

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

17 October 2023

Commenced: 3.30 pm

Terminated: 5.05 pm

Present: Councillors Feeley (Chair), Boyle, Fairfoull, Newton, Roderick, Colbourne, Elizabeth Turner and Melanie Wicks

In Attendance:

Sandra Stewart	Chief Executive
Jane Sowerby	Assistant Director of Education
Kate Campbell-Green	Head of School Music and Library Services
Mhairi McDonald-Junor	Head of SEND
Catherine Moseley	Head of Access and Inclusion
Jo Pearson	Head of Education Improvement and Partnerships

Apologies for Absence: Paul Jacques

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 20 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

11. TAMESIDE MUSIC AND LIBRARY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from the Head of Access services, which outlined the role and output of the Music Service, including its statutory obligations, and the School Library Service.

It was reported that Tameside Music Service was part of the Greater Manchester Music Education Hub along with 9 other regional Music Services and 18 partner organisations. It was a traded service that received a grant from the Arts Council England, which accounted for approximately 36% of the annual budget. Attached to the grant were several conditions, which formed the basis for the output of the service, such as ensuring that all students had the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. The School Library Service was a traded service and was committed to providing support and advice to schools to engage students in reading. Both services supported every school in the borough during the 2022-23 Academic Year, working with approximately 8000 children across all schools in Tameside.

The Board were made aware that although engagement with the School Library Service had increased during 2022-23, the buy in had decreased. On the other hand, the Music Service continued to grow and thrive and realised a small surplus in 2022-23. The Music Service had seen a growth in both engagement and buy in and it was likely that this would continue to increase in 2023-24 due to the new National Plan for Music Education coming in to force during this academic year, which made it clear that schools and Music Hubs should be working closely to realise its aims.

With regards to the Music Service, Board members were informed that the focus had been on consolidating and developing their offer to ensure it was reflective of the needs of young people within the borough, as articulated in the corporate vision. Trauma informed nurture groups had

been established within several primary schools, Birch Lane was used as an inclusion centre for students receiving education outside of mainstream education and a dementia choir was commissioned by the NHS.

Members were notified that students from 15 different main and special schools were given the opportunity to play and sing with the Halle Orchestra in June 2023 and more primary schools were invited to sing at the Bridgewater Hall as part of the Greater Manchester Music Hub's Celebration concert in July 2023. The Music Service held a fest at Manchester Academy in July 2023, which was an opportunity for young artists from around Tameside to experience performing in a high quality, nationally-renowned venue.

Information was provided on Birch Lane Centre, which was established as an exam centre for both the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and Trinity Music College exams. The Centre was used for ensembles, bands, groups and individual students to receive tuition on an extra-curricular basis. Several play days were also offered to new and emerging young musicians at weekends over the school year, which were all well attended. The Virtual School utilised the centre as a location for students facing social isolation to attend with their tutor, receive music tuition and, in a few cases, sit their GCSE exams.

It was reported that the service worked with Great Academies Education Trust to establish a Music Subject Network for their secondary and primary schools. This was then opened up to all primary and secondary schools within the borough for CPD and professional learning. They had also worked with local and regional partners to extend the offer available to young people within the borough. Highlights included working with The Vale in Mossley and the Royal Northern College of Music Pathfinder's scheme, which was open to any student who faced a barrier to music making whether economical, social or logistical. Officers were pleased to report that students from Tameside had gone on from Pathfinder to be accepted in to the Royal Northern College of Music, Chetham's School of Music, Salford University and beyond.

It was further reported that the service worked with established vocal experts to provide a Singing Festival at St Peter's Church, Ashton in June 2023, which was attended by 6 different primary schools. The festival was the last event in a series of 'Big Sings', which saw primary schools coming together to sing in Dukinfield, Denton, Mossley, Stalybridge, Hyde and Droylsden.

With regards to the School Library Service, it continued to support schools with a comprehensive offer including School Library Audits, Reading Champion scheme, Junior Librarian Training, World Book Day resources, Rolling Library offer, Project Loan Scheme and Nurture Group sessions. The Reading Champions Celebration took place at Dukinfield Town Hall in July 2023 where pupils from 17 schools were represented at the event who had all been involved in encouraging their school to engage in reading for pleasure. A survey was sent to all Tameside schools in November 2022 to gauge the impact that the service was having; 25 schools completed it and the responses were all positive.

