

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

17 January 2023

Commenced: 3.30pm

Terminated: 4.50pm

Present: Councillors Feeley (Chair), Fairfoull, and Colbourne
Paul Jacques, Andrea Radcliffe

In Attendance:

Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
Jane Sowerby	Lead Primary School Performance and Standards Officer
Charlotte Finch	Head of SEND
Caroline Barlow	Assistant Director, Finance
Ali Stathers-Tracey	Director, Children's Services
Amanda Aylward	Head of Virtual School and College

Apologies: Councillor Cooper
Councillor Boyle
Elizabeth Turner

55 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced all parties. Sincere thanks were expressed for the services of Tim Bowman, Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport), who would soon be leaving Tameside to take up a new role. Best wishes of Members were extended to Tim and it was explained that Jane Sowerby would be taking up the role of Assistant Director, Education at the end of January 2023.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

57 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board, which was held on 18 October 2022.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 18 October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

58 SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided an update on the progress of the Written statement of Action.

It was noted that this report provided a snapshot of progress at the time of writing and that, since the report had been produced, there had been further progress. Members' attention was drawn to the appendices included alongside the report and it was stated that the following actions had been completed:

- Local Offer Rebrand Completed. Soft Launch Live from October 2022

- Local Offer Working Group - new lead assigned and working groups established and convened
- Co-produced parent/carer survey now completed and results shared with parents/carers and Primary Heads
- Business Process Review completed with findings reported to Executive Cabinet
- First parent carer engagement session had taken place- feedback given re PC survey
- SEND Scorecard devised and all schools provided with their own individual data
- EHCP Quality Assurance Framework in place
- Annual Review Recovery Plan in place
- Timeliness Recovery Plan in place
- Child/ Young Person Survey Live
- SENDco Survey Live
- Health Navigator Service in place - impact being measured
- Health audits and CPD programme well underway
- Significant Improvement in Timeliness in Health Advice (end of September 100% for CAMHS, 92% ISCAN, 63% Paediatrics)
- Recruitment well underway for additional investment in Health Therapy and CAMHS
- Health Preparation for Adulthood Strategic Lead appointed

Members were informed that implementation was progressing well. On the report, 88% of actions were green or amber and only 3% of actions were red, with 4% not yet started. However, it was noted that, since the report had been produced there were now no red areas at all.

In relation to Priority 1, it was stated that numerous training sessions had been delivered and post-course feedback evidenced that this had been effective and well received. Priority 6 had also seen further progress and, whilst it was acknowledged that there continued to be some recruitment challenges, this had now progressed to amber rather than red and much work was underway. It was explained that in relation to Priority 7, a new Head of Commissioning was now in post, which had followed a period of transition.

Discussion ensued in relation to the surveys, which had been undertaken and Members were keen to investigate whether these had been co-produced alongside parents/carers. They also requested information in relation to participation rates. It was explained that much work had been undertaken with Parent/Carer Forum to design the survey and ensure that this was as accessible possible for all stakeholders. In terms of participation, it was confirmed that there had been almost 500 responses, which had provided a good overview.

A question was raised in relation to ensuring that all opportunities to engage, gather and record relevant information were well utilised, including more informal groups. In response, Members were made aware that a wide variety of opportunities had been built in to ensure face to face contact with parents/carers, children and young people. It was also noted that SEND and Health presentations had been provided at all of the Parent/Carer Forums. In addition, it was suggested that there had been some discussion around Student Forums and Smart School Councils, which would provide strategic, interactive hubs. It was hoped that these initiatives would ensure good engagement from all stakeholders.

It was acknowledged that recruitment and retention had presented significant challenges. However, Members were reassured that there had been much planning and pro-active work undertaken in order to ensure that any vacant posts were filled and gaps in staffing minimised. Access to specialist therapeutic skills, for example speech therapy, was raised as a concern. However, it was acknowledged that this was national challenge and would require continued efforts to drive up capacity.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

59 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Access Services, which set out the proposed admission arrangements for Tameside community, and voluntary controlled schools for admission in September 2024, following a public consultation exercise. This report would also be presented to Executive Cabinet on 25 January 2023.

Members were made aware that, where no changes to the admissions scheme or admission arrangements were proposed, there was no requirement to consult. However, it was noted that there had been agreement with 2 secondary schools to consult on a proposed reduction in the Published Admissions Number (PAN).

