



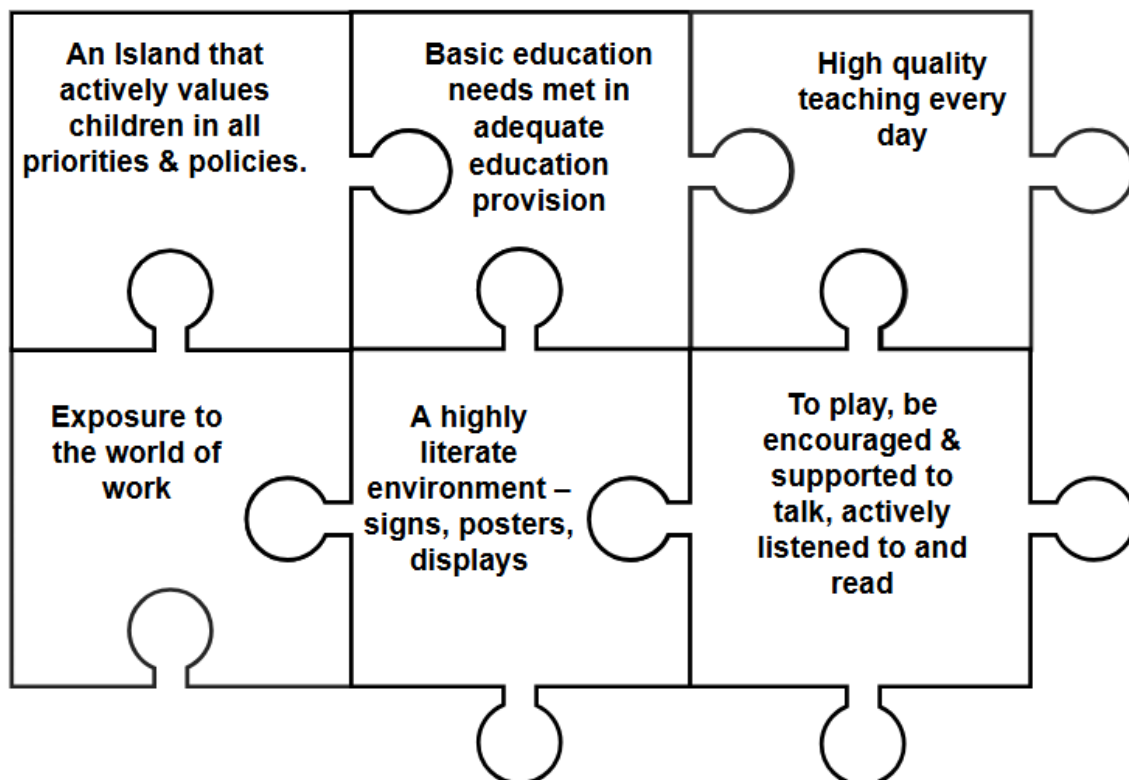
**St Helena
Government**

Education, Skills & Employment Portfolio

February 2025

Report of the St Helena Education Review

Saint Helena's children need:



REPORT OF THE ST HELENA EDUCATION REVIEW

Introduction

The St Helena Government has undertaken an Education Review to evaluate St Helena's education provision from early years to post 16 and its skills provision, exploring how St Helena's education services can be future proofed to support the economic and human capital development of the island, with the aim of enhancing educational attainment and learning outcomes for all. The review has drawn on extensive public consultation; the input of leaders and staff in the Education, Skills & Employment portfolio; a wide range of education data; and a number of reports by external experts.

Executive summary

Education is the engine of change. Currently in St Helena education is the engine of decline. This Report is a call to arms to the Island's community, the St Helena Government, and the UK Government (via the FCDO) to prioritise education for our children and young people, who need an adequate education which raises their aspirations enabling them to fulfil their potential and support St Helena's economic aspirations. Improving education will be essential to meeting SHG's overall vision of '*A sustainable environment that creates opportunity, inspires social and economic progress, ensuring a better quality of life for all*'. This report sets out the opportunities and a clear way forward for improvement.

