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Chair's foreword

A good education system is crucial to the future success of Oldham. Whether it is top quality schools, excellent colleges or successful training providers, the town and its citizens need high education standards and a highly skilled workforce.

For this reason the leader of the Council asked the Commission to consider the future direction of education and training in Oldham.

There are good foundations on which to build. There are already many good schools and colleges as well as talented and committed teachers. Many children succeed and some businesses are strong and expanding.

However, this isn’t the story across the borough – and we want it to be. Over the past 18 months we have had the privilege of talking with teachers and employers, parents and young people – and we know that they share our ambition for Oldham to have an education system that is among the best in the country.

This report makes some recommendations as to how we might begin this journey. Underpinning our report is a commitment to recognising the importance of every child and a belief in the power of education to deliver change. The report recognises the key role played by all those who work in schools and colleges, but it emphasises that the whole community also has a part to play. Families, employers, community leaders, sport and cultural organisations will need to contribute skills if we are to create the education system we want and need.

It has been a privilege to have chaired the Commission and I would like to thank the Commissioners and everyone who supported our work. I would also like to thank those who have generously given time to share their ideas and demonstrate a commitment to the future development of education in Oldham.

It is the determination with which they have spoken, the excitement on the faces of the children whose schools we have visited and the willingness of people in the town to face up to what needs to be done which convinces me that we are on the edge of being able to achieve great things here in Oldham.

I hope this report can contribute to and underpin, that work.

Baroness Estelle Morris, January 2016
Chair Oldham Education and Skills Committee

“...Oldham kids can be the best in the world and they can aim as high as they want to do... and I hope that message will come out of the commission...”
I want all our young people to have the best possible start in life. A good education is essential to that – and it is also the foundation of a fair society. We should not be satisfied with anything less but, sadly, far too many children are still not reaching their full potential.

Unfulfilled talent is criminal. It wastes ability and in the longer run it also wastes public money and blights families and communities. We must do better for our next generation and that’s why I invited Estelle Morris to come to Oldham last year to bring together all the experience and expertise needed to challenge how we have been operating.

A high-performing education system and – critically – successful schools underpins all our ambitions for Oldham as a vibrant and successful place for people to live and work. It’s pivotal to our plans for future economic redevelopment, regeneration, housing, health and wellbeing and community cohesion.

In sponsoring the Oldham Education and Skills Commission I gave Estelle and her fellow commissioners carte blanche. I wanted them to ask difficult questions and get to the heart of problematic issues. I wanted insight, for example, on how we can tackle pre-determination: the practice whereby professionals can track a child born here and predict their future prospects, career and life expectancy with disturbing accuracy. That should not be the case.

This is a hugely important report that highlights the need for us to focus on supporting every child to be ‘school ready’, ‘life ready’ and ‘work ready’. Achieving that will challenge us all – whether you are a parent, carer, governor, teacher, school head, local business owner, or member of a voluntary or community group.

To succeed we will have to move towards a culture where education is everyone’s business. The report gives us an excellent starting point, suggesting the introduction of ‘The Oldham Offer’ which sets out what all of us should expect – and what each of us must contribute – in a high-performing education system.

This is the next step in a challenging but very necessary journey for our borough and one I will be keeping a keen eye on in my new role as MP for Oldham West and Royton. Please take the time to read the commission’s recommendations and consider how we can all act upon and develop them even further.

Jim McMahon OBE
Oldham Council Leader
January 2016
Section one
Understanding the challenge

Oldham is an aspirational borough, with an ambitious vision and a belief in a better future. It is committed to its children and young people as the guardians of that vision and the citizens of that future, and understands that education and learning are the bedrock for bringing about change. Oldham has some excellent schools and education providers and many of its young people develop into confident, well-rounded citizens with the qualifications they need. However, there are huge inequalities in outcomes across the borough and overall, particularly at secondary school level, achievement and qualifications fall significantly short of expectations.

The Oldham Education and Skills Commission (OESC) was established in the summer of 2014 by the Leader of the Council. Bringing local leaders and external expertise to the table, its work over the last eighteen months has enabled schools and educators across the borough to come together, take stock, reflect on the current state of play and to contribute to the Commission’s report. This has been a timely exercise in terms of the changing policy and funding context, coinciding with the significant economic potential presented by the government’s devolution deal with Greater Manchester and the election of the current government. The Commission hopes that its work will put Oldham’s needs and aspirations at the forefront of the minds of policymakers and enable Oldham’s educators and citizens to make significant improvements to educational achievement and Oldham’s economy.

The need to align education and skills to the local and city region economy has been an essential focus of the Commission’s work. The structure of Oldham’s economy continues to be largely manufacturing based but its future is increasingly dependent upon shaping its relationship with the Greater Manchester City region. Education and skills play a pivotal role within this context of economic change. The labour market rewards for those with higher skills are significant and it is widely assumed that future growth will depend on improved productivity which is dependent on the supply of skills that employers need.

As well as meeting the needs of the economy, the Commission fully recognises the value of all areas of learning and the importance of supporting young people to grow into well-rounded confident citizens who can succeed as individuals and contribute to their community. Oldham is proud of its co-operative ethos and heritage and works under the guiding principle of ‘everyone doing their bit and everybody benefitting’. The Commission has responded to this principle by engaging with community representatives, voluntary groups, arts and cultural organisations, housing and health partners, employers and business leaders as key contributors to its work.

Beyond this, a high-performing education system and critically, successful schools, underpin Oldham’s ambitions to be the place of choice for people to live and work. In this regard, education is pivotal to the delivery of economic development, regeneration, housing, health and wellbeing and community cohesion.
The Commission’s main focus has been looking at how standards can be raised across the borough and its recommendations seek to transform outcomes for Oldham’s students. Attracting and retaining the very best teachers and leaders, giving them the time, space and support to develop their subject knowledge and practice, and investing in their development as practitioners and leaders is critical in this endeavour, as is recognising, sharing and building upon existing good and excellent practice and innovation.

The vision is for Oldham to become a learning borough, where every child, young person and citizen is supported in their personal and educational learning and development, throughout life. The Commission has created ‘The Oldham Offer’ as a set of guarantees to underpin this vision, detailed later in this report. Early years, schools, post-16 colleges, training organisations and adult and community education providers are all part of the learning continuum. Whilst different parts of the education system have widely differing strengths, challenges, funding streams and governance structures, we hope they all share our vision and can work together to help achieve it.

This report has been informed by discussions with headteachers, principals, teachers, governors and parents as well as visits to primary, secondary, special schools, colleges and academies across the borough. The Commission has also surveyed headteachers, teachers and governors, and has supported ‘Grow Oldham’, an interactive social media and communications campaign, which has gathered direct input from our most important stakeholders – Oldham’s children and young people themselves.

The Commission’s recommendations are intended to act as catalysts for change in Oldham. The responsibility for implementing them will rest with local partners, who will need to work together to develop solutions which will make a difference to the life chances of Oldham’s children and young people. The OESC will wish to be assured that robust plans are in place to deliver this transformation and that the momentum it has created will be sustained. Oldham partners will report on their progress in autumn of 2017 to the Commission.

Policy context

National

In supporting Oldham’s journey towards an outstanding local education and skills system, the Commission recognises that it is the action of partners in the borough that will deliver sustained improvement. However, this can only be achieved by working within the wider national education system. The overarching aim must be to create a successful local system which is resilient to the inevitable policy changes of successive governments.

The Commission reports at an important juncture in the evolution of the education system in England. In the past three decades there has been a departure from the previous model of centralised control, via local authorities, to one which is characterised by academies and free schools being given new autonomy, and groups of schools taking responsibility for school improvement. The role of local authorities has been reduced and re-defined. These policy drivers are set to continue for the lifetime of the current parliament and most probably beyond.

The value of greater autonomy for schools is well recognised but whilst the need for schools and colleges to have the freedom to do the job is broadly accepted, it is increasingly recognised that it carries with it the risk of a fragmented, system where there is little collaboration, knowledge transfer and system leadership. This is addressed in the work of David Hargreaves for the National College for Teaching and Leadership in his 2012 ‘think piece’ ‘Towards a self-improving school system’ and more recently in the ‘Blueprint for a Self-improving System’ produced by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

This makes the relationship between school autonomy and partnerships within, between and beyond schools, a key issue for the Commission. The success of a school will be influenced by both how it uses its autonomy and the strength of the partnerships it develops.

There are tensions between the national drive for further academisation and more free schools and the local imperative for a self-improving education system based on partnership and collaboration. Through clear and strong local leadership partners in Oldham will need to make the current and emerging architecture for school improvement work coherently for all the borough’s children and young people. Underpinning this will be the assumption that a self-improving education system is characterised not only by school autonomy but also by the inter-dependence of schools. This will mean, for example, that the local partnership of schools, colleges and the local authority will need to be proactive in selecting and developing academy sponsors and free school proposers who share Oldham’s aspirations for excellence along with its co-operative values.

Similarly, in the market-led environment in which further education colleges and training providers operate, it will be necessary for the Oldham Partnership Board to take a strategic lead to ensure that skills pathways offer progression to meaningful employment for Oldham learners.
Policy context

Local

Although there have been tensions between schools and the local authority in recent times, the Commission has noted a growing sense of common purpose between the partners and a wish to work collaboratively to improve outcomes in Oldham. Although this has yet to be embedded fully in effective partnership structures, there is an evident willingness to work together to put these in place. Currently the Oldham Learning Co-operative Partnership is established as the over-arching body to facilitate improved outcomes through collaborative working. Whilst this has had some success – most notably in bringing the sectors together; overseeing effective and promising work on developing primary to secondary transition arrangements and school-to-school peer review – its lack of decision-making powers has diluted its impact.

Within the primary and secondary headteachers’ associations, progress is being made in developing collaborative structures focused on improvement.

The Oldham Schools Alliance (OSA), which brings together Oldham’s primary headteachers and leaders, is well established with schools across the borough working together on themes such as school-to-school support; teaching and learning; special education needs and disability; early years; business and careers; and international new arrivals.

Through the Oldham Association of Secondary Heads and Principals (OASHP), work has been initiated on peer review, behaviour and exclusions and curriculum development. OASHP has established a Curriculum and Achievement Partnership, led by deputy headteachers and has a long-standing Behaviour and Attendance Partnership.

The OSA and OASHP have been developing joint working relationships for 18 months including a number of joint conferences and are working closely to further develop collaboration across Oldham to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The leadership of Oldham Council has made education one of its key priorities and works closely with schools. It has brokered and co-funded school-to-school support and has put in place Achievement Partners in secondary schools. It works with partners to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and has supported the Peer Review programme in secondary schools.

An Oldham Economy and Skills Commissioning Cluster has been established to take forward skills development in synergy with local economic development. Chaired by the Oldham Business Leadership Group, this is in its early stages of development and represents a key vehicle for ensuring that appropriate pathways to employment are created within the context of the city region. It is proposed that a number of the Commission’s recommendations should be taken forward by the Cluster. There is evidence that the Council initiated Get Oldham Working programme has been very successful in securing employment and training for local residents and that Oldham’s pledge of a Youth Guarantee, for all 18 years olds leaving the education system, will be fulfilled.
All of the previous examples appear to have had varying degrees of impact on outcomes and standards and in some cases it may be too early to make judgement. However, a lack of over-arching strategic coherence across the local system is acknowledged by many local stakeholders and the Commission believes that addressing this is fundamental if we are to achieve sustainable improvement.

Education provision in Oldham

Oldham is home to 57,168 children and young people aged 0-17. This is 25.1% of the borough's population.

