

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

18 January 2022

Commenced: 3.30pm

Terminated: 4.50pm

Present: Councillors Feeley (Chair), Fairfoull, Boyle and Welsh
Paul Jacques, Elizabeth Turner

In Attendance:

Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
Caroline Barlow	Assistant Director, Finance
Amanda Aylward	Head, Virtual School
Tim Bowman	Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)
Sandra Stewart	Director, Governance and Pensions

Apologies:

Steven Pleasant	Chief Executive
Jayne Sowerby	Lead Primary School Performance and Standards Officer
Councillor Cooper	
Councillor Smith	
Andrea Radcliffe	

24 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced all parties.

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

26 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board, which was held on 19 October 2021.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 19 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

27 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided updates in regard to the education provision of cared for children during the academic year 2020-21. It also provided reflections in relation to some of the incredible personal achievements of cared for children and care leavers

Members were informed that there had been a redesign of this service, with the Virtual Headteacher now reporting to the Director of Education and sitting on the Education Management Board and Children's Leadership Team.

Capacity had been increased to be able to support not only cared for children, previously cared for children and care leavers but also now included vulnerable children with a social worker and young

people within the Youth Justice Service. This had increased the cohort of 700 cared for children to around 2500 children and young people. It was noted that restructuring of the team to further increase capacity was a priority and that this was currently being developed in partnership with Stockport Virtual School, in order to increase training and expertise.

The Impact of Virtual School and College 2020-21 was highlighted for Members, including:

- The vast majority of Tameside's cared for children attend schools rated at least good by Ofsted
- Improved Maths and English GCSE results
- Greater numbers of care leavers attending Further and Higher Education
- Immediate and proactive responses to needs of cared for children in schools
- Extension of duties to include children with a social worker and youth justice service prior to extended duties commencing in September 2021
- Fluid and responsive interventions to pandemic

Key priorities were also outlined, including:

- Reducing fixed term exclusions
- Continued focus on attendance
- Ensuring cared for children have appropriate SEN support at SEND support level or EHCP
- Stability of school placements
- Collaborative work with Employment and Skills directorate and Tameside College to improve post 16 EET
- Quality Assurance (QA) of residential school placements
- Development of website
- Improved processes and support for young people in custody or involved with Youth Justice Service

Members were informed that the Virtual School and College's website, which aimed to provide quality resources, useful links, news stories and opportunities for children, parents carers and professionals, had been developed and had now gone live. It was intended that there would be a period of time to navigate around the new features and that there would be an official launch scheduled for later this month.

Members were made aware that the completion and return of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) was consistently high. It was explained that this high level of return and quality assurance provided a clear picture of how schools were supporting cared for children and ensured that further support could be offered, if necessary. However, it was acknowledged that improvements needed to be made with regard to the voice of the child and greater representation in PEP meetings from social workers and parents, where appropriate.

With regard to Pupil Premium spending, an outline of this was provided. It was explained that the largest proportion of this spend was currently being used to provide tuition. This was due to the significant impact of the pandemic in terms of lost learning

It was noted that, whilst attendance had been significantly impacted by the effect of the pandemic, it was encouraging to see that overall attendance figures for cared for children and young people was not significantly below previous years. However, it was explained that there had been a slight increase in the number of fixed term exclusions and that Virtual School recognised the damaging effect multiple fixed term exclusions could have. With this in mind, it was stated that Virtual School continued to work in partnership with schools in order to address issues leading to exclusions before they occur.

Increases in the number of cared for children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) were discussed. It was explained that there had been a change in the most common category of need, with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) now being better identified, with much

intervention provided across this area of need. A full distribution of need across the current cohort of cared for children was also provided for members of the Board.

With regard to GCSE attainment and Post 16 information 2020-21, a summary of un-validated data was provided, which highlighted the following:

- There were 60 young people in this cohort, with 21 holding an EHCP.
- 18/60 (30%) gained both Maths and English at Grade 4 or above. This was an increase of 18% from last year.
- 30/60 (50%) gained Grade 4 or above English or Maths. This was an increase of 20 % from last year.
- 38/60 (63%) achieved at least 1 GCSE grade. This was broadly similar to last year.
- 10/60 (17%) achieved at least 1 Grade at 6, 7 or 8.
- 19 young people were attending Higher Education and 1 was completing a Master's Degree from September 2021. 8 of these young people attended Russel Group Universities.
- 5 young people transitioned to Higher Education from Year 13 provision this academic year
- The number of young people entering both FE and HE had been increasing over the last three years.
- Alongside college advisory roles, care leavers receive comprehensive support from Virtual School and College worker who was part of GM Higher group and provided additional visiting opportunities, connecting with care leaver champions within the Universities. This ensured there was a smooth transition with a key worker at the chosen University, who would ensure appropriate finance, housing and pastoral support was in place.
- More young people were entering FE year on year and were completing courses at different levels. There was also an increased number of young people entering FE at level 3
- **Year 13** - 5 young people had confirmed places on FE courses or training. A further 5 were in employment.
- **Year 12** - 64 young people had confirmed places on FE course, apprenticeships or training.
- Virtual School and College worker based in Tameside College was supporting all students in Further Education at all institutions. They attended PEPs and tracked attendance. It was felt that the key to better completion of FE courses had been due to their advice and guidance around course suitability and intervening early when any concerns from either student or staff were raised.

It was emphasised that the number of care leavers in education, training or employment continued to be a priority for Tameside. Members were also informed that the Virtual School Head, Head of Leaving Care and Head of Employment and Skills were working collaboratively to co-ordinate opportunities to provide intense additional support which would raise the profile of care leavers in further education (FE), improve the attendance of care leavers in FE and better support the delivery of PEPs. The wrap around care model, which it was hoped would ensure this, was outlined for Members.

In line with the Corporate Parenting focus of improving life story work for cared for children, it was explained that the PEP document had been adapted to reflect new life story guidance. Members were informed that schools had been requested to attach children's successes, such as certificates, alongside school reports to ensure there was a chronology of positive memories and achievements.

The strengths of collaborative working were highlighted and a summary of partnership working across agencies with Tameside and national organisations was provided.

Members were made aware that all primary school aged children were sent books or comic packs through the post to encourage a love of reading as an opportunity to read with parents/carers. In addition, it was explained that all Year 6 children had been sent a copy of 'You are a Champion', by Marcus Rashford as they made the transition to secondary school. The aim of this was to inspire young people to recognise that, even when faced with adversity, they had the ability to achieve their dreams and goals.

Members noted that it was encouraging to hear of the positive increase in the number of cared for young people in further education and that this had been a particular focus of the Corporate Parenting agenda.

A question was raised in relation to rates of exclusion and the strategies, which had been implemented in order to address this. Members were advised that there had been increased collaboration in the development of the Inclusion and SEND agendas and that strong links had been established with Tameside Pupil Referral Service. In addition, it was emphasised that headteachers were working very closely with Virtual School and TPRS to identify possible ways forward and prevent both fixed term and permanent exclusions. Members were also advised that much work was being undertaken with regard to securing positive destinations for those pupils, who had been previously excluded.

Members suggested that it would be valuable to further explore exclusion rates in later meetings and hear more about this, along with the collaborative work that had been undertaken with the employment and skills team. The Headteacher of Virtual School and College responded and explained that another detailed report, in relation to this, would be presented to Education Attainment Improvement Board in the near future.

Members enquired as to what things had changed in terms of this service area and what learning had taken place as a result. They were advised that the service had adapted quickly to the changes brought about by the pandemic, whilst maintaining a strong oversight of the young people. It was emphasised that provision had been available to a greater number of young people and that there had been a much clearer understanding of the cohort and the different challenges of the young people. It was also noted that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process had changed significantly as a result of the pandemic and was now much more efficient. It was emphasised that this process had been simplified but still managed to achieve the same outcomes

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

28 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Access Services setting out the proposed admission arrangements for Tameside community, and voluntary controlled schools, for admission in September 2023. These arrangements included proposed changes to the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for two community primary schools and consideration of a proposal to commence consultation on adding a resource base for children with additional needs at Corrie Primary and Nursery School.

Members were reminded that all admission authorities were required to consult on their coordinated admission scheme and on changes to admission arrangements. Where no changes had been proposed to the coordinated admissions scheme or admission arrangements, there was no requirement to consult. It was noted that admission authorities should ensure that their determined admission arrangements comply with the mandatory requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021 and that consultation must take place once every seven years, as a minimum..