The case for change

Education in St Helena has many strengths. Staff in schools are dedicated and hardworking, with a strong commitment to the education of the children in their care. They are often prepared to work 'above and beyond' by stepping up into new roles, including those they have not been qualified or trained for. Leaders support their staff and recognise the value of high quality training and development. A broad and appropriate British curriculum is in place that should enable pupils to fulfil their potential, and is enriched by a focus on St Helena's culture, history and environment. Behaviour in St Helena schools is mostly good, when compared to the UK.

There are also some deep and long standing challenges. There has not been a standards framework that all St Helena schools work towards, which is a fundamental gap. School attendance rates have declined in recent years. There is an urgent need to raise aspirations right across the community for what children can achieve and how they can contribute to St Helena's future. Children need clear and achievable pathways to higher levels of learning and good jobs. Providing adequate education and support to help children with special needs and disabilities achieve good outcomes is an ongoing challenge. The falling numbers of pupils presents challenges in operating a school service across four sites - in 2024/25, there are 106 pupils at St Pauls, 88 at Harford, 93 at Pilling and 197 at Prince Andrew School. A smaller primary intake in September 2025 will reduce these numbers further.

The most common teaching qualification in St Helena is a level 4 qualification, and many school staff with teaching roles are qualified to a lower level than this. By comparison, almost all teachers in the UK hold a post-graduate (Level 7) qualification, and other countries have similar standards. There is a serious shortage of staff which contributes to disrupted

teaching and learning for pupils, presents challenges in classroom management, and limits the time available for school improvement and staff development. Previous partnerships with educators outside St Helena have provided vital high quality support and challenge, but have fallen away when budgets ran out. Such links need to be re-vitalised and sustained over the longer term to make a real difference.

As a result, St Helena's schools are not currently meeting the needs of St Helena's children, or preparing children for work in the modern world. Children are not reaching their potential and educational standards have fallen far behind those in other countries. The key metrics illustrate that the education system, in its current format and funding, is unable to provide an adequate standard of education and will not deliver a future educated workforce or enable the island's children to meet their potential. In 2024:

Only 20% of St Helena's primary students met phonics standards, far below the UK's 80% average—a crucial foundation for future learning.

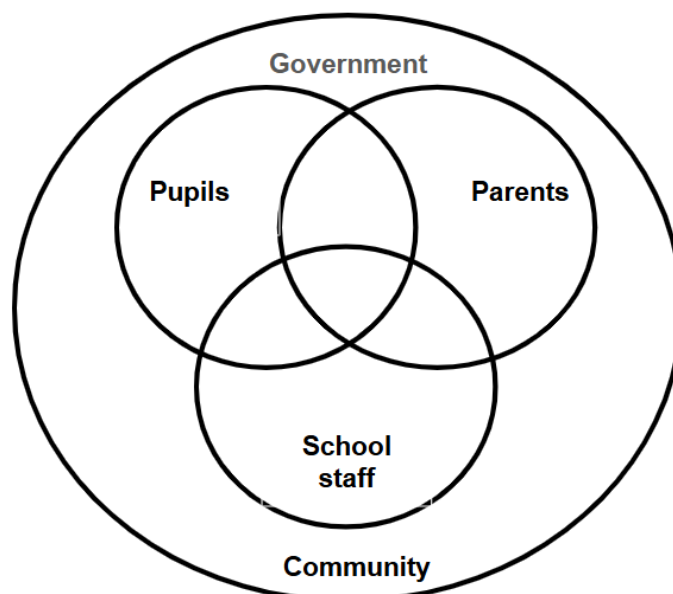
Just 13% of St Helena's Year 6 students (aged 11) met age-related benchmarks in English and Maths pilot SATs, compared to 61% in the UK, indicating a major educational gap.

