

Local school improvement systems

SOUTH EAST SECTOR-LED IMPROVEMENT - AD EDUCATION
NETWORK MEETING

Isos Partnership (Simon Rea, Simon Day)

7 June 2019



Aims for this workshop

1 Share evidence and research about the development of local school improvement systems

2 Share examples of practice from across the region

3 Discuss the implications for your own school improvement systems

Agenda

10.30

Opening summary from Isos Partnership

10.50

Activity 1 – strengths and areas for development in your local school improvement systems?

11.20

Why are partnerships established and how are they structured?

11.25

Learning from current practice - three examples from our region

11.55

Activity 2 – factors influencing local school improvement systems and changes to local school improvement partnerships?

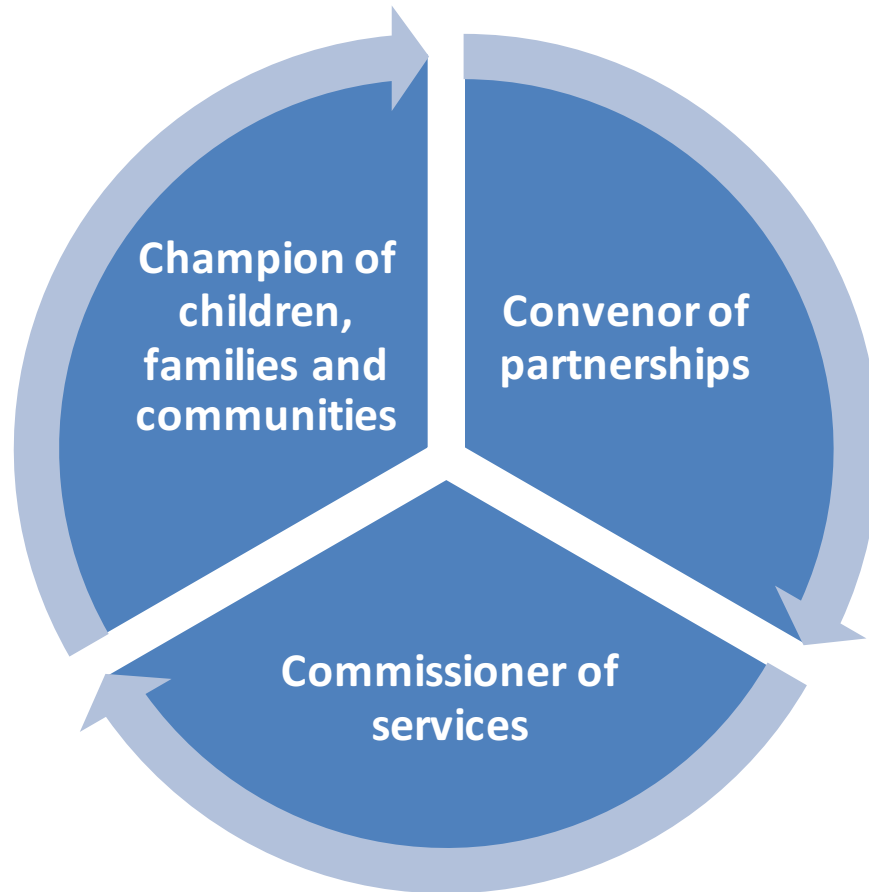
12.30

Close and thanks

Our Isos Partnership evidence base

- Work with 30+ local authorities, including developing school/LA partnerships
- 2012 report for DfE and LGA on the future role of the LA; 2014 follow-up 'temperature check' for DfE
- Reports for DfE and National College - leadership of teaching school alliances, primary system leadership, SEN funding, post-16 funding, and how schools work together to close gaps in attainment
- Work with RSC SW and 30+ MATs in the SW to develop a school improvement framework for MATs. National research on school improvement practices in school groups
- 2018 report for LGA on the development of local school improvement systems and the role of LAs

