

Southwark Education Partnership Board

Draft Terms of Reference

Date Agreed	Review By:
11 th June 2026	11 th June 2027

1. Introduction

The Southwark Education Partnership (SEP) is a borough-wide initiative designed by education setting, for education settings and facilitated by Southwark Council.

It is a collaboration between Southwark education settings and the Local Authority, working together to help improve life-chances for all children and young people in the borough.

The SEP aims to:

- Narrow outcome gaps for Southwark's most vulnerable children and young people.
- Strengthen links and shared learning between education settings, Southwark Local Authority (LA) and wider borough partners.
- Ensure collective responsibility between education settings and Southwark LA for all children and young people.
- Promote children and young people's independence and preparation for adulthood in all our work.

It will achieve its aims through:

- Promoting inclusive, evidence informed practice that improves outcomes for all children and young people.
- Providing a strong, collective voice for education settings in Southwark's wider system decision making.
- Supporting strategic dialogue between education settings, the local authority and wider partners.

- Enhancing sharing of the expertise and strengths across Southwark education settings.
- Enabling more agile, collaborative and effective responses to longstanding and emerging borough challenges.

2. Purpose of the Board

The Southwark Education Partnership (SEP) will be overseen by a board. The Partnership Board exists to provide strategic leadership, direction, and accountability for the Partnership. The board will work to ensure the Partnership remains inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the borough's wider vision — including the Southwark 2030 commitment to give every child “a good start in life”.

3. Function

The board will:

- Set out the annual partnership priorities and objectives in response to the needs of the borough and education settings.
- Oversee individual subgroups (e.g. thematic hubs, families, problem solving task forces etc.) as required.
- Oversee and direct funding during funded phases of partnership activity.

The Partnership Board will meet six times per year, normally once per half term.

4. Governance and Constitution

The Board is accountable to Southwark Education Settings and Children Services Leadership Team collectively and will report regularly on priorities, decisions and progress. (Appendix 2)

5. Composition

The Partnership Board will comprise of the following:

Primary schools	5	Co Leads will represent as 1 member
Secondary	2	At least 1 SASH representative

		Co Leads will represent as 1 member
Special Schools	1	
Early Years Providers	1	
Independent Chair	1	
(LA) Assistant Director of Transformation	1	
(LA) Deputy Director of Learning and Inclusion	1	
(LA) Assistant Director of School Standards, Partnership and Sustainability	1	
Total	13	

Please see appendix 1 at the bottom of the document which details all appointed board representatives.

The board is committed to advocating for representation that reflects the diversity of school communities in the borough.

Other roles

- Partnership Manager (non-voting)
- Partnership Headteacher Advisor (non-voting)
- Additional attendees (e.g. hub leads or individual presenters) may attend meetings by invitation, where relevant to the agenda.

6. Appointment, Eligibility

Initial appointments to the board were made via nominations. Future appointments will be facilitated by the Local Authority through partnership board agreed nomination and election processes.

Where a vacancy for a headteacher representative arises, or is about to arise, communication will be sent to all headteacher in the family groups, inviting them to consider nominating themselves.

If by the specified closing date, the number of nominations exceeds the number of vacancies available, a voting poll will be created, listing the nominees.

If the number of nominations is the same or fewer than the number of vacancies, the nominee(s) will be appointed without the need for a poll.

7. Term of Office

Board members will normally be appointed for a two-year term, with the option to extend for a further year. The term will start from 23rd April 2026.

Membership will cease if an individual no longer holds the role by virtue of which they were appointed.

Members are expected to attend meetings regularly and must find a substitute to attend in the case of absence. Headteacher representatives are expected to find a substitute headteacher to attend on their behalf.

Failure to attend two consecutive meetings without agreed reasons and a substitute may result in membership being reviewed.

Where a position on the board falls vacant before the term of office has run its full course, the person newly elected to that position will initially serve out the remainder of that term of office only.

Persons whose term of office has expired may stand for re-election provided that they are still eligible.

Selection processes for board members will be transparent and communicated to all schools.