Board members commented that the collaborative projects with the Halle Orchestra and Royal Northern Ballet had been outstanding and it was wonderful for children from disadvantaged areas to experience it. Members requested that the information provided be broken down into primary and secondary schools and also by the type of educational establishment.

A discussion ensued on the changing trend of the School Library Service due to increased online activity and the changing landscape of reading material. Officers agreed that investment was needed in digitalisation and an informative briefing had been held on the topic in September 2023 with a school intranet currently under development.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board

12. SCHOOL ALLOCATIONS AND ADMISSIONS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Access Services, which informed the Board of the successful school allocations for Reception and Year 7 earlier in the Year as well as in-year transfers and children placed under the Fair Access Protocol. The annual report to the School Adjudicator was also shared.

It was reported that the Council was the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in the borough and was also responsible for coordinating the school admissions system for all schools in the borough. The coordination scheme was published on an annual basis and was the agreed way that all applications for Reception, Year 3 (Stalyhill Junior School) and Year 7 places were allocated. This was a statutory responsibility of the local authority and the scheme also provided information on how in year transfers were dealt with. All school admissions in England were guided by the School Admissions Code. As part of the responsibility, every local authority was required to submit an annual report to the School Adjudicator at the end of June each year on how effectively the admissions systems worked in their area.

Board members were told that admissions to school could be complex with a number of different admission authorities in the borough; there were 16 Secondary schools with 11 admission authorities and 80 Primary schools with 36 admission authorities.

The Board were informed that Tameside's primary school offer day was Monday 17 April 2023, due to the national offer date of 16 April being on a Sunday. There had been 2650 applications for a place in Reception for September 2023, which was similar to last year and in line with the predictions based on birth rates in the borough.

It was explained that 2656 places were allocated, which was 17 less places than last year reflecting the prevailing low birth rates in the borough over recent years. 91.9% (2440) of applicants received their first preference school, which was less than last year and reflected a reduction in the number of places available. Overall 98.3% of applicants were allocated one of their preferences compared with 99.1% last year and only 46 applicants did not receive any of their preferences. It was noted that the England average in 2023 for applicants getting their first preference primary school was 92.5%.

With regards to Secondary schools, the offer day was on 1 March 2023 and 3374 applications had been received compared to 3231 last year. It was reported that 3315 places were offered, which was over 100 more than last year (3207) and in line with predictions. It was noted that this was the last of the large year groups coming through from primary schools and numbers would begin to drop from this point forward.

Members were notified that the policy of adding places into secondary schools continued to pay off with a significant number of pupils offered their first preference with a slight increase in the percentage from last year. It was reported that 85.9% of applicants (2846 places) were offered their first preferences, which was an increase compared to 85% (2725) first preferences last year and 129 pupils did not receive one of their preferences. The England average receiving their first preference school in 2023 was 82.6%.

The process for in-year transfers was outlined and Members were made aware that all but one school had opted into the local authority administered admissions scheme as outlined in the School Admission Code. It was explained that this process had been streamlined, which had speed up the process of being able to offer places, particularly for those children moving onto the borough without a school place. However, an unintended consequence of that was schools could be unaware that a parent wished to move their child from a school until after the transfer had occurred, which denied them the opportunity to work with the family to try to persuade them to remain at their school. This had been highlighted as an issue for some schools and the School Admissions Team were looking to see if there was anything that could be done from within current resources to mitigate this issue.

The Board were advised that the School Admissions Team aimed to process in-year transfers within 20 school days and there had been a significant increase in requests compared to data from the previous year - there were approximately 33,000 pupils in Tameside schools meaning that around 7% of pupils were moving schools annually.

The Fair Access Protocol was explained to Members, alongside the criteria for consideration under this scheme. Members were informed that, during the last school year, 115 children had been allocated school places under Fair Access (71 primary and 44 secondary), an increase of 40 compared to the previous year.

The Annual Report for the Schools Adjudicator was presented to Members, as appended to the report, which highlighted that the school admissions system in Tameside was effective at placing pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Members were told that the School Adjudicator used the information submitted by all local authorities as the basis for their annual report.

A detailed discussion ensued around the significant issues the high number of in-year transfers was creating, especially given that some schools were full whilst other schools had vacancies. Members commented that schools could be part of the solution if they were made aware and could intervene prior to a move taking place and suggested that a strategy be developed to deal with the issue. Officers confirmed that the Headteachers Group had recently agreed some changes and Officers would look into a solution and feedback suggestions in an attempt to resolve the problem.

