Barnsley Schools' Alliance

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

2025 - 2028

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE

STRONGER TOGETHER TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

Support • Challenge • Inspire

SUPPORT

To collaborate and network to drive excellence

CHALLENGE

To provoke educational enquiry to deliver excellence

INSPIRE

Raising standards and expectations through excellence

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Welcome

"We are delighted to introduce our Education Improvement Strategy for 2025 - 2028. This strategy represents a shared commitment to excellence and collaboration amongst our schools, academies, partners, and stakeholders. We continue to work together to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all young people in Barnsley, empowering them to succeed and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Through this strategy and associated plans ('Every Child in School Every Day') we will focus on driving improvement across key priorities including attendance, SEND, reducing exclusions and improving pupil outcomes. This ambition will be supported by 'The Great Childhoods Ambition'; a commitment by Barnsley to broaden the experiences young people can take part in, and which includes free bus travel across Barnsley for under 18s. Barnsley has also invested in the development of a Youth Zone called 'Base 71'. We will work together to share best practice, develop innovative solutions and support each

Schools across Barnsley maintain a sharp focus on early reading. For the third consecutive year, outcomes in the Y1 phonics screening check place Barnsley among the top three local authorities nationally. Disadvantaged pupils in particular, achieve well above average, highlighting the effectiveness of targeted support. There has been further progress in helping pupils master their times tables by the end of Year 4. Barnsley now leads the country for the proportion of pupils achieving full marks on the Multiplication Table Check and ranks second nationally for average pupil score. This achievement reflects the borough's collective efforts to raise standards since the test was introduced in 2022.

By the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is now above the national average. Pupils continue to do better at the expected standard than at the higher standard and greater depth this is our next area of focus which we will drive through our CPD focus.

At Key Stage 4 outcomes show marked improvements across all key measures in 2025, resulting in a much-improved picture when comparing performance against national, regional, and statistical neighbours. At Key Stage 5, pupils perform in-line with those across the Yorkshire and Humber region. Barnsley performs substantially better than comparator groups when considering the percentage of pupils achieving at least two A-levels. In 2025, male and SEND pupils performed especially well.

We would like to thank everyone in developing this strategy, including school and MAT leaders, teachers, partners and stakeholders. Your dedication, expertise, and passion for education in Barnsley have been invaluable in shaping our vision and priorities.

We are confident that our collective efforts will make a real difference in the lives of children and young people. We look forward to working with all of you to achieve our priorities and to make Barnsley a place where all young people can flourish."

Carly Speechley - Executive Director - Children's Services

Cllr Ashley Peace - Cabinet Spokesperson - Children's Services

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FOREWORD

"The Barnsley Schools' Alliance continues to enhance its impact through collaborative efforts amongst schools and academies, benefiting children and young people across Barnsley. Together, we have established key priorities for 2025 - 2028. As Independent Chair, I am committed to advancing the Alliance's progress over the next three years. We will unite leading professionals to drive innovation in artificial intelligence, focusing on developing tools and processes that improve curriculum quality and efficiency. Our approach will emphasise the safe and ethical use of AI, sharing best practices to positively influence staff workload, wellbeing, and student learning outcomes."

Andy Lancashire - Independent Chair Barnsley Schools' Alliance

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FOREWORD

Our Four Core Principles

These principles are supported by keyways of working

PRINCIPLE 1: EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

To champion world class education opportunities for all children, young people and families. Ensuring we meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people.

- To ensure that all educational settings deliver a quality of education that enhances the life chances of all Barnsley children and young people
- To improve outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people, including a focus on those pupils who have special educational needs, looked after children and young people and pupils in receipt of free school meals as well as those for whom their school received pupil premium funding

PRINCIPLE 2: INCLUSIVE PROVISION

To secure high-quality inclusive provision, widen local opportunities and promote equality.