2012 – three responsibilities for the local authority in education

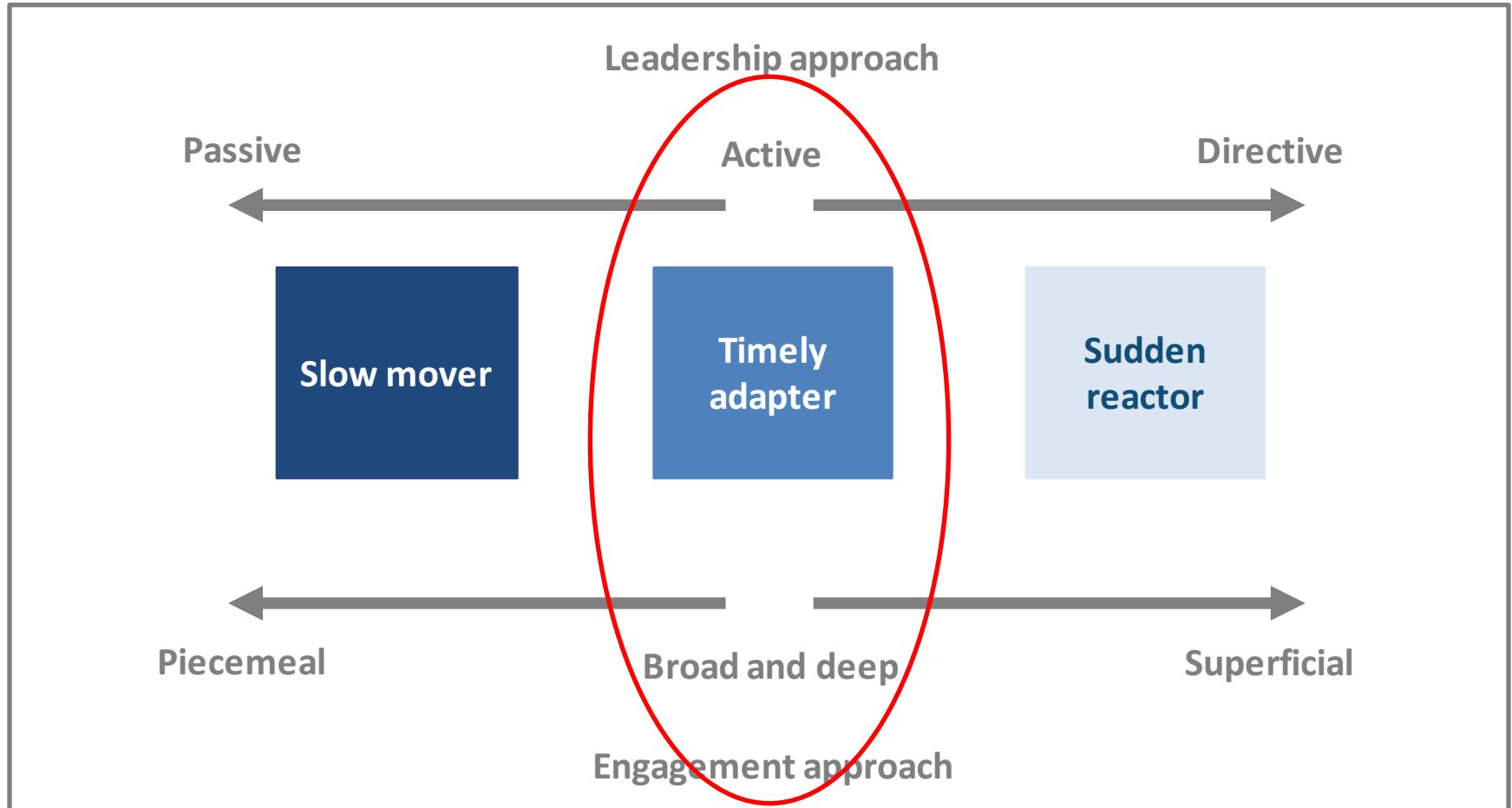


Champion – of educational transformation, moral purpose, democratic mandate to ensure good outcomes, vision

Convenor – bringing leaders together, connecting to best practice within and beyond the system, facilitating partnerships