The local authority currently commissions 16 children’s centres that are delivered on a district basis across the borough. There are 177 registered child minders, 88 day care providers across the private and voluntary sectors, and four independent nurseries.

A total of 110 providers deliver education for the compulsory years. There are 85 primary schools (73 maintained, 9 academies and 3 independent), 18 secondary schools (5 maintained, 7 academies, 1 Free School, 1 University Technical College and 4 independent), 5 special schools (2 maintained, 2 academies and 1 independent) and a Pupil Referral Unit. Oldham has one sixth-form college which is also home to the Regional Science Centre.

In recent years there has been considerable pressure on primary school places which has prompted a number of school expansion projects and the creation of a new three-form entry primary school in the town centre. Despite this, the percentage of primary school surplus places is just over 2% well below the national benchmark of 5 – 8%. The pressure on school places is set to impact on secondary schools from 2018. There is also rising demand for specialist provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Oldham has one further education college and a ‘satellite’ higher education campus. The following paragraphs provide an overview of education in Oldham. For more complete data and explanation, see the final part of this report ‘Background Information’.

Summary

The data show that children in Oldham enter Reception at a lower level of development than the national average, as is generally the case in boroughs with above average levels of deprivation like Oldham. They remain below national averages for attainment by the end of Year 2. Pupils then make higher than average progress between Years 3-6 to reach national levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Secondary school progress however is below the national average resulting in below average GCSE attainment. At A-Level, students make above average progress resulting in A-Level attainment that is higher than the national average. Vocational attainment is below the national average and skill levels in Oldham are lower than the rest of Greater Manchester.

Figure 1 summarises how Oldham’s performance compares nationally across the Key Stages. It shows where Oldham ranks compared to other local authorities across the country for each of the key performance measures. It demonstrates the areas where Oldham is in the top half of local authorities including:

• Achievement at Key Stage 2
• Ofsted ratings for primary school effectiveness
• Achievement and progress at A-Level

Oldham is also above the national average in terms of the attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Oldham is also in line with the national average for attendance.

Figure 1 also demonstrates some of the key areas where Oldham is below the national average including:

• Achievement in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (Oldham is in the bottom 10% of local authorities)
• Phonics and Key Stage 1 (bottom 20% of LAs for phonics)
• Secondary phase progress (bottom 20%) and achievement (bottom 25%)
• The small proportion of Oldham secondary schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted (bottom 5%)
• Key Stage 5 attainment for vocational qualifications (bottom 5%)

Figure 1: Oldham's rank amongst 152 Local Authorities in England for key performance measures in 2013-14
Oldham is also below the national average in terms of the attainment gap for the following groups of children (difference to national gap at Key Stage 4 in brackets):

- Children from ethnic minority groups, especially Asian and mixed groups (over 10 percentage points for both)
- Looked After Children at Key Stage 4 (3.4 points)
- Disadvantaged pupils (1.8 points)
- Boys as compared to girls (1.3 points)
- Higher ability children – in terms of gaining the higher grades or levels at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4

Other key areas include:

- The high level of permanent exclusions in secondary schools (0.32% compared to 0.13% nationally)
- The comparatively high proportion of residents in Oldham who do not have a qualification (15% compared to 10% nationally)
- The comparatively low proportion of Oldham residents who have graduate level qualifications (23% compared to 35% nationally)

Further issues arising from analysis of the data and the deliberations of the Commission are:

- The wide variation in performance between providers at all Key Stages. Oldham has some of the best performing institutions in the country, yet also has many that require improvement
- The capacity of the local system to improve in the secondary phase. With only a third of Oldham’s secondary schools currently judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted, the potential for school-to-school support from within the borough is limited
- The Commission recognises that data does not always tell the whole story and that further work is needed in order to understand the dynamics of underperformance and how to address them. Nevertheless, the areas of underperformance highlighted must be addressed.
Section two

The Commission’s vision for change

A SELF-IMPROVING EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Commission believes that the education and skills outcomes in Oldham can be transformed. Our vision is of successful schools and colleges working in A New Collaborative Education Partnership. A partnership that is built upon the skills and talents of the best of our school leaders, teachers and lecturers, working closely with the Council, employers and the wider Oldham community that raises standards by making education everyone’s business.

The New Education Partnership will need a clear focus and vision, a consistent emphasis on effective leadership and a shared commitment to robust short, medium and long term objectives. The new relationship should reflect the following values and beliefs which underpin the discussions and recommendations of the Commission.

The Commission’s guiding principles

1 Education is a powerful force for change and the future prosperity of Oldham and its citizens, depends in part, on the quality of its education system
2 All children and young people should develop a life-long love of learning
3 A good education should prepare people for study, for work and for life. The curriculum should meet the needs of all young people and inspire and stretch all learners. It should build links with the economic regeneration of the town.
4 People must be supported to gain the qualifications they need and that give them the chance to progress
5 Every child is of equal worth. Oldham schools and colleges want the best for their own pupils and students but accept a wider collective responsibility for all children and young people in the town.
6 Schools and colleges need both to be independent and interdependent. They need the freedom to lead but they make most progress when they learn from and challenge each other.
7 The education system must build strong and effective partnerships with parents and carers.
8 Excellent teaching and school leadership are essential for success and investing in good professional development should be a priority.
9 Schools and colleges should be supported by the wider community - employers, sports and cultural organisation civic leaders and local citizens.
10 Oldham must build on the strengths it has and celebrate its success. It must continually look outwards for new ideas and good practice and have the confidence to compare itself with the best.
11 Oldham’s education system must be underpinned by high expectations, mutual challenge and high quality support.
A self-improving education system for Oldham

The Commission wishes to build upon the existing and emerging good practice that already exists in the town to create a school led, self-improving education system.

Our proposals aim to raise standards in all schools and colleges by strengthening strategic leadership and accountability and adding capacity to the system. Oldham’s education community together with the Council as a key partner should be brought together in a new education partnership.

The Commission recognises that within the quasi-market systems of the current educational landscape the creation of sustainable partnerships based on trust and reciprocity presents challenges. There is a need to maximise the incentives for schools to take on leadership roles beyond their own schools and reduce the barriers to partnership working. Collaboration does not mean reducing autonomy or performance expectations; it is a vehicle for helping to spread good practice and creativity throughout the system. Research suggests that schools need a healthy mixture of collaboration and competition to help spur improvement. If we are to make sure that every child and young person attends a good school, moving towards a self-improving system is an essential step.

The detail of how this would work needs to be co-created locally by schools and the local authority and the move to the new arrangements would need to be phased and carefully and jointly planned, led and managed. However, the suggested building blocks for a new education partnership are set out below.

**Inspirational Leadership and Inclusive Collaboration**

Strong collaboration and a sustainable self-improving education system will require strong leadership and effective co-ordination. The leadership needs to come from within the education community and be supported by others.

**A new partnership body**

The Commission recommends that a new partnership body is established to provide this leadership and co-ordination of Oldham’s education system. In the first instance, this would have three key partners.

- Representatives from schools and early years providers
- Member and Officer representatives from Oldham Council
- An independent education partner to add challenge and support

The new education partnership’s governance arrangements would ensure that schools and the local authority work together to develop the self-improving system and drive improvement across the borough.

Over time, the Council would delegate to the Partnership both funding and responsibility for some of its key statutory duties and functions as they relate to school improvement. The Council would remain a key partner as the champion and voice of Oldham’s children and families and through its stewardship of the borough as a place of choice to work and live.

The independent education partner would be a key appointment. It would be commissioned by the new education partnership body to provide additional capacity, impartial third party support, challenge and quality assurance to its work.
Core functions
All Oldham’s education partners - early years providers, maintained schools, academies, free schools, independent schools and 16-19 colleges would be invited to be active members of the new partnership. Teaching schools and multi-academy trusts will play a critical role in driving improvement. The new education partnership would also work with businesses, the health service, arts, cultural and sporting organisations as well as the wider civic community. Its core function will be to improve education leadership and teaching in the Borough’s schools through the dissemination and sharing of best practice. Education leaders and teachers will drive improvement both within their own organisations and beyond and over time this will create a cycle of innovation and continuously renewed capacity in the local education system. An excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Oldham school system will be essential if this is to be successful.

Outcomes
Schools and colleges will, of course, focus on the achievements of young people while they are in their care but in order to meet the economic and social aspirations of the town, the partnership will need to be aware of the impact and influence they have on the life-chances and wellbeing of each child once they leave formal education and are in the early years of their working life.

The focus for the new education partnership will be the continuous improvement of:
• Outcomes for children and young people
• A broad and high quality curriculum
• Progression to further learning, training, Higher Education and employment
• Transitions between learning providers
• The quality of provision in all settings, schools and colleges
• Leadership that will drive the self-improving system
• Teaching, learning and assessment

It will also lead on a series of awareness raising campaigns in the borough to promote the value of education being ‘everyone’s business’, to create momentum and purpose and to gain much wider practical support for our education providers.

Targets
The Commission believes that a self-improving education system needs to have clear targets so that it can ensure pace and assess the success of the system as a basis for review and continuous improvement.

The Commission recommends that the new Partnership has an ambition that:
All national performance indicators to be at the national average or beyond by 2020
All Oldham education providers to be judged as good or better by Ofsted by 2020
If this ambition is to be reached, local targets together with clear plans as to how they will be delivered, monitored and achieved will need to be clearly set out.

It is important that the Partnership itself carries out this task so that targets are agreed and owned by the local education community.

The Commission recommends that these further performance targets should cover:
• Achievement in the Early Years and Foundation Stage
• Phonics and Key Stage 1
• Secondary phase progress and achievement
• Key Stage 5 attainment for vocational qualifications
• Permanent exclusions
• Higher skills

In addition, targets should be set to close the gaps for the following under-performing groups:
• Looked After Children at Key Stage 4
• Higher ability children achieving higher grades
• Children eligible for the Pupil Premium and free school meals
• Children from ethnic minority groups especially Asian and mixed groups
• Boys as compared to girls
• Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities *

Whilst this group is performing at or above national averages, the Commission advises further target setting because the number of children with special needs is expected to rise which presents a significant risk to maintaining this performance.

The Commission strongly believes that education must be about more than exam passes and should embrace learning in its widest sense. The Partnership may wish to set targets in the areas that are not covered by performance tables to make sure that they are given sufficient priority and to measure progress on the delivery of the Commission’s wider recommendations.

Building on existing relationships
The Commission recognises that there are already a number of existing relationships in place in Oldham such as the OSA, OASHP and the OLCP. It is essential that we learn from these existing partnerships and that they are involved in co-designing the new education partnership.
Section three
The Commission’s Recommendations

This section sets out the building blocks that the Commission believes will be needed to achieve transformational change. These recommendations will guide the initial work of the new partnership and set clear priorities for action that have emerged from the education community and other partners.

The recommendations are framed within the co-operative ethos of Oldham and underpinned by the belief that ‘education is everyone’s business’ and they recognise that the self-improving system needs to develop a broader perspective across the whole education system from 0-25 years and on the outcomes for our children once they become adults.

This means that every headteacher, governor, teacher, lecturer has a role to play in leading the whole of the self-improving education system as well as their own school or college. But the Commission recognises that they will need support to do this and this forms the basis of many of the recommendations.

Our recommendations are grouped under three themes:

- Transforming outcomes
- Levering in the co-operative contribution
- Aligning the education system with the economy

Many of the recommendations are expressed as The Oldham Offer

What is The Oldham Offer *

These recommendations describe what stakeholders in education can expect in Oldham and in turn, what is expected of them. The Commission hopes that the Oldham Offer can be the start of an ongoing dialogue that helps to define what Oldham means when it says ‘education is everyone’s business’ and inspires more people to get involved and support our education providers to deliver excellent outcomes for Oldham children and young people.

