

REPORT TO:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	19 October 2021
Reporting Officer:	Tim Bowman, Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)
Subject:	SCHOOLS UPDATE
Report Summary:	The report provides an update of how schools are overcoming the challenges of lockdown easing and returning to business as usual. In addition, this report explores the priorities for recovery and the Council's role in this.
Recommendations:	It is recommended that the Board note the content of the report.
Corporate Plan:	The content of this report supports most aspects of the corporate plan by ensuring that schools are able to provide a good education offer for all children, especially those most affected by the pandemic.
Policy Implications:	The report sets out the position in line with Council policies and the statutory framework.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	<p>Direct school ring-fenced funding is where the work outlined in the report and support for pupils will be funded from. In addition Tameside Schools and Academies will receive £1.4m of covid catch-up funding to support schools to try and address pupils lost learning as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>A further initiative has been announced by the Dfe for Tutor led funding for 15 hours per pupil, schools must contribute 25% towards of the costs of the tutoring. The funding is aimed at pupils eligible for pupil premium payments. The allocations per school have not been confirmed at this stage however the Dfe will provide allocations per school in due course;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream schools - £202.50 per pupil • Special Schools - £529 per pupil <p>The DfE grant subsidy will decrease as follows: 2021-22 75%, 2022-23 60% and 2023-24 25%. Some schools in the borough face significant financial difficulty and may struggle to make the contribution required.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report
Risk Management:	The whole school risk assessments completed by schools alongside all guidance from the Department for Education should have been used to enable each school to assess the level of risk and how it can be mitigated in order to ensure schools can open and operate safely.

Access to Information:

NON-CONFIDENTIAL

This report does not contain information, which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Tim Bowman Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report follows on from previous reports presented to the committees in the previous academic year, which described the context, challenges and support for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a detailed review of remote learning. Since the last Education Attainment Improvement Board (EAIB), restrictions across the country have been relaxed and the nation has moved into a 'living with COVID-19' phase. Restrictions in schools have also moved in line with this approach. Section 2 details the requirements for schools currently.
- 1.2 Headteachers, school leaders and school staff in Tameside are happy to be operating in what is largely a 'business as usual' context but there are still challenges, calls on the school timetable and restrictions to be implemented. COVID-19 rates are still high in the Borough, especially in the younger age groups and this continues to affect attendance and school staffing, albeit to a much lesser extent than previously seen, and planning for the new academic year in a context of considerable uncertainty.
- 1.3 Support for schools and colleges will continue 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.