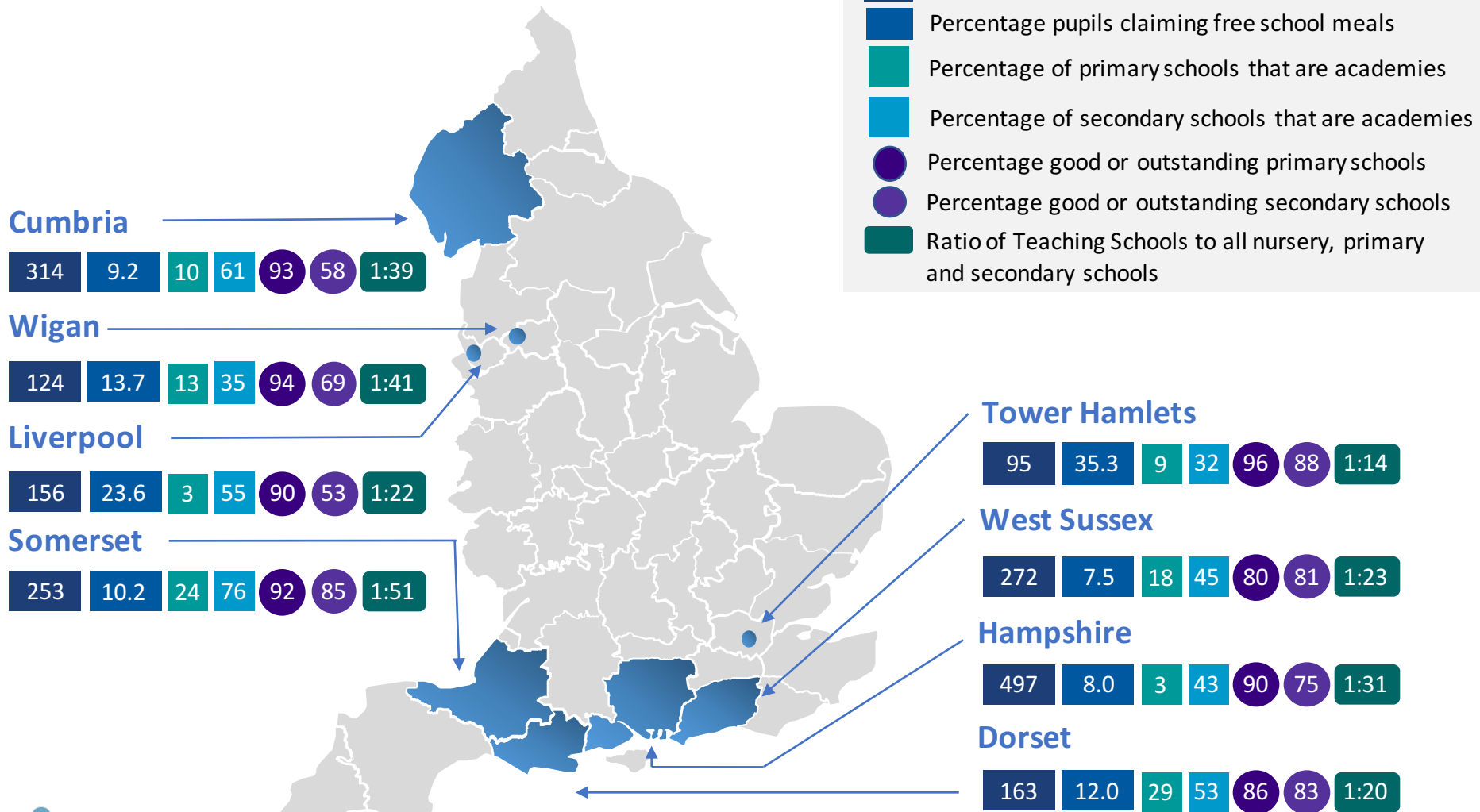
Commissioner – bringing the strategic picture, intelligence and data, enabling and commissioning support and development

2014 - three types of transition that local systems were experiencing



2018 report for LGA - context of participating local areas

- Number of nursery, primary & secondary schools
- Percentage pupils claiming free school meals
- Percentage of primary schools that are academies
- Percentage of secondary schools that are academies
- Percentage good or outstanding primary schools
- Percentage good or outstanding secondary schools
- Ratio of Teaching Schools to all nursery, primary and secondary schools



Some key messages from our visits to participating systems in 2018

1

Local systems at different stages

- some with clear strategic direction
- others maintaining status quo
- others lacking direction or U-turns