The Commission realises that some recommendations will take time to put in place; others can create impact and momentum very quickly and will be important in creating a widespread sense of change and doing things differently.

Theme one:
Transforming outcomes

Recommendation one: The Oldham Offer *

The Oldham Student: The Oldham Curriculum Offer

Schools should follow the national curriculum but they shouldn’t be limited by it. The commission recommends the development of an enriched curriculum for Oldham schools and colleges. This would be ‘designed by Oldham, for Oldham’ and would be flexible and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the borough, its children, young people and communities. It would support people to achieve the qualifications they want and need but would embrace art music and culture, sport, citizenship and community contribution, character development, life skills and employability.

Its aim would be to ensure that Oldham’s children and young people are:

- School ready
- Life ready
- Work ready

The Oldham curriculum should place the learner at its centre.

Every child and young person should expect to:

- Be heard
- Have access to excellent teaching and development opportunities
- Be respected and show respects to others
- Receive high quality impartial careers education and information, advice and guidance
- Experience life through a broad and exciting curriculum both inside and beyond school and college
- Be offered employment, training, further education or work experience on leaving formal education as part of the Oldham Youth Guarantee

In return, Oldham would expect students to develop their individual responsibility as they get older to:

- Take ownership of their own learning
- Always to do the best that they can
- Ask for help and guidance when they need it
- Engage in collective educational activity so that others can learn as well as themselves

It is important that children and young people help shape and develop these expectations.
Case Study one:
Children’s take over days

Preparing children to be ‘work ready’ at Whitegate End Primary School

Takeover day has become an integral part of the school’s curriculum and a ‘rite of passage’. Younger children talk about the role they would like to take on and are excited to take part. The event empowers the children, it heightens their confidence and self-belief, opens their eyes to different career paths and provides a platform for discussions about aspirations. Children learn about the job, the skills needed to undertake it and the education path they can go down if they want to take on such a role in the future. It is a really rewarding day for the whole school.

Suzanne Ashton – Headteacher Whitegate End Primary School

Whitegate End Primary School has been holding a Takeover Day once a year for the past five years. During that time, over 150 Whitegate End children have experienced every imaginable role in school, from Headteacher to Site Manager, Teacher to Cook on their annual Takeover Day.

Year 5 pupils prepare extensively for the roles they are going to take over in school. In November, a series of adverts for each job in the school are posted in the Year 5 classrooms. Children are encouraged to look at the job descriptions for each job, select the job they want to apply for and feel they have the skills to undertake, and then apply for it. This entails writing a letter against the person specification. Pupils go forward to a shortlisting process and are sometimes asked to attend an interview.

Prior to carrying out their roles the pupils spend time preparing; this may be planning and resourcing lessons, or discussing their roles with the adult postholder. During the day the children take on all the jobs in school, shadowed by the adult whose role they are undertaking.

Takeover day was amazing for me. I become the Reception Class teacher for the day. I planned and delivered lessons, taught a phonics lesson and shared a story, helping the children answer questions about it. The most valuable lesson I learned was patience. To have patience in all I do. (Jack Flynn)

I really enjoyed Takeover Day. I learned what it was like to work in a school and be a deputy headteacher! I observed some lessons and realised the skills you have to have to be a teacher. I have a good eye for detail and I used this in my role, something I still use today. (Tom Wiswell)
Further provision is therefore needed to meet the needs of children with MLD/SLD and ASD. The new Hollinwood Academy which opened in September 2015 has addressed some issues of capacity to meet the needs of children with ASD and severe and complex SLCN. However, further provision is needed to meet the needs of children with MLD/SLD. Pupil forecasts in June 2015 (SCAP data) show a continued overall increase, with a consequent expected increase in the number of children with SEN and the associated proportion of children requiring specialist provision.

In order to address this problem, immediate consideration should be given to establishing a free school to meet the need for additional capacity for children with SEND in the primary phase and to work with mainstream schools to embed effective practice.

There will also be a subsequent need to review the capacity within secondary provision to accommodate the potential expanded cohort of children with MLD/SLD who will have attended the expanded primary provision.

- These issues need to be captured in the Oldham SEND Strategy which is currently in development

**Recommendation four:**

**Behaviour and exclusions**

Oldham has a high level of permanent exclusions in the secondary phase and it is clear that current arrangements are not working as well as they should. The Commission also heard anecdotal evidence that mental health issues in children and young people are increasingly prevalent and that the availability of appropriate support needs to be improved. This is a national issue but one which also needs to be addressed locally in Oldham.

The Commission recommends that by working together through existing arrangements and ultimately via the new education partnership, schools design and commit to:

- A new approach to how exclusions and ‘managed moves’ are brokered across the borough
- Improving early identification (through the new SEND strategy)
- Share information and data and carry out joint research and analysis
- Increased focus on preventative measures
- The availability of social, emotional and psychological support
- Incentivising inclusion

A re-framing of the Pupil Referral Unit (Kingsland School) will be key to this, as will a review of the current behaviour management provision in primary schools. Joint working with health partners on issues of children and young people’s mental health will also be critical. There may be new opportunities emerging from the devolution of health budgets within Greater Manchester to examine whether children and young people’s mental health might be delivered more effectively.

The Commission also recommends that the opportunity to secure additional capacity in Alternative Provision through the establishment of a free school should be explored.

**Recommendation five:**

**International new arrivals and English as an additional language (EAL)**

Every child’s school experience is hugely enriched through learning alongside children from a wide variety of background and origins, including those from abroad. The full benefit of this diversity for children’s “spiritual, moral, social and cultural education” (SMSC) depends though on the effective integration and provision for those international new arrivals.

The OESC recognises the extent of inward migration to the borough from other countries and the challenges that this poses to some schools in Oldham.

Based on two years of new arrivals data (2013/14 and 2014/15) and assuming that new arrival patterns are repeated, it is estimated that there will be an annual requirement for between 34 and 36 additional pupil places per age group at secondary level. At primary level, an estimate of between 33 and 38 additional pupil places in every year group will be required. Recent information from schools also indicated that the school community as a whole was catering for at least 23 different languages.

However, the children who come under the category of international new arrivals and early language learners are all individual and have different life experiences and backgrounds. They will require different levels of support and not all new arrivals will stay in Oldham for their education long term.

The Commission acknowledges the work that has recently commenced through joint working between the Oldham Schools Alliance’s (OSA) International Arrivals Work Hub where both primary and secondary sectors and the local authority are represented, and supports the recommendations of its interim report.

The recent Ofsted visit to evaluate provision in Oldham for children who learn English as an additional language (EAL) acknowledged that positive work is being undertaken in this area and the Commission supports the plans for schools and the local authority to implement the inspector’s recommendations which include:

- To build up good practice for EAL in the secondary phase in the same way it has been established in the most successful primary schools
- To raise achievement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils at GCSE
- To strengthen transition links from primary to secondary and from secondary to further education as well as links with children’s centres for EAL learners to ensure there are no dips in their progress as they change phase

In addition to the Ofsted recommendations, the Commission also recommends that:

- ‘The Oldham Welcome’ is developed - a borough-wide approach to assist children and young people from newly arrived families in making the transition to life, culture and the community in Oldham
Recommendation six:
Using data to drive improvement within a new performance framework

The effective use of robust data is essential to all our recommendations. It will allow individual schools and the partnership to identify and agree priorities and take appropriate action.

Good analysis of data can allow education providers to:

• Identify good practice
• Identify under-performance in schools, individual pupils and groups of children (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, SEND, economic disadvantage, ability and in specific subject areas and classes)
• Put in place and monitor support and interventions to address under-performance
• Plan strategically to improve outcomes - school ready, life ready and work ready
• Encourage schools and colleges to share data to facilitate knowledge transfer and the sharing of effective practice

The Commission recommends that the new education partnership:

• Considers how it sources and commissions the development of a more effective data analysis function for Oldham schools
• Develops proposals and protocols for sharing and using data so that head teachers have confidence in the new system and agree to share data for their own school or college
• Provides appropriate training for those who use education data

The proposals and protocols will include:

• Shared and transparent performance targets and success measures for children and young people’s outcomes - both for individual education providers and for the borough as a whole. These would include regular monitoring of the progress of under-performing groups as well as headline achievement measures
• Mutual arrangements for sharing and managing data and information, including any IT platforms or software used jointly for this purpose
• Agreed performance monitoring arrangements to meet the needs of the decision-makers
• The content, format and frequency of jointly developed performance monitoring reports
• Common timescales for key data collection points

Recommendation seven:
Educational Leadership in Oldham

The Commission recognises that transformation will be driven by high quality leadership both in schools and colleges. Oldham’s new Education Partnership will support and promote clear progression pathways to encourage existing and future educational professionals to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise in educational leadership, and to be ready for promotion to key roles within schools and within the local school system. Its programmes will embrace the full spectrum of educational leadership development from curriculum and pedagogic innovations, strategic approaches to efficient and effective organisational management, to mentoring and coaching support, to a broader understanding of education in a social, economic and political context.

Education leaders first responsibility is to their own school but Oldham leaders will also contribute to the new arrangements by:

• Helping to shape Oldham’s new system through sharing information, innovation and effective practice
• Working with schools and education providers in putting ‘The Oldham Offer’ into practice
• Making full use of professional development, including national training programmes (e.g. Future Leaders and Teaching Leaders) as well as postgraduate research and development projects and accreditation (e.g. Masters and Doctoral qualifications)
• Supporting the development of their colleagues as new and emerging education leaders, enabling career pathways to develop and be responsive to diverse goals
• Working collaboratively with Oldham educational professionals to put in place effective succession planning for within school roles
• Benefiting from and contributing to independent research located in University-led research and practice
• Building upon the great achievements that exist by contributing to the identification and celebration of success e.g. raising the profile and extending the scope of the annual Oldham Education Excellence Awards

Recommendation eight:
The Oldham Offer *

The Oldham Teacher

Great education starts with high quality teaching. The Commission recommends that existing teachers in Oldham, and newly qualified teachers looking for their first opportunity, can expect:

• Opportunities to research, reflect, experiment, improve practice and build subject knowledge
• Access to comprehensive and high quality professional development opportunities, throughout their career, including personalised induction, career planning, coaching, MA/PhD and accredited CPD options
Encouragement, shared learning and support from colleagues through coaching and mentoring, teach meets and subject networks

Support and capacity building from Specialist Leaders of Education, Local Leaders of Education, National Leaders of Education, Teaching Schools, Education and Training Foundation, National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education and other expert practitioners

Access to and involvement in high quality, university research and development of evidence-based practice

To benefit from contributing to Oldham’s new self-improving system and place-based curriculum

A focus upon the best practice regarding professional standards for vocational education

An Oldham Teacher will be expected to:

Take an interest in the education of all children in Oldham schools by sharing skills and knowledge with others and developing best practice

Support the development and delivery of the Oldham Curriculum, enabling all children to be school ready, life ready and work ready

Take responsibility for their own professional development

Given the opportunities in Oldham we hope that teachers would consider career progression within Oldham in the first instance

In order to support teacher recruitment and retention in the Borough, the Commission recommends that the Council and its partners should explore ways in which teachers can be attracted to come to work in Oldham - this might include key worker housing provision and incentives put forward by its business partners.