- To promote a culture of excellence through aspirational social expectations, including good attendance, punctuality, personal behavior and learning standards
- To promote equality and inclusion to equip our young people to become productive citizens ready to make a positive contribution locally and in the wider world

PRINCIPLE 3: SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT

To continue to strengthen Barnsley's system-wide school-led improvement, working closely with key partners.

- To build leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley schools
- To ensure that all settings offer a curriculum that is dynamic, engaging and aspirational so that it caters for the breadth of interest and talents across the locality
- To deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning to drive curriculum delivery and embed the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects
- To achieve the highest possible attainment outcomes; through rapid rates of progress from all starting points. To provide teachers with regular, relevant and high-quality access to Continuous Professional Development at all levels

PRINCIPLE 4: IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

To promote, safeguard and improve our children and young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. Recognising that this ultimately underpins the ability for us to achieve all other priorities.

- To enable all services to be collaborative and effective in supporting children and young people to feel safe and secure in our Borough whilst promoting physically and mentally healthy lifestyles to all

Barnsley Schools' Alliance Priorities for Learning

1. To ensure that all educational settings deliver a quality of education that enhances the life chances of all children and young people across the borough by:

- Monitoring the quality of education and school performance
- Brokering support for schools and academies to help them develop and improve
- Ensuring effective leadership and governance works in a comprehensive, system-wide way to develop current and future leaders
- Promoting a cohesive education system that will minimise the risk of fragmentation in a multi-provider context
- Holding schools and academies to account for their outcomes and challenging school/academy leaders and governors where outcomes are not meeting expectations
- Initiating specific projects and case studies to support school improvement leading to positive outcomes for children and young people

2. To build leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley schools by:

- Ensuring all schools and academies are receiving appropriate support and challenge in proportion to their success and effectiveness
- Ensuring that effective leadership and governance is embedded system-wide in order to develop current and future leaders
- Researching, promoting, supporting and sourcing best practice to inspire and motivate innovation and excellence
- Providing high quality continual professional development where required

3. To ensure that all settings offer a curriculum that is current, relevant, dynamic, engaging and aspirational so that it caters for the breadth of interests and talents across the locality by:

- Determining the priorities for education and improvement across the Barnsley education sector
- Supporting and challenging schools and academies to promote high aspiration for all our pupils, which provides access to opportunities to enhance ambition and help pupils realise their full potential
- Working to promote a cohesive education system that will minimise the risk of fragmentation in a multi-provider context
- Early identification of needs and implementation of support and intervention at the earliest opportunity to enable sustained access to quality learning opportunities

4. To deliver the highest quality of teaching and learning to drive curriculum delivery and embed the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects by:

- Holding schools and academies to account for their outcomes and challenge school academy leaders and governors where these are not meeting expectations
- Supporting schools and academies to help them develop and improve
- Collaborating with subject leaders to ensure the correct curriculum is driven and that subject leads have the necessary skills and knowledge in all subjects
- Providing high quality continual professional development

5. To achieve the highest possible attainment outcomes; through rapid rates of progress from all starting points by:

- Determining the priorities for education and improvement across the Barnsley education sector
- Working continuously with senior leadership teams to ensure accurate delivery of education
- Where school improvement is deemed to not be achieving, then the Alliance will initiate the local authority escalation process
- Knowing and understanding ourselves, what the issues are and what needs to be done about them

Our 4 Fundamental Priorities which sit within our "Every Child in School Every Day" Co-Produced Plan

PRIORITY 1:

Electively Home Educated
Commitment to reduce overall rate currently on the register by 30% and to reduce the overall number of children leaving school to become EHE.

PRIORITY 2:

Attendance
Full time attendance to be in line or above the national picture.

PRIORITY 3:

Suspensions and Exclusions
An incremental reduction from 20% to 40%.

PRIORITY 4:

SEND and Inclusion
Our settings create learning environments whereby every child and young person feels safe, valued and supported so that they achieve their full potential and feel like they have a sense of belonging in their school community.