The proportion of pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSE passes, including English and Maths, has dropped from 51% in 2020 to 20% in 2024, showing a widening gap with UK standards.

Less than 40% of primary pupils and less than 30% of secondary pupils had good attendance (i.e. an attendance rate of 94% or higher), and it is likely that this has contributed to these poor outcomes.

Girls consistently outperform boys' at all key stages. This is a serious concern and needs to be addressed urgently with focused staff training.

Our students have far greater potential, but the current system is holding them back, impacting on pupil's life chances and failing to meet the Island's economic needs. There is a pressing need to invest in our educators: the top priority should be recruiting, training, and retaining quality teachers and staff. Pay and conditions need to be attractive enough to encourage people to join and remain in the teaching profession. Meeting these challenges will mean a long-term commitment - political, financial and from the whole community - with sustained focus and investment over time. This needs to be a priority right across the island, with everyone working together:



School improvement

A vision for sustained school improvement

The vision for St Helena's schools is for:

A nurturing, internationally-accredited education system that develops home-grown talent (teachers and students) to support St Helena's sustainable future and economic and social growth with permanent qualified staff.

We will ensure that education plans continue to be aligned with the St Helena Government's wider strategic planning. SHG's vision is underpinned by seven National Goals including:

*ALTOGETHER BETTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Our children and young people get the best start in life and we are better educated, more skilled and more successful.*

The Review also supports the aim of lifelong learning for all ages and the national goal for St Helena to be 'Altogether Wealthier' through promoting economic growth. Developing human capital through education and training is critically important for the economy. Higher educational attainment is needed to secure a workforce both for existing employment roles and for the higher level jobs that St Helena seeks to attract. The Education Review is intended to help drive the delivery of St Helena's Sustainable Economic Development Strategy. International research shows that better education outcomes are also associated with better health, improved quality of life, and other positive social and community outcomes.

To achieve this vision, our schools will need to work closely with parents/guardians and will also need the support of the wider community, including the private and voluntary sectors. Children's needs and higher aspirations for our children's futures needs to be a high priority right across the St Helena Government and the Island's community.

System-wide school improvement

St Helena schools are essentially British International Schools that have operated outside a standards framework. In 2024, the St Helena Government committed at political level to adopt the COBIS standards as a framework for structured and sustained school improvement, working to achieve the standards by academic year 2030/31.

COBIS is the Council of British International Schools. Their standards (listed in the Appendix to this Report) represent an established and well respected framework for ensuring a good quality of education. It will be challenging for St Helena's schools to reach them, but they are appropriate to the context of St Helena and are achievable with long term commitment and investment. Two Boats School on Ascension Island is a COBIS accredited school.

Having an agreed set of standards enables the Education Portfolio, school leaders, staff and the whole community to consistently focus their efforts on key improvement priorities, to measure progress towards them, and celebrate successes. A shared vision and standards will help schools and all the Portfolio to work together under coordinated leadership.

A detailed and costed COBIS standards delivery plan has been produced. It will take at least five years of relentless improvement involving the whole St Helena community, backed by additional recurrent funding. Changes and improvements will be sequential, and will need to be sustained and developed. This will need strong community, family and political support, with a strong focus on the needs of the children.

Annual review of school improvement

An annual review of school improvement will be commissioned from Hampshire County Council, our strategic partners for education. Each review should examine data on pupils' attainment and observe classroom practice to assess the impact of staff training in terms of improved teaching and learning. It should take a critical look at progress in our COBIS journey - identifying both successes and areas where progress has stalled, to highlight priorities for advice and support. This will help SHG Ministers, the Education Portfolio Advisory Board and FCDO to evaluate the impact of the change programme and identify if any additional support is needed.

Assessment & Monitoring

Regular and effective assessment of pupil attainment is essential to help teachers' guide future learning, plan interventions to help individual pupils succeed, and enable school leaders to identify priorities for improvement and training.