It was reported that for entry to community or voluntary controlled primary, junior and secondary schools in September 2023, no changes were planned and, therefore, consultation was not necessary. The proposed admission arrangements for entry in September 2023 for community or voluntary controlled primary, junior and secondary schools were set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were advised that the Council had consulted on changes to the Published Admission Number (PAN) at Buckton Vale Primary School in Stalybridge and Holden Clough Primary School in Ashton. This consultation process had followed a timetable determined by the Department for

Education (DfE) and details of the consultation were provided within the report. It was stated that no responses to this consultation were received and it had, therefore, been proposed that the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of both schools be reduced to 30.

Members were informed that school place planning in the borough was reviewed on an annual basis and formed part of the annual report on admission arrangements, which would be reported to Executive Cabinet in February.

Appendix 2 to the report set out the latest information for Members and it was noted that the primary population was decreasing, whilst the secondary population was continuing to rise. It was stated all local authorities had a statutory duty to ensure that there were sufficient school places to meet demand in the area. These could be school places available at provision maintained by the local authority, academies, or other non-maintained schools. In order to carry out this statutory duty, Councils needed to carry out school place planning and forecasting.

Members were made aware that, by being proactive and working in partnership with schools over a number of years, the Council had been able to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places in spite of significant variations in pupil numbers.

It was explained that whilst there were currently sufficient places to meet expected demand, the school place planning process must continue to be dynamic particularly in view of significant housing development that was predicted within the borough and the impact this would have on demand and travel to learn patterns.

Members' attention was drawn to the information provided in relation to Specialist Provision. It was explained that the recent growth in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) had placed significant, additional strain on specialist providers and resource bases across the borough and that work to establish additional SEND capacity was underway.

It was noted that there was an urgent need to develop additional specialist places within the borough for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and, therefore, a proposal to formally establish a 10 place resource base for children with cognition and learning and/or communication and interaction and/or social, emotional and mental health needs was outlined.

It was proposed that that this provision would be located at Corrie Primary and Nursery School., following the opening of this on a pilot basis from September 2021. Members were informed that this consultation was proposed to commence on 27 January 2022 and run until 3 March 2022. A copy of the proposed consultation document was provided for Members at Appendix 3 and it was stated that a key decision report would be presented to Executive Cabinet on 27 April 2022.

Members acknowledged that this was a very comprehensive report and a question was raised in relation to the increased demand for specialist provision and the high needs funding gap. It was noted that the High Needs deficit budget position presented significant challenges. However, the efficiencies in securing local provision, for example, the establishment of resource bases and extensions to Tameside special schools, rather than sourcing specialist provision out of borough, were highlighted.

Discussion ensued in relation to the historical funding and cap on the High Needs budget. However, it was explained that the SEND Review would be published in April, which would aim to address some these funding issues, whilst also focussing on greater consistency in offers for more effective inclusion within mainstream settings.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

29 SCHOOL FUNDING DECISIONS

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director of Finance and Director of Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided an update for Members on the latest school funding announcements. The report set out information on the allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022-23 and details of the supplementary grant provided to address increased costs to schools, and proposed changes to the Schools Improvement Grant by the DfE.

Members were informed that the provisional DSG settlement for 2022-23, of £240,507m was received on 16 December 2021, with accompanying data released on 20 December 2021. In addition to this, supplementary funding for mainstream schools had been allocated, which totalled £5,605m.

It was explained that supplementary funding for the primary and secondary sector had been provided to cover the Health and Social Care Levy and other cost pressures. This would be provided as a separate grant for 2022-23 and it was explained that the DfE's intention was for this to be included in the DSG allocation for 2023-24. £1,300m supplementary funding had also been received to support the High Needs Block and a detailed breakdown of the provisional settlements for the four blocks was provided for Members of the Board.

It was noted that the allocation of spending would be based on the October 2021 census, with the exception of the early years element as this would be based on January 2022 census. Members were informed that figures would be provided in spring 2022 and the allocation funding basis in the Schools Block was outlined as follows;

- basic per pupil rate for pupils 5 to 16, with different rates for primary and key stages 3 and 4
- a lump sum of £3,680 per school
- A rate for FSM ever6 different rates for primary and secondary.

