

## EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

19 October 2021

Commenced: 3.30pm

Terminated: 5.00pm

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

**In Attendance:**

Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
Jane Sowerby	Lead Primary School Performance and Standards Officer
Caroline Barlow	Assistant Director, Finance
Kate Campbell Green	Head of School Music and Library Services
Maxine Carroll	Senior Education Welfare Officer
Steven Pleasant	Chief Executive

**Apologies:**

Councillor Welsh	
Councillor Boyle	
Elizabeth Turner	
Richard Hancock	Director of Children's Services
Tim Bowman	Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)

### 15 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced all parties. Members of the Board were informed that a SEND inspection was currently underway and that an update would be provided in relation to the outcome in the near future. The chair extended a warm welcome to Maxine Carroll and Kate Campbell Green, who were both in attendance.

### 16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 17 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board, which was held on 22 June 2021.

#### RESOLVED

**That the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 22 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.**

### 18 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

On introducing the report, it was made clear to Members that circumstances had significantly changed since the report was written. The written report had outlined that schools were currently

operating in a 'business as usual' context. However, this was no longer the case, due to a recent rise in infections, particularly amongst secondary school aged children. Headteacher of Hyde High School, Andrea Radcliffe was able to describe recent experiences in her school, where infections rates had significantly increased over recent weeks,

Andrea explained that there had been over 200 positive cases of Covid-19 since the start of the academic year and stated that this had recently had a severe impact on staffing within the school. As a result, she made Members aware that that pressures on staff had increased, where many colleagues were having to cover lessons and duties to help ensure the smooth running of school and prevent the need to send home groups of students.

As the result of good advice and guidance, Andrea explained that the school had maintained staggered start, finish and lunch-times, alongside mask wearing and regular sanitising. In addition, she highlighted that Hyde High School had been the first secondary school in the borough to offer vaccinations to pupils and that there had been around a 50% uptake of the vaccine amongst students so far.

Jane Sowerby extended her thanks to Andrea and other headteacher colleagues for the incredible job they were undertaking, during what continued to be uncertain times. She also highlighted the continued disruption for secondary schools.

It was explained that the Director of Population Health had advised that all parents be encouraged to support schools in asking children to wear face masks in all communal areas and to request that all family members take daily lateral flow tests for a 10 day period, when they were aware that they had been exposed to the virus. It was hoped that this would contribute to preventing the spread in schools.

Members were made aware that the vaccination programme for 12-15 year old in the borough was now underway and was currently being led by the school nursing team. However, concerns were expressed with regard to capacity, particularly when taking into consideration, the additional vaccination programmes for HPV and nasal flu, which were also ongoing at this time.

With regard to vaccine uptake, the figures across Tameside so far reflected the situation Andrea Radcliffe had described at Hyde High School, which was around 50%. It was suggested that the current paper based consent system would benefit from a more modern e-consent system.

An update was provided with regard to attendance and it was explained that 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, where Covid-19 related absence had increased.

With a focus on vulnerable groups, Members were informed that the attendance of pupils with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) had also been broadly in line with the national average until an increase in Covid related absence from June 2021. It was explained that the percentage of pupils with a social worker on site from full school opening was below national average. However, it was acknowledged that a large number of these pupils were attending alternative provision and so were not marked as on site. Members were informed that the Head of Virtual School had been working alongside the PRU to ensure that any of these pupils with low attendance had appropriate plans in place to support attendance.

Members were informed that, following the cancellation of national exams for the 2020-21 academic year, students' grades were based on rigorous teacher assessment (TAG). Provisionally, 47% of students in Tameside had achieved a strong 9-5 pass and 69% were reported to have achieved a standard 9-4 pass in English and Maths.

With regard to exclusions, it was stated that much work had been and was continuing to be undertaken alongside secondary headteachers and that the number of permanent exclusions continued to be reduced. Members were informed that a significant reduction in the number of

fixed term exclusions provided a positive picture. Members were also made aware that a new executive headteacher had been appointed for Tameside Pupil Referral Service (TPRS) with a strong focus on improving inclusion within the system and reducing exclusion.

