiard Park Academy. There is significant investment in high quality professional development at Swindon Academy. Using different

*"In some schools, more work needs to be done to ensure that the day-to-day learning experiences of vulnerable learners are of consistently high quality and underpinned by the highest of expectations."*

models, behaviour is immaculate at St Joseph's Catholic High School and Nova Hreod Academy. Teachers and other staff at EOTAS are models for 'going the extra mile'.

At the heart of any school strategy must be the overarching aims:

- That the most vulnerable learners are able to access the highest quality, most experienced, best qualified teachers and support staff.
- That teachers and support staff are provided with high quality professional development.
- That teachers have the capacity to implement evidence based teaching strategies and interventions based on pupil need.

## ● Accountability and research

A significant amount of research has been carried out into the effective use of the Pupil Premium. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are a key thread for the high stakes accountability system that most English state schools work within.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs have received less of a focus. This, in part, may be because outcomes for this group are more difficult to 'judge'. However, it would seem wrong for them to be hidden from the

accountability glare because of this. Schools need to beware of overly focusing on narrow external measures, balancing accountability to agencies such as Ofsted and the DfE with accountability to families and pupils. The highest form of accountability focuses on the pupils being served by Swindon schools.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are not homogenous, and many vulnerable pupils experience multiple barriers to learning. Some vulnerable pupils may not have any formal 'label'. Therefore, it is paramount that schools focus on equity and excellence for all, regardless of background, barrier to learning or prior attainment.

## ● Successful and less successful learners

108 teachers, leaders and support staff from Swindon Secondary Schools were asked 'what are the characteristics of your successful and less successful learners?'

Staff felt that school was more likely to be a positive experience for successful learners.

*"In discussions with pupils, there was a marked contrast between those that were high achieving and those that were not. Pupils that were struggling with school demonstrated a tangible frustration with their learning experiences. This is a positive starting point because school culture means they feel they can do this openly; it provides a platform on which to build."* – School visit report

## ● Key measures

It is important for schools to focus on the building blocks, the processes for success for disadvantaged pupils. Too often (nationally), there is too great a focus on the 'outcome', leading to much energy and resources being targeted at year 11. This leaves schools 'cohort vulnerable', particularly if evaluation is weak too.

This report recommends 10 key measures for schools to evaluate against. These measures are based on:

- Effective process, practice and the values in Swindon schools evident during visits and from wider documentation reviews.

### Characteristics of successful and less successful learners

#### Successful learners

Strong parental engagement  
Active in wider school life  
Strong sense of belonging  
Good vocabulary  
Wide social networks  
Culturally rich  
Broad range of interests out of school  
Know they can do well  
High self esteem  
Good attendance  
Don't mind when others do well  
Don't give up when things go wrong  
Well organised  
Good social skills  
Ask questions and seek feedback

#### Less successful learners

Poor attendance and punctuality  
Poor disposition towards learning  
More likely to be taught in lower sets  
More likely to have negative relationships with adults  
Lack self confidence  
Have poor role models  
Not taking part in wider school life  
Give up easily  
Think people don't like them  
Avoid failure by avoiding challenging tasks  
Lack boundaries  
More likely to be out of class  
Ask 'what's the point?'



- Evidence about how to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable learners nationally and internationally.
- Good practice from schools nationally.

The 10 measures can be used for schools to evaluate against. These should help ensure that no vulnerable learner slips through the tightening grip of our accountability system, which sometimes creates perverse incentives. They should help schools ascertain whether their strategies are sufficiently embedded. Pastoral and academic and strategies should be intertwined.

Swindon can be considered a high performing authority when all schools feel accountable for all pupils who are learning in the borough, not just those on their roll.

## 1. An attainment measure

*“The Vice Principal and his team have reinvigorated the school’s approach to tackling educational disadvantage at the school. A robust and accurate self-evaluation has been carried out which analyses the effectiveness of the school in improving outcomes for all disadvantaged pupils. Significant progress has been made in developing an evidence-based strategy that leans on best practice.” – School visit report*

- All vulnerable pupils should be expected to make necessary progress to attain well in English and Maths. Is attainment strong in subjects which will keep options and choices open?
- Do teachers and other staff believe that all pupils can attain well? Where attainment grouping is in place, is it based on evidence, where all pupils are expected to reach the same destinations and have the same expectations?
- Avoid benchmarking against Swindon schools only. What does performance look like compared with the most effective schools nationally, using the Education Endowment Foundation’s Families of School database?
- Visit those schools, even if, on the surface, their approach may differ. What are the active ingredients for success in these schools?