After appropriate staff training, we will introduce:

- a rationalised and rigorous framework for the assessment of pupil attainment, built around the statutory Year 1 phonics screening test, Year 6 end of Key Stage 2 SATs (in Reading, Writing and Mathematics) and GCSE outcomes
- a common framework for moderating teachers assessments so that they are consistent with classes and schools
- an effective system for monitoring school improvement, with regular reporting to the Education Portfolio Advisory Board

Assessment Timeline in Primary Schools

Year	CATs	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Support
1		Phonics Screening	Teacher Assessment	Power Maths	Supported moderation for writing from Hampshire Training of year 6 teachers in moderation of the expected standard by Hampshire
2		Phonics Screening	Teacher Assessment	Power Maths	
3		NFER	Teacher Assessment	Power Maths	
4	CATs	NFER	Teacher Assessment	Power Maths	
5		NFER	Teacher Assessment	Power Maths	
6	CATs	SATs	Externally Moderated Teacher Assessment	SATs	

Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) are used by all primary schools in England to measure pupil's academic progress and attainment at the end of year 6. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) provides a range of education services including standardised assessments for use by schools.

External assessment Timeline in Secondary Schools

Year	Regular ongoing subject-based assessments, plus:
7 (at entry)	CATs
9	CATs
11	External GCSE examinations
12	CATs
13	External A levels examinations, and vocational qualification assessments

CATs (or Cognitive Abilities Tests) measure pupils' abilities across various areas, including verbal, non-verbal and quantitative reasoning. They focus on pupils' abilities to learn and solve problems, rather than their knowledge. The results provide schools with insight into pupils' strengths, areas for development and preferred learning styles - helping with planning for teaching and identifying where targeted support is needed. Over time, they can be used to measure progress and value added.

Curriculum

The curriculum in St Helena schools is broadly fit for purpose, but its delivery needs to be improved through ongoing Continued Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, to improve their abilities to:

- improve phonics teaching in primary school, to provide a secure base for all future learning
- adapt the curriculum to the individual needs of the pupils in their classes, and to ensure both boys and girls are engaged in learning
- sequence the curriculum so that pupils' previous learning is reinforced and built upon as they progress through their schooling; and
- building upon existing strengths, engage pupils by using examples and resources that reflect the local context, culture and history of St Helena.

An overview of the curriculum will be published on school websites so that parents/guardians know what their children are learning and can support them with this.

Behaviour

An urgent priority for the education portfolio and head teachers is to review the behaviour policy across the primary and secondary phases. The schools will need to engage with parents and the broader community, so that everyone is working to a shared set of expectations around pupil behaviour and attendance. Staff training will be needed.

The policy should have a focus on learning behaviours and developing independence. The aim is that by the time pupils arrive at secondary school they display behaviours that enable them to be independent and self-regulating, and are capable of sustaining that through the secondary phase.

School leadership

A programme of sustained investment over many years in school senior and middle leadership is needed, with clear succession planning. The main elements should be:

- a CPD programme for existing school leaders, including coaching from expert education practitioners in the UK and well planned exposure visits
- identifying strong teachers in the local workforce who could be the future leaders of education on St Helena
- creating a programme of coaching and support for those 'future change makers', including UK exposure visits
- exploring the scope to bring in additional leadership capacity to provide coaching and support for future change makers
- Future change makers would step up initially into curriculum or pastoral leadership roles, then deputy leadership and ultimately headship roles in St Helena schools.

School staffing

St Helena schools are understaffed compared to the current required staffing levels, with ongoing shortages of qualified staff. Locally qualified teachers hold a Level 4 qualification in teaching & learning. However, 50% of primary school teachers and 62% of secondary school teachers have qualifications below Level 4, and there are very few staff with internationally recognised teaching qualifications. In the UK, the standard qualification held by almost all teachers is a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or equivalent, which is a Level 7 qualification. Other countries have similar qualification standards. Low local wages contribute to difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers.