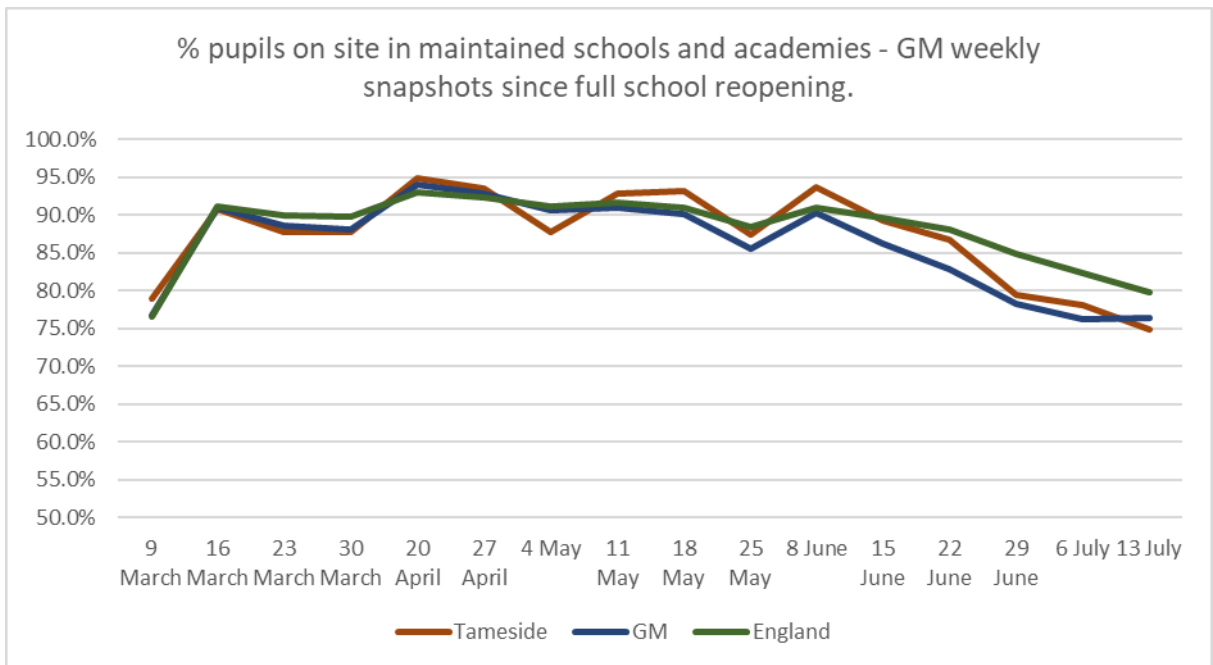
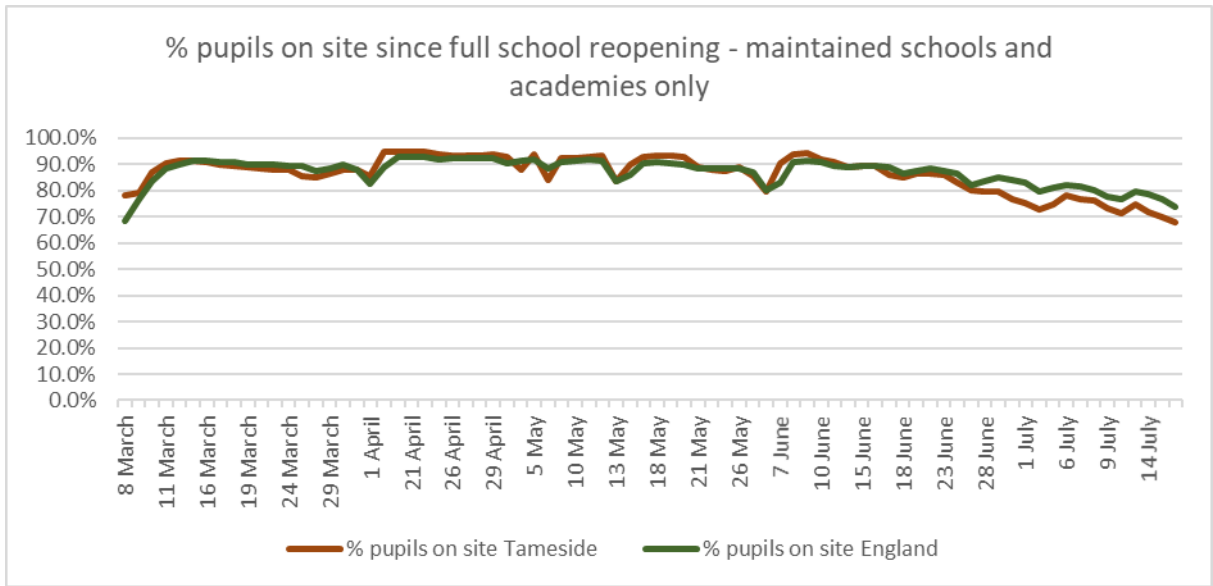
2. CURRENT COVID-19 REQUIREMENTS IN SCHOOLS

- 2.1 Schools are still expected to maintain an effective system of controls but within 'living with COVID-19' approach. Schools are no longer required to operate bubbles, use face coverings, children under 18 and double vaccinated staff are no longer required to isolate if they are a close contact of a positive case, and educational trips are now permitted. All positive cases are still required to isolate for 10 days.
- 2.2 All schools and colleges continue to work very effectively with our Public Health and Health and Safety Teams and are required to work with Public Health more closely where there is an identified outbreak. During an outbreak, Public Health and the school work together to identify further measures from the outbreak control toolkit which includes use of the warn and inform letter, wearing face coverings, improving ventilation, returning to bubbles, and, as a last resort, moving to remote learning.
- 2.3 Schools have been asked to test onsite all secondary-age pupils using Lateral Flow Devices twice three days apart on return to school in September. All school and early years staff, and all secondary school pupils, following on from onsite test, are requested to undertake a Lateral Flow Test twice weekly at home until further notice.
- 2.4 Since the last report, vaccination of healthy 16 and 17 year olds has been approved and is underway following on from the vaccination of all adults 18 and over. COVID-19 vaccinations for healthy 12-15 year olds has also been approved and is underway at the time of writing. We are working closely with schools to plan for implementation.