Recommendation nine
Partnerships with organisations external to Oldham

One of the challenges facing Oldham is a lack of capacity to drive improvement. In the Commission’s summary of its analysis of performance data earlier in this report the connection was made between the low proportion of the borough’s secondary schools judged to be good or outstanding and the impact this has on the capability of a self-improving system. Whilst it is important to build capacity within the local education system, it is also important to develop links with good practice and evidence based research from further afield.

The Commission recommends that the new education partnership develops relationships with the following:

National organisations, including
• The Sutton Trust
• The Education Endowment Foundation
• Teach First
• Teaching Leaders
• Future Leaders

Regionally-based organisations, including
• Teaching School Alliances
• Multi Academy Trusts
• Universities
• Other local authorities

Recommendation ten:
Sharing best practice

‘Does Oldham know what Oldham knows?’ has become something of a mantra for the Commission, not just in terms of data and information, but also in reference to the vast amount of good and best practice the Commission has seen across the borough. It is only through sharing and replicating that practice that the whole system will improve.

The Commission recommends:

• The introduction of a register of quality assured local best practice which is regularly updated
• A programme of excellence visits and dissemination events so that schools within the local system continuously benefit from sharing and developing best practice within and beyond the borough
• An annual publication of case studies which are judged to be ‘best in Oldham’ should be used to recognise and promote high standards in the borough and enhance and raise the profile of Oldham’s Annual Education Excellence Awards event
• Consideration is given to aligning the Education Excellence Awards with other prestigious awards events such as Pride in Oldham, Oldham Business Awards and Oldham Sports Awards. This would further increase the profile of education and signify the importance that needs to be given to making ‘education everyone’s business’
Levering in the co-operative contribution

Recommendation eleven: Making Education ‘everyone’s business’

The aspiration for Oldham to be a co-operative borough where everyone contributes and everyone benefits resonates profoundly with the Commission’s vision for the local education system. The Commission is attracted by the notion that education can and should be ‘everyone’s business’.

The Commission notes the success of the Get Oldham Working campaign that has successfully engaged a wide range of employers, employment and skills providers in getting over 2000 people into a job, skills provision or work experience.

The Commission recommends that:

• A series of high profile public campaigns are launched to embed the notion that ‘education is everyone’s business’

• The campaign needs to be owned and driven by the new education partnership and, on its simplest level, it needs to enthuse everyone in Oldham to get involved in some way in helping to achieve higher quality education

The earlier these campaigns begin, the more impact there will be on educational outcomes. An example of this approach could be a high profile Get Oldham Reading campaign. Analysis of data shows that Oldham children under-perform in reading against national benchmarks. Get Oldham Reading could involve schools, libraries, parents, businesses, sports and arts organisations together with anyone who wants to make a difference to reading standards in Oldham.

Case Study two: Holy Cross Primary School and First Choice Homes Oldham

At Holy Cross Primary, we place a large emphasis on engaging positively with our community and local agencies and establishments to secure positive outcomes for our pupils and families. We place special focus on trying to provide enriching opportunities and experiences that we feel perhaps our families wouldn’t necessarily get in their everyday lives. As well as the academic rewards that this brings, we feel it also helps to build self-esteem and a holistic feeling of value and positivity.

Our partnership with First Choice Homes and their facilitation of publishing our pupils’ writing and art works into a tangible book that the pupils can take home and keep was incredibly powerful as it motivated our children into writing for a real audience and real purpose.

The feedback school received from our parents was simply wonderful, and certainly the children were thrilled with the end result – they can now say they are published authors and artists, and this is incredibly exciting. As a school community, we feel very grateful that we have been able to establish and maintain sustainable links that have a genuine positive impact for all those involved.

Paul Wardle, Headteacher of Holy Cross Primary School

Year 4 pupils from Holy Cross Primary School Oldham were given the opportunity to become published authors and artists, with the publication of a book containing two stories ‘The Journey Home’ and ‘Mr Collin Beetleman’s Big Adventure’, written and illustrated by the children.

Designed as a way of exploring Oldham’s culture and heritage and each child’s personal family history, the book was produced with the help of a visual artist, who worked with children, parents and carers on the project over the course of the year. Children also visited Gallery Oldham as part of their research, which is where the idea for the owl came from as it features large in the town’s history and identity.

The book was funded through First Choice Homes Oldham’s New Innovations Fund.

Dave Smith, Customer First Director, FCHO, said: “The children were excited, in awe and proud, and so were we. To be there at the moment they saw the finished book of their work for the first time was an honour and a privilege. The children and their families have a wonderful book which they can not only be immensely proud of, but I’m sure will be well read for generations to come”.
The Oldham Governor

School Governance and the Oldham Governor

The role of the school and college governor is a critical one, not only in terms of the educational landscape, but as a social and civic responsibility. Oldham has more than 1,200 governors who dedicate their time, experience and energy on a voluntary basis.

Feedback from governors has told the Commission that the role is often more testing than they expected and in particular that there is a large amount of high-level data and information that they are expected to understand and retain. Whilst take up for formal training is high (with 95% of schools buying in training from the local authority), governors do not always feel that they are fully equipped to fulfil the role of both challenging and supporting school leaders on the outcomes for pupils in schools.

Recommendation twelve:

School Governance and the Oldham Governor

The Commission recommends that a clear and easily understood framework is drawn up in support of a governor’s Gold Standard for Oldham. This will be the Oldham Offer to governors.

Oldham education governors should expect:

• Induction support and accredited training within the first twelve months of taking on the role
• Support and mentoring toward progressing to Local Leader of Governance (LLG), and then National Leader of Governance (NLG) status
• Support for new Chairs of Governors, including an assigned NLG mentor
• Opportunities to share good practice via Oldham’s governor network

In return, governors will be expected to:

• Attend governing body and sub-committees as fully as possible
• Participate in induction activity within the first twelve months and participate in ongoing training
• Provide both challenge and support to school leaders
• Attend the annual Oldham governors’ conference
• Contribute to the improvement of outcomes for all children and young people in Oldham through supporting school collaborative arrangements

In order to support The Oldham Offer to governors, the Commission further recommends that:

• The Governor’s Data Group work with Governor Services to ensure that school performance data provided to governing bodies is relevant and easy to understand
• A centrally-held database be developed to include all governor vacancies and record of service of governors. This would be part of a strengthened Governor’s network, which would facilitate support, shared learning and access to National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) and Local Leaders of Governance (LLG)
• In addition to assigning an NLG mentor to all new Chairs of Governors, where a school is OFSTED rated as Requires Improvement or Inadequate, the Chair of Governors should also receive immediate NLG mentoring support, making use of not just Oldham’s four NLGs but the thirty in Greater Manchester, and 56 in the North West
• A high-profile recruitment drive be instigated, working in particular with the Local Authority, NHS and other large employers in Oldham to encourage (and perhaps incentivise) staff members to volunteer as school governors
Case Study three:

**Being a governor for Oldham Sixth Form College**

I find serving as a governor at the College extremely rewarding: I gain insights into education and into my home town that I couldn’t get elsewhere, and realise I have still have much to learn. I also feel able to apply knowledge gained in my professional capacity to support the College’s strategic aims well beyond merely signposting learners looking to study at university. It genuinely feels like both parties benefit from our relationship.

**Mike Gibbons**, Director of Student Recruitment and International Development, University of Manchester, and Governor of OSFC

Oldham Sixth Form College has benefitted from the University of Manchester’s School Governor Initiative (UMSGI), which provides opportunities and support for staff across the University and the University’s alumni community, to become local authority or community governors.

When we approached the University, our first question was to ask whether there was anyone on the database who had a link to Oldham in some way. We were really lucky to receive an expression of interest from Mike Gibbons, Director of Student Recruitment and International Development. Mike comes from Oldham and still has many family connections here. He was keen to support the College personally and professionally and, of course, we have significant numbers of students progressing from OSFC to the University each year, including via the Manchester Access Programme (MAP), which supports progression amongst students currently under-represented in HE.

Mike is a fantastic governor, with a great understanding of our key issues and areas of work. He has brought a wide range of skills and knowledge to the governing body and we have benefitted enormously from his input on the full range of issues. Mike also ensures we are fully aware of all the opportunities the University has to offer to sixth formers. This, in turn, means our students are even better placed in terms of awareness of progression routes and experiences that can enhance their chances of successful applications to the University of Manchester. I think it is a mutually beneficial relationship too, as Mike also has a first-hand insight into how we operate.

The UMSGI scheme has been nationally recognised and won the 2014 Times Higher Education Supplement award for Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community.

**Jayne Clarke**, Principal of OSFC
**Recommendation thirteen: Early Years and School Readiness**

The Commission supports Oldham’s adoption and implementation of the Greater Manchester New Early Years Delivery Model: 8-stage assessment model (branded locally as ‘Right Start’), as a vehicle for integrating children’s early year’s services. The Commission also recommends the following:

- Working relationships between schools, children’s centres and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers should be improved, encouraging children’s centres and PVI providers to join and work collaboratively within Early Years networks and Primary Collaboratives, in order to improve children’s readiness for school:
- Schools and PVI providers should work more closely together to share expertise and develop shared practices, so that they can work in partnership with parents, particularly at points of transition in order to sustain children’s progress and ensure continuity of experience from pre-school to school:
- The OSA Early Years Hub should convene a stakeholders group of PVI providers, children’s centres, health colleagues and local authority Early Years officers to develop an agreed definition and description of ‘School Readiness’. This will unify Oldham’s diverse early years services by providing a common language and framework for understanding and promoting school readiness with families and across early years services:
- Schools and PVI providers should improve partnership with parents and carers to support their child’s development by including them in their child’s reviews and assessments. Information gathered from reviews and assessments for children between age 0 and 5 should be shared with parents and carers and should inform discussions about their child’s progress. This will help to identify any problems early and contribute to a development plan where progress is not at expected levels.

**Case Study four: The REAL programme – Roundthorn Primary School**

The REAL programme, although costly to school, has a huge impact on the level of development of the children and in their progress from entry. The children are able to transfer the skills learnt at home into the classroom environment. Their listening, communication and social skills improve which inevitably has an impact on their overall development. Most children reach age related expectations in the three prime areas by the end of nursery with the greatest amount of progress being made in the term they are engaged in the programme.

Lisa Needham, Executive Principal Focus Trust

The REAL programme - Raising Achievement in Literacy - is based on four strands of learning: books, oral language, environmental print and mark-making. Activities are tailor-made to meet the needs of the individual children and might include a trip to the library, coaching parents in reading books to their children, rhymes and songs and mark-making using different mediums such as paint, flour and water.

The programme aims to improve children’s progress in early language, literacy and social development so that the child is confident, engaged and ready for learning. The programme endeavours to ensure that the children develop a secure grounding in the three prime areas of learning. It also gives parents and carers the tools to enhance the work done in school.

The programme is delivered in the child’s home and encourages parents to engage in their child’s learning. Children are identified through home visit and pre-entry assessment, with the majority who take part in the programme being below age related expectations in Personal and Social Communication, and Language and Physical Development, tending to display extremely low levels of confidence, reluctance to engage in conversation with peers or adults, limited language and social skills and poor listening skills. Some children are from families who are already involved with outside agencies.

Full parental engagement is critical and parents must commit to all the in home learning, group workshops and group visits. The school supplies resources and workshops to enable parents to utilise things already found in the environment in their child’s learning. The programme is also very beneficial to the parents who grow in confidence, accept and act upon advice more readily and are less isolated from other families within the community.

One parent stated: “I love the things my son has done, he is more confident with other people and he is so happy”.