2

Developing local strategic partnerships

- structure around which schools and LA could jointly form the vision
- focus of local school improvement offer
- sense of strategic cohesion – helping against risks of fragmentation

3

Critical period for funding

- LAs contributing significantly to partnership structures (e.g. one LA paying £160k) or funding release time for system leaders
- schools contributing to SI costs: e.g. £7m of £9m costs of advisory support paid by schools; schools paying for 90+% of primary advisory team

4

Importance of the LA role

- bringing strategic coherence to the local system
- helping to co-ordinate school-to-school support
- continuing to monitor and support vulnerable schools
- adding capacity and intelligence to school/LA partnerships

The importance of the right conditions...

“In education, ‘what works?’ is not the right question because...

everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere

...So what’s interesting, what's important in education is

‘Under what conditions does this work?’ ”

Dylan Wiliam (2006)

Our nine conditions...

Nine conditions to develop an effective local school improvement system

1. A clear and compelling vision for the local school improvement system
2. Trust and high social capital between schools, the local authority, and partners
3. Strong engagement from the majority of schools and academies
4. Leadership from key system leaders
5. A crucial empowering and facilitative role for the local authority
6. Sufficient capacity for school-to-school support
7. Effective links with regional partners
8. Sufficient financial contributions (from schools and the local authority)
9. Structures to enable partnership activity

Christine Gilbert's 2018 think-piece on local area-based improvement partnerships

“Local strategic partnerships are the most exciting thing that is happening in education” (Christine Gilbert, May 2019)

Optimism of the will: development of local area-based improvement partnerships (2018)

*The majority of these partnerships are **voluntarily taking responsibility for the collective performance of schools in an area...** It is lateral, shared responsibility rooted in ambitious local vision and professional networks.*

*These partnerships are **generating energy and commitment** because they are making connections across schools and communities to improve schools and outcomes for young people... Partnerships have the potential to **reduce the risk of fragmentation and dangers of isolationism** in an increasingly diverse system.*

Christine Gilbert's 2018 think-piece

Opportunities

1. Glue in a diverse and fragmented system
2. Force to drive improvement and innovation by engaging teachers, leaders and schools
3. Focus for involving the local community and business
4. Opportunity for efficiencies of scale
5. Space to build children's social, emotional and cultural capital

Key elements for school improvement

1. Intelligence gathering: identifying needs, capacity, using peer review
2. Brokerage: design, negotiation and purchase of targeted bespoke and universal improvement programmes
3. Development and improvement work
4. Evidencing progress and impact

Key challenges

1. Danger of distraction from core purpose
2. Developing new skills and finding capacity
3. Maintaining rigour in the land of nice
4. Shifting the current accountability mindset
5. Resourcing the partnership

Characteristics of successful area partnerships

1. Collective moral purpose and vision linked to place and community
2. Clear model of change using professional power and skills, aligned to evidence
3. Inclusive culture of openness, trust and mutual accountability
4. Good planning, quality assurance and business development
5. Capacity for building a self-improving system

Activity 1: Our nine conditions...

Nine conditions to develop an effective local school improvement system

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Activity 1: Please organise into a “diamond 9” for your system