A discussion took place in relation to comparisons between exclusion figures locally, nationally and for other neighbouring areas. It was acknowledged that there was a strong correlation between levels of disadvantage and exclusion rates. In addition, it was also suggested that previously undiagnosed needs had contributed to the number of exclusions. With this in mind, Members were reassured that work with secondary headteachers was continuing and that there had been some very positive steps made in terms of increased support from TPRS. In addition, it was noted that the SEND review was ongoing and would continue to address these issues.

It was outlined that there continued to be a very strong focus on recovery within schools and that most secondary schools had held summer schools throughout the summer break. Members were informed that feedback with regard to the success of this initiative had been overwhelmingly positive, particularly with regard to the impact on vulnerable children. It was, therefore, hoped that this initiative could be replicated moving forwards

With regard to children eligible for free school meals, it was confirmed that funding had been provided over the summer break and would continue to be provided for the October half term break. Schools had, again, supported with the distribution of vouchers so that all financially vulnerable families could be reached.

The impact of lost learning for pupils was discussed, with particular regard to the disproportionate impact on pupils in Greater Manchester in comparison with many other areas of the country. With this in mind, it was emphasised that recovery needed to be intentional and deliberate with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils, the early years, reading and mental health.

Discussion ensued with regard to the mixing of children outside educational settings and the need for families to continue to administer regular lateral flow tests for children. In addition, there were suggestions made with regard to the need for the vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds to increase in pace and potentially to also be delivered outside of schools in order to ensure that a higher number of pupils were vaccinated in advance of the winter period.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the report be noted by the Board**

## **19 SCHOOLS FUNDING UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Education (Tameside and Stockport) and Assistant Director of Finance, which provided an update on the latest school funding announcements.

Members were made aware that The DSG announcements at this stage only covered the Schools Block, High Needs Block and the Central Service Support Block. Early Years Block information had not be shared at this point. However, it was explained that updates on this and confirmation of all other allocations were expected in December 2021. It was noted that the data stated in this report was based on the 2021-22 data set (October 2020 census data) and would change in order to take account of October 2021 census returns.

With regard to Schools Block, it was explained that there had been an increase of £40.146m, which represented an increase of 4% at a national level. This had resulted in a £5.573m increase in 2022-23 provisional allocation, excluding growth funding and Members were presented with a detailed breakdown of the funding elements.

Key areas of change were highlighted, including the Sparsity Factor. Members were informed that

NFF rates had been significantly increased by DfE on the Sparsity Factor for a 2nd year, which had resulted in an increase from £45k to £55k per primary school, and from £75k to £80k in secondary schools. However, as this was payable to schools, which were both small and remote, although the distance measurements had changed so that this would reach a wider number of schools, there would still be no Tameside schools, which would benefit from this as they did not meet the criteria.

Members were informed that there had been changes to the funding factors that support deprivation within the formula and that, on average, these had increased by 3% for IDACI and Free School Meals Ever 6, and 2% for Free School Meals.

Members were made aware that the DfE were taking steps towards a 'hard' National Funding Formula (NFF) and a consultation for local authorities, schools, academy trusts and any other interested parties had been launched in July. Tameside, along with a significant number of local authorities, were already mirroring the majority of the NFF factors but had submitted a response to the consultation, which had closed on 30 September 2021.

In relation to the High Needs Budget, Members were informed that there had been a 9.6% national increase (£780m) and that Local Authorities had seen an increase of between 8% minimum and 11% (capped and before recoupment, Alternative Provision and Hospital Funding Factors were included). It was noted that Tameside had received the maximum increase of 11% (capped). However, without this cap, Members were advised that this would have included an additional £2.988m.