8. Chairing Arrangements

The Board will be chaired by an independent Chair, appointed for an initial term of two years, starting from the date of first meeting, 23rd April 2026. The Chair will:

- Facilitate inclusive, purposeful meetings
- Support constructive challenge and decision-making
- Represent the Partnership externally where required

The appointment of the Independent Chair will take place every two years at the first meeting. In the absence of the independent chair for any given meeting, a proxy chair will be appointed by the board on the date of that meeting.

A proxy chair will be appointed from among the education setting representatives.

9. Quorum

A meeting will be quorate when at least 50% of education setting board members are present. The presence of substitutes at a meeting will count towards the quorum. As time goes by the board can re-evaluate this percentage.

10. Voting

Decisions will normally be made by consensus. Where a vote is required, each member has one vote; the Chair holds a casting vote if required. Votes from a family with co-leads will be counted as one vote. For example, if two co-leads vote, this is counted as one vote.

11. Substitutes

Named substitutes may attend and vote at meetings of the Board on behalf of members who are unable to attend.

Individual headteacher board members will be responsible to find another headteacher in their absence.

In the case of the family lead representatives, one deputy lead can be nominated as a substitute in the absence of the family lead member.

12. Local authority attendance at meetings

Local authority attendance will be restricted to:

- Deputy Director of Learning and Inclusion
- Assistant Director of School Standards, Partnerships and Sustainability
- Assistant Director of Strategy, Transformation and Business Intelligence

Any other Local Authority person who is providing specific specialist or technical advice may be invited by the Chair of the Board.

13. Secretariat and Support

The Partnership Manager, employed by Southwark Council and reporting to the Board, will act as the secretariat and will:

- Coordinate agendas, papers and actions.
- Support communication between the Board, schools and partners.
- Maintain records of meetings and decisions.

- Support evaluation and sustainability planning.

14. Ways of Working

The Partnership Board will operate on the basis of:

- Trust, transparency and shared responsibility.
- Inclusive participation and co-production.
- Evidence-informed decision-making.
- Clear communication with all schools.

Papers will be circulated, as far as possible, one week in advance of meetings and agendas will focus on strategic issues rather than operational detail.

15. Sub Groups and Work Programme

The Board may establish sub-groups to progress specific priorities. These may include:

- School Families (Appendix 3)
- Thematic hubs (Appendix 4)
- Time limited taskforces (Appendix 5)
- Any other sub-group determined by the board, which aligns with the aims and vision of the partnership.

Each subgroup will operate under its own clear terms of reference, established collaboratively between schools and the LA, and report back to the Board.

16. Conflicts of Interest

Members must declare any conflicts of interest for example; pecuniary, non-pecuniary and loyalty based.

Where a conflict arises, the member will withdraw from discussion of that item.

17. Complaints

Any concerns or complaints relating to the Partnership Board should be raised with the Chair. Where a complaint relates to the Chair, it should be raised with the Vice-Chair.

18. Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the incoming elected board to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflective of the needs of Southwark Schools and Local Authority.