Denton Community College and Hyde High School had previously increased their Published Admissions Numbers (PAN) in order to accommodate a peak in birth rates. However, as this peak had now passed, these additional places were no longer required. It had, therefore, been agreed to consult on a reduction in the PAN of Hyde High School from 240 pupils to 210 pupils and Denton Community College from 330 pupils to 270 pupils.

Members were also made aware of a proposed change to the wording of 'home address' in the admission arrangements. It was stated that, in order to provide further clarity on the definition of wording on home address where parents had shared responsibility for a child, each for part of week, it was proposed to amend the wording to change from:

'Where a child lives with parents with shared responsibility, each for part of a week, the home address is the address from which the child travels to school for the majority of school days per week'

and amend the definition to:

'Where a child lives with parents with shared responsibility, each for part of a week, the home address is the address from which the parent receives the child benefit'.

In relation to admission outside of the normal age group, it was proposed that the admissions arrangements be updated to align with the wording of the School Admissions Code. This was to ensure further clarity on the example reasons a parent may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group.

Members were informed that the period of consultation for these changes had been from 3 November 2022 up until 15 December 2022 and no responses had been received. As a result, it would be recommended to the Executive Cabinet on 8 February 2023 that these changes be implemented for September 2024.

An annual update in relation to school place planning was provided for Members. It was noted that the main issues that affected the Council's strategic plans were late applications and in-year admissions, which complicated planning; both at school and at local authority level. It was explained that previously, well-understood trends were changing and proving difficult to predict, including short term tenancies, mobile populations and other changes in the housing market. Patterns of parental preference were also difficult to predict.

It was stated that the Council had been proactive in tackling the issue of rising births over the last 15 years. The Published Admission Number (PAN) had increased by almost 18% in primary and 14% in secondary schools in order to accommodate increased demand. However, it was noted that the number of places available was now beginning to decrease.

Members were made aware that, by being proactive, the Council had been able to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. This had been done whilst also managing to maintain high levels of meeting parental preference, usually at a higher level than the national average. Local and national data was presented in order to support this.

A range of data was provided for Members in order to demonstrate changes in birth rates, census data, in-year transfer rates, overall pupil numbers and cohort survival rates.

Members were informed that there would be significant surplus places in primary schools in the near future and, as a result, plans were changing in order to reflect and prepare for this. It was noted that large amounts of surplus capacity would impact on the financial viability of schools and could lead to increased levels of deficit budgets for schools. With this in mind, there had been a number of awareness raising sessions with primary headteachers in the borough to alert them to the issues of rising levels of surplus places. Further support had also been offered to geographical clusters in order to identify where surplus capacity could be reduced.

In relation to secondary school places, Members were made aware that the peak of secondary school numbers was reached in September 2021. September 2023 was expected to be high numbers again. However, it was expected that there would be sufficient places, with 3199 places available. The following reductions to PAN had also been implemented, which represented a mix of temporary and permanent arrangements:

Published Admission Numbers	Previous PAN	PAN for Sept 23
Audenshaw School	240	210
Droylsden Academy	195	180
Laurus Ryecroft	220	210

In relation to Specialist provision within the borough, Members were informed that the number of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) had been rising since 2017 and had more than tripled. As a result, Tameside was now more in line with statistical neighbours and approximately 3.64% of the school population now held an EHCP.

Whilst it was acknowledged that this growth in EHCPs was necessary, it was explained that this had placed significant strain on specialist providers and resource bases across the borough. Work to establish additional SEND capacity was, therefore, underway and recently acquired data, which was provided for Members, demonstrated the ongoing imperative to create additional SEND provision within Tameside.

In conclusion, it was stated that, by being proactive and working in partnership with schools over a number of years, the Council had been able to meet the demand for places in spite of significant variations in pupil numbers.

After the sustained period of growth, the need to consider reducing levels of surplus predicted to increase in primary and secondary schools over the next few years was noted. It was acknowledged that there was a need to engage in dialogue with primary school leaders to begin to consider options to reduce projected levels of surplus capacity.

Members noted that, whilst there were currently sufficient places to meet expected demand in mainstream provision, this was not the case for specialist places. It was, therefore, acknowledged that school place planning must continue to be dynamic, particularly in view of significant housing development and predicted increases in children and young people requiring support for their additional needs.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted

60 VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Director, Education (Tameside and Stockport), which provided information regarding the education provision of cared for children and children with a

social worker during the academic year 2021-22. Significant improvements during the year 2021-22 were outlined for Members, alongside planning and priorities for 2022-23.