A detailed explanation of Schools Block funding; the largest element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), was provided for Members. It was stated that the settlement from DfE comprised the following funding:

- A primary unit of funding (PUF) of £4,734.84
- A secondary unit of funding (SUF) of £6,097.80

Members were advised that this core school funding covers funding for all pupil and school led factors in the funding formula, including:

- Premises – this included PFI and business rates, which were based on historical spend. Whilst rates are included in the calculation of the DSG grant, this would not be allocated to Schools or Academies in 2022-23. This would be top sliced from the DSG allocation and retained by the ESFA who would make payments to all LA's directly on behalf of Schools.
- Mobility – to support schools in which a high proportion of pupils first join on a non-standard date.
- Growth – this was calculated using the difference between the primary and secondary numbers on roll on the October 2020 and October 2021 school censuses.

The rates used for each sector to allocate funding for individual schools was also explained and was provided for Members at Appendix A.

With regard to growth, the estimated Growth fund for 2022-23 was £1.3m, details of which, were provided within the report. Members were informed that a policy for the Growth Fund had previously been agreed by Schools' Forum, which took into account both implicit and explicit growth.

- Explicit growth related to the specific growth fund and was allocated based on the growth criteria agreed by Schools Forum.
- Implicit growth related to adjustments to pupil numbers when calculating the funding; in this case, for new and growing schools.

It was noted that there were currently two new and growing schools within Tameside (Discovery Academy and Laurus Ryecroft), where Implicit Growth was required as the intake increases each year.

It was noted that, as in previous, financial years, schools were asked to support Tameside Safeguarding Children Partnership through agreeing a contribution of £2.99 per pupil. All schools would be asked to support the continuation of this arrangement in 2022-23, equating to approximately £0.105m.

The outcome of the Schools' Funding consultation was provided and Members were reminded that Schools' Forum had agreed to support a 0.5% transfer from Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block, which equated to £0.954m.

Members were made aware that consultation on Schools' Funding had taken place between 19 October and 19 November 2021 and that proposals in relation to applying the National Funding Formula (NFF) rates continued to be in line with DfE allocations, as far as possible. Outcomes of the consultation were shared with Members of the Board as follows:

- (a) Support was given for a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs block. 67% (20 respondents) supported the transfer, 33% (10 respondents) did not.
- (b) Support was not given for a 1% transfer. 74% (23 respondents) do not support this proposal, 26% (8 respondents) did support the transfer

In relation to not supporting the 1% transfer, it was noted that a number of schools cited increasing cost pressures in schools arising from term time only costs and increased national insurance contributions. It was also reported that some schools did not believe even if schools supported the 1% that the Secretary of State would not allow it.

With regard to the to the High Needs Block, it was stated that the provisional 2022-23 High Needs Block allocation of £31.617m (before academy recoupment) had been released and explained that this represented an increase in funding (12%) from the previous year. It was also stated that this included an additional £0.350m to cover the growth in pupil numbers.

In addition, Members were made aware that the Local Authority had also received supplementary funding of £1.300m. It was explained that this extra funding recognised the additional costs, which local authorities and schools would face during the coming year, including the Health and Social Care Levy.

Changes in the settlement compared to 2021-22 were outlined for Members and it was noted that the allocation was subject to further adjustments, including:

- The outcome of the Place change request in November 2021 which adjusts recoupment of academy places in September 2022, an expected adjustment to funding of £0.298m is included.
- Import and Export adjustments to reflect cross border movement of pupils living in one borough and accessing provision in another

A detailed breakdown of the number of current and commissioned places for special schools and resourced units was presented and Members were advised that there would be ongoing conversations with Tameside Pupil Referral Service (TPRS) with regard to the commissioned numbers for September 2022.

With regard to the projected position for the High Needs Deficit, a detailed forecast was provided, which outlined the budget forecast, after the 0.50% transfer from schools for 2022-23 and highlighted the potential impact of the expected growth up to 2025-26.

Members were provided with information in relation to the current funding settlement for Early Years 2021-22 and 2022-23. It was noted that confirmation of the basis of the settlement for the provisional 2022-23 information was being sought and that this would be updated based on

January 2022 and January 2023 census data.

The reductions in funding for 3 and 4 Year Olds and 2 Year Olds was explained, along with the increases in funding for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Disabled Access Fund (DAF). It was noted that consultation would need to be held with Early Years providers in relation to increased rates and Members were made aware that an additional Schools Forum meeting had been arranged for 15 March 2022 in order to agree the rates of allocation for this element of funding.