### Attainment self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

*“The school’s strategy is a strong one. The Pupil Premium strategy document on the school website is comprehensive and informative. There is much to be positive about. It is well planned, focuses on pupil need and includes internal quality assurance and impact evaluation. The strategy is understood by staff at all levels. Senior leaders all saw their roles as contributing to better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.” – School visit report*

## 2. A curriculum measure

*“She knows her stuff’, ‘she explains until you understand’ were comments from pupils in the Geography lesson observed. This lesson was rich in teaching the technical vocabulary pupils will need to be successful in their future learning.” – School visit report*

- Do all pupils access a knowledge rich, language rich curriculum that creates opportunity and choice? Avoid less rigorous learning opportunities for the sake of ‘engagement’. Pupils who are not attaining well cannot catch up if they are provided with easier work. The best learning, the best engagement comes from rich cultural, technical and contextual knowledge. The most engaging and interesting learning is challenging, whether studying Antony and Cleopatra in literature or building a kit car in engineering.
- Are the opportunities to access this knowledge open to all, regardless of prior attainment? Where technical or vocational pathways are chosen, qualifications should be sufficiently robust to enable opportunity and choice if pupils change their minds.
- Are low prior attainers given access to a less rigorous curriculum?



### Curriculum self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school's self-evaluation?

*"During classroom visits, there was much to be positive about. In particular, discussions with (disadvantaged) pupils in English demonstrated a broad, in-depth level of knowledge about their subject (Frankenstein).*

*Further, the teacher had planned the learning within the lesson so pupils could use drama to demonstrate their knowledge of the text, participate in the learning and improve their oracy." – School visit report*

### 3. An inclusion measure

*"There were a few isolated examples where Teaching Assistants were speaking over the teacher when the teacher was addressing the class. This is an internal barrier to learning for vulnerable pupils. It would be well worth conducting a further review of TA interactions in the classroom. 'Maximising the Practice of Teaching Assistants' is a very helpful guide for this: <http://maximisingtas.co.uk/courses/maximising-the-practice-of-teaching-assistants.php>." – School visit report*

- Do the vulnerable pupils have access to high quality, well-trained, well-qualified staff at least in proportion to their peers? Are they able to frequently work alongside successful role models?
- Do vulnerable learners play visible role in wider school life? Do they feel like they belong? Are their voices heard and do schools listen?
- Are the views of parents of vulnerable pupils actively heard and listened to?
- Are behaviour management systems based on evidence? Do they work? How do you know?
- Where pupils are removed from class for challenging behaviour, are they and their teachers still expected to work together to secure progress?

Are teachers sufficiently trained in SEMH to support vulnerable learners?

- Where EOTAS is used, partners should be proactive in providing solution for reintegration.

### Inclusion self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school's self-evaluation?

*"The emerging work to support pupils with Special Education Needs and Disability is model practice that should be embedded across the school. It is an approach that should be shared with schools across Swindon and beyond. It is particularly encouraging that there is a focus on SEND expertise into classrooms to support teachers. The Pearson survey work is critical in providing a baseline and impact measure of the improved experiences of vulnerable pupils at the school." – School visit report*

### 4. An oral language measure

*"The consistent view of pupils, regardless of prior attainment and barrier to learning, was that the lesson where they learnt most were those where they felt they were active participants in their learning. It is important that this does not push disadvantaged pupils down a particular curriculum route. Rather, ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the language and vocabulary to access an academic curriculum. This will enable them to be participants in subjects which will create opportunity and choice." – School visit report*

- Oral language is a critical indicator for future attainment. Yet it rarely gets sufficient focus in secondary schools nationally. Is the curriculum language rich?
- Are classrooms language-rich? Is language development targeted sufficient at those who need it? Are there opportunities for pupils to think aloud together to develop collaborative lines of thinking?

Do these opportunities differ across classes (ie, do 'lower' sets have fewer opportunities in order to manage behaviour)?

- Are pupils able to articulate their thinking clearly in spoken word? Do they have the subject-specific vocabulary to enable them to active participants in their learning?
- Are there clear strategies for teaching vocabulary? Just hearing it/seeing it is not enough to embed. Being 'language rich' cannot be achieved through vocabulary being displayed and used in lessons. Are effective teaching strategies used to sufficiently impact on pupils?
- Is there sufficiently skilled speech therapy provision in school?
- Oral language and articulation are fundamental to success beyond the classroom too. Are pupils given opportunities to practise these qualities?