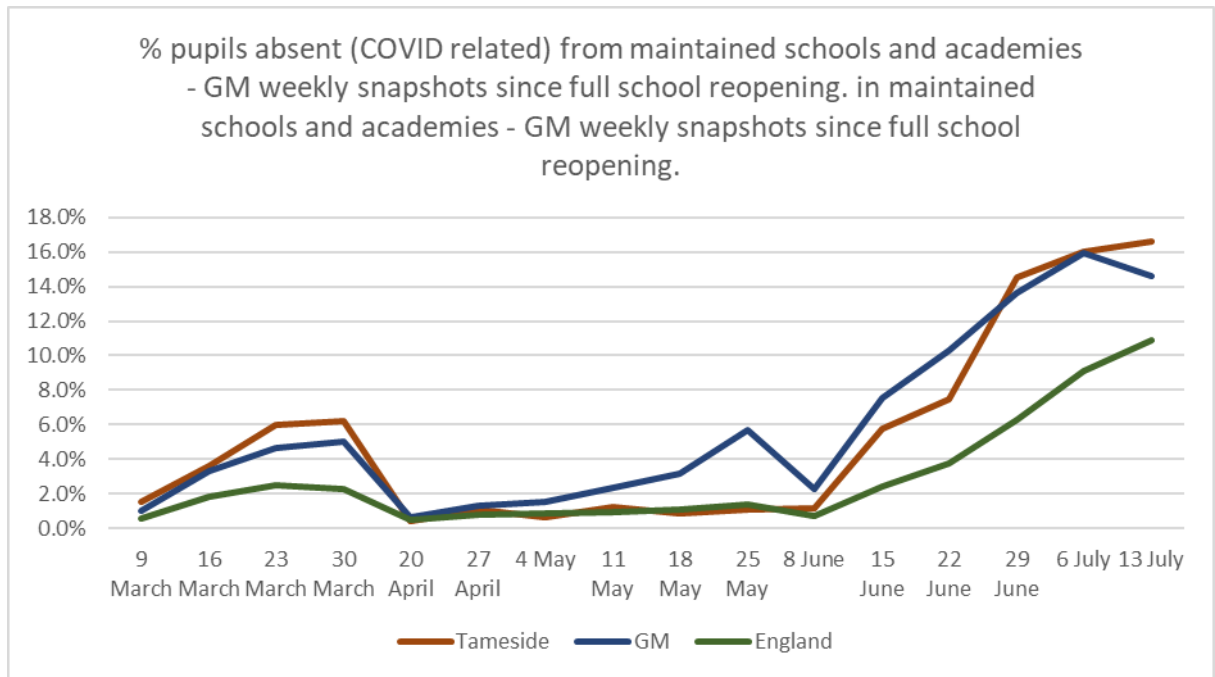
3 SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Attendance

