



<b>Report to:</b>	<b>EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD</b>
<b>Date:</b>	16 March 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Tim Bowman – Assistant Director, Education
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>REMOTE LEARNING UPDATE</b>
<b>Report Summary:</b>	The report provides an overview of remote learning across Tameside schools and how the Education team is supporting schools to ensure the offer is the best it can be.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	It is recommended that the Board note the content of the report.
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	The proposals contained in this report support most aspects of the corporate plan by ensuring that schools are able to be open for eligible pupils and provide a strong remote education for those not eligible for places, until lockdown is eased.
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	The report sets out the position in line with Council policies and the statutory framework.
<b>Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer &amp; Chief Finance Officer)</b>	<p>The remote offer in schools has been funded via the school individual delegated budgets based on individual school circumstances.</p> <p>Schools have been able to apply directly for support of a £1,500 DfE grant to help them develop their learning platforms for remote learning, which has been promoted across the borough, this is a direct award to the school from DfE not via the Council.</p>
<b>Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)</b>	The legal implications are contained in the main body of the report with the legislative requirements being set out in section 3 of the report.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	The risks are addressed in the main body of the report.
<b>Access to Information:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NON-CONFIDENTIAL</b></p> <p><b>This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.</b></p>
<b>Background Information:</b>	<p>The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Tim Bowman Assistant Director, Education</p> <p> Telephone: 0161 342 2050</p> <p> e-mail: <a href="mailto:tim.bowman@tameside.gov.uk">tim.bowman@tameside.gov.uk</a></p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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*Remote education: a broad term encompassing any learning that happens outside of the classroom, with the teacher not present in the same location as the pupils.*

*Ofsted, January 2021*

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- 1.1 This paper follows on from the papers presented to October and January Committees, which described the context, challenges and support for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic in detail. Since the last paper was written, and just before it was presented, schools entered the third national lockdown and the second period of restricted attendance in schools. At this point, we are still under restricted attendance in our schools but this is likely to change again from 8 March 2021 when lockdown easing is expected to begin with schools.
- 1.2 On 4 January 2021, the Government announced the third national lockdown and, overnight, restricted attendance in schools, making on-site education available only to vulnerable children (those with an EHCP and/or a social worker) and the children of critical workers. The majority of children being educated remotely and the expectations for learning both at home and in schools are significantly greater than during the first lockdown.
- 1.3 This paper also describes the support given to schools and how schools have responded to the challenge.
- 1.4 Headteachers and school leaders in Tameside have continued to work tirelessly. The challenges created by the much greater expectations of schools during this lockdown is having a significant impact on staff morale, workload, and professionalism.
- 1.5 Support for schools and colleges continues to be available to all schools, whatever type they may be and whatever phase or sector they are in, and we continue to maintain a borough-wide approach to identifying collective processes which support safe and sensible local decision-making.

## 2. CHRONOLOGY

Below is a chronology of dates relevant to remote learning throughout the pandemic:

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|-------------------------|---|
| <b>20 March 2020</b>    | Schools closed to all but the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. The National Curriculum is suspended and schools are expected to provide childcare for those in school. The majority of schools provide some sort of remote education to varying degrees. |
| <b>23 March 2020</b>    | The first national lockdown begins.   |
| <b>Easter 2020</b>      | Schools remain open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.   |
| <b>22 May 2020</b>      | Government provides laptops for children with a social worker and for disadvantaged (FSM) Year 10 pupils  |
| <b>22 June 2020</b>     | Wider-opening of schools begins in Tameside for Reception, Year 1, and Year 6 and Year 10. All other children were educated remotely.   |
| <b>1 September 2020</b> | Schools reopen for all children.  |

- 30 September 2020** Schools expected to have a clear Remote Learning Plan published on the school website detailing the education for children isolating due to COVID-19.
- 22 October 2020** Legal duty requiring all schools to provide access to remote education should they be unable to attend due to COVID-19.
- Autumn 2020** Government releases digital devices for schools to order for disadvantaged children in Key Stages Two to Five who are self-isolating due to COVID-19.
- Autumn 2020** Schools in Tameside and the North West experience significant disruption to learning in school due to the high levels of the virus in the community, which are disproportionately greater than those seen in the south and the majority of the country.
- 4 January 2021** Pupils return to school.
- 5 January 2021** The third national lockdown and restricted attendance in schools begins.
- January 2021** Department for Education (DfE) releases more digital devices for disadvantaged children in Key Stages Two to Five who at home due to national restrictions on school attendance.
- 12 February 2021** All schools must publish their remote learning offer on their website by law.
- 8 March 2021** Lockdown easing to start with full opening of schools during this week.