Our CPD Sub-group is leading and embedding the following 5 educational attainment drivers at primary phase across the borough through robust CPD

PRIORITY 1:
Continue to raise attainment for pupils working with SEND SUPPORT by the end of KS2.

PRIORITY 2:
Continue to raise GLD by the end of EYFS, especially for boys and pupils without additional barriers. Schools should also look to close the attainment in both in Understanding the World (UTW) and Expressive Arts and Design (EAD).

PRIORITY 3:
Raise attainment in reading, especially at the higher standard.

PRIORITY 4:
Continue to embed an effective oracy curriculum which improves pupils' attainment in writing, especially at greater depth.

PRIORITY 5:
Continue to raise attainment at the higher standard in mathematics by the end of KS2.

How Barnsley Schools' Alliance Works

- Barnsley Schools' Alliance is a strategic partnership between early years settings, schools, academies, colleges and the local authority. Its purpose is to raise the quality of education and improve outcomes for children and young people across Barnsley

- The Alliance is the custodian of effective education within Barnsley

- The Alliance recognises the needs of children and young people as a whole and so works with education providers, families, and the community to identify and meet need holistically (see SEND, Early Help and Neglect Strategies)

- The Alliance represents a sector-led model that works in partnership with the Local Authority

- Sector-led improvement means that all schools take a collective responsibility for the outcomes of Barnsley children, and all partners have a mandate to mutually support and challenge each other

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How our priorities will be driven and aligned through each relevant sub-group

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE STRATEGIC (BSA) BOARD

The BSA and its Board is the strategic partnership body composed of the Local Authority and its education partners. It will be accountable to the borough, Children and Young People's Trust Executive Group for progressing and achieving one of the strategic objectives of the Barnsley Children and Young People's Plan. This is to develop a strategy for improving the education, achievement and employability of all children and young people in the borough through driving inclusion, promoting social mobility and ultimately enhancing social capital in the borough.

CEO SUB-GROUP

The Academy CEO Sub-Group meeting fosters a culture of collaboration and partnership working to share best practice and expertise. The network's premise is to improve the education system across Barnsley by collectively focusing on and co-constructing key strategic priorities such as the 'Every Child in Every School Every Day Plan' that will drive positive change and raise standards for all. The network encourages accountability and transparency through open discussion, constructive feedback and collective decision making to maintain trust and credibility across the system in Barnsley.

CEO WORKING PARTY SUB-GROUP

The CEO Working Party Sub-Group developed a 'Barnsley Pledge', which is a shared agreement and commitment between Barnsley Local Authority, Barnsley Schools and Multi Academy Trusts serving in our Locality. The 'signed Barnsley Pledge' is a form of words in which all partners and stakeholders can coalesce to improve outcomes for young people, particularly those with vulnerabilities. The working party has been instrumental in driving the work of the co-produced "Every Child in School Every Day Plan" (ECISE) and surrounding activity. This group routinely meet and monitor the progress, impact and activity against the 4 Key Priorities of the ECISE plan.

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY SUB-GROUP

The Leadership Capacity Group focuses on building leadership capacity which empowers leaders at all levels to develop a sustainable model of continuous improvement across all Barnsley Schools. A group of key stakeholders focused on driving activities to ensure that school leaders including governors can continue to lead their schools effectively. The group's work is underpinned by effective communication with school leaders and collaboration with external partners. The group works with the teaching school hubs to develop, monitor and challenge the engagement of school leaders with the professional development opportunities available so this has maximum impact.

CLUSTER LEADS

The Cluster Leads are responsible for representing the voice of the schools within their cluster. They act as a conduit for information flow between the Barnsley Schools' Alliance and school leaders. The Secondary Heads meeting is routinely attended by all 11 secondary leaders.

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QUALITY OF EDUCATION SUB-GROUP

The Quality of Education Group is responsible for determining and overseeing the annual quality assurance process. It monitors school performance over time, acknowledging success and challenging underperformance. Additionally, the group also oversees the brokering and commissioning arrangements for schools to ensure leaders have the capacity to improve at the required pace. This includes monitoring the impact of any external support and determining when escalation processes need to be implemented to prevent further decline. Finally, the group considers the impact of the core offer for continuing professional development on educational outcomes for schools across the borough.