Members requested that the data be broken down into different categories for first choice preferences for secondary schools and extra information be provided to schools regarding Year 7 admissions.

The Chair commended the tremendous piece of work and achievement of placing a high percentage of Tameside children with their first preference Primary and Secondary schools.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Education Attainment Improvement Board noted the contents of the report; and**
- (ii) That the contents of the 2023 annual report be agreed, submitted to the Office of the School Adjudicator and published on the Tameside Council website, as required by the School Admissions Code**

13. SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director for Education that provided an update on progress in implementing Tameside's Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Written Statement of Action, which was gathering pace. A number of actions had already been completed and would be monitored to ensure that change and transformation needs were identified and actioned and that the actions remained valid and dynamic. Some actions had been revisited where further assurance was required and recovery plans put in place, such as around annual reviews and health waiting times.

It was reported that between 18 and 22 October 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of Tameside to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the SEND reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The findings were received on 11 January 2022 and a [Written Statement of Action](#) was required, which was signed off by Ofsted on 1 July 2022. Progress in implementing the Written Statement of Action was overseen by the SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board, chaired by the Assistant Director for Education, with updates provided to the Education Attainment Improvement Board. Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England's SEND Advisors meet monthly with Council and Health Officers to monitor progress and agree priority actions. So far, five formal monitoring meetings have been held in September and December 2022; March, June and September 2023.

Three documents were appended to the report and considered by the Board, as follows:

1. The report compiled for DfE and NHS England Advisors at the September 2023 monitoring meeting, which provided a detailed overview of progress;
2. The presentation given to DfE and NHS England Advisors at the September 2023 monitoring meeting; and
3. The Written Statement of Action Highlights Tracker given to DfE and NHS England Advisors at our September 2023 monitoring meeting.

Board members were advised that since the last update at the meeting in June 2023 the following actions had been completed:-

Communication

- The new Local Offer website would be launched in December 2023.
- A new SEND system quarterly newsletter was published in July 2023.

Capacity and resource in the right areas

- The SEND Assessment Team restructure was now complete with some ongoing external recruitment.
- New leaders were now in post providing oversight and direction for SEND improvement. These posts were Head of SEND, Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) and SEND Programme Lead.
- The Health Navigator Service had supported 664 new families since July 2022.

Increasing inclusion to meet need as early as possible

- A significant amount of diagnostic and planning work had been undertaken as part of Delivering Better Value, including analysing data from across the system, a diagnostic of root causes of pressures, focus on ideal outcomes and a plan to change the approach in inclusion and transitions had been completed and a £1 million bid from the Council had been agreed by the DfE.
- 'Impactful Leadership in SEND' schools training took place in June and July 2023; Starling training for Autism Awareness; financial support had been secured from the DfE's Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) programme.

Improved focus and self-evaluation

- DfE reporting processes had been reset and agreed with DfE to focus on impact.
- New modelling had started for CAMHS initial assessments for core and neuro-developmental needs with a view to enhancing the number of assessment pathways.
- A new BRAG rating had been developed to give a more pragmatic and accurate view of progression.

Members were informed that 46% of actions were complete, 46% of actions were on track (green or amber) and 3% of actions were red, which reflected a reset of the BRAG to focus on impact and the wider picture. Clarification was sought and provided on the red areas in Priority 1 and Priority 5. It was confirmed that these related to timeliness of Education Health Care Plans and waiting times and would be an area of focus for the next DfE meeting and at the SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board on 19 October 2023.

The next steps were outlined that included, a diagnostic review of SEND with work currently underway whose recommendations would be brought to a future meeting of the Education Attainment and Improvement Board. Practice and resource needed to be focused on getting the basics right for children and adopting the Children's Services, 'Brilliant at the Basics' principles. Ensuring significantly improved performance around multi-agency attendance at annual reviews and completing reviews in full, was a key priority to improve outcomes for children and young people. The SEND Inclusion and Partnership Board would continue to provide oversight of the delivery of the Written Statement of Action as well as providing a wider view of improvement and provision.

Members were pleased to hear of the progress and to learn that priorities were being met. They commended the good governance framework that had been established and the learning that had taken place over the past 12 months. Members requested more detail on the timeliness of Education Health Care Plans and what the main obstacles were and how they were being addressed. In response to questions on Priority 10, it was confirmed that the Transition Protocol and Pathway would be published by the end of October 2023

RESOLVED

- (i) That the update be noted;**
- (ii) That the recommendations of the SEND diagnostic review be brought to a future meeting of the Education Attainment and Improvement Board; and**
- (iii) That further information be provided in the next SEND Written Statement of Action update report on Education Health Care Plans.**

14. EDUCATION UPDATE - END OF KEY STAGE OUTCOMES 2023

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Education, which set out the headline figures for Tameside at each assessment point, the issues arising, and how these issues needed to be addressed.

