

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

22 June 2021

Commenced: 3.30pm

Terminated: 4.30pm

Present: Councillors Feeley (Chair), Cooper, Fairfoull, Welsh and M Smith,
Paul Jacques, Elizabeth Turner, Andrea Radcliffe

In

Attendance:	Tim Bowman	Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)
	Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
	Jane Sowerby	Lead Primary School Performance and Standards Officer
	Charlotte Finch	Head of SEND

Apologies:	Councillor Boyle	Director of Children's Services
	Richard Hancock	Chief Executive
	Steven Pleasant	Assistant Director, Finance
	Caroline Barlow	

9 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed thanks to Councillor Patrick for all his contribution and support to Education Attainment Improvement Board. Councillor Welsh was introduced as a new Member of the Board and welcomed to the meeting.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members of the Board.

11 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board, which was held on 16 March 2021. It was noted that page 3 of the minutes made reference to Elizabeth Radcliffe and this should have read Elizabeth Turner.

On page 1, Councillors Boyle and Cooper were recorded as both present and having sent apologies. Councillors Boyle and Cooper had sent apologies for the meeting and, therefore, should not have been recorded as present.

RESOLVED

That, with the amendments stated above, the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 16 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

12 SCHOOLS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided an update on how schools were overcoming the challenges of lockdown easing and returning to business as usual. The report also outlined the priorities for recovery and the Council's role in this. The report also highlighted the extreme challenges, which were continuing to be faced by schools and the impact on workload, wellbeing and morale.

The report was written and presented during the period where the easing of restrictions had been initially planned for 21 June 2021 and then delayed until 19 July 2021. It was, therefore, noted that this had a significant impact on schools' ability to undertake planned transition activities, particularly for those pupils who were due to begin secondary education in September 2021. With this in mind, there was, again, a vast amount of change and a great deal that schools were currently having to think about and carefully organise. Sincere thanks were expressed to staff across all sectors, who were continuing to work tirelessly throughout this period.

Members were informed that pupils and staff continued to be required to isolate for 10 days if they were a positive case or a contact of a positive case and that contacts were now being asked to have a PCR test, even if they were not displaying symptoms. It was also explained that pupils isolating were still entitled to a good remote education offer and a free school meal if they normally accessed one.

It was stated that, on the advice of the Directors of Public Health for Greater Manchester, face coverings for secondary aged children and staff were to be continued until the end of the summer term. Although this was contrary to national guidance, this was in response to the greater risk of the more prevalent Delta variant in the local area.

An update was provided in terms of digital devices for vulnerable pupils. It was noted that 7.5k devices had been issued in May 2021 and that current numbers would be greater still. With many students still having to isolate, it was acknowledged that remote learning was still very much a feature of education.

Ofsted inspections were discussed and Members were informed that, following the last meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board, there had been revised plans for full, graded Ofsted inspections to resume in the autumn term for maintained schools and academies. During the summer term, it was stated that Ofsted would inspect schools to provide reassurance about how well children and learners were catching up and that monitoring inspections would move back to the regular framework, but would not be graded, from 4 May 2021.

Members were made aware that there had been 2 inspections since the last meeting (Hyde High School and Samuel Laycock School). Andrea Radcliffe, Headteacher of Hyde High School was able to provide members with feedback in relation to this.

Andrea explained that the recent inspection (March 2021) had been a very positive experience and acknowledged that, whilst the inspection was conducted remotely, it was extremely thorough. Andrea felt that the inspection had provided valued acknowledgement for much of the work that had been undertaken at the school and the associated improvements, which had been made since the last inspection.

A very positive update on attendance data was shared with Members. It was noted that, since schools reopened fully on 8 March 2021, the percentage of pupils on site in Tameside's maintained schools and academies had been consistently in line with the national average. It was highlighted that, since the start of the summer term on 19 April 2021, Tameside had been consistently above the national average for the % of pupils on site, with the only exceptions due to INSET days/elections/school closures. Members were informed that Tameside had also been, bar one exception (due to school closures), consistently at or above the GM average.

With regard to the attendance of more vulnerable groups, Members were made aware that attendance of those students with an EHCP had been broadly in line with the national average, whilst the percentage of pupils with a social worker was below the national average. However, it was acknowledged that one of the most significant factors in relation to this had been the proportion 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 not being marked as on site. It was explained that the Head of Virtual School was working closely alongside Tameside Pupil Referral Service (TPRS) to ensure full awareness and support for this vulnerable group. Members

were also made aware that they were currently meeting weekly to discuss the needs and status of each student with a Social Worker.

Discussion ensued in relation to current education changes and associated challenges. It was outlined that there had been another cancellation of national exams and that teacher assessed grades would be used for GCSE's, with students receiving their results on 12 August 2021. Again, it was highlighted that there would be no school level date published by DfE.