Lisa Needham, Executive Principal Focus Trust
Recommendation fourteen:
The Oldham Offer

The Oldham Parent

The role of parents and carers as educators cannot be overstated. There is overwhelming evidence that children achieve better outcomes if their parents and carers value education and are learners themselves.

Building on existing home-school agreements and the existing good practice demonstrated by the Oldham All Service Parental and Young Persons Engagement Values, the Commission recommends that ‘The Oldham Parent’ should expect:

- Support, skills development and mentoring for new and soon-to-be parents including adopting and foster parents
- Easily understood reports from early years’ providers, schools and colleges in relation to their child’s progress and development, particularly in communicating the outcomes of assessments and examinations
- Regular communication of positive feedback, good news and successes
- To be encouraged and supported as learners themselves:

In return, Oldham expects the Oldham parent and carer to:

- Talk and listen to their child
- Value all of their achievements – whether small or great
- Ensure that their child is school ready
- Ensure that their child is always ready to learn, strives for full attendance, and arrives on time to school and for lessons
- Take responsibility for their child’s behaviour
- Ensure that their child completes homework when set
- Actively participate in school activities that provide feedback about their child’s learning
- Informs the school if there is anything that might affect their child’s learning
- Ask the school for help and support when needed

Case Study five:

Involving parents
Pupil driven review – Saddleworth School

The basic principle behind our Pupil Drive Review days is to give every child in our school a chance for his or her voice to be heard.

Matthew Milburn, Headteacher, Saddleworth School

Saddleworth School has introduced a pioneering programme of ‘Pupil Driven Review’ (PDR) as part of its annual reporting practice. PDR is designed to give children the opportunity to express their aspirations and ambitions, reflect on their own personal strengths and challenges, and contribute to their own educational and social development.

Students are asked to put forward five things they are proud of and five things they have achieved during the year. They are also asked to reflect on their learning and progress, and to consider what they would like to achieve in the year to come. Pupils in Year 7 are asked to respond as an extended essay. Year 8 pupils are asked to write a 2000 word assessment, and to reflect on their preparations for GCSEs. Year 10 pupils are asked to consider the important year ahead and their options for college and further education.

Parents, carers and families are all engaged in the review process, and encouraged to support students to contribute to the reviews.

They are then invited in to school, where the student makes a presentation to their families, teachers and peers.

‘The quality of presentations is exceptionally high’, explains Mr Milburn. For some parents, the reviews are a highly emotive experience, and many teachers describe seeing the presentations as the highlight of their year. It is wonderful to see the confidence and enthusiasm of our students and how eloquently they talk about their feelings and experiences.

Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive, recognising the positivity of the sessions and the deeper insight they are given into their children’s education.

This year, one parent commented: ‘It was lovely to see how our daughter has grown in confidence over the year and to hear her talk so enthusiastically about her learning and life at school. The hour felt like a real celebration of her achievements.’
Recommendation fifteen: Community, parental and family learning

The Commission recognises the potential for community learning to contribute to improved parenting – both through providing classes and mentoring in parenting skills, particularly to new or inexperienced parents but also the opportunity to engage parents as learners, to inspire parents about learning and to create a family and home environment where learning is valued.

It is recommended that a review of current community, family and parental learning is undertaken, including that which is directly provided by schools.

This should have the following objectives:

• Mapping provision
• Identifying and sharing good practice
• Evaluating the impact of provision on both adult and children’s learning
• Identifying gaps in provision
• Identifying funding opportunities
• Identifying opportunities for the involvement of other partners e.g. housing partners

Recommendation sixteen: Extended use of school premises

Given the significant investment in new school buildings in Oldham over the past few years, it is important that good use is made of them as hubs for their communities.

The Commission recommends:

• Assessing the extent to which school buildings are utilised by the community and how access might be improved. However, it is also recognized that the core function of schools is the education of their pupils, so the review should focus on those community-based activities which support children’s achievement, such as parental and family learning.
Aligning education with the economy

A key aspect of the Commission’s initial brief was to include an analysis of skills and economic alignment in its assessment of educational provision and performance. The importance of this aspect of the Commission’s work cannot be underestimated. Oldham’s economic performance, within the City Region of Greater Manchester, is immensely challenging, but full of opportunity. The economic structure of the town continues to be largely manufacturing based, but its future is increasingly dependent on shaping its relationship to the wider City Region, which continues to move rapidly toward a post-industrial services based growth.

The role of education and skills within this context is widely regarded as critical. The labour market rewards for those with higher skills are significant and future economic growth, it is widely assumed, depends on improved productivity which, in turn, is dependent on the supply of skills. This does not mean that the education and skills system should only be viewed from the perspective of meeting the immediate demands of employers today. The role of the education and skills system is broader than this. It includes developing the rounded skills of citizens. And some young people, growing up and acquiring an education in Oldham, will develop their future careers elsewhere in the global economy. However, a significant number of Oldhamer’s grow up, live and work within either the town or the wider City Region, and understanding the contribution which improvements in achievement and skills levels has to play in securing the present and future economic wellbeing of the town is essential.

Although the rationale for including economic alignment within the scope of the Commission is compelling, further exploration of the issue opens up far more questions than answers. First, the relationship between improved educational outcomes and the economic benefits which follow from this is complex. Second, shortly after the Commission was appointed, the “rules of the game” - at least in relation to the “adult skills” element of the picture - changed dramatically, as it was included within the first phase of devolution. In embracing and addressing these two issues, the Commission has begun to frame an analysis of education and skills in relation to economic alignment, and this has been sufficient to shape a set of practical recommendations but also identifies some important issues that require further work.

The analysis

The most recent economic analyses of city growth undertaken by the City Growth Commission\(^1\) in 2014 emphasises that skills are undoubtedly a key factor in driving economic growth, but that they are only effective when placed within a wider strategy where the “supply” of skills is matched by growing demand for them and expertise in terms of how they are effectively applied in workplaces. It proceeds to identify a number of areas of skills “mismatch” within the economy: the oft cited “skills shortage” when employers are unable to obtain the skills they require, is the smallest of these and usually temporary, and to some degree
resolved through market forces; skills “gaps”, which occur within firms and are key to improving productivity; and finally, underutilisation, where firms design jobs which do not sufficiently use an employee’s skills (conversely these employees can be described as being overqualified).

The Core Cities Report\(^2\) is encouraging about the potential for resolving these skills and growth issues, and about the future growth of British cities. There is no specific analysis of Manchester from the perspective of the report, but Manchester is part of the Core Cities group and its potential for growth is especially encouraging. Within Greater Manchester, there is considerable evidence to demonstrate the nature of the demand for skills across different sectors, and an especially strong emphasis on the importance of higher level skills to future growth. The main analysis of growth and skills specific to the City Region continues to be the Manchester Independent Economic Review\(^3\).

It describes the link between high skills and the growth of the City in terms of the “escalator” effect (the opportunity for career progression and lifestyle choice for the higher skilled) and the “fountain effect” (the relocation of higher skilled individuals to new areas of the City, as growth accelerates). The extent to which Oldham has or will benefit from either of these processes is not well understood.

When the long term (over the length of a decade rather than shorter) is considered, the relationship between improved educational attainment and improved economic outcomes is not clear. Data considered by the Commission for the period from 2003-2013, shows a general upward trend in educational performance at all Key Stages (2, 4 and 5). At each of these stages, over that decade, performance improved faster than the national and Greater Manchester averages. Although the picture has changed more recently, the overall trajectory has been positive. This may be expected given the number and range of improvement initiatives which took place during this period, and the investment in education which has been significant.

However, the Commission also considered a range of indicators relating to adult skills, employment and economic wellbeing. The indicators for the levels of adult skills are much less encouraging than for younger people. The majority of Oldham adults continue to have qualifications no higher than Level 2, and the improvement in this figure was negligible over the decade examined. The number of Oldham residents with degree level qualifications was also a concern. Although improvements were evident, the gap between Oldham and boroughs such as Trafford and Stockport remained large.

The level of adult skills is a legacy of longer term underachievement in school dating back over a period of decades, and the level of adult skills will also be determined by the patterns of movement in and out of the borough. Further analysis, for example, is needed to understand the patterns of progression to degree level skills in Oldham, to understand whether part of the problem is that those who acquire them tend to leave and not return. Similarly, further analysis is needed to understand whether new arrivals into the borough tend to have lower levels of qualifications.

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1. Final Recommendations of the City Growth Commission October 2014 www.citygrowthcommission.com
It is clear however; that there is an anomaly – with the rate and levels of qualifications among young people improving, but those of the adult population remaining relatively static. It is also evident that any improvements in terms of skills and qualifications acquisition appear to have had little impact on closing the gap in economic performance as compared to Greater Manchester and the UK. Among adults, there continues to be a significant gap between local skills levels and those required to obtain well paid employment in Greater Manchester.

Analysing and understanding the complex range of factors – both educational and economic – which sit behind this picture, is a key concern for the Commission but not one which it can do justice to in its First Report. At the same time as the Commission began to address these themes, the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement was announced (November 2014). It includes, within its scope, the budget for adult skills (19 plus non apprenticeship activity) and a wider commitment to reshape further education provision to better meet the needs of the economy. The Commission considered some of the early work of the devolution strategic analysis, which has included understanding the impact of the adult skills spend. This is primarily focussed on vocational routes back into education for those over 19, or for those who have started but not finished a programme before they were 19, as well as employment programmes and work with employers. From this initial analysis a number of key findings have emerged -

There are a series of immediately identifiable inefficiencies in the education and skills system which need to be understood and resolved. These include -

- A skills underutilisation in Greater Manchester and Oldham, with over a third of unemployed residents who already have qualifications to Level 3
- The high proportion of 16 year olds who leave school without the required levels of skill in English and Maths
- The number of young people who opt for the wrong course, or change course at 17 or 18 thereby costing themselves time and the system money
- The high proportion of young people who have not completed a Level 3 qualification by 19, and therefore depend on additional “adult” funding to complete their programme
- The relatively low number of adults returning to education in Oldham and progressing to higher level (Level 3-4) skills
- The number of adults engaged in learning, but at relatively low levels with inadequate progression

However, there are also some more challenging questions to consider. The Commission did briefly consider the wider views expressed by employers about the skills and education system. This is not a simple task, as there is no consensus. The most comprehensive employer survey, and the most independent, is undertaken annually by UKCES which reports relatively high levels of satisfaction from employers in terms of young people recruited from school, but more particularly college. There is a markedly higher rate of satisfaction with 19 year olds than 16 years olds - which in large part reflects the changing role of “soft skills” in the labour market. Other employer surveys, most notably the Institute of Directors and the CBI, tend to be more critical. The views of the CBI are particularly challenging, because their view (July 2015) is that there is a fundamental mismatch between the school system and the economy, because of the low status of vocational education compared to academic.

Their view is that this has become more marked through recent curriculum reforms, and their conclusion is that the only solution is to abolish GCSE examinations. They also include the Inspection regime within their critique, arguing that it is overly driven by data and performance and not enough by innovation and content.