CPD WORKING SUB-GROUP

The CPD group is responsible for co-constructing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Barnsley School's Alliance professional development programme. This ensures that the workforce can access high- quality CPD, enabling them to hone the skills they need to fulfil their roles effectively.

ALLIANCE EXECUTIVE SUB-GROUP

The Alliance Executive sub-group maintains financial oversight of the Barnsley Schools' Alliance budget and approves the major funding of projects proposed by the working groups. It maintains strategic oversight of the working groups and monitors impact of their work. The Executive group oversees the progress of Schools Causing Concern moving through the escalation policy it also determines important agenda items and the structure of the Barnsley Schools' Alliance Strategic Board.

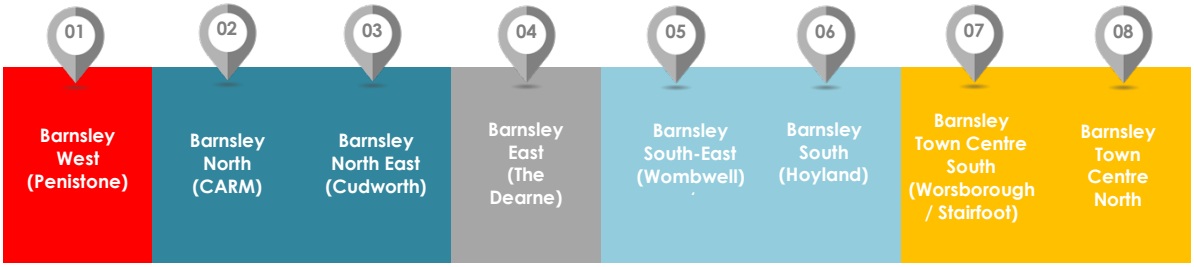
The Learning Provision in Barnsley Includes:

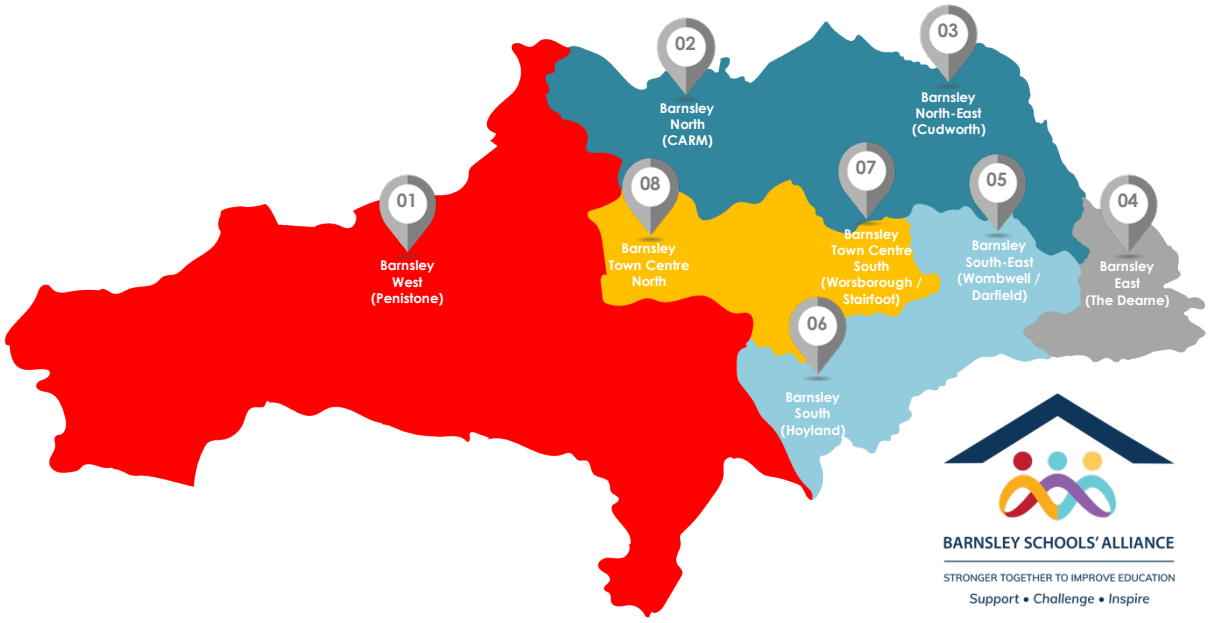
SETTING:	MAINTAINED SCHOOLS:	ACADEMIES:	FREE SCHOOLS:	TOTAL:
Primary	**26**	**51**	**0**	**77**
Secondary	**1**	**9**	**1**	**11**
Special	**0**	**4**	**0**	**4**
Student Referral Unit	**0**	**1**	**0**	**1**
Total	**27**	**65**	**1**	**93**