Members were informed that teachers would award Teacher Assessed Grades TAGs for their students based on evidence, such as classwork, homework, results in assignments, mock exams, non-exam assessments or coursework, and a student's general progress. It was, therefore, noted that students would only be assessed on what they had been taught and, unlike last year, there would be no national standardisation process i.e. grades awarded by algorithm. Instead, it was explained that schools and colleges would quality assure student grades, and students would be able to appeal their grade should they be unhappy with the process. Members acknowledged that this would have represented a significant amount of additional work for colleagues and some concerns were expressed in relation to the potential impact of the appeals process on teacher workload and staff wellbeing.

Andrea Radcliffe provided some valuable insight into how the process of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) had been implemented at Hyde High School. She informed Members of the Board that this process was significantly different to last year. Andrea explained that schools had needed to ensure that this was a very robust set of judgements, which were very much evidence based and assessed against key criteria for each individual.

Andrea explained that students had been involved in regular assessments in order to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, which staff had then marked, moderated and standardised. She stated that this had been a lengthy process and a huge undertaking for staff, who were still required to continue with their day to day teaching commitments alongside this additional workload. However, she stated that the commitment and dedication of the staff had been extraordinary and that all staff were extremely committed to ensuring that there was a set of fair and robust grades for their students.

Early Years Reforms, which would become statutory from September 2021, were outlined for Members, including the implementation of the Reception Baseline. It was explained that 18 Tameside schools had, in fact, been early adopters of this new framework, having taken part in the pilot, which had been a very valuable experience.

The main changes were highlighted as very positive, with goals being clear and more specific and a large emphasis placed on building communication, language and vocabulary, which aligned well within the Council's priorities and latest evidence on child development.

Members were also made aware that, from September 2021, the council would no longer be required to moderate 25% of schools each year but would still be required to provide training on the assessment and the completion of the profile to all providers who need it; and would still be responsible for the collection of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data in future years, quality assurance of the data and submitting this to DfE.

In relation to these reforms, it was stated that Headteachers and Governors had attended briefings and a training session for Headteachers had been attended by 60% of primary school heads. Sessions for practitioners had also been set for June and July, with networks being hosted throughout the next academic year.

The Teaching School Hubs Programme was outlined for members. It was explained that this would create a network of 87 centres of excellence for teacher training and development. This would replace the previous network of around 750 teaching schools, which would cease in August 2021.

The rationale of teaching hubs was explained and it was stated that DfE had paired together Tameside and Oldham Councils, who together formed the East Manchester Teaching Hub. This would be led by The Blue Coat School, in partnership with Tameside and Oldham schools. It was reported that a key part of the CPD provided through the hub would focus on the implementation of the Early Career Framework, which would represent a significant change in terms of the support received by new teachers within the first 2 years of their career. In addition, valuable training for mentors would also be provided through this provision.

Discussion ensued with regard to the 2 year Early Career Framework requirements and the importance of new teachers being allowed to remain the same school for 2 years was highlighted. It was felt that this would ensure continuity and allow skills and knowledge to be developed within one familiar setting, without the need to re-establish routines and mentor support at an alternative school.

With specific regard to recovery, Members were informed that DfE research estimated that, in the first half-term of autumn 2020, pupils in Years 3-9 were on average around 1.6 to 2 months behind in reading and those in Years 3-7 were around 3.2 months behind on their maths. Pupils in high-FSM schools were on average further behind those in low-FSM schools. With this in mind, it was explained that Government aimed to address this need through a short summer school offer led by secondary schools.

Members were informed that 82% of eligible schools, nationally, had taken the opportunity to access summer school funding and this had been replicated in Tameside. It was, therefore, explained that many Tameside secondary schools would be offering summer school provision of 1-2 weeks throughout the summer break. It was stated that this support was targeted for Year 7 and for those who were most in need. Members were made aware that this offer would incorporate a blend of academic and education enrichment activities, which would also help to ease the transition into Year 7.

Information on National Recovery Support was provided for Members and it was stated that support available nationally had been revealed on 2 June 2021, with additional funding to possibly be allocated in the future. It was explained that a total of £1.4 billion was being invested, including £1 billion to support up to 6 million, 15-hour tutoring courses for disadvantaged school children, targeting key subjects such as maths and English. Within this envelope, it was highlighted that £153 million would support evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, including new programmes focusing on key areas such as speech and language development

Members were informed that every school with a Reception class could apply for training and resources through an early years catch-up programme, funded by Government, to support communication skills. It was also outlined that recruitment had launched for the second wave of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI), a programme proven to be effective in raising outcomes in reception age children's early language, communication and speech skills. This would mean that this was the third year in which Tameside schools had been able to access the NELI programme and/or tutoring programmes as this had already been an area, which had seen significant investment prior to the pandemic.