It was reported that Summer 2023 was the second year of national testing at all key stages following the pandemic of 2020. At GCSE level there was a return to pre-pandemic grading in England after the mitigations that were in place in 2022 were removed. It was therefore most meaningful to compare results to 2019, the last summer exam series before the pandemic in terms of grading. It was noted that all figures and averages were provisional and subject to change following the validation of data by the Department for Education (DfE).

With regard to Early Years and Key Stage 1, Members were advised that 61% of pupils in Tameside had achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) on the revised profile. It was highlighted that the provisional North West average was 64% and the provisional national average was 67%, though it was noted that this would be subject to change.

It was explained that the gap between boys in Tameside and boys nationally had widened from 5% to 9% when compared to 2022, whilst the gap between girls in Tameside and girls nationally has narrowed from 5% to 4%. The provisional national average for girls had increased by 2% from 72% to 74% and, for boys, the provisional national average has also increased by 2% from 59% to 61%. 70% of girls achieved a GLD, a 3% increase on 2022, compared to a provisional national average of 74%, and 52% of boys achieved a GLD, a decrease of 2% on 2022, compared to the provisional national average for boys of 61%.

When looking at Key Stage 1 data, 75% of pupils were working at the expected standard in Tameside for phonics, – an increase of 3% compared to 2022. In reading, 66% of pupils were working at the expected standard in Tameside– an increase of 2% compared to 2022. The provisional national average had also increased by 2% and was 69%. In writing, 56% of pupils were working at the expected standard in Tameside– a 1% increase compared to 2022. The provisional national average had increased by 3% and is 60%.

With regards to Key Stage 2 data, 57% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2022/23 – the same as 2021/22. The national average was 59% - the same as 2021/22. When broken down by gender, 60% of girls achieved the expected standard in each subject in Tameside, a decline of 4% on 2021/22, compared to 62% of girls nationally with girls in Tameside now being 1% below national average. In contrast, 54% of boys in Tameside achieved the expected standard in each subject, an increase of 3% on 2021/22, compared to 56% of boys nationally, with the gap between boys in Tameside and boys nationally narrowing from 4% to 2%.

In relation to Key Stage 4, in Tameside:-

- 40% of pupils achieved a strong pass in English and maths compared to 44% in 2021/22
- 61% of pupils achieved a standard pass in English and maths compared to 65% in 2021/22
- 56% of pupils achieved a strong pass in English compared to 59% in 2021/22, whilst 72% of pupils achieved a standard pass compared to 74% in 2021/22
- 47% of pupils achieved a strong pass in maths compared to 50% in 2021/22, whilst 68% of pupils achieved a standard pass compared to 70% in 2021/22
- Attainment 8 was estimated to be 43.2 compared to 45.2 in 2021/22, and
- English baccalaureate (Ebacc) Average Points Score (APS) was estimated to be 3.8 compared to 3.9 in 2021/22.

It was highlighted that comparison to previous years would only be possible once the DfE published their GCSE statistical first release, which would enable national and regional comparison, and the local authority had received the pupil level data during the autumn term that would also contain Progress 8 scores. This analysis would be reported to Members in the spring.

Members were advised that Early Years outcomes continued to remain a high priority for Tameside. Whilst there had been a small increase in the percentage of children attaining GLD the gap to national averages had increased. Early Years, phonics and outcomes at GCSE in maths and English were the key areas that would be targeted via the Priority Education Investment Area funding. In addition, other work in Early Years was being supported via the Early Years Quality Team support transition between the Private, Voluntary and Independent Early Years Settings and Schools and between primary and secondary schools from year 6 into 7.

A discussion ensued around the data with a particular focus on the issues concerning Early Years reading, writing and phonics and Key Stage 3 literacy. Issues surrounding school attendance, in particular for boys was discussed in addition to engagement. It was confirmed that further work would be done once the data was available at a pupil level to identify other contributing factors such as attendance, exclusions, SEND and disadvantage in order for further targeted interventions to be identified and supported.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on 16 January 2024.

CHAIR