### Oral self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school's self-evaluation?

*"Check whether teaching allow the lowest prior attainers the opportunity to sufficiently develop their language and oracy to be able to participate in lessons. As a through school with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils, it is critical that classrooms are language rich from early years to KS5. Without language, there is a risk that a small number of pupils may develop strategies to opt out of learning, particularly if that have speech, language and communication difficulties which may present as poor behaviour."* – School visit report

## 5. A metacognitive measure

*"When we are placed in the bottom set, we think... we don't have a future – Year 10 Pupil."* – School visit report

- Poor dispositions towards learning and a lack of self-regulation strategies are frequently cited as a barrier to learning. These can sometimes be exaggerated by well-intentioned interventions in the name of 'support'. The best long-term, evidence based strategy is to improve metacognition and self-regulation. Metacognition is part of excellent teaching and learning. It is the conscious application of learning strategies to enable pupils to overcome challenging tasks. It enables pupils to self regulate and plan an approach to learning. Metacognition enables pupils to understand that learning does not happen by chance.
- Too many vulnerable pupils have not sufficiently developed metacognitive strategies, with teachers and leaders speaking of passive learners who lack independence. Is metacognition embedded within teaching and learning?
- This should ensure more accurate records of learning in books, enabling teachers to more effectively assess pupil progress. Correct answers in pupil's books are not necessarily a good proxy for learning if they have not had to think hard. Do books provide an accurate record of the process of learning?
- Are pupils able to articulate and explain what happens in the lessons where they learn the most?

### Metacognition self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school's self-evaluation?

*"Pupils said: 'some lessons are less interesting than others... but I am still going to work hard as I know what I am capable of'; 'my best lessons are those where I am still thinking about them the next day'; 'teachers should not be too harsh on those who struggle to understand topics'. This final point related to some pupils not having prior knowledge. This highlights a need for effective planning to ensure that*

teaching and learning is inclusive and ambitious: high challenge but accessible to all.” – School visit report

## 6. An evidence measure

“The emerging strategy being designed by the Pupil Premium lead is based on the best available evidence and best practice. This strategy dovetails clearly with the overarching school development plan. It sets out an entitlement, including a pupil charter, which focuses on building cultural capital and aims to maximise the attainment of all learners. Further, the strategy is correct in not making assumptions that disadvantaged pupils have low aspirations – rather, that they need support and scaffolding about how to achieve their aspirations.” – School visit report

- It is critical that school leaders do not cherry pick research that avoids making difficult decisions. Avoid overly simplistic decision-making.
- Engage with research more widely, beyond the front page of the EEF’s Teaching and Learning toolkit, which provides guidance on average gains and ‘best bets’ from meta analysis. There are no guarantees, but the chances of impact improve by fully understanding research and the ‘active ingredients’ of effective implementation.
- Structural changes that do not lead to better relations between teachers and pupils have limited impact. Smaller class sizes will have limited impact for a high cost if they do not result in better planning for pupil need, more targeted feedback, opportunities for collaborative learning. Are the expectations clear for teachers?
- Are school strategies based on a deep, evidence-based understanding of their school community, or are they based on assumptions?

### Evidence self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

“A significant level of spending continues to fund smaller class sizes as part of the overarching strategy to provide outstanding lessons for all. This approach needs further consideration to carefully define what specifically will be different for disadvantaged learners as a result, and how this will be quality assured. It is important that teachers are provided with clarity over the specifics and provided support to deliver. For example, what additional feedback is provided to disadvantaged pupils as a result of the smaller classes? What impact will that have on pupils and how will leaders know that it is consistently happening?” – School visit report

## 7. A school culture measure

“It is important to avoid terminology such as ‘low ability’ or ‘gifted and talented’ when writing about disadvantaged learners. Rather, there is a need to highlight the point that pupils can become successful learners. A better wording would be ‘all pupils, not just those that are working below age-related expectations.’” – School visit report

- Understanding the barriers to learning faced by vulnerable pupils is fundamental. This means recognising that barriers don’t just sit with pupils themselves, but also within the community and within school. Have the in-school barriers to learning been recognised?
- Are attitudes to parents of vulnerable pupils positive? Is the language used to describe vulnerable pupils universally positive?
- Do teachers and support staff know their pupils, their interests? Do they support pupils in achieving the highest of ambitions?
- Is the Pupil Premium used to target high prior attaining pupils? Are pupils put in ‘lower sets’ based simply on KS2 SATs results? Do organisational needs take priority over the learner?
- What are the expectations of vulnerable pupils at the end of lessons, at the end of the day? How purposeful is learning in lower sets?
- What do pupils say about the relationships between adults and pupils?
- Be wary of meaningless and simplistic ability labelling which are not supported by evidence.