### **3. GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR REMOTE LEARNING**

#### **Remote Education Expectations**

- 3.1 During the first lockdown, the majority of children were educated remotely between March and July 2020 across the country, with varying degrees of success and variable quality.
- 3.2 Government guidance for full opening of schools, September 2020, expected all schools to have a high quality remote learning strategy in place from the end of September 2020, which should fit seamlessly with learning provided on site.
- 3.3 In October 2020, the DfE published a temporary continuity direction under the Coronavirus Act 2020, which stated that all state-funded school aged children must be provided immediate access to remote education should they miss school due to coronavirus. This made it clear that schools had a legal duty to provide remote education until the end of the academic year, in the first instance. Up to this point, there had been very limited support for schools to put this in place but over the autumn, a range of guidance and support started to emerge nationally.
- 3.4 Since 12 February 2021, under The Education (Coronavirus, Remote Education Information) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, schools have been required to publish information about their remote education offer on their websites by law. The Government recognises that younger children in Key Stage One or Reception often require high levels of parental involvement to support their engagement with remote education, which makes digital provision a particular challenge for this age group. Therefore, schools are not expected that solely digital means will be used to teach these pupils remotely. Government also recognises that some pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may not be able to access remote education without adult support and so expects schools to work with families.

- 3.5 Government guidance states that remote education should be equivalent in length to the teaching a child would normally get in school and that this should include a mixture of recorded or live, direct teaching time as well as time for pupils to complete activities independently, such as working through assignments, PE or reading in a comfortable space.
- 3.6 The Government has specified the amount of remote education that children should receive. This should be a minimum of:
- Key Stage 1 - 3 hours per day on average across the cohort, fewer for younger children
  - Key Stage 2 - 4 hours per day
  - Key Stages 3 and 4 - 5 hours per day.
- 3.7 Schools are also expected to have a system in place to check pupils' engagement with work on a daily basis. Schools can decide how this will take place. It could include monitoring pupils' attendance at live or recorded lessons; checking that pupils have understood and completed their work; and/or direct contact with pupils.

**Remote Learning Experience to Date**

- 3.8 Schools had to quickly develop digital and remote learning between March and July 2020 often starting from a very low base

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*The Council commissioned us to create parent resources to support reading at home including reading with your child, how to support phonics, and how to develop a love of reading. Reading with and to children and young people remains a stalwart of remote education and is something most families are able to give time to at some point in the day.*

*Hollingworth Primary School*

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- 3.9 Schools learned how to navigate the new landscape quickly and many secondary schools were able to move from low-level activity on school VLEs to delivering live lessons on a regular basis, through Microsoft Teams. The challenge was more significant in primary schools due to the requirement for greater parental involvement for primary-age children and less well-developed IT expertise and equipment in schools.

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*We offered support to all primary schools to develop a remote learning platform – G-Suite – and to raise awareness of a £1,500 DfE grant to help schools develop in readiness for the remote learning challenges ahead.*

*Russell Scott Primary School, Denton*

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- 3.10 During the autumn term, remote offers evolved and improved but it remained challenging to manage learning when partial cohorts were required to self-isolate due to COVID-19.

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*Core lessons are live virtual lessons online via Microsoft Teams which gives great functionality in terms of uploading work, assignments, and submitting work for feedback as well as the e-safety options provided. For other lessons we post work online to match what is being taught in school and students are able to engage with their teachers through Teams for feedback and to submit work. This is extra work for the teachers but they want the best for the children. We ask parents to support us by getting their children to engage. We have had some lessons with 100% online engagement now so we know the system is working well even though it is complex.*

*Great Academy Ashton*

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- 3.11 Since the beginning of January schools have evolved and developed their offers further and we now see sophisticated remote learning practice available for the majority of children. The majority of schools were able to use lessons learned in the autumn to secure improved remote learning.

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*Remote learning has been very successful with almost all families engaging. We have been using Google Classroom since September and all our staff do a mixture of live teaching, recorded lessons and setting tasks online. All staff have gained in confidence and are now proficient at using the platform.*

*Corrie Primary School, Denton*

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#### **The Quality of the Remote Offer**

- 3.12 During the autumn, schools struggled to make the remote offer 'seamless', especially when there was partial cohort isolation. Schools where children were already familiar with using online learning platforms, such as Google Classroom, where digital access was good, where children were older, and where staff had the capacity and expertise to engage with children directly (either during, after or before lessons), were better placed to deliver high quality learning. For schools where digital access was very low, remote learning had to be delivered by schools providing hard-copy learning packs, knowing their families well, and keeping in regular contact, especially with the most vulnerable.