These staffing and qualification gaps negatively impact the quality of education and student outcomes. 36% of primary classes are taught by classroom instructors and teaching assistants, while significant numbers of secondary classes are taught by teachers who lack the required knowledge of the subject curriculum.

Additional funding is being explored to strengthen staffing in the immediate term through additional TC qualified teaching posts, with a remit to provide mentoring and training to help upskill local staff. HR are working to explore recruiting teachers from lower cost countries, where St Helena salary levels may be more competitive. Gibraltar are now advertising our teaching vacancies.

Improvement in teaching and learning will be underpinned by continued recruitment for local initial teacher training, with improved induction training, and an improved offer of skill development and CPD. This will be shaped by school leaders, access to National College resources and bespoke training commissioned from Hampshire, both on island and remotely.

Initial teacher training needs long term improvement and sustained funding. This is a significant piece of work that needs to be addressed as an immediate priority. A clear, funded pathway whereby high quality training enables teaching staff to secure Level 5 teaching and learning qualifications is a first step, backed by mentoring and support to ensure that learning is applied in the classroom. An external partner will need to be secured

to support this training route with a mixture of virtual and on island training. Longer term, staff need a pathway to secure higher qualifications.

We hope to secure sustainable funding for some key posts needed to strengthen education standards and delivery including an Education Welfare Officer, an Education Data Analyst, and a training post to secure a qualified Level 6 careers professional to develop careers provision to the internationally respected 'Gatsby' standard. Without these posts it will be challenging to secure the underpinning accountability, tracking, monitoring, attendance and raised aspirations to drive the school improvement programme.

It is anticipated at this stage that any re-organisation of primary schools in St Helena will not lead to any reduction in teaching posts. The aim is to raise standards by giving teachers more time for planning, preparation and assessment and for their own CPD.

School funding

Implementing the COBIS standards in St Helena's schools and the other measures outlined in this review will require additional recurrent funding of an estimated £2.8m per year for the next 5 years. Budgets are currently very tight for all St Helena's schools, with significant costs for IT, broadband, electricity and transport adding to the budgetary pressures. The budget planning assumption across SHG of a 4% vacancy rate creates challenges for budget management in fully staffing a school for the school year.

Achieving the vision for St Helena's schools, enabling children to fulfil their potential, depends on securing the necessary funding. The measures outlined in this report will be implemented as resources allow. A development bid has been submitted to FCDO for additional funding as part of the annual budget process, and all potential funding sources will be explored.

Potential infrastructure funding will be considered separately under SHG's Economic Development Infrastructure Programme (EDIP).

Partnerships

External partnerships can help fill gaps in expertise and knowledge; provide advice, support and training to school leaders, teachers and other staff; and offer challenge to help drive improvement.

A sustained partnership with Hampshire County Council's Education Department will help St Helena's schools to drive improvement and meet the COBIS standards. Hampshire will provide a range of staff training and development delivered both on St Helena and remotely, and opportunities for exposure visits to UK schools. For example, in early 2025 Hampshire delivered three days of bespoke training focusing on phonics, early years, inclusion and teaching and learning. A package of four days of training for schools is proposed for later in 2025.

The Two Boats School on Ascension Island is an accredited COBIS school. The Headteacher, who is from St Helena, can provide advice and support to St Helena's schools as they work towards meeting these standards. We will continue to build strong links between schools in St Helena and Ascension Island.

Primary re-organisation

Options are being explored for re-organising the primary schools in St Helena. Falling numbers of pupils mean that the schools are operating at a scale which does not optimise the quality of learning or the use of resources. The existing issues of recruiting and retaining sufficient qualified staff are made more challenging. It results in group sizes that are too small for effective learning, and results in some vertical (mixed age group) classes which are not supported by parents and are difficult to manage for staff who are not trained.

