**2023/24 Categorisation – Primary Phase**

**Support for schools**

**Why do we categorise schools?**

To identify schools in need of support within the city’s school-to-school improvement model.

Categorisation impacts on:

* The level of CMO support schools receive
* Identification of focus schools that are eligible for focussed network support
* Funding for networks

**How do we categorise schools?**

The core criteria are:

* Overall effectiveness (Ofsted judgements or school self-evaluation preceding Ofsted)
* Capacity of Senior Leadership (including change)
* Achievement Data

Other measurable data factors will be taken into consideration (e.g. attendance data, financial sustainability). However, these are not criteria in their own right – they will be taken into consideration where they have the potential to have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the school (i.e. linked to Ofsted outcomes).

**What categories do we use?**

* Category 1 – SIB School (maintained only)
* Category 2 – Focus School Plus (maintained only)
* Category 3 – Focus School
* Category 4 – No support need identified

Each school will also receive a letter reflecting a data designation. This is based on a number of measures (including EYFS and KS2 data) over time. Data points significantly below national averages are flagged with the accumulated number of flags corresponding to an overall achievement designation from A (higher number of flags) to D (lower number of flags).

These two processes elements combine to give each school an overall categorisation indicator. For example, 1A would indicate a SIB school with significant challenges in data. 4D would suggest a school with no support need identified and no data flags identified.

**How are data designations (A to D) calculated?**

Data designations are based on the accumulation of “flags” in key measures:

**EYFS (GLD)** is flagged if the gap to national average is greater than 20%

**Cumulative Phonics (Yr 1)** is flagged if the school is in the bottom quintile nationally.

**Key Stage 1 RWM Combined** is flagged if the school is in the bottom quintile nationally.

**Key Stage 2 RWM Combined** is flagged if the school is in the bottom quintile nationally.

**Key Stage 2 Reading** **Progress, Writing Progress and Maths Progress** are each flagged if the progress is significantly negative.

A school has a “**trend flag**” if one of the above areas has been flagged two years in a row.

A school has a “**single year flag**” if EYFS; Key Stage 1 or Phonics; or any of the Key Stage 2 measures have been flagged in the most recent year.

**Category A** schools have three or more trend flags.

**Category B** schools have one or two trend flags.

**Category C** schools have no trend flags, but two or more single year flags.

**Category D** schools have no trend flags and at most one single year flag.

**How is a school identified as a Category 1 school – requiring a SIB process?**

Only maintained schools can be designated Category 1.

This happens when either:

* They have an Ofsted overall judgement less than good (including a Leadership & Management judgement less than good); or
* There is a significant concern (usually agreed between school and Local Authority) that next Ofsted overall judgement is at significant risk of being less than good

**How is a school identified as a Category 2 school – a Focus School Plus?**

Only maintained schools can be designated Category 2.

This happens when either:

* They were previously a Category 1 school but now have a proven improvement trajectory (through SIB) that will still benefit from Local Authority oversight until next inspection; or
* They have an Ofsted overall judgement less than good but with capacity to improve evidenced by a Leadership & Management judgement of good
* There is a specific and significant vulnerability that puts the overall effectiveness of the school at risk (e.g. significant financial vulnerability)

**How is a school identified as a Category 3 school – a Focus School?**

All schools, whether maintained or otherwise, can be designated as a Focus school. This categorisation is based on the following criteria:

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| Overall effectiveness (non-maintained) | An overall Ofsted judgement of less than Good. |
| Overall effectiveness  (maintained) | Particular Ofsted area judgement identified as being at risk of being less than good but where specific actions from the network can support necessary improvement. |
| Capacity of Leadership | Change in headteacher or other significant change in senior leadership within a school |

Note – if a maintained school is at potential risk of overall effectiveness being less than good, a professional conversation will take place between school leaders (including governors) and the Local Authority to agree whether a designation of Category 1 or Category 3 would provide the most appropriate level of support.

**What support is offered to Category 1, 2 and 3 schools?**

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| Category 1 | Schools enter (or continue within) the SIB process (School Improvement Board) |
| Category 2 | Schools enter (or continue within) the PCI process (Progress Check-In) |
| Category 3 | Schools are supported by a focussed plan, supported by their network and co-constructed by the network lead |

**What does support for Category 3 (Focus Schools) look like?**

Where a focus school has been identified for support through self-evaluation, support needs to be tailored to the specific element of improvement required. This could involve, for example, using network funding to facilitate additional expertise to support school improvement priorities. This might come from within the network, from another Coventry network or from an external partner.

