

Report to:	EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Date:	8 March 2022
Reporting Officer:	Tim Bowman, Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport)
Subject:	SCHOOLS UPDATE
Report Summary:	The report provides updates from schools since the last report in October. It includes information about the likely future direction of the schools landscape with insight into what the new Schools White Paper will contain. It also provides updates on Ofsted, Phonics outcomes, exclusions, and changes to the support for Early Years providers.
Recommendations:	It is recommended that the Board note the content of the report.
Corporate Plan:	The proposals information in this report support most aspects of the corporate plan by covering outcomes, updates and future policy changes at a national level which will impact on the provision of good school places.
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>In this update report there are two areas where finances for the council or schools have been affected by recent government policy change.</p> <p>Education Investment Area policy has been announced. However at this stage the details of the funding have not yet been released updates will be provided when allocations are released.</p> <p>The schools improvement grant removal has placed the council in a difficult position, whilst we are the statutory body responsible for Schools Improvement activity, we must request the funding from our maintained schools sector. Tameside schools have agreed to fund this activity, this will be subject to annual decision making at Schools Forum.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The Board is asked to note the challenges as set out in the financial implications. The impact of the Education Investment Area Policy and the removal of the school improvement grant will no doubt require careful scrutiny and close monitoring by the Board.
Risk Management:	There are potential budget pressures and sector influence risks for several education services relating to the new Schools White Paper and removal of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant which will be closely monitored.
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:	<p>The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Jane Sowerby</p> <p> Telephone: 0161 342 3247</p> <p> e-mail: Jane.Sowerby@tameside.gov.uk</p>

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report follows on from the October report presented to the Board. Since the last Education Attainment Improvement Board (EAIB), the Omicron variant has spread across the country and Tameside is still very much in the middle of this maelstrom, despite national restrictions being stepped down (26 January 2022).
- 1.2 Headteachers, School Leaders, Early Years Leaders and their staff in Tameside are still dealing with significant challenges. COVID-19 rates are very high in the Borough and business continuity in education settings continues to be a cause for concern, despite reduced isolation requirements for those testing positive for COVID-19 and the high levels of vaccination.
- 1.3 Pupil attendance nationally is still being negatively impacted by the pandemic and a separate report detailing Tameside's attendance patterns and activity is being presented to this Board. This is also expected to be a key focus in the new Schools White Paper due out in March.
- 1.4 Support for settings, schools and colleges continues to be available to all schools, whatever type they may be and whatever phase or sector they are in, and we continue to maintain a Borough-wide approach to identifying collective processes which support safe and sensible, local, decision-making.

2. CURRENT COVID-19 UPDATES AND REQUIREMENTS IN SCHOOLS

- 2.1 Education settings are still expected to maintain an effective system of controls, and to have effective contingency framework arrangements which can be stepped up in the case of an outbreak or should national conditions require it. Use of face coverings, stepped up before Christmas nationally, are no longer required nationally but local Public Health advice is that schools and settings should consider continuing to use face coverings in communal and crowded areas for all adults and children of secondary age.
- 2.2 All settings, 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. Remote learning has been required only rarely and in almost all cases it is due to safe levels of staffing not being able to be maintained.
- 2.3 January 2022 again saw a requirement for schools to test onsite all secondary-age pupils using Lateral Flow Devices on return to school with a follow up test at home three to five days later. A slight staggered start to the term was permitted by the Department for Education (DfE) to accommodate this requirement.
- 2.4 The vaccination programme has successfully been implemented by the SAIS team who are currently undertaking a programme of second doses of the COVID-19 vaccination in secondary schools. 12-15 year olds are also able to access vaccinations in the community. 16 and 17 year olds can access second doses of the vaccination in the community.
- 2.5 Business continuity in schools in January has been creating difficulties for school leaders to maintain the full face to face offer for all classes at times. Partial closures in January and early February have affected five primary mainstream and special schools in KS1 and Early Years classes and in a Year 4/5 class. Closures have been for a short amount of time, mostly one day. Many other schools have been on the brink of partial closures due to staffing shortages. At the time of writing, at the end of January 2022, there are 62 educational

outbreaks – 53 primary schools, 2 special schools and 7 PVIs (0 confirmed outbreaks in secondary schools) – with two Ofsted inspections needing to be deferred.