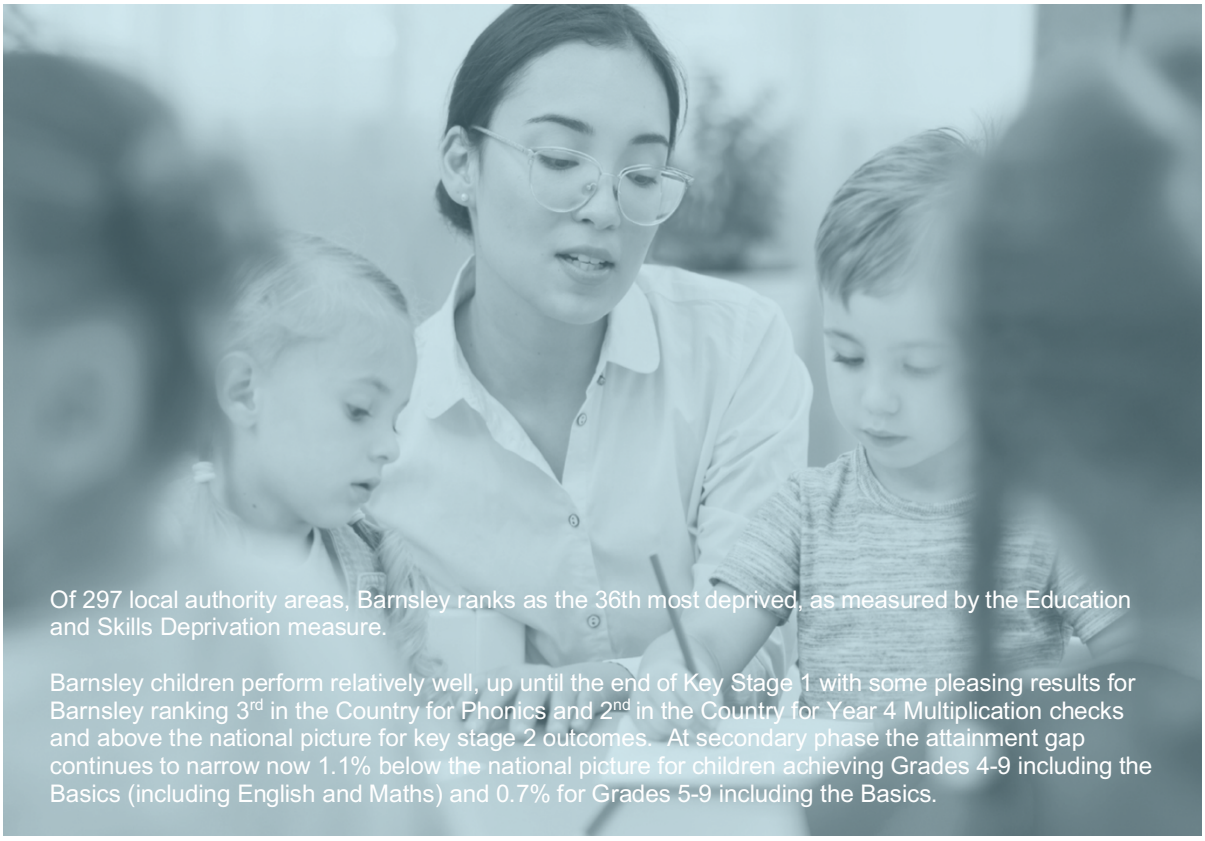
There are 92 state-funded schools in Barnsley. Holy Trinity is an all-through 3-16 academy but is counted here as two settings, one Primary and one Secondary. The new free school opened in September 2021.