- Comments during the review visits include ‘our low ability pupils lack self confidence’ and our low ability pupils are surprisingly good at...’

### School culture self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

*“The visit itself was conducted in a very open, reflective and engaging way. The self-evaluation demonstrated an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school’s strategy for vulnerable learners. Staff were unanimously positive about pupils and families, including those from growing up in the most challenging of circumstances.”* – School visit report

## 8. A CPD Measure

*“Visits to lessons highlighted the strong relationships between adults and pupils. One teacher spoke about how she’d adapted her teaching based on training and research on supporting learners with EAL to access teaching in science, which led to positive results. Teachers spoke about how these types of strategies had been effective for their disadvantaged pupils.”* – School visit report

- Is professional development sufficiently targeted at the needs of vulnerable pupils and their gaps in learning?
- Is the professional developed based on evidence, with a clear evaluation framework in place?
- Is professional development compliant with the Professional Standards for CPD?

### CPD self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

*“The learning walk highlighted some inconsistencies in the planning and levels of expectations of some pupils. Some of the strategies we viewed were well intentioned but not supported by evidence. For example, the seating of disadvantaged pupils and those with Special Educational Needs together on tables at a position in of the class to enable ease of access by Teaching Assistants. Intuitively this is understandable but the adoption of collaborative learning strategies would be far more effective and can help create independent learners. Seating should be based on pupil need and characteristics rather than labels.”* – School visit report

## 9. A destination measure

*“Building on the opportunities created by the school’s new sixth form, there are inspirational case studies highlighting successes and high expectations for pupils with significant special educational needs and those pupils aiming to attend world-class universities. These case studies provide powerful examples of what is possible within the local community.”* – School visit report

- Are low prior attainers expected to achieve as well as their peers in end of key stage results?
- A successful education is more than a good progress 8 score. Drop out from KS5 and university is too high for vulnerable pupils nationally. What is the proportion of vulnerable pupils that go on to successfully complete KS5?
- What is the proportion that goes on to attend and complete university? What is the proportion that secures high quality employment?
- Avoid myths such as ‘vulnerable pupils have low aspiration’. Evidence suggests this may inaccurate. Rather, aspirations tend to be high, but the support networks and understanding of requirements of how to achieve those aspirations tend to be missing. Is the evidence on how to impact on pupil aspirations and expectations understood?
- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

### Destination self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*“There are high expectations of all pupils. Energetic Middle Leaders ensure consistency and quality. There is a close partnership with Marlborough College which offers an imaginative approach to improving the attainment and readiness of disadvantaged pupils. Efforts to ensure that pupils see themselves as global citizens were acknowledged in the recent Ofsted inspection. The focus on this has been redoubled.” – School visit report*

### 10. An evaluation measure

*“Encouragingly, the plan aims for some high quality impact evaluation, encouraging teachers and leaders to use professional judgement and short term measures, rather than trying to make causal links between individual activities and end of key stage attainment.” – School visit report*

- Is the school’s process and impact evaluation framework sufficiently robust and precise? Are there sufficiently clear internal quality assurance, frequent milestones and SMART outcomes?
- Does the framework enable school leaders to make the necessary adjustments so that there are ‘no surprises’ at the end of the academic year? Does the evaluation lead to better practice, avoiding vague or simplistic statements?

### Evaluation self-evaluation

Emerging practice	Secure practice	Leading practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- What evidence is there to support the school’s self-evaluation?

*“Linked to this, the (year 7) strategy to use primary specialist teachers to support low prior attainers with*

*targeted support is well thought through. It is critical that the longitudinal impact of the approach is evaluated – do pupils keep up following the gains made in this keep up strategy? During the review there was a detailed discussion about the importance of not isolating these pupils within the school community. The school had robust plans to ensure this is not the case.” – School visit report*

### ● Further reflections

Each of these measures needs to be underpinned a better understanding of growing up as a vulnerable young person in Swindon. Too many assumptions have been made. Comments such as ‘employment is high so pupils don’t work hard’ and ‘our parents didn’t have a good experience of education so don’t engage’ have been frequently made. These may be true. But a more evidence-based approach is needed to build a strategy upon. This should include professional development for teachers and support staff in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

There is a broader question about the community too. What is great about growing up in Swindon? How can the town’s unique characteristics create a platform for opportunity for all?