The Commission is not in a position to advocate a solution of the type suggested by the CBI, but does consider that there is merit in further work to examine the role and status of vocational education within Oldham and the links between this and improved economic outcomes. Again, it has considered some of the early themes emerging in the devolution analysis, and their relevance to Oldham, in forming its view. Although focussed on adult education and skills (post 19) these indicate -

- There is a very close interdependency between 16-18 programmes and the focus of adult skills spending. Vocational programmes for 16 plus students are generally well aligned with the growth sectors of the economy and are successful in developing skills at the right levels
- However, vocational options, both for adults and young people are very closely associated with “second chance” provision – i.e. a “choice” made when other routes have not worked out. Learners typically commence with low levels of numeracy and literacy. Vocational options can be very effective in helping them find new skills and options for developing a career

4. Employer Perspectives Survey 2014
5. www.news.cbi.org.uk/news/an-education-system-that-works-for-all
Recommendation seventeen:  
An independent review of vocational education  
The Commission recommends an independent commissioned review of vocational education in Oldham, including pre and post 16 routes and pathways. This will influence and shape the future of provision in the town and Oldham’s position in relation to the further development of devolution.  
The review should include -  
• Consideration of employer perspectives  
• Review of role and parity of vocational options within Oldham  
• Characteristics of best practice  
• Facilities  
• Appropriate high quality independent advice and guidance/careers education

Recommendation eighteen:  
Improving higher skills  
The Commission also recommends improving the number of residents with higher level skills (Level 4 and above) including:  
• Increasing the number of young people progressing to university, apprenticeship or foundation degree  
• Developing an improved route/series of pathways for adults returning to education, to progress from Level 2 to higher skills via degree, apprenticeships or foundation degrees.

Recommendation nineteen:  
Addressing worklessness  
The Commission recommends that new solutions to worklessness are developed, removing barriers to education and employment by:  
• Reviewing the use of existing programmes, including community learning, adult budgets and European Social Funds, as well as the Work Programme and related initiatives, to improve routes into education and employment  
• Engaging wider public and voluntary agencies to support positive progression and ensure appropriate social support is in place to maximise success.

Next steps

If this report is to have the impact we hope, there must be clarity about how the recommendations are taken forward. Existing organisations together with the new schools-led partnership recommended in this report will have the main responsibility for driving change.  
It is important that the people who will lead the change also lead the debate about what happens next and set out the steps to be taken. We don’t underestimate the work this will involve and everyone will need to play their part, but the prize of improved life chances, stronger communities and a thriving borough are ones that make it worthwhile. The Commission is confident that Oldham’s education service can be better than it is and that there is the talent and expertise in the borough to begin this journey of change.  
The Commission thinks that it would be helpful to review progress in the autumn of 2017 and looks forward to doing so.
Acknowledgements

The Commission is grateful for the evidence it has received from:

New Economy, Oldham Youth Council, GM Chamber of Commerce
The Tutor Trust, Regenda Housing, Positive Steps, Voluntary Action Oldham

Diocese and Academy Sponsors:
Matthew Milburn, Saddleworth School
Oldham Council: School Improvement, Lifelong Learning and Early Years teams

The Commission would like to thank all of the headteachers, governors, teachers and young people who took part in the ‘Grow’ campaign and completed online surveys. In particular, the Chair and Commissioners wish to thank those colleagues and young people who have hosted visits to:

Blessed John Henry Newman RC College
The Blue Coat School
Collective Spirit Free School
Crompton House CE School
The Kingfisher Community Special School
North Chadderton School
Oasis Academy Oldham
Oasis Academy Limeside
The Oldham Academy North
Oldham College
Oldham Sixth Form College
Richmond Primary School
Roundthorn Community Primary School
Saddleworth School
Stoneleigh Academy
Westwood Academy
Whitegate End Primary School
Handsworth Grange College, Sheffield
Shirebrook Academy, Mansfield

The Commission wishes to thank colleagues at Liverpool Education Partnership and Tower Hamlets for sharing learning and good practice, Tunafish Media for its delivery of the ‘Grow’ campaign, the Oldham Schools Alliance and the Oldham Association of Secondary Heads and Principals for giving over so much of its conference time, agendas and energy to the Commission’s work over the past eighteen months and to the support team, including Rosie Clayton, Education Advisor and Oldham Council’s Communications Team.
Education Provision in Oldham

Oldham is home to 57,168 children and young people aged 0-17. This is 25.1% of the borough’s population. The local authority currently commissions 16 children’s centres that are delivered on a district basis across the borough. There are 177 registered child minders, 88 day care providers across the private and voluntary sectors, and 4 independent nurseries.

A total of 110 providers deliver education for the compulsory years. There are 85 primary schools (73 maintained, 9 academies and 3 independent), 18 secondary schools (5 maintained, 7 academies, 1 Free School, 1 University Technical College and 4 independent), 5 special schools (2 maintained, 2 academies and 1 independent) and a Pupil Referral Unit. Oldham has one sixth form college which is also home to the Regional Science Centre.

In recent years there has been considerable pressure on primary school places which has prompted a number of school expansion projects and the creation of a new three-form entry primary school in the town centre. Despite this, the percentage of primary school surplus places is just over 2%; well below the national benchmark of 5 – 8%. The pressure on school places is set to impact on secondary schools from 2018. There is also rising demand for specialist provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Oldham has one further education college and a ‘satellite’ higher education campus. The following paragraphs provide data and explanations concerning education in Oldham.

1 – Performance

In order to assess the current performance of educational institutions in Oldham this document aims to compare the most recent available indicators of school and pupil performance in Oldham with data from previous years to identify trends in performance over time. It is also important to compare Oldham’s performance with relevant benchmarks such as the national (state funded providers in England) average and the average of Greater Manchester Local Authorities. As educational attainment is strongly linked to socio-economic factors, perhaps the most useful comparison is to those local authorities across the country with similar demographics to Oldham (known as Statistical Neighbours) which should give a more informative picture of Oldham’s performance, given the higher than average levels of deprivation in the borough.

Since Oldham strives to have the best standards of education it is also useful to determine if it is inside the top 25% performing Local Authorities in England. The upper quartile value denotes the boundary above which sit the top 25%, so where Oldham’s performance is above this mark, it is in the top quarter of Local Authorities. The following sections highlight the relevant data in each Key Stage making where appropriate the above comparisons.

1 Ofsted Judgements

The performance, as assessed under the Ofsted framework, of Oldham’s schools is slightly below the national average, with 78% judged to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ compared to 82% nationally and this has remained consistent over recent years. There is a very different trend between primary and secondary school performance as shown by Figure 1 which compares Ofsted judgements for Oldham’s primary and secondary schools to the national averages in September 2015.

![Figure 1: Ofsted Judgements for Overall Effectiveness of Schools (Sep 2015)](http://www.watchsted.com/tables)

The primary sector has improved in recent years, with 87% of schools now gaining ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ ratings compared to 74% in August 2011. This means that Oldham is 2 percentage points above the national average of 85% good and outstanding schools. In contrast, secondary school inspection outcomes have been largely unchanged and the sector remains below the national average of 74%.

Two of Oldham’s special schools are judged to be outstanding. Its school for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties requires improvement. The borough’s Pupil Referral Unit is judged to be good.

2 – Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Oldham enter the education system with lower levels of development than their peers nationally and this is generally the case in local authorities with higher than average levels of deprivation such as Oldham.

Before primary school, children are assessed under the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP). Figure 2 shows that 52% of children in Oldham achieved the benchmark ‘Good Level of Development’ in 2013-14, which was below the national average of 60% and Greater Manchester average of 56%, but only just below the average of boroughs with similar demographics to Oldham (Statistical Neighbours)\(^7\).

Provisional data from 2014-15 indicates that the number achieving a Good Level of Development increased by 5 percentage points to 57%, but this mirrors a similar rise across the country and means that Oldham has remained consistently around 9 percentage points below the national average over the three years of the new profile\(^8\). The Early Years Foundation Stage was revised in September 2012 and the introduction of a new Profile means that results from before 2013 are not comparable to the current data.

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3 – Key Stage 1

Children enter Reception at a lower level of development and this is reflected in performance during Key Stage 1. Figure 3 shows that in 2013-14, 70% of Oldham’s pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, which is lower than the national average of 74% and the statistical neighbours’ average of 73%. Oldham has had a continuous increase over the last three years from 51% in 2011-12 to 70% in 2013-14, which is in line with the similar increases across statistical neighbours and national figures.

By the end of Year 2 (7 years old), Oldham’s Key Stage 1 data, which measures where children are in their reading, writing and maths, shows that children on average are consistently below national, Greater Manchester and statistical neighbour levels. 87% of pupils in Oldham achieved a Level 2 or above in reading, 84% achieve Level 2+ in writing and 89% in maths. Results have improved in line with improvements across the country in recent years, but have remained around three percentage points below the national average in all three areas.
4 – Key Stage 2

Oldham’s Key Stage 2 attainment has matched or bettered local and national standards over the last few years, which indicates that pupils make high levels of progress during Key Stage 2 from below average attainment at EYFS and Key Stage 1 to matching national levels at the end of Key Stage 2.

Figure 4 displays Key Stage 2 results for the combined measure of Reading, Writing and Maths as a percentage of children achieving Level 4 or better (solid lines, left hand axis) and Level 5 or better (dashed lines, right hand axis) over the last 6 years.

Provisional 2014-15 results in Oldham match the national performance for Level 4+ at 80% and better that of the statistical neighbour average of 78%, but are slightly below the Greater Manchester average of 81% and the upper quartile value of 82%. Level 4+ results in Oldham are slightly better relative to national figures in maths than they are in reading and writing.

Oldham performs less well in terms of children achieving Level 5 or better with 22% of children achieving the measure in 2014-15. Whilst this is above the statistical neighbour average of 21%, it is below the England and Greater Manchester averages (both 24%) and top quartile of 26%. Again Level 5+ results are better in maths relative to the national average than they are in the other two areas.

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5 – Key Stage 4

5.1 GCSE Attainment

Over the last five years GCSE attainment in Oldham has remained consistently below the national and Greater Manchester averages but is in line with the statistical neighbour average. Figure 5 displays the percentage of children gaining five or more A*-C grades including English and maths (left hand axis, solid lines) and the difference in attainment between Oldham and the national average (right hand axis, dashed lines).

In 2013-14 52.4% of pupils in Oldham achieved the benchmark measure compared to 56.8% nationally, 56.2% across Greater Manchester and 51.9% amongst statistical neighbours. This puts Oldham 4.4 percentage points behind the national average and this deficit in relation to national has been increasing since 2010-11 when it was 2.3 points. Similarly, whilst Oldham is above the average of its Statistical Neighbours, the margin has reduced over recent years.

GCSE attainment figures across the country dropped in 2013-14 as a result of a change in which results count in these statistics (Wolf reforms) and a reduced weighting given to non-GCSE qualifications.

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9. N.B. Writing results from 2013 onwards are from Teacher assessments.

10. DfE: Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England 2013 to 2014

11. N.B. Data from 2013-14 onward shows students’ first examination entries only, rather than Summer results from year eleven, where students have been entered early for some subjects.
5.2 – Pupil Progress (Key Stages 2-4)

Another measure of secondary school performance is the progress made by pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4. The current benchmark of expected progress is three or more levels of progress, which for a pupil achieving Level 4 at KS2 means achieving a C or better at GCSE. By this measure Oldham is performing below national, local and statistical neighbour averages in both English and maths. This is a product of the fact that Oldham performs above average for Level 4 attainment at KS2 and below average for attainment at GCSE.

Figure 6 shows that pupil progress for English over the last few years has been consistently behind the national and Greater Manchester averages, but has also fallen behind the statistical neighbours average. The gap narrowed in 2013-14 with Oldham on 67%, behind statistical neighbours on 68% and below the Greater Manchester (70%) and national (72%) averages.