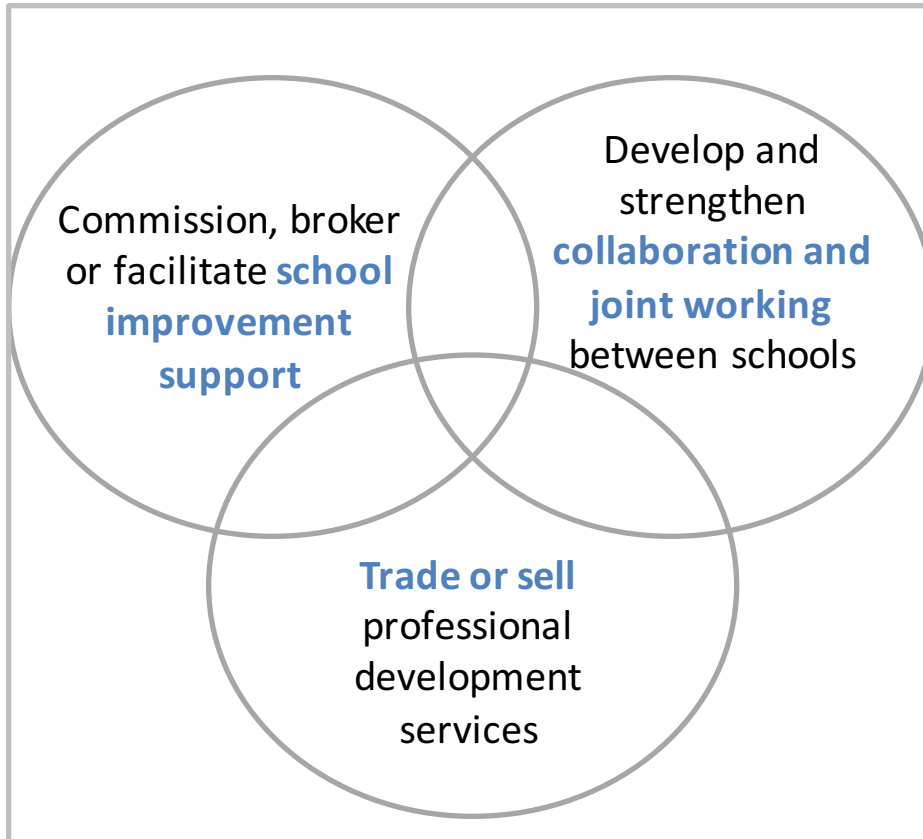


Top of the diamond = areas of **strength** for your local system

Bottom of the diamond = areas where **most improvement needed** in your local system

Why are partnerships established and how are they structured?

1. Why has the local school improvement partnership been established?



2. How is it structured?

- **Collaborative partnership** with wide membership and scope (not just school improvement)
- **School improvement partnership** with mainly school and LA members (e.g. SI Board)
- **School-based company** (either company limited by guarantee or charitable company)

And then how do partnership structures work at three different levels?

1. SCHOOL-LEVEL CLUSTERS

1. School-level clusters...for peer review, mutual support, joint practice development and moderation, leadership and staff development opportunities, and to enable efficient procurement of school improvement support

2. LOCAL AREA OR DISTRICT-LEVEL ALLIANCE / CONSORTIA

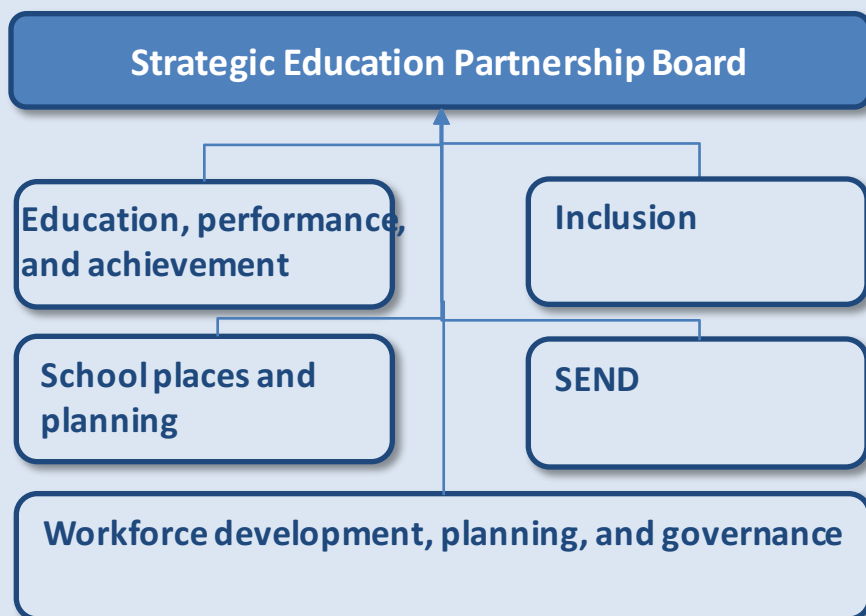
2. Local area or district-level alliances...co-ordination across a number of clusters, sharing data and intelligence, reviewing the health of clusters, support and challenge, brokering and deploying support for vulnerable schools, system leader development, monitoring and evaluation