#### **OFSTED**

- 3.13 Routine inspections have been postponed by Ofsted, since the beginning of first lockdown in March 2020. During the autumn, Ofsted undertook a series of interim visits of all schools. During this time, two secondary schools, with 'inadequate' judgements, received Ofsted monitoring visits, and two 'good' primary schools received virtual interim inspections. In January 2021, one secondary school with an 'Inadequate' judgement received a monitoring inspection.
- 3.14 Since January, OFSTED have resumed monitoring inspections of schools judged 'inadequate' at their previous inspection as well as some schools graded 'requires improvement'. These inspections do not result in a grade, are remote, and focus on things such as curriculum, remote education and pupil attendance, particularly of vulnerable children. OFSTED continues to reserve the right to inspect a school if it has serious concerns, including about safeguarding and remote education.
- 3.15 Full, graded OFSTED inspections will not resume until the summer term for maintained schools and academies.
- 3.16 Tameside remains at 89% pupils in good or outstanding primary schools, 67% of pupils in good or outstanding secondary schools and 70% of pupils in good or outstanding special schools.

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*Whole-class bubbles and individual pupils that are self-isolating are provided with either online or paper-based resources to support their learning at home. The activities provided in these resources reflect the curriculum that pupils are being taught in school. Teachers check pupils' work and provide feedback. You told us that parents have received guidance explaining how they can support their children with remote education.*

*Ofsted Report from Stalyhill Infant School, December 2020*

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## **4 CHALLENGE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS**

### **Surveys and Data Collections**

- 4.1 In the autumn, Oldham Sixth Form College conducted surveys with parents and schools in Tameside as part of a review of remote learning in Tameside and Oldham. 50 Tameside schools responded to the digital survey, 38 primary and 11 secondary including TPRS. The top two priorities identified by the majority of schools as being needed to support remote learning (aside from funding) were 1) improving staff digital skills; and 2) having the technology to improve collaboration.
- 4.2 The responses from the parent/carer survey indicate that 47% of pupils have to share a device with siblings or other family members, which is broadly in line with national figures. In terms of device ownership, whilst 92% of families owned at least one PC, laptop or tablet device, only 3.2% of those who responded lived in a 'mobile phone only' household.

## **5 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT WITH DIGITAL DEVICES AND REMOTE LEARNING**

### **Digital Devices and Wifi Access**

- 5.1 During the early part of the first lockdown in 2020, the Government recognized some of the issues around digital access and two schemes were introduced, aimed at providing laptops for children. In May and June, Tameside was provided with 941 laptops and 124 4g wifi routers for children with social workers, which were gifted to schools and loaned to named children (Executive Decision 3 June 2020). In addition, maintained schools were provided with 140 laptops and a number of 4g wifi routers for disadvantaged children in Year 10 without digital access while the DfE provided laptops directly to academies for the same key group.
  - 5.2 In the autumn, the Government provided laptops to schools for children who were self-isolating and were therefore unable to attend school. Schools with more than 15 children isolating were contacted by the DfE to order devices for disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 who did not have access to a device and whose face-to-face education was disrupted. Allocations were based on numbers of disadvantaged children in school and fixed by the DfE.
  - 5.3 In January 2021, an additional allocation of devices was made by the DfE and schools have been accessing these devices since the middle of January 2021. Meaning the Government will have provided a total of 1.3 million devices nationally.
  - 5.4 In total, Tameside schools have received 3,118 devices and academy trusts and colleges have received 3,280 devices (data is only available at trust-level and not at school level so this is a best estimate based on DfE data) and 506 4g wifi routers in all.
- ### **EdTech Demonstrator Programme**
- 5.5 Demonstrator schools and colleges are a network of providers who have shown they can use technology effectively and have the capacity to help other schools and colleges to do the same. They have been commissioned by the Government to support a range of schools and colleges during the COVID-19 outbreak by helping those schools most in need of support,

those who have recently adopted an online learning platform, or who have high numbers of disadvantaged learners. The support package includes advice, training, online tutorials, webinars and recorded content

- 5.6 Oldham Sixth Form College is Tameside's local EdTech Demonstrator School specialising in Google Classroom, which a majority of our primary schools are using, and Manchester College is available for support around Microsoft Teams which most of our secondary schools are using.
- 5.7 Oldham Sixth Form College has delivered workshops, one-to-one training, support, advice, and guidance to Tameside schools and will continue to support schools as part of the twinning project with Oldham Opportunity Area.

## 6 TAMESIDE'S SUPPORT FOR REMOTE EDUCATION

- 6.1 During the first lockdown in the spring and summer 2020, a range of resources were shared with schools, this included sharing information from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on the use of [remote learning](#) and the limited evidence base that existed. Additionally, the Education Team in partnership with Russell Scott Primary School, offered support to all primary schools to access a remote learning platform – G-Suite – and to raise awareness of a £1,500 DfE grant to help schools develop their learning platforms. Take up of the learning platform was initially limited but has improved significantly, as the term progressed.