In addition, it was noted that Tameside's Historic Factor had changed from £8.6m to £8.8m. However, due to the cap, the full benefit of this increase would not be received. It was highlighted that these current announcements were provisional and would be subject to further updates, which were outlined for Members of the Forum.

The provisional allocation for 2022-23 was provided compared to the current 2021-22 allocation. This highlighted an overall increase of £3.072m (before recoupment and any further adjustments). Members were also asked to note that an estimate for growth in pupil numbers was built in at £0.101m, which would be finalised and confirmed in December 2021, but was likely to be offset by an estimated increase in recoupment.

Members were advised that, although Tameside was seeing an increase in funding of £3.062m (after recoupment), this was offset by an estimated increase in spend of £5.375m. This was reflective of the continuing expected increases and further growth of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs), which was likely to increase steadily from 3.58% to over 6% in the next 5 years.

The significant impact of the capped Funding Formula allocation on the High Needs Deficit position was explained and it was noted that Tameside would continue to receive this capped funding for 2022-23, with a further cap of £2.988m forecast.

It was explained that local authorities would continue to be able to transfer up to 0.50% of Schools Block allocation to another block within the DSG, with the approval of Schools' Forum. Members were also informed that a disapplication process to the DfE would continue to be in place for any amounts over 0.50% or for any amount without the approval of Schools' Forum.

Based on current projections, Members were made aware that, even continuing with the 0.50% transfer (as in 2021-22) of £0.939m, this would still leave a potential in-year deficit on the High Needs Block of £4.644m in 2022-23 and a 1.00% transfer would leave an in-year deficit of £3.705m and potential cumulative deficit over the 2 years of £6.098m.

With regard to the Central Services Schools Block (CSSB), it was stated that funding had increased by 5.6% (£62k). However, without the cap on this funding, Tameside would receive an additional £145k.

Discussion ensued in relation to High Needs funding and, specifically, the impact of the cap on this funding. It was also explained that Members of Schools' Forum had agreed in principle for 0.50% to be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block but had rejected to support a disapplication request to the secretary of State in order to transfer 1.00% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block

## **RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the report, including the proposed consultation surrounding the 0.50% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block for financial year 2022-23, be noted by the Board**

## **20 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Access Services, which provided information on the successful school allocations for Reception and Year 7 earlier this year. The report also provided an outline of the new Admissions Code and the associated implications for schools.

Members were made aware that there had been a reduction in birth rates across the borough, which was reflected in the number of primary school applications received for 2021-22 academic year and the relative increase in the percentage of applicants, who had received their first preference school allocation.

It was further explained that there had been an increase in demand for secondary school places for September 2021, with the number of places offered being at the highest level for 10 years. Members were made aware that the policy of adding additional places in a number of local secondary schools had been successful and that the percentage of pupils allocated a place at their first preference school had remained above the average for England, despite the increase in demand.

Members were informed that a new School Admissions Code had been introduced in September 2021, which included a number changes with particular regard to in-year admissions and Fair Access Protocols. A summary of these changes was provided for Members.

It was explained that the definition of looked after children within the code had been expanded to include those children, who were in state care outside England but were later adopted and it was recommended that governing boards of voluntary aided and academy trusts would need to ensure that they were complying with these new regulations.

Detail was provided with regard to the changes in Fair Access Protocol arrangements and Members were made aware that locally agreed criteria, which had previously been used, could no longer be applied. In addition, it was stated that the new code identified a wider range of criteria for eligibility under the Fair Access Protocol. Copies of Tameside's Draft Protocols, which were to be agreed by schools, were provided for Members at Appendix 1 and 2.

With reference to in-year admissions, Members were informed that there had been several changes to the Admissions Code in order to clarify decisions, responsibilities and procedures. Whilst local authorities were no longer required to co-ordinate in-year admissions, it was stated that Tameside would continue to offer a coordinated scheme to all maintained schools. Schools, who were their own admissions authority, were required to inform the Council whether they intended to be part of this scheme on an annual basis. All schools had been contacted with regard to this and support provided in order to allow them to make an informed decision. It was noted that, to date, almost all schools had responded and had chosen to opt into this scheme.