Figure 7 shows that pupil progress for maths has followed a similar pattern to English. In 2013-14, 58% of pupils in Oldham made expected progress compared to 61% for statistical neighbours, 63% for Greater Manchester and 66% nationally. Attainment across the country was lower in 2013-14, but due to the reform of GCSEs, the data is not comparable to previous years.
6 – Key Stage 5

6.1 A-Levels

A-Level attainment in Oldham is in line with national averages, which, given that GCSE attainment is below national, means that A-Level students are making more progress than students nationally. Figure 8 displays the trend over the last few years for A-Level, Applied A-Level and Double Award A-Level students gaining at least 3 A*-E grades (solid lines, left hand axis) and students achieving grades AAB or better (dashed lines, right hand axis). Oldham is ranked in the top half of Local Authorities nationally.

80% gained three passes in 2013-14 compared to the national average of 78%, but slightly below the Greater Manchester average of 84% and top national quartile of 82%. The performance of Oldham’s higher ability students, (those achieving grades AAB), was 15% in 2013-14, slightly below national and local averages (both 16%). However, that figure is higher than that of demographically similar boroughs (13%).

Whilst the average points score per A-Level entry in Oldham (209.6) is slightly below the national average of 211.2, the average points score achieved by each student in Oldham (795.6) is above the national average of 772.89.

Progress at Key Stage 5 is measured by the value added score, which compares the progress of Oldham’s students with that of students nationally. Any score above 0 indicates that students are making greater levels of progress than the national average. Three out of the five A-level providers in Oldham have a positive score. On average across the borough Oldham’s A-Level students are outperforming the national average in terms of progress.

Vocational Qualifications

Vocational qualifications are an increasingly important element of education provision in Oldham with more students undertaking vocational courses in Oldham than is the case nationally. Whilst the average points score per student in Oldham (439.3) is below the national average (560.1), the average points score per vocational entry (212.2) is only just below the national average (216.6), which suggests that students in Oldham take fewer vocational courses from the outset. This may also explain the fact that fewer students achieve at least 2 substantial vocational qualifications in Oldham (48%) compared to nationally (66%) as shown by Figure 9.

As is the case with A-Levels, vocational attainment should be seen in the context of students’ starting point. As GCSE is below average in Oldham for attainment, progress is potentially a more useful measure to determine the quality of vocational education. More than half of vocational providers in Oldham have higher levels of progress than nationally with 2 out of 3 providers having a positive Value Added score.

7 – Underachieving Groups in Oldham

At each Key Stage in Oldham there are several demographic groups whose attainment is significantly lower than that of their peers. This attainment gap is often mirrored by a similar gap nationally. Figures 10 and 11 compare the attainment of these groups in Oldham with that of the same groups nationally in terms of the main benchmarks for Key Stage 2 and GCSEs to show which groups are underachieving more in Oldham. In the sections below, the performance gap of some of these groups at Key Stage 4 (the most important attainment stage for employability) is assessed.
Ethnicity

Table 1: Percentage of boys and girls achieving 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths in 2014 by ethnic group10,11

Attainment levels for pupils in ethnic minority groups at Key Stage 4 in Oldham are lower than those of white pupils in almost all cases. Table 1 shows the performance of GCSE students in Oldham in 2013-14 by ethnic group and gender compared to statistically neighbouring boroughs and ranks Oldham relative to those boroughs where 1 is the best performer and 11 is the worst.15, 16

Asian boys were the only ethnic minority group to match the attainment level of their white peers; Asian boys and white boys both achieved 47.1%. The attainment gap for ethnic minority girls when compared to white girls was much higher. Oldham pupils outperform the average of statistical neighbours in half of the ethnic minority categories; however Asian girls underachieve by 7 percentage points compared to the statistical neighbour average. Asian boys and black girls also fare less well than the statistical neighbours. Oldham pupils are behind the national average in every category especially for Asian girls and boys (attainment gap 14 and 10 percentage points lower than nationally respectively) and also “mixed” girls and boys (gap 10 points lower for both).

Figures 10 and 11 indicate that there is a larger attainment gap on average in Oldham compared to national for Bangladeshi pupils than is the case for Pakistani pupils. However progress data indicates that the gap for Bangladeshi pupils compared to national is starting to close.

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16. N.B. x denotes where figures are not available due to small dataset in order to protect confidentiality of pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Neighbour Average</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldham Rank amongst Statistical Neighbours</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England Average</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

White | Mixed | Asian | Black
7.2 Gender

Table 2: Percentage of young people achieving GCSEs and equivalent in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stage 4</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Neighbour</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear difference in attainment between boys and girls in Oldham which mirrors the national pattern. Table 2 shows that overall there is an 11.4 percentage point gap between boys and girls achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and maths in Oldham, a slightly wider gap than that seen nationally or in the statistical neighbours (10.1 points for both).

The gap in performance varies by ethnic group which is highlighted by Table 1, with girls outperforming boys in GCSEs by more than 10 percentage points in all of the categories of ethnicity except the Asian grouping. The gender gap is highest between white boys and girls, where it is 4 percentage points wider than the national or statistical neighbours average. The gap is narrowest between Asian boys and girls because the performance of girls is lower.

7.3 Disadvantaged Pupils

Pupils from deprived backgrounds also show an attainment gap to their peers both in Oldham and nationally. Figure 12 shows GCSE attainment for disadvantaged pupils over the last six years in terms of five A*-C grades including English and maths as well as the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils here refer to children who qualify for the Pupil Premium and includes children that have been eligible for free school meals at any time in the previous six years as well as children looked after by the local authority (LAC) for more than 6 months.

The trend in attainment over recent years is slightly below the national average but in line with the statistical neighbour average. In 2013-14, 33% of disadvantaged pupils in Oldham achieved the measure compared to 37% nationally.

A similar pattern emerges when considering only pupils currently eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). The gap of 26 percentage points between FSM and non-FSM pupils has been in line with national and statistical neighbour averages for the last few years.

Looked After Children (who are included in the data for disadvantaged/FSM pupils) have significantly lower attainment in Oldham than is the case nationally. Whilst the performance gap for Oldham FSM pupils in 2013-14 was almost 1.8 percentage points narrower than the national average, the gap for Looked After Children in Oldham for the same year was 3.4 points wider than the national average at 49 percentage points in Oldham and 45.6 points nationally. The attainment gap between LAC children and other children is the widest of all the underperforming groups in Oldham.
7.4 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) do not attain at the same levels as non-SEND pupils in Oldham schools. This attainment gap has recently narrowed in comparison with the national gap. Figure 13 displays the GCSE attainment of SEND children over the last six years in terms of the percentage achieving the benchmark of five A*-C grades including English and maths as well as the attainment gap between SEND and non-SEND pupils.

The trend in attainment is in line with national and similar borough averages, with 20.5% of Oldham SEND pupils achieving the measure in 2013-14, which is just below the national average of 21.8% and above the statistical neighbour average of 17%. The attainment gap between SEND and non-SEND pupils in Oldham has also remained consistent with national and statistical neighbour levels in recent years and in 2013-14 fell below the average national and statistical neighbour gap (both 43 percentage points) to 38 points.

There is rising demand for places in SEND schools. In April 2012 a study was carried out into special school provision which identified trends in needs and future demand for places. The study showed that in contrast to the rest of the country, statements of SEN in Oldham were increasing, with a particular growth in the numbers of pupils with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), social and emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and speech, language and communications needs (SLCN). New Bridge secondary special school was over number with the Kingfisher Primary Special School anticipated to be full by the end of 2013-14. The secondary SEBD provision was also full; whilst the Primary SEBD School, Spring Brook, had some surplus capacity, the numbers were slowly increasing and coupled with recognised delay in early diagnosis there was a projected future pressure on places. In reviewing the findings in 2013 the initial forecasts were holding true; the number of statements continued to increase in Oldham whilst remaining static in the North West and England.

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New Bridge remained full and has increased its PAN in 2015 by 10% to 330; despite this increase the school continues to accept admissions above the PAN. The numbers on role at Kingfisher have increased from 119 in Jan 12 to 135 in Jan 13 and 147 in January 2014. In September 2015 the NISP had increased to 157, with further applications for places. Demand for primary age places at the all through special school for children with SEMH (SEBD), Spring Brook, is increasing.

At the time of an application for a statutory/EHC needs assessment, the primary need is not always clear and is often identified as a result of the assessment process or from on-going assessment in the school setting. The table below shows the increase in applications for statutory/EHC needs assessment for children with an identified SEN with primary needs including MLD, SLCN or SEMH (SEBD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar year</th>
<th>Number of applications for assessment</th>
<th>Statements issued naming mainstream</th>
<th>Statements issued naming special</th>
<th>Subsequent transfer to special (including those excluded from their mainstream school)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lack of bespoke special provision for children with MLD/SLD, including needs associated with SLCN and SEMH has resulted in a proportion of children being placed in mainstream provision with full time support causing significant pressure for the schools involved in managing the impact of the inclusion of this group of learners in the mainstream cohort.

Pupil forecasts in June 2015 (SCAP data) show a continued overall increase, with a consequent expected increase in the numbers of children with SEN and the associated proportion of children requiring specialist provision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Forecasts</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td>Actual 2014-15</td>
<td>3,386</td>
<td>3,431</td>
<td>3,409</td>
<td>3,279</td>
<td>3,298</td>
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<td>Forecast 2015-16</td>
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<td>3,496</td>
<td>3,528</td>
<td>3,498</td>
<td>3,364</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecast 2016-17</td>
<td>3,461</td>
<td>3,505</td>
<td>3,590</td>
<td>3,618</td>
<td>3,582</td>
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<td>Forecast 2017-18</td>
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<td>3,565</td>
<td>3,600</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Forecast 2019-20</td>
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<td>Forecast 2021-22</td>
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<td>3,938</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecast 2023-24</td>
<td>3,466</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>3,657</td>
<td>3,745</td>
<td>3,826</td>
<td>3,912</td>
<td>3,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecast 2024-25</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>3,656</td>
<td>3,743</td>
<td>3,827</td>
<td>3,901</td>
<td>3,998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oldham has seen an increasing trend in the number of statements issued each year and the overall number maintained. The following data is taken from the SEN2 return:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Number of statements maintained</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>1160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of statements issued</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7.3 Higher Ability Pupils

At a number of key stages in Oldham the data indicates that pupils with higher prior attainment have lower outcomes than expected when compared with similar pupils nationally. Figure 4 shows that Level 4+ attainment has been above or the same as the national average in 2013-14, whereas at Level 5+ attainment was 2 percentage points below the national average.

Oldham pupils with higher, middle and lower (i.e., level 5, 4 and 3) Key Stage 2 scores attained below the national average in the 5A*-C grades including English and maths measure. The gap between the performance of pupils in Oldham schools and those nationally is greater for pupils achieving Level 4 and Level 5 at Key Stage 2 (4.7% and 2.4% below national) than it is for pupils achieving Level 3 (1.2% below).

At A-Level, whilst overall pass rates are above national (by 2 percentage points in 2013-14), the percentage of students achieving grades AAB in Oldham in 2013-14 was 1 point below the national average as demonstrated by Figure 14.

### 8 – Attendance and Behaviour

#### 8.1 Pupil Absence

The number of permanent exclusions in Oldham’s secondary schools has remained above average in recent years. Figure 15 shows the number of permanent secondary exclusions expressed as a percentage of the total school population to give the exclusion rate. In the last 6 years the rate has improved from a high of 0.5% in 2008-09, which was more than double the England and Statistical Neighbour averages, to 0.21% in 2010-11 but has since begun to rise again, increasing to 0.32% in 2013-14 compared to 0.13% nationally, 0.20% locally and 0.24% for statistical neighbours.

Rates for persistent pupil absence (formerly absent for 15% or more sessions in a year) in Oldham are very close to that of local and national averages for both primary and secondary establishments and have closely followed the national trends over the last few years. Figure 14 shows that in 2013-14 secondary persistent absence rates were 5.6% in Oldham and 5.3% nationally and primary rates were 2.1% in Oldham and 1.9% nationally.