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

3. Strategic partnership...to co-ordinate and identify area-wide priorities, develop a shared vision, involve key players, promote effective communication, develop system leader capacity, link to other key priorities, and promote sustainability

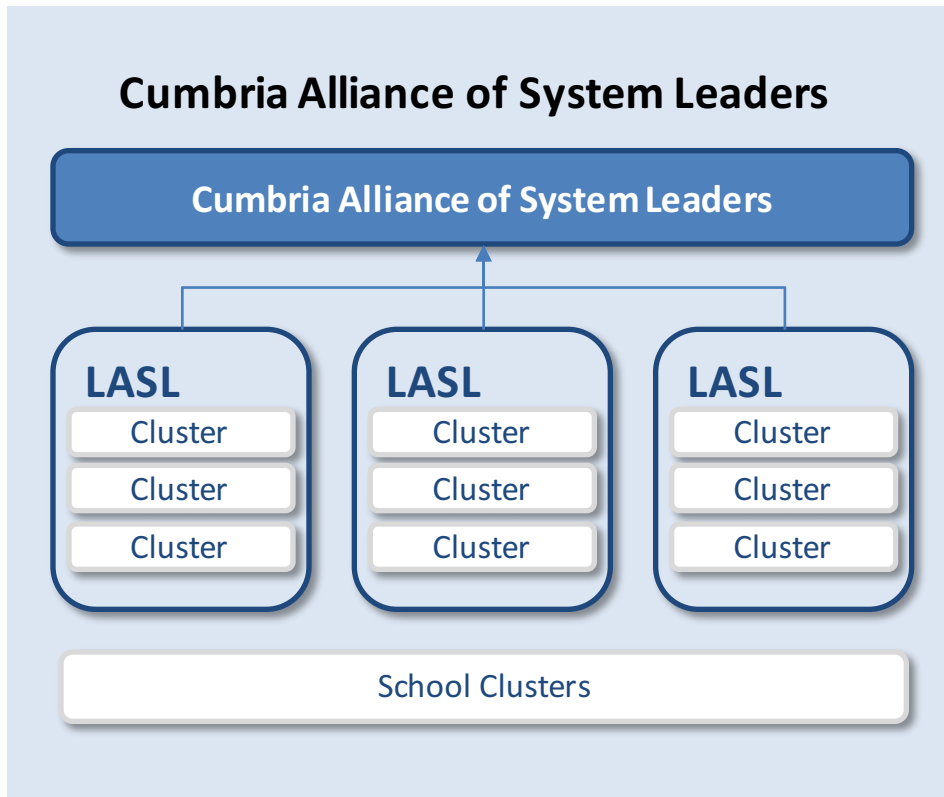
Strategic Education Partnership Board sits above a number of sub-groups on specific priority areas

Bexley Strategic Education Partnership



- Strategic Education Partnership Board steers the work of the partnership, develops then agrees priorities
- Strategic Board has 25 members incl chairs of all sub-groups, LA officials and members, and RSC regional rep
- Sub-groups are each co-chaired by 2-3 HTs, with typically 6-8 people as members.
Current sub-groups cover:
 - Education, performance and achievement
 - Inclusion
 - SEND
 - School places and planning
 - Workforce development, planning and governance