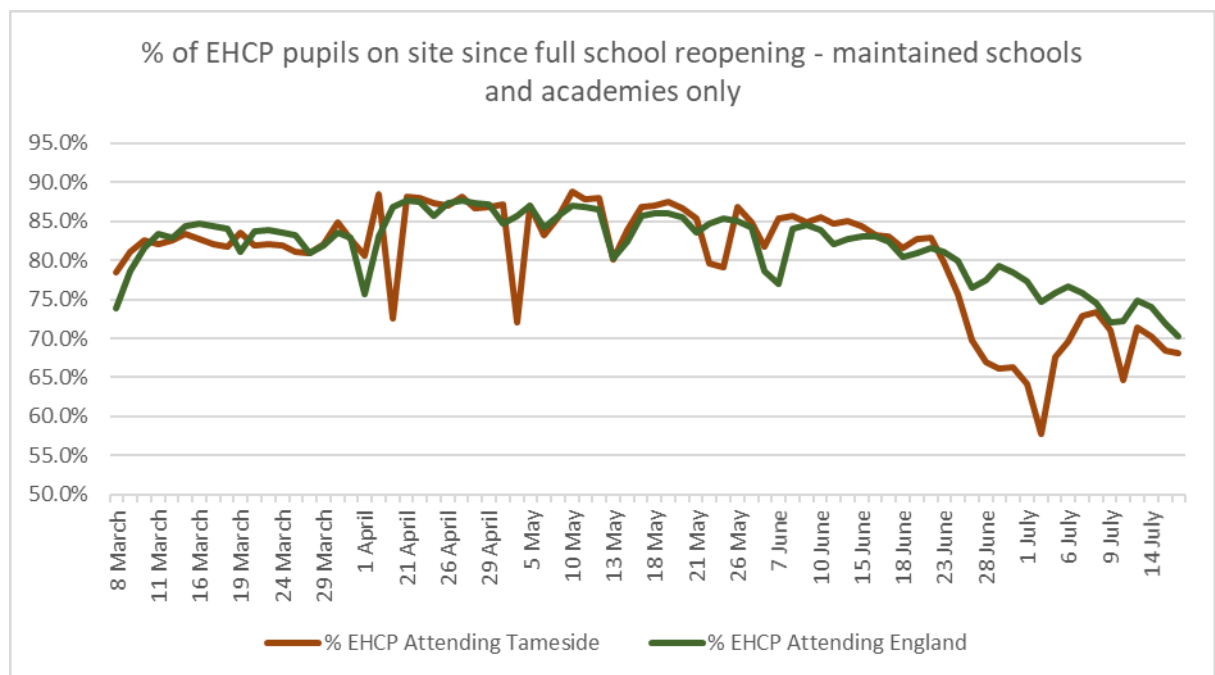
- 3.1 Following schools and education settings reopening fully on 8 March 2021, the percentage of pupils on site in Tameside's maintained schools and academies was consistently in line with the national average up until the end of June when COVID related absence increased in our settings.



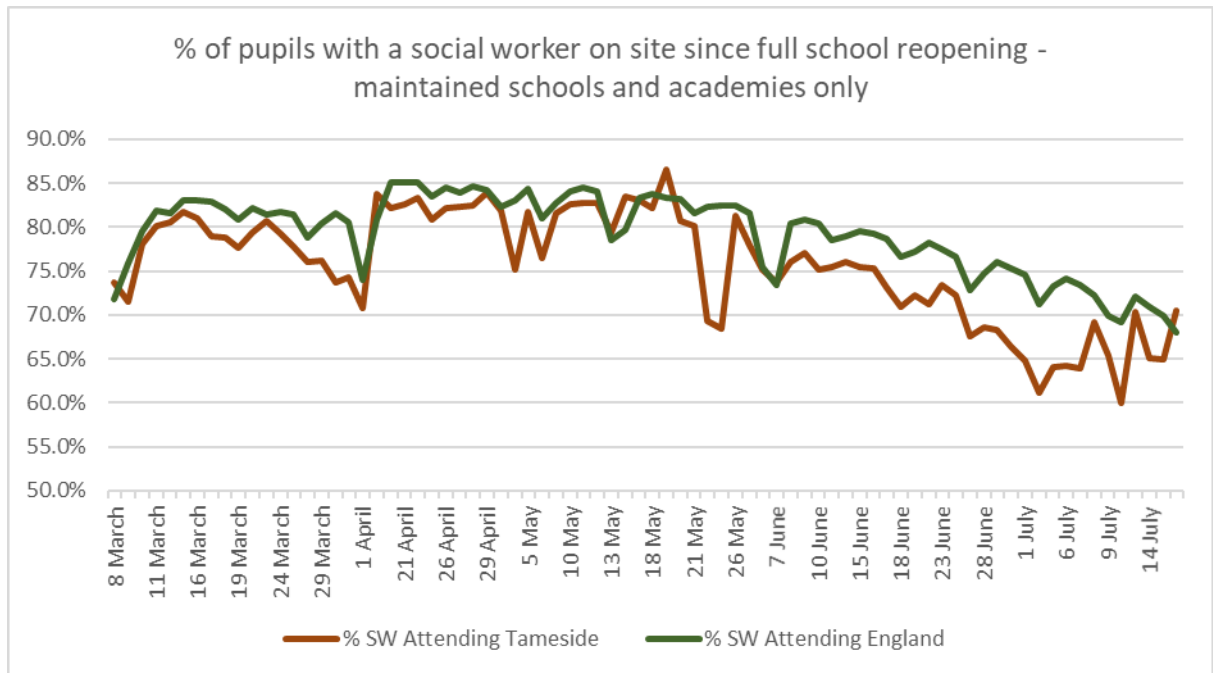
3.2 COVID related absence in Tameside and GM was significantly higher than nationally, though Tameside was consistently above the GM average.