- 2.6 There is a severe shortage of supply staff created by COVID-19 absences and conditions. Some school leaders report that the current situation is the most challenging they have experienced during the whole pandemic.
- 2.7 Schools and settings have continued to implement the Council's decision to continue to provide supermarket vouchers for children eligible for free school meals and Early Years Pupil Premium for each school holiday period which has proved a very effective way of reaching families. The Council is grateful to schools for supporting this important initiative.
- 2.8 The DfE is continuing to provide laptops, tablets and connectivity support to local authorities, schools, academy trusts and further education colleges to support disadvantaged children and young people to access remote education during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The number of devices available in AY2021/22 for schools, colleges and other FE institutions to order is based on estimates of need made by the DfE. These estimates are based on free school meals data and the number of devices each setting may have received in AY2019/20 and AY2020/21. The numbers received by has been reported in detail in previous reports to this Board during the pandemic.
- 2.9 Tameside maintained schools have received 1,253 devices (laptops and tablets) since the start of the winter scheme (29 October 2021). Manchester has received 3,373; Rochdale 1,964; Salford 1,520; Oldham 1,324; Stockport 1,301; Bury 981; Trafford 779. In addition Tameside's academy trusts have received c959 devices.

3. EDUCATION OUTCOMES AND UPDATES

3.1 Ofsted

This academic year we have had two Good secondary school inspections, three Good primary school inspections, one primary school which Ofsted judged to Require Improvement that was previously Good and one secondary school that has moved out of Inadequate into Requires Improvement. In January, two primary school inspections were deferred due to the schools being in active outbreak.

3.2 Reading

In the second half of the autumn term, schools again undertook the Year One Phonics Screening Check with children in Year 2 due to the check being cancelled in the summer, when it would usually be undertaken. The check has not been standardized for the last two years but is statutory. The percentage of children in Tameside achieving the Phonics Check remained the same as in 2021 at 77.4% with 79.7% of children achieving this nationally. 67.4% of children eligible for Free School Meals achieved the standard, which is 1% above FSM children nationally but falls well below more advantaged children. Further analysis is needed to understand why improvement is not gaining ground against the national comparison. The pandemic has had a sustained impact in Greater Manchester and in particular in Tameside and this is likely to be a significant factor.

3.3 End of Key Stage Assessments

End of Key Stage national assessments at KS1 and KS2 will go ahead this summer along with the new Year 4 Multiplication Check and the Year 1 Phonics Screen. Early Years Foundation Stage is required to submit data in line with the new framework implemented this year but formal local authority moderation is no longer required. The Education Team will however provide support and training for schools to make accurate assessments and submit their data.

- 3.4 GCSEs will go ahead this summer almost as normal. The DfE will soon be publishing

guidance to schools on the focus of questions in the summer exams to support student revision and reduce the burden on students who have had so much of their education disrupted over the last two years.

4. REDUCING EXCLUSIONS

4.1 Tameside has grappled with high levels of exclusions over time. In the last report to the Committee, the latest published data (2019/20) was shared showing continued high levels of permanent exclusion but an improving picture around the reduction in fixed term exclusions comparing especially favourably with statistical neighbours (4th out of 11).

4.2 In summer 2020, Education Improvement and Partnerships worked with the Tameside PRU Management Committee to redesign the role of the leadership of the TPRS (Tameside Pupil Referral Service) and recruited to this post in November 2020. The new role required an Executive Headteacher, sourced from a mainstream background, who also had responsibility for transforming the wider system around more inclusive practice. This additional responsibility is funded through School Improvement monies. A key priority for the new Executive Headteacher was to engage mainstream secondary headteachers in co-producing a strategy for achieving better outcomes for this vulnerable group of children. One of the central initiatives to achieve this has been a new TPRS Outreach Offer.

4.3 The unpublished data for the autumn 2021 suggests an improved picture on 2019 but there remains a significant distance still to travel. We do not have comparable national data for this period. During autumn 2020 exclusions were significantly reduced due to the impact of the first lockdown during which secondary pupils had not been in school between the end of March and September.

Autumn term	Primary PEx	Secondary PEx	Total
2019/20	4	29	33
2020/21	1	16	17
2021/22	2	28	30

4.4 The number of pupils in the PRU reduced during the 2020/21 academic year and further reduced in autumn term 2021 to 103. This data would indicate that the PRU outreach programme is having a positive impact

	Jan-17	Jan-18	Jan-19	Jan-20	Jan-21
Pupils on roll at PRU	119	121	144	155	125
Pupils on roll in Tameside	36189	36447	36879	37090	37313
Rate of pupils in PRU	0.33	0.33	0.39	0.41	0.33
Rate of pupils in PRU in Tameside per 1,000	3.3	3.3	3.9	4.1	3.3

4.5 To work towards reducing permanent exclusions across the borough, significant forward thinking and investment has been required. To be successful, there must be: a change in mind-set at all levels; an increase in supporting provision; an innovative use of outreach; a shared development and approach towards early intervention strategies; and a continued commitment to a collaborative approach from Tameside Secondary Schools and TPRS.