It was noted that, as part of this strategic leadership from the Council, it was important that schools were encouraged to maximise the opportunities available nationally as well as to lead locally. It was acknowledged that, whilst the Recovery Commissioner's recommendation for longer school days to give time for broad, balanced, and engaging activities, had not been implemented by the Government, there were already schools nationally and locally, who had made this approach work. In addition, it was emphasised that exploring the research, the importance of play and social interaction could not be under-stated and that 'Play' approaches focussed on resilience, problem-solving, engagement, and language all needed to be at the heart of recovery strategy.

As part of recognising the mental health and wellbeing needs in education, it was noted that the Education team, Public Health and the CCG had commissioned a Tameside school, through a competitive tendering process, to lead and co-ordinate Mental Health in Education practice, communications and training from June 2021 for at least two years. As the successful school was Millbrook Primary School, Elizabeth Turner was able to discuss this with the Board.

Elizabeth explained that, as Millbrook, had long been established as a Forest School, the ethos of emotional development of the children had always been a core priority of the school. Elizabeth described this as a whole school approach and explained that they were currently aiming to encourage greater understanding and involvement in the emotional wellbeing of children amongst lots of primary and secondary schools. She stated that they were working towards building in supportive clusters and developing a network in order to develop the role of a Mental Health Lead within schools.

Elizabeth explained the importance of a Mental Health Lead in schools and stated that this would help to simplify processes and have everything in one place and one 'go-to' member of staff in relation to monitoring and meeting the emotional needs of pupils. Within Millbrook Primary School, Elizabeth made the Board aware that the Lead was currently being carried out by Leanne Connolly. Elizabeth described this as an exciting opportunity and was very much looking forward to the many challenges and potential successes that this work may bring.

In conclusion, it was stated that the national focus on early language, engagement, targeted offers and mental health all sit well with Tameside's existing education priorities of Reading, SEND, and Attendance and that these causes would continue to be championed. It was also acknowledged that significant prioritising would be needed in order to support schools with recovery and accessing the most effective approaches and evidence-based CPD, targeted at the most vulnerable children.

It was stated that school improvement activity and funding would be focused on recovery and acknowledged that schools had a huge challenge ahead. However, it was explained that clear priorities and effective collaboration would help to ensure that children, young people and their families in Tameside were well supported.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

13 SEND UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided an update on the current position across SEND services.

It was noted that, historically, Tameside had maintained an extremely low number of statutory plans and that, as part of the wider improvement agenda across Children's Services, it was recognised this needed to be addressed. As a result, there had been a significant rise in the number of Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) maintained.

Members were informed that, as part of this improvement agenda, there had been a considerable improvement in the timeliness of statutory planning. However, it was acknowledged that the high levels of management support, which had been required in order to secure these improvements was difficult to sustain and the experience of families in terms of this assessment required further improvement, specifically in terms of waiting times for many health services and the quality and consistency of plans.

It was explained that, following information from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and feedback from parents and carers, there were now 4 Headline Strategic Priorities, each with its own development plan and lead officer. These were outlined for Members as follows:

- **Increasing and improving inclusion** of children and young people in mainstream settings, ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.
- **Increasing confidence** of parents and carers in services and systems across all of the partners in Tameside, ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.
- **Involving children and young people**, who have SEND, and their families in decisions about their future and in the shaping, accountability, quality and delivery of services, ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.
- **Improving accuracy and timeliness** with young people's needs are identified and assessed, ensuring appropriate preparation for adulthood.

It was stated that, as part of the drive towards the SEND strategic objectives, the SEND Service was proposing to embark on a range of improvement actions, each designed to promote inclusion across the borough for the most vulnerable learners, whilst also ensuring that service delivery was fit for purpose and efficient.

Members noted the impact of Covid-19 with regard to SEND services and the need for these to be adapted in light of the pandemic. They were also informed that a number of key pieces of work had been completed during this period, including, an updated JSNA, SEND Strategy, Key Commissioning Strategy and Co-Production Strategy.

The re-design of SEND Pupil Support Services was discussed. Members were informed that this service was currently divided into 4 areas; the Sensory Support Service, CLASS- the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Support Service, the Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD) Support Service and the Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Support Service. It was noted that SEMH support services were a traded service, through which schools could opt to buy in at the start of the year or could spot purchase discreet interventions, as required.

It was noted that, over recent years, school buy in had significantly reduced and, therefore, it was acknowledged that a more modern approach was required. As a result, last year, significant work had been undertaken in order to revise and improve this offer. However, the impact of the pandemic had led to a significant impact on school buy in and, consequently, this service had accrued a full year deficit of £221k. Members were, therefore, informed that this service was in need of re-design to attract greater buy-on and ensure long term viability.