3.3 Looking more carefully at the vulnerable groups, the percentage of pupils with an EHCP on site since full school reopening was broadly in line with the national average until the increase in COVID related absence from mid-June onwards.



3.4 The percentage of pupils with a social worker on site from full school reopening was below the national average. One of the biggest factors around this was been the proportions of pupils with a social worker on site at the Pupil Referral Service, with a large number of pupils with a social worker attending alternative provision, and so are not marked as on site.



3.5 GCSEs

The coronavirus pandemic led to another cancellation of national exams in the 2020/21 academic year. Following consultation conducted by Ofqual and the DfE, students received teacher assessed grades (TAGs) on 12 August 2021. Provisionally, 47% of pupils in Tameside achieved a strong 9-5 pass in English and maths and 69% of pupils achieved a standard 9-4 pass in English and maths. As in 2020, no school level data will be published by the DfE. Detailed information at local authority level is yet to be released but the board will be updated following its publication.

Exclusions

- 3.6 Since the last meeting, the latest statistics on exclusions have been published by the DfE for the 2019/20 academic year. The number of permanent exclusions continued to reduce having improved from 97 in 2017/18, to 64 in 2018/19 to 51 and 2019/20.
- 3.7 Tameside had an overall permanent exclusion rate which was more than double the national average in 2019/20. Tameside had a rate of 0.14 in 2019/20 compared to 0.06 nationally. Tameside had a rate of 0.17 in 2018/19 compared to 0.10 nationally.
- 3.8 For permanent exclusions, Tameside was:
- ranked 146th nationally having been 131st in 2018/19,
 - 22nd out of 23 North West local authorities having been 18th in 2018/19,
 - 9th out of 10 Greater Manchester local authorities having been 8th in 2018/19, and
 - 9th out of 11 statistical neighbours having been 5th in 2018/19.
- 3.9 Tameside had an overall fixed term exclusion rate of 4.66 compared to the national average of 3.76. Tameside had a rate of 7.49 in 2018/19 compared to 5.36 nationally. For fixed term exclusions, Tameside was:
- ranked 122nd having been ranked 125th in 2018/19,
 - 20th out of 23 North West local authorities having been 21st in 2018/19,
 - 8th out of 10 Greater Manchester local authorities having been 9th in 2018/19, and
 - 4th out of 11 statistical neighbours having been 6th in 2018/19.
- 3.10 Tameside had a rate of 2.36 for pupils with 1+ fixed term exclusions compared to the national average of 1.87. Tameside had a rate of 3.38 in 2018/19 compared to 2.44 nationally. For pupils with 1+ fixed term exclusions, Tameside was:

- ranked 131st having been ranked 132nd in 2018/19,
- 20th out of 23 North West local authorities having been 21st in 2018/19,
- 8th out of 10 Greater Manchester local authorities having been 9th in 2018/19, and
- 9th out of 11 statistical neighbours having been 8th in 2018/19.

3.11 For the 2020/21 academic year, provisionally, permanent exclusions have continued to reduce with 43 pupils being permanently excluded during the academic year. Provisional fixed term exclusion information for the academic year is not yet available.