Where a focus school has been identified due to leadership capacity, the support will depend on the nature of this. All new heads should be supported with an appropriate mentor. This should be an appropriately experienced head from within the network (or external to the network if a suitable person isn’t available). This mentor’s time should be funded. Other key leaders (Deputy Head or equivalent) should also be supported with an appropriate mentor.

If a school has more general leadership capacity issues for a fixed period (e.g. staff absence or periods in between substantive postholders being in place), the Senior School Advisor will take a lead on brokering appropriate support. However, this is likely to be done in liaison with the network lead in the first instance.

**Is categorisation fixed? Can it change during an academic year?**

The categorisation process takes place for all schools at the beginning of each new school year. However, categorisation can change at other points during the year, as required. This could be in response to an Ofsted inspection, discussion at a CMO visit or changes in leadership. Alternatively, any school can proactively seek additional support at any stage via their network lead, CMO or the Senior Advisor.

**What impact does achievement data have in categorisation?**

The designation of the A to D regarding achievement data impacts in two potential ways:

* Significant challenges could indicate risk in terms of overall effectiveness of the school. Where a school has an achievement data categorisation of A or B, this will need to be considered. However, there is no automatic impact from achievement data on overall categorisation – this will always be considered qualitatively taking the context of the school into account
* The A to D data designation will have an impact on network funding allocation (see below)

**How is network funding allocated according to categorisation?**

The funding for 2023/24 has been allocated on a per pupil amount, graduated so that pupils in schools with a higher tariff category receive a larger amount of funding.

This weighting towards more funding for Category 1, 2 and 3 schools should be reflected in the proportionate allocation of funds to actions within network plans, e.g. focus schools could be expected to attract a higher level of funding.

As stated above, schools can change categorisations part way through an academic year. If a school’s category is identified as requiring increased support part way through a year, the network lead and Senior Advisor will discuss whether additional funds need to be made available to the network to support focussed support.

**How is CMO allocation affected by categorisation?**

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| Category 1 | 3 CMO visits | These are default allocations – depending on the school’s context (especially for Category 1 and 3 schools, additional CMO visits could be agreed at the start of the year or as circumstances change during the year. |
| Category 2 | 3 CMO visits |
| Category 3 | 2 CMO visits |
| Category 4 | 1 CMO visit |

**What is the focus and structure for CMO visits?**

A separate document explains the role and organisation of CMO visits.

**Who provides accountability to schools (and their networks) for Category 1 and Category 2?**

Senior Advisor chairs this process – accountability provided by SIB membership (including network representative – this is likely to be the network lead but can be delegated to an alternative, appropriately experienced, headteacher).

**Who provides accountability to schools (and their networks) at Category 3?**

Each Category 3 Focus School will have actions identified as a core part of the network’s overall action plan. The accountability for progress and impact of these actions is provided by the Primary Network Improvement Board (as part of overseeing progress of the action plans in general). However, during 2023/24, we will explore a model to develop the use of other system leaders in providing this accountability (alongside additional support).

**What happens if a school does not agree with the categorisation and/or does not wish to engage with support?**

Joint school improvement work always works best when there is shared agreement regarding areas identified for improvement. Support for schools is unlikely to be effective where a school disagrees with the reasons that support has been offered.

The Local Authority has statutory responsibilities regarding school improvement and performance. However, the threshold for these responsibilities is significantly above the level at which the partnership model operates – this is because the partnership works together to support each other for the benefit of children not because they must but because they agree that they should. The role of the LA is to enable this partnership.

Given this context, any school could opt out of any support / intervention up until the LA has to take steps in line with statutory rules. However, if a school does choose to opt out of such support, the LA will ensure that governors/trustees and school leaders have been clearly communicated with regarding the reasons for the support being offered.

Currently, school-to-school support funding is provided (via collaboratives/networks) on the understanding that schools engage in working together for the benefit of Coventry children and towards Coventry Education Partnership priorities. If a school opts out engagement in their collaborative or network, it is not automatic that they would not benefit from funding that supports Coventry Education Partnership collaboration but this would be reviewed.

**Support from Schools**

The categorisation model identifies schools within the system that would benefit from support in one or more aspects of their school improvement journey. The Coventry Education Partnership is clear that much of this support can be sourced from the partnership itself.

Schools in any category can be identified as having specific areas of strength to share with others via:

* Coventry Leaders’ Directory
* CMO feedback (collated from CMO reports – shared as a standing item on the agenda when network leads meet)
* System leadership models
* Network Leads

A school can be categorised as a focus school (including a SIB school) for a range of reasons. These do not preclude that school from also being able to offer support (to other schools) in their other areas of strength.