School leaders should work in partnership with the Local Authority, HEIs and Teaching School Alliances to develop a peer review model based on the themes set out in this overarching report. The collaborative reviews should also consider progress against the individual school targets arising from initial Swindon Challenge visits, which form the basis of this report. The peer review model should be based on robust self-evaluation within a spirit of trust and shared values. It should focus on evaluating effective processes as well as outcomes.

The aim is ensure all schools, regardless of governance model, curriculum or core values should take collective responsibility for all pupils in Swindon, not just those on their own roll.

### MARC ROWLAND, OCTOBER 2017

\*I have used the term ‘vulnerable’ to encapsulate pupils who may be disadvantaged, have SEND or additional needs that do not have a formal ‘label’. School leaders are best placed to judge who those students are.



## ● Evidence sources and further reading

### Strategic planning and impact evaluation tools

Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit, Families of Schools Database and DIY Evaluation Toolkit: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>

Whole School SEND: <http://www.wholeschoolsend.com/>

Professor Deborah Eyre – High Performance Learning: <https://www.highperformancelearning.co.uk/>

Sir John Dunford – Pupil Premium Champion: <https://johndunfordconsulting.co.uk/2015/08/29/the-pupil-premium-journey-lessons-learned-during-two-years-as-national-pp-champion/>

Professor Rob Coe – Improving Education: <http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf>

Communication Trust – A Generation Adrift (Oral language): [https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/31961/tct\\_genadrift.pdf](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/31961/tct_genadrift.pdf)

Marc Rowland – A Practical Guide to the Pupil Premium, Learning without Labels: <https://marcrowland.wordpress.com/resources/>

IEE York Best Evidence in Brief – Preventing drop out in secondary schools: <http://www.beib.org.uk/2017/10/new-wwc-practice-guide-on-preventing-dropout-in-secondary-schools/>

### Evidence based classroom practice to support better outcomes for vulnerable learners

Professor Becky Francis – Best Practice in Grouping Pupils: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-centres/centres/groupingstudents>

Rob Webster – The SENSE Study, Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants: [http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-sense-study.php /](http://maximisingtas.co.uk/research/the-sense-study.php/)  
<http://maximisingtas.co.uk/>

Professor Courtenay Norbury – Developmental Language Disorder: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/pals-news/courtenay-norbury-research-child-language-disorders>

*School leaders should work in partnership with the Local Authority, HEIs and Teaching School Alliances to develop a peer review model based on the themes set out in this overarching report.*

Voice21 (Oral language): <https://www.voice21.org/>

Supporting spoken language in the classroom: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-centres/centres/centre-for-inclusive-education/supporting-spoken-language-in-the-classroom>

Dialogic Teaching Evaluation Report: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/our-work/projects/dialogic-teaching/>

Education Endowment Foundation – Metacognition (a more detailed themed report will be published shortly): <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/meta-cognition-and-self-regulation/>

### Families and aspirations

University of Missouri – Students more likely to succeed if teachers have a positive perception of parents: <https://phys.org/news/2017-02-students-teachers-positive-perceptions-parents.html>

Dr Sam Baars – The pitfalls of the aspiration raising agenda: <http://sambaars.com/white-working-class-boys-in-the-neoliberal-meritocracy-the-pitfalls-of-the-aspiration-raising-agenda/>

Education Endowment Foundation – Aspiration Raising Strategies: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/aspiration-interventions/>

## ● Annex A: Pupil Premium self evaluation template

Briefly describe your Pupil Premium strategy. Three to four bullets, no more than 15 words per bullet.

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How well embedded is your Pupil Premium strategy? Is it understood by all staff and governors? How do you know? *50 words maximum*

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To what extent is your Pupil Premium strategy and activity evidence based? *50 words maximum*

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Is Pupil Premium integrated into senior and middle leadership roles? Is there sufficient leadership capacity to monitor, evaluate and quality assure Pupil Premium funded activity? Include the role of governors. How do you know? *50 words maximum*

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Have you identified barriers to learning for learners (including children looked after and those adopted from care) at pupil, school and community level? Briefly describe these. *50 words maximum*

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How is the Pupil Premium used to help overcome these barriers? *50 words maximum*

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How does the school's curriculum build cultural literacy for disadvantaged pupils? *50 words maximum*

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Briefly describe outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at each key stage. Are there any strengths or weaknesses to be aware of? *50 words maximum*

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What evidence do you have that all staff have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of background or barrier to learning? *50 words maximum*

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How well do disadvantaged pupils take part in wider school life? How do you know? *50 words maximum*

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How does Pupil Premium funded activity work towards achieving the school's overarching school improvement aims? *50 words maximum*

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## ● Annex B: Pre-visit email

Dear xx

I am looking forward to visiting your school on xx at xx. The purpose of the visit is a collaborative review of outcomes for vulnerable learners.