It was further explained that the 2021 Admissions Code provided clarification that all parents had the right to make an application for a school place at any time and that these must be processed and parents informed of their statutory right of appeal, including those applications considered under the Fair Access Protocol.

Clarification was also provided with regard to the Published Admissions Number (PAN) only applying to the usual point of entry into a school. It was clarified that, for other year groups, it would be for the admission authority to determine whether there was available space or whether admissions beyond a particular number would cause prejudice to the provision of efficient education and use of resources at the school.

Members were made aware that the Council would continue to work with the online portal so that schools/trusts had immediate access to applications. It was also outlined that the admissions team would work to provide parents with decisions within the statutory timescales, providing that the relevant information from schools/trusts was received in a timely manner. With this in mind, it was stated that the revised code required own admission authorities to share information with the Council about the availability of places in their school(s) within two school days of the request. It was explained that the Council would automate this process with the use of the B2B system, which would allow the automatic transfer of information between relevant databases.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the report be noted by the Board**

## **21 CHILDREN WITH MEDICAL NEEDS PROTOCOL**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Access Services, which explained the Children with Medical Needs Protocol and outlined how this policy ensured that the Local Authority worked alongside schools, health professionals and parents to provide alternative provision in order to meet pupils' individual needs, which would enable them to thrive and prosper in the education system. This report provided updates to the Medical Needs Protocol for pupils, who were too ill to attend school, and outlined improvements made to this process to better support pupils.

Members were informed that all schools (including maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies, and alternative provision academies) were required, by law, to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions. Reference was provided to this duty, as detailed in Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and statutory guidance entitled Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions (DfE), which provided assistance for schools in understanding and complying with this legislation.

It was noted that all schools would have access to school nursing services and that this service had a responsibility for notifying schools, where a child had a medical condition, which would require support. It was explained that, whilst this service would not usually have an extensive role in ensuring that schools were taking appropriate steps to support children with medical conditions, they may provide support for staff on implementing necessary health care plans, and providing support and advice. In addition, it was noted that school nurses could liaise with lead clinicians with regard to appropriate support for children and associated staff training needs.

The key points of the Children with Medical Needs Protocol were outlined for Members as follows:

- Pupils at school with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education, including school trips and physical education.
- Schools need to make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate pupils with medical needs.
- Governing bodies, trusts and management committees must ensure that arrangements are in place in schools to support pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Governing bodies, trusts and management committees should ensure that school leaders consult health and social care professionals, pupils and parents/carers to ensure that the needs of children with medical conditions are effectively supported.
- There should be clear communication with parents as to how the needs of their child will be met.

A Draft Local Authority Protocol was provided for Members of the Board and key updates to the

revised Protocol were outlined, including:

- Revision of the Protocol to ensure the Council, schools and their partners were continuing to support pupils with medical needs to have full access to an education. Colleagues worked with a group of Headteachers on the revision.
- An update to the section guidance on school policies, which reflected excerpts from the DfE guidance 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions'. This made clear that governing bodies must ensure arrangements are in place in schools to support pupils with medical conditions.
- Updated and enhanced advice on schools' responsibility when working with pregnant students to better reflect responsibilities relating to childcare arrangements. This should form part of the education planning process, when a student is returning to school. Expectations that pupils, who are pregnant continue to be educated at school whilst it is reasonably practical, and is in the best interest of the pupil were also highlighted.
- Revised processes for the operation of the case management panel. Revised membership of the panel to include pupil support services and robust processes for the case management pathway to escalate cases, with clearer expectations of outcomes for children and young people were noted.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the report be noted by the Board**

## **22 MUSIC SERVICE UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Tameside Music Service, which set out the role and output of the music service, including its statutory obligations, particularly over the last 18 months. The report explained the issues the service had faced in continuing to deliver music education within the borough, during the pandemic, and set out the priorities for the coming year.