Members were advised that, following this report, approval would be sought to centrally retain 5% (in line with national guidance) of 3 and 4 Year Old funding (£0.701m based on the current settlement) and £0.13 per hour (as a minimum) of 2 Year Old funding (£0.061m based on the current settlement). It was noted that this centrally retained funding would continue to support the following:

- Early Education Funding Team
- Family Information Services
- Early Years Quality Improvement Team
- SEN Team
- Social Emotional and Mental Health service
- Sensory Support
- Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy)

In relation to the Central School Services Block (CSSB), Members were informed that the total allocation for 2022-23 was £1.182m, which was based on a per pupil element of £33.83 for ongoing duties. It was noted that National Copyright School Licenses were also funded from this block and would equate to £0.189m.

In line with DSG operational guidance, the support of schools' Forum was sought for the central retention of funding in relation to: School Admissions; servicing of Schools Forum and; contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools (formally the retained duties element of the DSG). It was noted that, whilst budgets for these areas were still being worked on, the costs were estimated to be in excess of £1.102m, with £0.993m currently available to support these costs, with the approval of Schools' Forum.

Members were informed that a number of services were to be subject to a de-delegation vote at the next meeting of Schools' Forum and these decisions were taken annually by Maintained Primary and Maintained Secondary Members of Schools' Forum. It was noted that the services subject to de-delegation for 2022-23 would be:

- Local Trade Union Support
- Contingency
- School Improvement

Members were informed that the DfE had proposed to remove the School Improvement and Brokeridge Grant, which the Local Authority currently receives from DfE of £231,000 to support statutory school improvement functions. It was stated that, in 2022-23, the Council would receive transitional funding of 50%. Therefore, it was advised that de-delegation of schools funding to support the remaining 50% of ongoing statutory functions activity cost was sought.

It was confirmed that DfE consultation had been undertaken and a link to this was provided. A formal response had been submitted to the DfE in response to this proposal, which highlighted the following concerns:

- Although formal powers of intervention had not been used a great deal, the grant was used to meet needs before schools reach this critical point of failure and therefore monies are used to support schools to prevent them from failing children before being eligible for intervention.

- School improvement activity in Tameside was not limited to maintained schools only, support was provided to academy schools too. Removal of this grant and funding would remove the ability to support the whole sector and be detrimental to the whole Education offer in Tameside.
- De-delegation would present an uneven playing field between MAT's and maintained schools, MATs did not need to seek permission of schools to top slice school budgets to provide improvement support.
- Removal of this central government grant to fund school improvement functions was transferring the cost and applying more pressure to the Schools Block funding of the DSG.
- The timeline for the change made decision making and informed consultation very difficult.

Members were informed that the outcome of this consultation had been released on 11 January and it had now been confirmed that the grant would be cut. It was noted that DfE would provide a supplementary grant to schools, alongside the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), in order to support the new Health and Social Care Levy and wider costs. However, concerns were raised in relation to the Schools Improvement Service's ability to deliver its statutory functions without the grant and, therefore, the importance of these de-delegation contributions for 2022-23 was emphasised.

Members were made aware that the cost of Schools Improvement for 2022-23 would be £6.12 per pupil and it was explained that this would at least double in 2023-24, as the LA would receive 50% transitional grant in 2022-23. However, it was noted that the cost of the service would need to be de-delegated in full from schools in 2023-24.

Following the presentation of the report, Members expressed particular concern in relation to the removal of the Schools Improvement and Brokeridge Grant and the need to meet the demands of the required improvements. This was of particular concern as it was confirmed that this grant would now be withdrawn and only 50% of this funding would be received for 2022-23. Members were informed that conversations had already begun in relation to how the Local Authority and schools could respond to this but it was acknowledged that this would present significant challenges in terms of maintaining and supporting school improvement.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report, including the changes to funding for schools and the Local Authority, arising from the grant allocations announcements for 2022-23, be noted by the Board

30 SEND UPDATE

The Director, Education, Tameside and Stockport provided a verbal update in relation to the recent SEND inspection, which had taken place. He explained that between 18 and 22 October 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Tameside to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The findings of the report had been received and the outcome of the inspection was that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI had also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group(s) (CCG) were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. Members were advised that the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) must be submitted for approval no later than 12 April 2022.

Members were made aware that regular updates in relation to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) would be provided for Members of Education Attainment Improvement Board and this would become a standing item on the agenda for future meetings.

RESOLVED

That an update in relation to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) be included as a standing agenda item for future meetings of Education Attainment Improvement Board.

31 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 3.30pm.

CHAIR