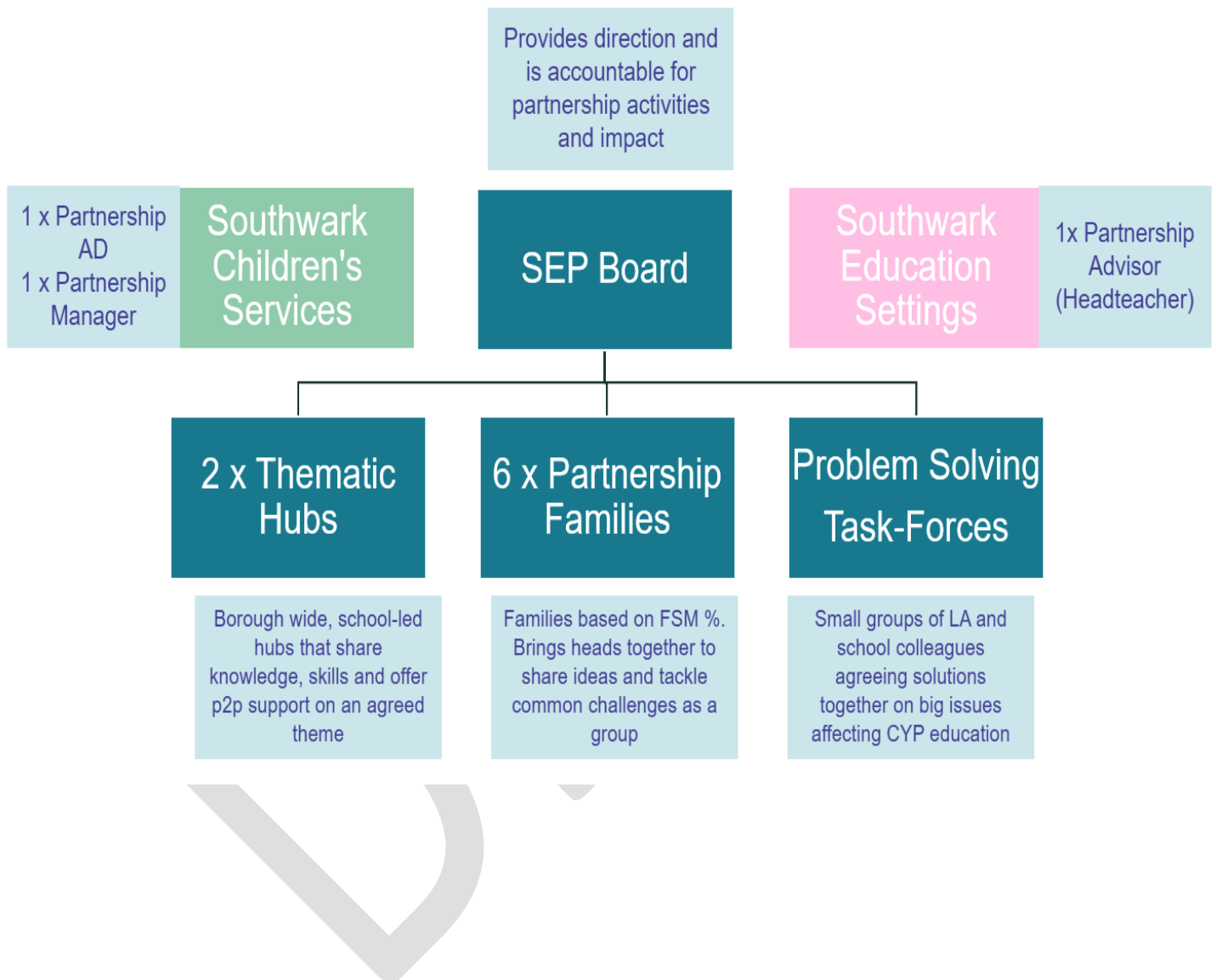
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Appendix 1

Southwark Education Partnership Board Representatives		
Primary schools	Ruth Sharp, Rye Oak	Family 1
	Vicky Shires, Crawford	Family 2
	Gregory Doey, River Peck Federation	Family 3
	Catherine Fulton, St Josephs Borough	Family 4
	Alli Crank, St Johns and St Clements Tom Turnham, Lyndhurst	Family 5 Co-Leads
Secondary Schools (At least 1 SASH Representative)	Jane Button, Southwark College Alison Harbottle, Charter East Dulwich	Family 6 Co-Leads
Special Schools	Georgina Quigley, Spa School Bermondsey	
Early Years Providers	Rebecca Sherwood, The Grove and Kintore Way Nursery Schools	
(LA) Assistant Director of Transformation	Michael Crowe	
(LA) Deputy Director of Learning and Inclusion	Anna Chiva	
(LA) Assistant Director of School Standards, Partnership and Sustainability	Nikki Tilson	
Independent Chair	Maria Dawes	

Appendix 2

The SEP Structure and framework of governance and engagement



Appendix 3

Partnership Families – Description

Groupings

SEP families are an integral structure and are organised as “families of schools” with similar communities of children and young people.

Schools are in families based on their FSM% and secondaries are linked to their key primary feeder schools. Special and nursery schools are distributed evenly across the families.

Federations of schools have been kept together.