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*We've been using Google Classroom, if used to its full capacity it means the children have more than their minimum time expectation of learning and we have had really positive feedback from parents. The teacher remote teaches direct into the home and classroom for 20 to 30 minutes and then supports the children in school during the independent sessions.*

*Discovery Academy, Hattersley*

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- 6.2 In order to understand accurately the remote offer in place in schools and the barriers to improvement, Oldham Sixth Form College was commissioned, as part of a shared DfE funded programme with Oldham Opportunity Area, to survey schools and parents in Tameside and Oldham. This partnership will continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021 by providing Digital Champions CPD for headteachers and Digital Leads in schools, as part of this programme, schools are required to develop and implement a three-year digital strategy. Work to deliver remote learning will lay the foundations for a long-term strategy to take advantage of the opportunities technology presents.
- 6.3 The Education Team has shared information with schools throughout the pandemic about best practice nationally and evidence-informed practice including Ofsted ['What's Working Well in Remote Education'](#) document.

### **Remote Learning School-to-School Working Group**

- 6.4 The Education Team has used detailed research and analysis from the Oldham and Tameside Survey as well as a recent collection of data at the end of January, to inform the work of a school-led group to provide support for remote learning in Tameside and to share practice from school to school.
- 6.5 The recent data harvested from schools provides a rich source of information and evidences a range of different approaches being used. In summary, virtually all schools had published the details of their remote learning offer on their website (expected by 24 January). Primary schools were predominantly using a blended mix of remote learning offering a combination of live or recorded online lessons on Google Classrooms or Class Dojo as well as uploading

work assignments and providing hard copy work packs. Primary schools were also utilising MS Teams, Tapestry, Seesaw, Oak Academy, Purple Mash and White Rose. The majority of secondary schools were delivering live lessons using MS Teams.

- 6.6 Common barriers to remote learning during this period of lockdown are parental engagement, balancing working from home and home schooling; lack of access to the internet and devices; and teacher workload in part due to a lack of knowledge about the platforms and how best to deliver quality learning remotely.
- 6.7 There are a variety of concerns beginning to arise depending on the age sector and some are common across schools:
- Remote learning for younger children and children with SEND relies heavily on parental engagement and time to support children at home which many families don't have
  - It is very challenging for special schools and primary schools, especially one-form-entry schools, to create the capacity to teach children in school and at home given that most have significant numbers of children on-site. This translates into a stronger offer for those in school
  - For secondary schools the challenge is greater around the quality of the offer on-site
  - All schools are concerned about the impact of restricted attendance on children's wellbeing and mental health
  - Challenge for families is significant, relationships need to be strong, expectations need to be well communicated
  - All schools are concerned about teacher workload.

### **Working Group Principles**

- 6.8 Expertise is being commissioned from schools for a time-limited period, starting after half-term and focused on practice sharing and development, and equality of access. The resource is organised by contexts and digital platforms so that schools can access support and ideas more easily and themes include younger children; Google Classroom; Zoom; Class Dojo, Tapestry and See-Saw; and secondary schools and MS Teams.
- 6.9 Although schools in the group are reporting good engagement and participation from most children (approximately between 80 and 97%) there is a significant minority who are not fully engaged in the learning. Additional themes therefore include disadvantaged and vulnerable learners; families where English is an additional language; parental engagement.
- 6.10 This approach is not about imposing a model or a preferred platform on schools. It is important, where possible, for schools to enhance their existing remote learning practice rather than adopt something entirely new. The programme needs to reflect the Council's approach of defining collective processes to enable local decision-making.
- 6.11 Understanding the impact on parents is an important part of this programme and parental engagement specifically, including supporting families who, for a wide range of reasons including work, are unable to keep pace with school and/or Government expectations, is a key theme
- 6.12 Programme success criteria:
- School awareness of the programme
  - Targeted participation
  - Support delivered addresses one or more of the themes
  - Successful practice sharing accessible for all
  - Positive feedback from schools, parents and children
  - Sample of case studies showcasing different successes.



## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The impact and toll on schools, continues to cause concern. Headteachers have supported their staff, children and families throughout and have demonstrated strong leadership in their communities.
- 7.2 Remote learning is likely to be with us for some time to come in one form or another. Digital learning is a long-term investment for schools and it is important that the Council encourages and support schools to develop a three-year digital strategy to reflect this.
- 7.3 The Education Teams will continue to help schools in a variety of ways to ensure that those that need the support most are able to receive it.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 As set out at the front of the report.