There are 17 Multi-Academy Trusts currently working in Barnsley. In addition to Primary and Secondary schools, there are two main providers of Post 16 / Key Stage 5 provision, Barnsley College and Penistone Grammar School.

Barnsley School Clusters



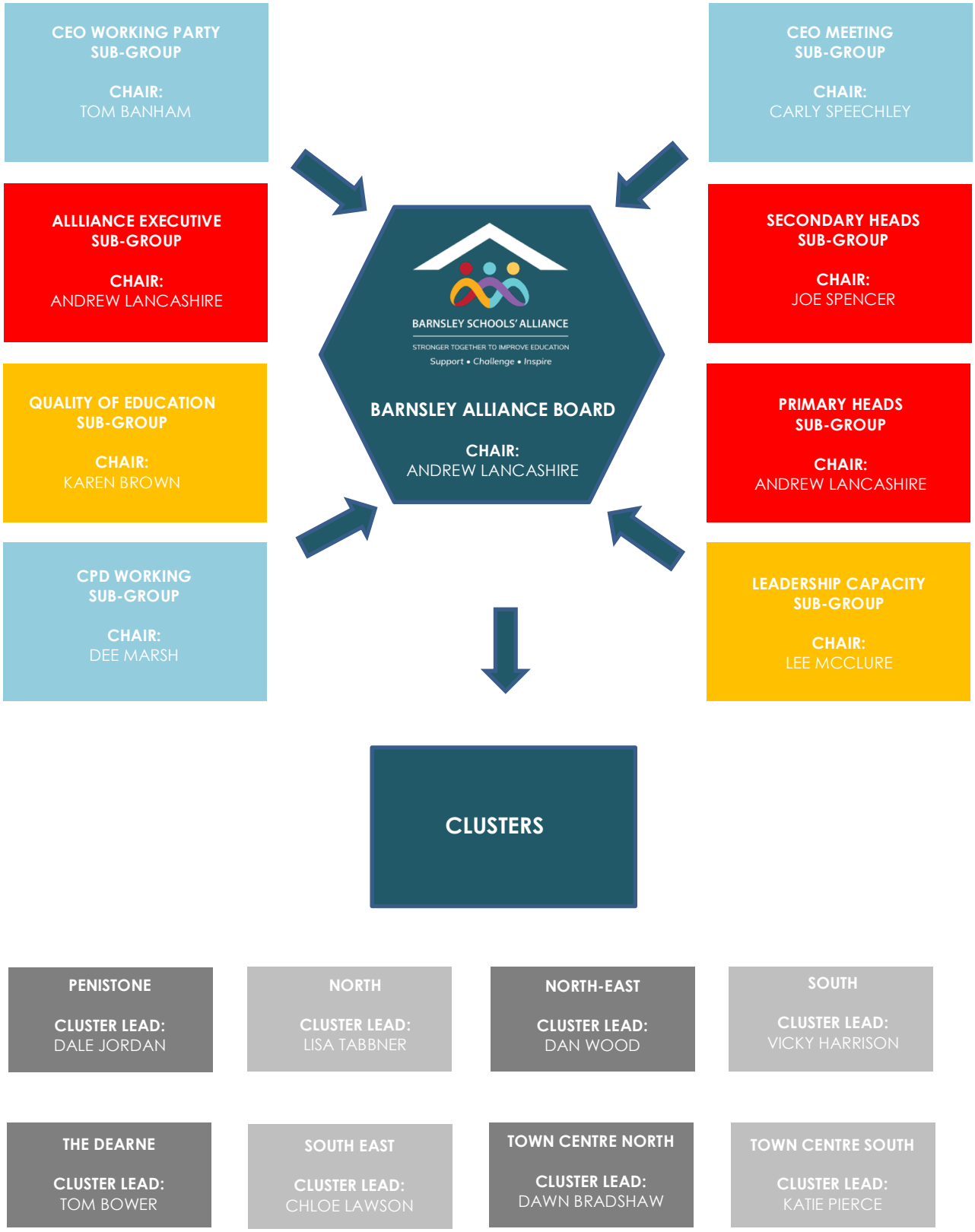




Of 297 local authority areas, Barnsley ranks as the 36th most deprived, as measured by the Education and Skills Deprivation measure.

Barnsley children perform relatively well, up until the end of Key Stage 1 with some pleasing results for Barnsley ranking 3rd in the Country for Phonics and 2nd in the Country for Year 4 Multiplication checks and above the national picture for key stage 2 outcomes. At secondary phase the attainment gap continues to narrow now 1.1% below the national picture for children achieving Grades 4-9 including the Basics (including English and Maths) and 0.7% for Grades 5-9 including the Basics.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance Governance and Structure 2025/2026



Barnsley Schools' Alliance strategic key priorities will help drive the local authority's corporate and directorate Key Performance Indicators for 2025-28:

Key Performance Indicator Position 2025	
Corporate:	**Target:**
Take up of 2 year old childcare/education offer	77.0%
Primary School Attendance	95.0%
Secondary School Attendance	91.10%
Proportion of educational settings judged good or outstanding by Ofsted	94.0%
Early Years and Childcare settings rated good or outstanding by Ofsted	98.0