Members were made aware that there had been significant changes to this service since the last annual report. This had been facilitated by a redesign and recruitment process, which had now been completed

The impact of Virtual School and College 2023-22 was outlined for Members. This included:

- An increase in 4+ and 5+ English and Maths GCSE results for 2022 cohort in comparison to 2019
- Increase of cared for children having SEND identified and EHCPs awarded
- Consistently high level of PEPs completed and returned termly (around 98%)
- Increased numbers attending further and higher education
- Total of 3361 hours school led grant tuition completed
- Wider coverage of children's services giving advice to social workers and schools supporting children in need and preventing permanent exclusions of vulnerable children through the intervention of the service

Priorities for 2022-23 were also outlined for Members, including:

- Reduction of suspensions
- Attendance
- Earlier identification of SEND needs
- Establishing the new training programme
- Post 16 EET engagement

Members were informed that the vast majority of Tameside cared for children attended schools, which were either Good or Outstanding. It was also noted that, where schools had a Requires Improvement or lower judgment, Virtual School team attend PEPs, in order to ensure that provision was still appropriate and provided support for the school in order to support the child attending. It was explained that any movement of school was discouraged unless absolutely necessary and that school location was carefully considered in care planning with social workers, prior to any move being agreed.

Data in relation to pupil numbers of cared for children was provided for Members, who were made aware that there were 546 cared for children in Reception to Year 13, as of July 2022 with 459 of these attending Reception to Year 11. Data was also provided in relation to cared for young people in further and higher education.

It was stated that there was a consistently high termly return of PEP (Personal Education Plan) documents, with meetings held regularly and paperwork kept up to date and demonstrating effective pupil premium spending.

Members were made aware that the School Led Tutoring Grant had been used in order to provide tutoring intervention to support catch-up for lost education due to the pandemic. This had been demonstrated clearly in the termly PEPs for cared for children, which were quality assured by managers in the Virtual School.

Detailed information in relation to the attendance of cared for children was provided for Members. It was acknowledged that attendance remained broadly below pre-Covid levels and that there had been some increases in persistent absenteeism. It was also noted that attendance at specialist provision was lower than mainstream. With this in mind, it was stated that attendance would continue to be a key area of focus and that work would continue across schools and social care services to proactively address these concerns.

It was noted that the number of cared for children, who had been awarded Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) had continued to rise and that these had predominantly focussed on social, emotional and mental health needs. This increase was likely to be as a result of improved

identification of need and close working relationships with the SEND team in order to ensure that cared for children's needs were rapidly and accurately identified.

Attainment data for 2021-22 was provided for Members, alongside national comparisons. It was acknowledged that some excellent results had been achieved, despite young people facing difficult personal circumstances. This was particularly celebrated and some examples of remarkable achievements were provided for Members.

The importance of effective collaborative working was highlighted and a summary of partnership working across agencies was provided for Members. These included:

- VSH Youth Justice Board, Tameside and Stockport
- VSH education representative in DV Strategy Group
- VS representation on SEN assessment panel
- VSH PRS Governor
- VS representation as a Tameside Primary School Governor
- VS representation at social care placement tracking panel, legal gateway, permanence and residential panels
- VSH member of NAVSH
- VSH active member of North West Virtual Head network
- VSH member of Education Management Team and Children's Wider Leadership Team
- VSH member of Tameside Association Secondary Heads
- Provide induction training for all social care new starters

Members were also made aware that a key priority for this academic year had been training and development. An outline of training opportunities was provided, alongside information about where to access training resources on the virtual School website:

www.tameside.gov.uk/tamesidevirtualschool

As part of virtual School and College's extended duties, Members were advised that the team were now offering advice and monitoring attendance and outcomes for all children with a social worker. As part of these extended duties, they had continued to work collaboratively with the Youth Justice Service and Pupil Referral Service as key vulnerable groups. A case study was provided to support this.

A review of the Assertive Mentoring Pilot was provided, alongside a range of valuable feedback. It was noted that this had been determined to be a successful scheme, which would operate again, during the next academic year, but starting at an earlier point.

Discussion, which followed the presentation, praised the clear progress, which had been made and the wide range of achievements throughout the academic year. However, particular concerns were expressed in relation to the increase in persistent absenteeism and it was acknowledged that this would need to be a key focus moving forwards.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

61 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on 14 March 2023 at 3.30pm.

CHAIR