4.6 The ambition is to prevent exclusions through a proactive rather than a reactive approach. TPRS Outreach aims to work closely with each secondary school to identify students (KS3) who may be at risk of possible permanent exclusion and intervene at the earliest possible opportunity, providing a supportive and bespoke set of interventions to enable our students

to remain in mainstream education, on track to succeed. To achieve this, TPRS has secured 'buy in' from Tameside secondary schools to a supportive offer which will adapt and adjust according to need.

- 4.7 Tameside's Educational Psychology Service has been providing supervision and support for the Outreach Team. This is an opportunity for the team to discuss cases, ask advice and receive training. To date the team have received attachment training and a suite of training is planned for the remainder of the school year. Some of the allocated Educational Psychology time has also been utilised to support schools directly. To date three schools have received staff training through and two have had the benefit of the Educational Psychologist supporting students directly.
- 4.8 From September to December 2021, the Outreach Team received 122 referrals across 10 schools. 26 students have made improvements so that they no longer need support and their cases have been closed. No student that has worked one-to-one with the team has been excluded.
- 4.9 The work of the Schools Outreach Support Service in increasing inclusion will be covered in the SEND Update.

5. EDUCATION INVESTMENT AREAS AND THE NEW SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER

- 5.1 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) have been announced this week (31 January 2022) as part of the Government's levelling up agenda. EIAs have been identified as those areas being consistently below national attainment levels at the end of KS2 and KS4 and as needing further work to tackle this entrenched pattern of performance. The intention is to bring together the various place based initiative such as Opportunity Areas and EIAs in the White Paper. DfE has stated that it is committed to working with local authorities, multi-academy trusts and diocese to plan how to implement plans and announcements will be made in April to detail how strategy is tied to funding.
- 5.2 Tameside is an Education Investment Area. There are 55 EIAs and they will focus on two main government missions: for 90% of children to achieve the expected standard at the end of KS2 in Reading, Writing and Maths; and there will be a measure to judge the progress made in secondary schools relating to accessing successfully high quality post-16 placements.
- 5.3 Additionally, in these EIAs schools which Ofsted has judged to be Requires Improvement or worse in their last two inspections could be moved into strong academy trusts.
- 5.4 There is much expectation in the education world for the Government's Schools White Paper which is expected to be published in March 2022. We don't yet know what the paper will contain but there are some clear trailers about what it is being considered currently.
- 5.5 The White Paper is likely to focus on four main strategies:
- The quality of teacher training and CPD as a tool for recruiting and retaining teachers and this will focus on literacy and numeracy
 - Curriculum, behaviour and attendance
 - Targeted support for those that need it most
 - A strengthened school system: stronger MATs; clarity about the roles of LAs, Ofsted, the DfE, and funding.
- 5.6 EAIB will receive a detailed report on the implications for the Council and for schools on the White Paper once it is published. This is likely to be summer 2022.
- 5.7 **School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant**

As part of the DfE's schools strategy, to be laid out in the White Paper, the Department has already changed the way it funds local authorities for school improvement activity. The Government will reduce the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering grant, which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities and make provisions within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year 2022-23. This allows local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity via de-delegation from schools' budget shares by 50% for the FY 2022-23 and bring it to an end in FY 2023-24. The value of this grant in total in FY 2022-23 is £213,000.

- 5.8 Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate this money to cover the 50% shortfall in the next Financial Year and the Head of Service for Education Improvement and Partnerships will work with sector representatives to develop a strong, future proof model which will continue to support all schools and academies to continue to work together effectively across Tameside.
- 5.9 The biggest change to the school system in the last decade has been the rise of academies and multi academy trusts. This is a permanent change to our school system. In order to affect outcomes for all children it is important to embrace the academies agenda and continue with the Council's Schools Strategy. Strong partnership needs to be both a partnership between all schools and the local authority and, critically, needs to include strong partnerships between schools. Partnerships between schools are vital to their success and must always be central to our strategy. Partnerships between schools improve financial sustainability, especially for small schools; provide a vehicle for sharing high quality practice; maximise the impact of outstanding leaders; and are vital to continuing success over time.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 COVID-19 continues to provide challenge in schools in terms of business continuity but school exams and tests will go ahead this summer so planning must be made for business as usual. Tameside is likely to be adversely affected in terms of national tests and assessments due to the sustained impact of COVID-19 over time in the Borough.
- 6.2 There are some significant national changes ahead in the new Schools White Paper and the way school improvement activity is funded. The Council and all schools will need to work together to understand the changes for the school landscape that will happen and be ready for a future that builds on our existing strengths and good relationships.
- 6.3 The strategy the TPRS is implementing to reduce permanent exclusions is having an impact and needs to embed across the system. The scene has been set for schools to in partnership with the PRU and the local authority to make a real difference to inclusion across the Borough.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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