Percentage of children on SEN Support in schools	13.0%
The number of suspensions in all schools	1750
The Number of Exclusions in all schools	97
Young people aged 10 - 17 years entering the Youth Justice System for the first time	30

Comparators with Local & National Picture 2025

Metric:	Barnsley:	Yorkshire and Humber:	National:	Statistical Neighbours
Good Level of Development (GLD)	67.9%	66.2%	68.3%	66.1%
Phonics - Expected Standard	85.0%	80.0%	80.0%	78.4%
MTC - % Achieving Full Marks	50.0%	37.0%	37.0%	40.8%
Key Stage 2 - Expected Standard RWM	64.7%	60.3%	61.2%	61.5%
KS4 - Attainment 8	43.8	44.3	45.9	44.0
KS4 - Grade 9-4 inc. English & Math	63.4%	62.7%	64.5%	62.3%
KS4 - Grade 9-5 inc. English & Math	44.5%	43.3%	45.2%	42.2%
KS5 - A-Level APS	33.92	34.52	33.39	35.94
KS5 - Achieving at least 2 A-Levels	95.9%	81.9%	85.2%	79.0%
Primary School Attendance 24/25	94.9%	94.7%	94.8%	*
Secondary School Attendance 24/25	90.2%	90.7%	91.4%	*

**NB this data is not comparable*

In Barnsley, we want all children, young people and families to benefit from the opportunities that a great childhood brings. A range of experiences and learning opportunities can help to give children and young people the best start in life and adulthood.

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The Great Childhoods Ambition is our commitment to improving the lives and futures of our children and young people. We will support them to have a great childhood and ensure they feel they **belong**, and can **explore**, **dream**, **grow** and **connect**.