It was explained that, whilst the Sensory Service, would continue to function largely as it was, there had been some proposals to make some minor changes to the management structure and one teacher, who was leaving the service, would not be replaced. Whilst it was acknowledged that workload per teacher was likely to increase, it was noted that this would bring caseloads in line with neighbouring Sensory Support teams.

Members were made aware that that, following consultation, all remaining pupil support services for SEMH, ASC and SPLD would be merged into one service, effective from September 2021. This team would be a combined Specialist Support Service for all aspects of SEND, which would be made up of specialist teachers, specialist support staff and administrative support. This would be an advisory and support service, which schools could buy into at the start of the year and would be designed to promote greater inclusion and effective practice around this vulnerable group of learners. It was also noted that, in order to support access, this service would be partly subsidised by High Needs as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and next year was predicted to show a significant growth in this trade.

Members were informed that merging services would reduce costs, as there would be fewer staff across the service, working more flexibly across all areas of need. In terms of support, it was explained that this would largely be to school-based staff, in the form of advice and guidance around appropriate specialist interventions. Furthermore, it was noted that there would no longer be an offer of 4 separate support services, but instead would be only 2 - a specialist service for

children and young people with sensory impairment, and a merged SEND support service, where staff can work with any child regardless of their area of need.

Members were advised that improving the Pupil Support Service would not only have a financial benefit but it was also anticipated that the service to schools would be significantly enhanced, replacing current practice with a flexible, specialist responsive service, which would have the potential to significantly improve inclusive practice across Tameside, and reduce exclusion rates. In addition, it was hoped this would also slow the movement of children with SEND out of mainstream settings into specialist settings, thereby reducing the current considerable strain on those establishments, caused by over-subscription

It was stated that schools were presented with the revised offer in February 2021 and were asked to sign up by March 2021, with early indications demonstrating that the revised offer had already attracted greater buy in of £123k (an increase in buy in of £7k on 2020/21) and consequently an improved financial position. Members noted that the income target had been reduced in 2021/22 from £392k to £261k. However, they were made aware that there was currently still a shortfall in income of £138k forecast for financial year 2021/22.

Review and redesign of top up/band funding was also discussed, with Members noting the proposals to create a more flexible and accurate model of funding, based on provision to support SEND. It was explained that current SEND band funding was allocated using a deficit model but that a move had now been made towards a more modern and appropriate approach, focussed on Matching Provision to Need (MPTN), which was more aligned with the new SEND Code of Practice.

Along with potential financial savings, other advantages of this approach were outlined, including, the accuracy and flexibility this would afford, both for the Local Authority and for schools. It was proposed that the top level of funding would remain uncapped, allowing the Authority to work with schools to ensure even the most complex children and young people could be accommodated in both mainstream and specialist schools within their own community, reducing the need for out of borough provision.

Members were provided with an update with regard to the plans to design and build a brand new specialist school to accommodate up to 220 learners as part of the development of Hawthorns Specialist School. Whilst it was explained that this would not be complete until September 2023, Members were made aware of an interim partnership with Victorious Academy Trust, which would allow Hawthorns School to develop a satellite site at Discovery Academy, housing up to 36 learners.

Plans to open 4 additional primary phase SEND resource bases were also discussed and it was outlined that these would create an additional 40-50 SEND places for a range of EHCP pupils, who were struggling to cope in mainstream settings. The benefits of using such resource bases to promote inclusive good practice was also noted, along with the intention to expand this provision in 2022 and 2023, including Key Stages 3 and 4.

Members were informed that an area SEND inspection was imminent and it was stated that considerable work had been undertaken over the past 2 years to improve SEND provision and services. It was explained that the inspection would consider how effectively the local area identifies, meets the needs of and improves the outcomes of young the wide range of different groups of children and young people, who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). It was noted that the focus would be on the contribution of education, social care and health services to children and young people with SEND, as set out in the Act, the Regulations and the Code of Practice.

It was acknowledged that Tameside, like many local areas, had found implementing SEND Reforms challenging. It was also noted that implementation had not been consistent and challenges in capacity and leadership had negatively impacted upon this. Members were made

aware that, whilst there had been significant improvements, there remained work to be done, to ensure all vulnerable learners were effectively included and supported by SEND Support Services and schools. With this in mind, Members attention was drawn to the improvement plan and self-evaluation, which highlighted a number of key strengths and challenges. They were also informed that the likely outcome of an inspection would be that a written statement of action would be requested.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on Tuesday 19 October at 3.30pm.

CHAIR