Function

SEP Families:

- Serve a purpose in terms of representing education settings’ views collectively.
- Engage in collaborative dialogue and share and learn from other professionals.
- Discuss and consider common challenges and identify priorities that they would like to work on together, possibly funding opportunities to do so.
- Seek opportunities for taking collective responsibility for the positive outcomes for all children and young people served by the family.

Family Leads

The Family Lead (FL) plays a key role within the Southwark Schools partnership structure, leading a “family of schools” and representing their voice at the SEP Board.

The FL is responsible for:

- Facilitating 6 family meetings per academic year, including planning engaging agendas, and enabling productive dialogue.
- Attending and contributing to the Southwark Schools Learning Partnership (SEP) Board meetings twice a term, acting as a two-way conduit between the family and strategic decision-making forums.
- Acting as a representative voice for education settings, ensuring views and feedback are effectively communicated.
- Responsible for submitting data on family activity to the partnership manager (proforma, agendas)
- Promoting a collective responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people in Southwark, across the family.
- Identifying and sharing best practice within the family and beyond.
- Establishing a participation framework at wider professional meetings amongst setting leaders within the family to create an effective learning feedback loop.

Additional Information:

The FL role is supported by an initial £5,000 funding per family, per annum to enable delivery of responsibilities

The FL is typically fulfilled by head of an education setting (or group of education settings) within the partnership.

The FL can appoint a deputy (appointed by the family) to support with coordination and leadership and to deputise when needed.

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Appendix 4

Partnership Hubs – Description

There is 2-year funding for two borough wide hubs, to be led by education settings, designed in partnership with Southwark Local Authority.

These hubs will provide, in line with SEP aims, sharing of knowledge and skills and facilitation of peer-to-peer support. They will aim to support a wide range of education settings in the borough.

Model

Hubs will build on the model developed through the existing SEND Hub (see Southwark Schools Hub Operation Design 2021).

Settings, individually or in pairs/small groups will bid to lead the hubs via an application process managed by the SEP Manager. The board will select the hub theme and lead.

Each hub will be funded on a two-year basis, giving sufficient time to plan, recruit, deliver and evaluate.

Responsibilities of the SEP Board:

Agree on themes of hubs, in alignment with vision and aims of the SEP

Agree on the settings commissioned to lead the hubs

Quality assure the progress and impact of hubs

Responsibilities of the SEP Manager:

Co-create outcomes and measures that will be used to monitor hub progress

Co-design hub offer

Be first point of contact to the hub lead for any queries and escalations

Provide updates on hub offer and notices via SEP communication platforms

Monitor risk and progress of the hub and report formally to SEP board

Responsibilities of the Hub Lead:

Co-create outcomes and measures that will be used to monitor hub progress

Co-design hub offer

Be responsible for hub budget

Promote engagement and attendance

Be responsible for communications on hub offer through education setting networks

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Appendix 5

Partnership Taskforces – Description

Taskforces are time-bound task and finish groups that will bring together Southwark education settings, the LA and other partners as relevant to discuss and agree solutions to significant issues that affect the education of CYP in the borough.

Model

Agreed taskforce themes will be set by the board, based on SEP priorities in alignment with vision and aims. A task force lead will be identified based on whether the problem to be solved sits within LA services or education setting services.

Where an agreed taskforce should be led by an education setting professional, SEP family leads should identify volunteer nominees from within their groups for the board to agree.

Responsibilities of the SEP Board:

Agree focus of taskforces and number of taskforces at any given time

Agree on time frame for each taskforce

Agree on appointees to each taskforce which includes both LA and education setting professionals

Quality assure the impact of taskforces, the frequency will be appropriate to the amount of time allocated to complete the project.

Responsibilities of the SEP Manager:

Be first point of contact to the taskforce lead for any queries and escalations

Provide updates on taskforce work via SEP communication platforms

Monitor risk and progress of the taskforce and report formally to SEP board

Responsibilities of the Task-Force Lead:

Design the project plan

Agree on the outcomes and/or measure that will be used to assess progress

Update SEP manager on progress

Be responsible for any budget associated with the taskforce

Coordinate taskforce meetings

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