As a borough-wide, collaborative programme, we would like everyone to get on board and help us grow the opportunities for children and young people. If you're an employer and would like to find out how you can support the Great Childhoods Ambition, email us at **gca@barnsley.gov.uk**

What We Are Doing

As part of our Great Childhoods Ambition, we will:

• Work with family hubs to support parents to give their children the best start in life

• Work with schools and academies to provide a caring and safe space for all pupils to learn and grow, giving them a sense of belonging and the strength and skills to make anything possible

• Develop stronger partnerships between our schools / academies and communities, creating a network of support so no child falls through the gaps

• Provide activities, opportunities and experiences of interest to children and young people

• Support children and young people to access and explore what is on offer, building confidence and boosting their self esteem

• Work with careers leaders, higher education partners and businesses to inspire and encourage young people to dream big, showing them possibilities in the voluntary, public and private sectors

• Grow young people's digital skills to help them prepare for a digital future

Barnsley 2030

The Education Improvement Strategy will support the Barnsley 2030 Strategy – Learning Barnsley meet their ambition by working towards helping children and young people to achieve their full potential with improved educational outcomes, achievement and attainment, which in turn will enable completing higher-level skills studies than ever before.

Barnsley 2030 sets out challenging targets which will continue to improve social, economic and community life in Barnsley by 2030.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance through its collaborative approach will help deliver the following targets:

1.	Every young person attends a 'good or outstanding' early years setting or school in Barnsley.
2.	The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of KS2, exceeds the National Average.
3.	The percentage of pupils achieving passes at grades 9-5 in GCSE English and Maths exceeds the National Average.
4.	The number of fixed term exclusions will reduce year-on-year and be significantly lower than our baseline by 2030.

Barnsley Schools' Alliance – Plan on a Page

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OUR FOUR CORE PRINCIPLES

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

TO CHAMPION WORLD CLASS EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES. ENSURING WE MEET THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

INCLUSIVE PROVISION

TO SECURE HIGH QUALITY INCLUSIVE PROVISION, WIDEN LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PROMOTE EQUALITY

SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT

TO CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN BARNSLEY'S SYSTEM WIDE SCHOOL-LED IMPROVEMENT, WORKING CLOSELY WITH KEY PARTNERS

IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

TO PROMOTE, SAFEGUARD AND IMPROVE OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, RECOGNISING THAT THIS ULTIMATELY UNDERPINS THE ABILITY FOR US TO ACHIEVEALL OTHER PRIORITIES

BARNSLEY SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE PRIORITIES FOR LEARNING

TO ENSURE THAT ALL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS DELIVER A QUALITY OF EDUCATION THAT ENHANCES THE LIFE CHANCES OF ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE BOROUGH

TO BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY WHICH EMPOWERS LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE MODEL OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACROSS ALL BARNSLEY SCHOOLS

TO ENSURE THAT ALL SETTINGS OFFER A CURRICULUM THAT IS CURRENT, RELEVANT, DYNAMIC, ENGAGING AND ASPIRATIONAL SO THAT IT CATERS FOR THE BREADTH OF INTERESTS AND TALENTS ACROSS THE LOCALITY

TO DELIVER THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING TO DRIVE CURRICULUM DELIVERY AND EMBED THE NECESSARY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN ALL SUBJECTS

TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE ATTAINMENTS OUTCOMES; THROUGH RAPID RATES OF PROGRESS FROM ALL STARTING POINTS

"EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY" CO PRODUCED PLAN

PRIORITY 1:

ELECTIVELY HOME EDUCATED

COMMITMENT TO REDUCE OVERALL RATE CURRENTLY ON THE REGISTER BY 30% AND TO REDUCE THE OVERALL NUMBER OF CHILDREN LEAVING SCHOOL TO BECOME EHE

PRIORITY 2:

ATTENDANCE
FULL TIME ATTENDANCE TO BE IN LINE OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL PICTURE

PRIORITY 3:

SUSPENSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS
AN INCREMENTAL REDUCTION FROM 20% TO 40%

PRIORITY 4:

SEND AND INCLUSION
OUR SETTINGS CREATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WHEREBY EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON FEELS SAFE, VALUED AND SUPPORTED SO THAT THEY ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A SENSE OF BELONGING IN THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

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