A restructuring of the primary schools could help consolidate resources and expertise; increase the opportunities for teachers to work in collaboration to improve their teaching; minimise the risks of vertical teaching, and improve outcomes for all pupils.

Final decisions on any possible primary re-organisation have yet to be confirmed, and will be communicated widely in due course. It will be important that any agreed changes are implemented carefully involving pupils, parents and school staff; but without delays so as to minimise any period of uncertainty.

Inclusion

An inclusion hub in every school

Inclusion is an integral part of the mission of every school. We intend to reshape the inclusion service to set up an inclusion hub in each school for those pupils with the most complex needs. The hubs would aim to ensure that the adults supporting these pupils can receive the necessary training, resources and support; and that pupils receive an adapted curriculum that is appropriate to their needs. These hubs should have suitable high quality indoor and outdoor learning spaces. The hubs should be at the heart of each school, with close links to school leaders and staff.

The hubs should primarily offer time-limited evidence-based interventions so that they are not unnecessarily removing pupils from the curriculum and widening the attainment gap. An appropriate model of intervention focused on learners' needs will be used across all schools. They will also need to cater for those with the most complex needs who need personalised timetables and specialist support.

Planning and reviewing interventions

We will improve the monitoring of the implementation of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision so that the impact of actions is reviewed in a timely manner. We will continue to develop and implement an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for all students with complex SEND needs that is consistent across all schools and is reviewed regularly (at least termly). The purpose of IEPs should be to accelerate pupils' progress and close the gaps to their peers.

We will review the Education Team Around the Child (EDTAC) process including the staffing of these meetings so that it generates actions that are appropriate, measurable, time bound and reviewed frequently so that they remain relevant and aligned to pupils' needs and are regularly attended by families.

Training and support for inclusion

We aim to establish a coaching programme with UK based practitioners for the current primary and secondary SEND Coordinator (SENDCO). At least one colleague should have a recognised SEND leadership qualification (NASENDCO or iSENDCo).

We will review the induction process for all new teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that all have received the most up to date SEND training and understand the agreed principles of inclusion.

There should be a resource to help teachers identify a range of common learning and behavioural needs, together with a range of simple and easy to implement adaptive strategies that will address these needs.

We will review the training for 1:1 Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) including in phonics, behaviour management and the use of de-escalation strategies.

Classroom assistants

We will review the role, induction and training of teaching assistants and ensure the expectations outlined in their job descriptions are being carried out effectively. This will include a strong focus on enabling pupils to be independent learners, using best practice in teaching and learning.

Expert support services

We will work to ensure that there is a consistent and responsive process to access expert support and guidance rather than the historical approach of making ad hoc arrangements. For example, we need to establish an agreed source of expert advice from specialists such as Educational Psychology, Occupational Health, Speech & Language and Inclusion so that a well informed and reliable professional partnership is established over time. It will be important for the Health and Education portfolios to work together, building on the strong links that exist on Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Safeguarding

School policies

A comprehensive and timely review of all school policies related to safeguarding is needed so that roles, responsibilities and processes are understood by all stakeholders and so that the policies can be implemented reliably and consistently, and progress can be monitored effectively. All school policies should be regularly updated and reviewed annually, and where necessary, new policies implemented to reflect the change required within the Education Portfolio.

The attendance policy needs to be updated and regularly reviewed, ensuring that the importance of good attendance is understood by pupils, parents/guardians and staff. Filling a post for an Education Welfare Officer would help support schools in improving attendance.

A new record keeping system has been introduced in the secondary school from November 2024 to strengthen safeguarding. It includes the single central record of pre-employment checks conducted on all staff and volunteers working in a school. In time, the aim is to extend that system to the primary schools.

Training & development

On-line safeguarding training designed for British International Schools will be provided via the UK National College, supported by SHG children's services, and to secure Level 3 qualified Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) in schools.