On the day we will discuss:

- Your self-evaluation and current strategy for improving outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- Data
- The rationale and evidence for your planned activities.
- Quality monitoring and impact evaluation.

It would be really helpful to meet with:

- Senior leaders
- Anyone involved in Pupil Premium funded activity\*
- A small group of teachers\*
- A small group of TAs\*
- A small group of Pupils\*

\*20 minute group discussions are fine.

It would be useful to walk around the school, drop into some classrooms and look at some books too.

Following the visit, you will receive a short report setting out strengths and areas for development for your school strategy. It will also feed into an overarching borough-wide report.

In the meantime, and before our meeting, I attach the self-evaluation template for your completion and return.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**MARC ROWLAND**

## ● Annex C: Methodology

### Swindon Challenge: Maximising the achievement of vulnerable learners

This is a seven month programme.

It will promote the active ingredients for success in tackling educational disadvantage and improving outcomes for vulnerable learners. This includes a culture of high expectations and success for all within our schools; rigorous self-evaluation; awareness of challenges facing vulnerable learners and strategies to overcome them; a model of self-sustaining improvement.

- Launch\* and supported self-evaluation of participating school strategies for tackling education disadvantage: 1 day.
- One-day strategy reviews and reports, supported by SLT: 1 day per school.
- Expert input (Dr Jon Reid, Rob Webster), final report, lessons learned and next steps.

\*School leaders would be invited to attend as a group.

For the programme to be a success participating schools need to:

- Have a strong commitment to affecting change for all disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.
- Regard the issue of tackling disadvantage as achievable and a core theme which permeates the work of the school at every level; therefore, the programme needs to sit within a long term strategy and the over-arching improvement plan.
- Demonstrate the leadership capacity needed to affect change at both a strategic level and in relation to everyday practice.

The programme also seeks to:

- Strengthen sustained capacity within schools to secure improvement across different aspects of work and from varying starting points.
- Equip schools with a strong evidence base to demonstrate the positive impact of leadership and strategies for change on improved outcomes.
- Strengthen the culture of reflection and evaluation within the school, coupled with the significance of strategic planning routed in a robust evidence base and clarity of desired impact.
- Foster closer school to school partnerships and the benefits of a self-improving system beyond the single institution.

## ● Annex D: List of schools

- Lawn Manor Academy
- Commonweal School
- Dorcan Academy
- Abbey Park Academy
- Kingsdown Academy
- Lydiard Park Academy
- Nova Hreod Academy
- Ridgeway School
- St Joseph's Catholic High
- Swindon Academy
- UTC Swindon
- Highworth Warneford School
- EOTAS Swindon

## ● Annex E: Review against key measures

Swindon Challenge: Raising attainment for SEN and disadvantaged pupils in Swindon

School.....

Completed by.....

<b>An attainment measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>A curriculum measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>An inclusion measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>An oral language measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>A metacognitive measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>An evidence measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>A school culture measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>A CPD measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>A destination measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice
<b>An evaluation measure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emerging Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Secure Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Leading Practice

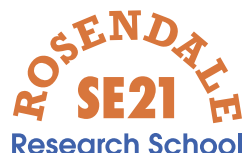
## ● Biography

Marc Rowland is Head of the Research School based at Rosendale Primary School, Lambeth. He was the former Director of Policy and Research for the National Education Trust from 2007 to 2017. Over the past four years Marc has worked with Rosendale School on two major school-based research projects on Lesson Study and Metacognition.

The second edition of his book 'An Updated Practical Guide to the Pupil Premium' was published in December 2015 (John Catt Educational). His latest book 'Learning without Labels' was also published by John Catt in March 2017. Marc is currently working

with the Jersey government on the introduction of a 'Jersey Pupil Premium' and with Learn Sheffield on their Priorities Project. He is also the co-author of the Essex LA funded Pupil Premium self-evaluation toolkit and has worked with North Yorkshire, Essex, Sheffield, Hampshire, Swindon and Warwickshire LAs on year-long projects to support better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Marc has worked with over 300 schools to support them with their strategy to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, and spoken to approximately 6000 school leaders in conferences on Pupil Premium, from Northumberland to Cornwall.



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