In terms of overall absence (persistent and non-persistent), rates for both primary and secondary schools were the same for Oldham as the national average at 5.2% for secondary and 3.9% for primary.
The number of secondary school fixed term exclusions has followed the national rate much more closely than is the case with permanent exclusions but remains above the national average as shown by Figure 16. In 2013-14, at 9.6% of the school population, Oldham’s rate was still above the national (6.6%), Greater Manchester (7.8%) and statistical neighbour (8.9%) averages. In contrast the primary schools’ fixed term exclusion rate is much lower than national and local averages and in the last few years has reduced to 0.4% of the school population, which is less than half that of national levels (1%).

9 – Skills

Compared to other Greater Manchester local authorities, Oldham has the highest percentage of residents without qualifications at 15% as demonstrated by Figure 17. This is higher than the national average of 10%. This undermines the borough’s competitiveness and ability to attract inward investment. The percentage of residents with a qualification at Level 4 and above is the joint lowest of the Greater Manchester local authorities at 23% and which is significantly below the national average of 35%. This may indicate that Oldham is not a place of choice to live for graduates.

The low skill level of the workforce is one of the biggest causes of vacancies not being filled in Oldham. The 2014 Greater Manchester Business Survey indicated that in 43% of cases across Greater Manchester, vacancies were hard to fill because of a low number of applicants with the required skills or qualifications, which was more than double the next leading cause and this suggests the skills gap is having a direct impact on the local economy. In terms of educational attainment there are major disparities found within Oldham. Large proportions of the unskilled population live in close proximity to the town centre.

It is no coincidence that these neighbourhoods also suffer from high levels of unemployment, and have low household incomes, which reflects the more challenging nature of accessing the labour market without any qualifications.

Qualification levels in Oldham vary by ethnic group. In 2011, 20% of white residents had no qualifications, compared to 34% of Asian residents and 19% for other BME groups. However qualification levels amongst Asian residents varies greatly by age with around the same proportion of 16-24 year old Asians (14%) having no qualifications as both white (13%) and other BME groups (14%), whereas for 35-64 year olds 53% of Asian residents have no qualifications compared to white (23%) and other BME groups (22%) indicating a clear generational effect. As well as increasing the skill levels of Oldham residents, another challenge is to improve the retention of a skilled workforce in Oldham as boroughs in Greater Manchester with more buoyant employment markets tend to attract the most highly qualified employees from surrounding boroughs. This will assist Oldham in attracting the inward investment to improve its economic base and act as a labour market for the rest of Greater Manchester, helping Oldham break the low wage/low skill employment cycle.

Summary

The data show that children in Oldham enter Reception at a lower level of development than the national average, as is generally the case in boroughs with above average levels of deprivation like Oldham. They remain below national averages for attainment by the end of Year 2. Pupils then make higher than average progress between Years 3-6 to reach national levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Secondary school progress however is below the national average resulting in below average GCSE attainment. At A-Level, students make above average progress resulting in A-Level attainment that is higher than the national average. Vocational attainment is below the national average and skill levels in Oldham are lower than the rest of Greater Manchester.

Figure 18 summarises how Oldham’s performance compares nationally across the Key Stages. It shows the where Oldham ranks compared to other local authorities across the country for each of the key performance measures. It demonstrates the areas where Oldham is in the top half of local authorities including:

- Achievement at Key Stage 2.
- Ofsted ratings for primary school effectiveness.
- Achievement and progress at A-Level.

The attendance of pupils in Oldham schools is in line with the national average, including students achieving at the highest level.

Oldham is also below the national average in terms of the attainment gap for the following groups of children (difference to national gap at Key Stage 4 in brackets):

- Children from ethnic minority groups, especially Asian and mixed groups (over 10 percentage points for both)
- Looked After Children at Key Stage 4 (3.4 points)
- Disadvantaged pupils (1.8 points)
- Boys as compared to girls (1.3 points)
- Higher ability children – in terms of gaining the higher grades or levels at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4

Other key areas include:

- The high level of permanent exclusions in secondary schools (0.32% compared to 0.13% nationally)
- The comparatively high proportion of residents in Oldham who do not have a qualification (15% compared to 10% nationally)
- The comparatively low proportion of Oldham residents who have graduate level qualifications (23% compared to 35% nationally)

Further issues arising from analysis of the data and the deliberations of the Commission are:

- The wide variation in performance between providers at all Key Stages. Oldham has some of the best performing establishments in the country, yet also has many that require improvement.
- The capacity of the local system to improve in the secondary phase. With only a third of Oldham’s secondary schools currently judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted, the potential for school-to-school support from within the borough is limited.
- The Commission’s recommendations will reflect how partnerships with organisations external to the borough will be needed to address the highlighted areas of underperformance.
- The Commission recognises that data does not always tell the whole story and that further work is needed in order to understand the dynamics of underperformance and how to address them. Nevertheless, the areas of underperformance highlighted must be addressed.

Figure 18 also demonstrates some of the key areas where Oldham is below the national average including:

- Achievement in the Early Years and Foundation Stage (Oldham is in the bottom 10% of local authorities)
- Phonics and Key Stage 1 (bottom 20% of LAs for phonics)
- Secondary phase progress (bottom 20%) and attainment (bottom 25%)
- The small proportion of Oldham secondary schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted (bottom 5%)
- Key Stage 5 attainment for vocational qualifications (bottom 5%)
Additional information

Education in Oldham – background data

The Commission’s 19 Recommendations

The Commission has made 19 recommendations which would form the focus of the self-improving education system and would underpin the achievement of two important targets for Oldham. They are as follows:

• All national performance indicators to be at the national average or beyond by 2020
• All Oldham education providers to be judged as good or better by OFSTED by 2020

1 The Oldham Student – the Oldham Curriculum Offer

An enriched curriculum for schools and colleges to ensure Oldham's children and young people are school ready, life ready and work ready. It would be 'designed by Oldham, for Oldham' to support people to achieve the qualifications they want and need but would embrace art music and culture, sport, citizenship and community contribution, character development, life skills and employability.

2 Underperforming groups – closing the gaps

Development of strategies to close the performance gap for Looked After Children at key Stage 4; higher ability children achieving higher grades; children eligible for the Pupil Premium and free school meals; children from ethnic minority groups especially Asian and mixed race groups; boys as compared to girls; Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Partnerships with The Education Endowment Foundation and The Sutton Trust will provide evidence based expertise.

3 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Make additional provision to increase the capacity and the types of support for children with autistic spectrum disorder; profound and multiple learning difficulties, complex communication and interaction difficulties and children with mild and severe learning difficulties. Consider establishing a free school to provide additional capacity in the primary phase.

4 Behaviour and exclusions

Develop a new approach to prevent escalation by earlier identification and improved support and to improve the management of exclusions. Improve the availability of social, emotional and psychological support and consider the establishment of Free School to provide extra capacity for alternative provision.

5 International new arrivals and English as an Additional Language (EAL)

To continue and extend the existing good practice to ensure integration and provision for international new arrivals which enables every child to be enriched by a wide variety of backgrounds and origins. Including extending best practice for EAL learners from the most successful primary schools to secondary schools, ensuring effective transitions between Early Years provision, primary and secondary schools, raising GCSE achievement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils and developing the ‘Oldham Welcome’ to support newly arrived families.

6 Using data to drive improvement within a new performance framework

To identify and record the data needed to support delivery of the recommendations, improve data analysis and agree data sharing protocols to support performance monitoring. Develop shared and transparent performance targets and success measures for children and young people’s outcomes - both for individual education providers and for the borough as a whole. These would include regular monitoring of the progress of under-performing groups as well as headline achievement measures.

7 Educational Leadership in Oldham

Transformation will be driven by high quality leadership in schools and colleges. Oldham’s new Education Partnership will support and promote clear progression pathways to encourage existing and future educational professionals to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise in educational leadership, and to be ready for promotion to key roles within schools and within the local school system. Its programmes will embrace the full spectrum of educational leadership development from curriculum and pedagogic innovations, strategic approaches to efficient and effective organisational management, to mentoring and coaching support, to a broader understanding of education in a social, economic and political context.

8 The Oldham Teacher

Great education starts with high quality teaching. Oldham’s new Education Partnership will support the development and retention of great teachers by providing high quality professional development, peer and mentoring support, capacity building from recognized expert practitioners, access to and involvement with University research. An Oldham Teacher will be expected to take an interest in the education of all children in Oldham schools, support the development and delivery of the Oldham Curriculum, take responsibility for their own professional development and consider career progression within Oldham in the first instance.

9 Partnerships with organisations external to Oldham

One of the challenges facing Oldham is a lack of capacity to drive improvement. The low proportion of the borough’s secondary schools judged to be good or outstanding will have an impact on the capability of a self-improving system. Oldham will develop stronger links with national and regional organisations to support school improvement in the town.

10 Sharing best practice

Best practice already exists in Oldham and needs to be recorded and effectively shared via a regularly updated register of quality assured local best practice case studies, excellence visits and further development of the Education Excellence Awards
11 Making education ‘everyone’s business’
Oldham’s new Education Partnership to run a series of high profile campaigns to engage residents, businesses and organisations in playing a role to improve education and aspiration in Oldham. A ‘Get Oldham Reading’ campaign is suggested as an early campaign that could secure the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders.

12 School Governance and the Oldham Governor
Develop a ‘Gold Standard’ for governors including induction support and accredited training within their first twelve months, regular, clear and concise data and information, support and mentoring toward progressing to become a Local Leader of Governance and National Leader of Governance (NLG) status, assign NLG mentor to new Chairs and share good practice via the Governor network. An Oldham governor will be expected to attend governors meetings as fully as possible, participate in training, challenge and support school leaders and contribute to the outcomes of all children and young people in Oldham.

13 Early Years and School Readiness
Closer partnership working between schools and Oldham’s diverse early years services with a particular focus on working with and supporting parents of under 5’s to ensure a smoother transition into primary school. They also need to increase collaborative working with the Early Years networks and Primary Collaboratives and to create a shared definition of ‘school readiness’ and improved support for parents and carers of under 5’s.

14 The Oldham Parent
There needs to be strong two way partnership between parents, carers and schools because children achieve better outcomes if their parents and carers value education and are learners themselves. Parents need easily understood and regular feedback about their children progress and they should be encouraged to be learners themselves. One of the roles of parents is to ensure that their child is ready to learn whatever their age and being actively involved with the school including communicating any issues that might affect their child’s learning.

15 Community, parental and family learning
Carry out a review of current provision including mapping and evaluating the impact upon both the adult and the child’s learning, identify the gaps in provision and the opportunities for improvement, to support parents and carers to better support their child’s learning.

16 Extended use of school premises
To assess how schools are utilised by the community and how to improve access for community-based activities which support children’s achievement, such as parental and family learning.

17 An independent review of vocational education
Carry out an independent review of vocational education in Oldham, including pre and post 16 routes and pathways to shape the future of provision in the town and inform Greater Manchester devolution. The review should consider the views of employers, the role and parity of vocational options and the characteristics of best practice.

18 Improving higher skills
Increase the number of residents with higher level skills (Level 4 and above) including progression of young people to university, apprenticeship or foundation degree and provide routes to support adult workers to progress from Level 2 to higher skills via apprenticeships, foundation degree or degree.

19 Addressing worklessness
Review existing programmes to further engage public and voluntary agencies in finding new solutions to worklessness.