Members were made aware of the impact of the pandemic on Tameside Music Service and the adaptability of the service during these unprecedented times. It was stated that, during the first period of lockdown (April 2020), staff had quickly applied their technological expertise to delivering music lessons online and that by May 2020, a fully blended offer had been fully rolled out to 62 primary schools within the borough. This encompassed pre-recorded lessons, live-streamed, interactive lessons and face to face tuition for schools, which had remained open to key worker and vulnerable children.

Members were informed that, in June 2020, the service 'TMS At Home' had been launched with the aim of supporting parents and carers in home-schooling their children. Online sessions were available every weekday, including Songs for Little Ones and Pots and Pans Percussion. The success of these sessions and a range of positive feedback was highlighted for Members. It was also confirmed that each of these sessions had been viewed by an average of 1,400 people.

A successful children's carol concert had been performed on 13 December 2020, which, in association with Tameside Radio, had been broadcast into the homes of Tameside residents. It was explained that pupils from 26 Tameside primary schools had taken part in singing, alongside some talented brass students from across the borough. In collaboration with the TMBC Community Engagement and Visually Impaired teams, accessible versions of song sheets were produced and distributed around the borough so that everyone could participate in singing along. Members of the Board were delighted to celebrate this great success.

With a strong commitment to raising standards in music education and teaching, Members were informed that the service had continued to provide and promote remote training throughout the pandemic, including supporting secondary PGCE students and facilitating the early rollout of the Early Career Framework, where support was provided for newly qualified teachers. In addition, it was noted that remote network meetings had also continued throughout this period for both primary and secondary sectors, as had weekly staff meetings and other Continued Professional

Development (CPD).

With regard to inclusion. Members were made aware that there were a variety of ways in which this commitment had been demonstrated, including, a keynote address from the Head of Service at the Pathways to Progression Music conference, June 2019, followed by a written article, which was published in Music Teacher magazine, October 2019. It was noted that the Music Service had established excellent relationships with numerous, local SEND schools, most notably Cromwell High School and Oakdale Primary School. In addition, a variety of work, focussed on vulnerable children within the borough was highlighted for Members.

In looking to the future, Members were advised that the 2021-22 academic year would, hopefully, provide valuable opportunities to build back better and that, as always, it was recognised that good partnerships and relationships would be vital in creating a sustainable, relevant and authentic offer to service users. It was noted that, whilst building ensembles, school and instrumental student participants back to pre-covid levels would remain a priority, there was also a great deal of learning to be put into practice over the coming year.

The opportunity and commitment presented by occupying the newly refurbished, fit for purpose Birch Lane Centre was recognised. It was stated that, in order to ensure that the building was used in a way, which was reflective of the needs and aspirations of young people, a robust system of governance would be introduced in order to enable critical challenge and direct the service offer. Members were informed that this would consist of the creation of three new groups:

- Tameside Young Musicians Advisory Group - A cross section of young musicians meeting termly to steer the direction of the music service output in a way, which is both authentic and relevant to Tameside young people.
- Birch Lane Advisory Group – Parents, professional associations, partners, school reps to meet termly to discuss how the centre should link in to the school and wider community and vice versa.
- School Representative Group - This will be a steering group for Music Education within Tameside made up of a cross section of School staff. They will meet termly to discuss issues in music education within Tameside and make recommendations to the Music Service

In conclusion, it was stated that the Music Service had survived and thrived throughout the pandemic. Members noted that this service had continued to provide music education to schools and individual children throughout the last 18 months, through innovative practice and effective partnerships. It was highlighted that challenging targets had been set, underlined by a clear passion for engaging and encouraging all children and young people to participate in music.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the report be noted by the Board**

## **23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

## **RESOLVED**

**That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on Tuesday 18 January 2022 at 3.30pm.**

**CHAIR**