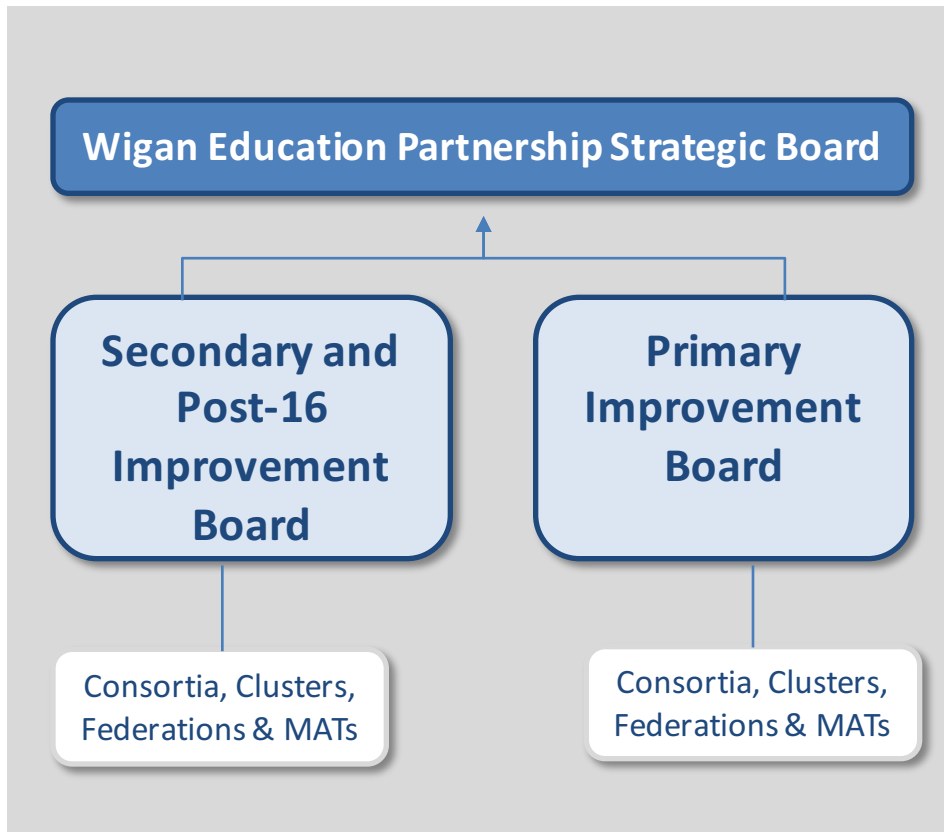
Strong central board (CASL) with local alliances of system leaders (LASLs) connecting the work of local clusters



- Three tiers of partnership
 1. School clusters of informal partnerships
 2. Local Alliances of System Leaders (LASLs) x3
 3. Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders (CASL) – county-wide
- Strong culture to work across schools and closely with the LA. LASLs co-ordinate support from TSAs
- LA plays a key co-ordinator role and provides funding to release headteachers to take on part-time chairing roles
- CASL – sets the vision and overall priorities, brings together key players and has county-wide strategic conversations

Comparison 3: Wigan Education Partnership

Model based around local clusters of schools reporting to separate primary and secondary boards with overarching board



- Local consortia with ‘lead headteachers’. Five primary consortia and one secondary. Commissioning and brokering support role
- Consortia report to two separate Primary and Secondary Improvement Boards chaired by the LA
- Have recently added overarching Partnership Strategic Board with independent chair and two HT deputies
- Wigan had well developed and mature system based around strong partnership between the LA and schools
- LA provided strong strategic leadership for development of the model and approach

Learning from current practice – three examples

1 Portsmouth

2 Hampshire

3 East Sussex

Activity 2: discussions in pairs and on your tables

What are the factors influencing the development of your local school improvement system?

How do you anticipate that local school improvement partnerships will change over the next 12-18 months?

Activity 2: partnership structures at three different levels



1. SCHOOL-LEVEL CLUSTERS

1. School-level clusters...for peer review, mutual support, joint practice development and moderation, leadership and staff development opportunities, and to enable efficient procurement of school improvement support

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2. Local area or district-level alliances...co-ordination across a number of clusters, sharing data and intelligence, reviewing the health of clusters, support and challenge, brokering and deploying support for vulnerable schools, system leader development, monitoring and evaluation

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

3. Strategic partnership...to co-ordinate and identify area-wide priorities, develop a shared vision, involve key players, promote effective communication, develop system leader capacity, link to other key priorities, and promote sustainability

Activity 2: how does this compare with your own partnerships?



1. SCHOOL-LEVEL CLUSTERS

2. LOCAL AREA OR DISTRICT-LEVEL
ALLIANCE / CONSORTIA

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP

1. School-level clusters... *what makes these work well?*

- ..
- ..
- ..

2. Local area or district-level alliances... *what structures exist and how successful are they?*

- ..
- ..
- ..

3. Strategic partnership... *what helps this work effectively?*

- ..
- ..
- ..

Thank you



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