School sites

We will investigate how to make all school sites, both primary and secondary, secure so that there are safe and secure boundaries for all schools to the relevant COBIS standard.

Regular audit and review

We will ensure that all schools have a safeguarding audit as part of any annual review of school improvement, which will include reporting to PAB on the single central record and electronic training record.

Early Years

We will commission an external review of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and provision as soon as possible. Going forward SHG should explore working with the private sector to enhance the education provision for early learning in the crèches.

Post 16 and other education provision

This review has focused mainly on schools, as the key area of development to improve children's life chances. A number of other services make important contributions to teaching and learning and the St Helena community.

The sixth form programme supports young people to achieve academic and vocational qualifications, gain work experience and move into employment. The Community College offers a range of vocational courses and qualifications. The Library in Jamestown is an important community resource that supports learning. This report includes some recommendations for upgrading St Helena's careers provision in schools.

Some young people progress to higher education, usually in the UK, and the new SHG Graduate Scheme now provides opportunities for young people to return to roles on the Island after completing their degrees. The St Helena Research Institute is building partnerships with British universities and increasing the range of post-graduate scientific research conducted in St Helena.

SHAPE is an independent charity that provides valuable learning and employment opportunities for adults of all ages with disability or learning difficulties, including through their recycling, community cafe and traditional crafts businesses. As time progresses, improvement in the schools service may lead to opportunities to further develop one or more of these services.

Implementation

An implementation plan will be drawn up covering all the changes and improvements outlined in this review, with timescales for short, medium and long term measures. That overall plan will dovetail with a detailed plan for St Helena's schools to achieve the COBIS standards. The Education Ordinance will need to be updated. We are recruiting for an

Education Review and Reorganisation Manager to co-ordinate and drive forward the delivery of the plan.

This Education Review Programme will be managed via a clear governance structure, with a direct reporting line to SHG's Steering Committee, which is a high level committee comprising Ministers and FCDO and SHG officials, and which has oversight of all projects and programmes that are jointly funded by UKG and SHG. Progress will be reported to the Portfolio Advisory Board. It is essential that timely action is taken to tackle any emerging delays or problems, in order to sustain momentum. A revised set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Education, Skills & Employment Portfolio will also be monitored by the Board.

Appendix : COBIS STANDARDS

	Standard	What meeting the standard will mean for St Helena schools
1	Safeguarding & safer recruitment	Safeguarding and child protection are high priorities for trained school staff. Schools will work in partnership with social care and the police to secure high quality safeguarding standards.
2	Student Welfare	Schools are safe and welcoming places with good attendance and behaviour, where pupils feel supported, have their needs met and can flourish.
3	Facilities	Schools have the right facilities to support all pupils' learning and keep pupils safe.
4	Governance	Schools benefit from the challenge and support of a governing body to guide the strategic direction of the school - this will be a new development for St Helena, and governor training will be important.
5	Ethos and values	Schools have a strong British educational ethos and a set of core values that support children and young people to learn and thrive.
6	Boarding	<i>This standard is not relevant to St Helena, as there is no boarding school provision.</i>
7	Learning & Teaching	Schools are focused on high quality teaching and learning as their core business. The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging, and the school encourages positive attitudes to learning. Assessment and feedback helps all pupils to make progress and succeed.
8	Leadership	School leadership is strong at all levels, giving clear direction to the improvement of the school, setting high expectations, and promoting the welfare of staff and pupils. Pupils develop leadership qualities.
9	Communication	Schools communicate effectively with parents to keep them informed and to support the progress of their children. Parents have the opportunity to be actively engaged in the life of the school.
10	Extra-curricular, enrichment & engagement	Schools offer a wide range of clubs and activities; and charitable, community and global opportunities which support and enrich pupils' education.

Compliance Standards: 1-6. Accreditation Standards: compliance, plus 7-10

The full standards can be found at: <https://www.cobis.org.uk/services/accreditation>