3.12 Attendance has been one of Tameside's key priorities for improvement for some time and part of the strategy to address the Borough's high exclusions rate has been to lead practice from the Tameside Pupil Referral Service (TPRS). A new executive headteacher was appointed in November 2020 and part of the scope of this new role was to improve inclusion in the system and reduce exclusion. The Council, TPRS and the Tameside Association of Secondary Headteachers (TASH) are now working in partnership to fund outreach support from TPRS in secondary schools to support children at risk of exclusion and to support schools to develop practice. The project has made a very positive start after a short pilot in the summer term and is currently working with 10 secondary schools with the remainder joining later in the term.

4 RECOVERY AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

4.1 Over the school holidays, most secondary schools offered a one or two week summer school to their new Year 7 cohorts. Government funding was awarded based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals and children identified as vulnerable. Secondary heads have reported very positive outcomes from the summer schools saying that they were very useful and positive especially for the more vulnerable children.

4.2 Supermarket vouchers were again provided to families with children eligible for free school meals at £90 per pupil. Schools again supported with the distribution of vouchers so that all financially vulnerable families could be reached.

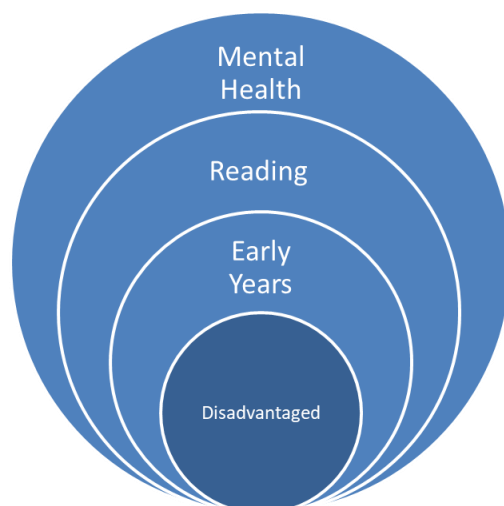
Recovery

4.3 Children's learning has been disrupted in an extraordinary and significant way during the pandemic. The impact of this lost learning time is greater in Greater Manchester than other parts of the country. The impact is most profoundly felt by those who experience the greatest disadvantage and whilst we must not catastrophise this challenge, neither should we underestimate it. Recovery needs to be intentional and deliberate; it is not something that can be left to chance.

4.4 The evidence is clear that missed face-to-face attendance causes significant harm to children and young people's education, life chances and mental and physical health. This harm disproportionately affects children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.5 Missing face-to-face education is associated with considerable harm to the health and wellbeing of children and young people. A recent systematic review prepared for SAGE found that the evidence for impacts of school closures on mental health and wellbeing was substantial and consistent.

4.6 The focus of recovery support for schools is explained by the below diagram and commissioning of support will centre around these areas. A focus on disadvantaged pupils must run through the strategy. These recovery priorities have been identified with schools across the age phases.



4.7 **Early Years:**

- Language interventions and pedagogy
- Developing relationships and learning at home

4.8 **Reading:**

- Phonics
- Curriculum
- Vocabulary

4.9 **Mental Health:**

Tameside is to benefit from two Mental Health Support Teams working across 30 to 40 schools as part of a Greater Manchester bid to improve the provision for children and young people. Schools were asked to express their interest before the summer and the final arrangements are being made and schools identified. For any schools not accessing the MHSTs, there will be a universal offer around the whole school approach.

5 **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Schools continue to face challenge and uncertainty at the beginning of this third academic year of operating within a pandemic. School leaders continue to work closely with Council teams to lead their schools and their communities within a COVID-19 context. School leaders must now turn their attention to the daunting and difficult task of recovery.

5.2 Recovery must be focused around disadvantaged learners and address deficits in the early years, in the curriculum with particular attention to reading, and mental health. Education Improvement and Partnerships commissioning will centre on these priorities identified by schools.

5.3 Absence for vulnerable pupils continues to require practice changes and the Council will continue to work with schools to improve attendance and inclusion.

6 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 As set out at the front of the report.