

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

16 January 2024

Commenced: 3.30 pm

Terminated: 4.30 pm

Present: Councillors Boyle, Fairfoull, Roderick, Colbourne and Elizabeth Turner

In Attendance:

Allison Parkinson	Director of Children Services
Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
Jo Pearson	Head of Education Improvement and Partnerships
Rachael Weeden	Head Teacher - Tameside Virtual School and College

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Feeley, Newton and Melanie Wicks

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 17 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

18. SEND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (WSOA) UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Education submitted a report, which provided a Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) update on progress in addressing Tameside's areas of weakness, as identified in the Ofsted inspection in 2021, and explained a recent reset to ensure that progress was delivered at pace through a single prioritised Local Areas SEND Improvement Plan.

It was reported that a diagnostic review of the SEND service had been completed and the work directly informed the SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF). Recommendations had been reported to the DCS and actions to address these recommendations and the impact they would make were included in the SEND Improvement Plan.

Consideration was given to two documents appended to the report as follows:-

1. The SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF).
2. The presentation that was given to Ofsted Advisors at the SEND Ofsted Engagement Meeting in November 2023.

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

Communication

- The new Local Offer website would be launched in January 2024 after extensive consultation with parents, carers, children, young people, partner agencies and stakeholders. The Local Offer website would provide clear, detailed, accessible, and up-to-date information about the provision available and how it could be accessed.
- The SEND system newsletter, 'SENDing You News', was published in December 2023 and would be sent out every term.

Quality Assurance

- To reduce the backlog of annual reviews, an interim backlog team had been recruited and was implementing the Annual review recovery plan. This would address the annual review backlog and establish rigor, accountability, transparency and moderation of decision-making in-house including a more consistent approach to casework.
- A new multi-agency placement, provision and transport panel had been established to ensure a transparent, multi-agency approach to placement, provision and transport decisions and panel meetings commenced in November 2023.
- A review of Statutory Assessment Panel commenced in October 2023. This panel would give greater scrutiny and autonomy of statutory assessments.
- EHC Quality Assurance Protocol had been completed in. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Protocol was to improve the experiences of children, young people and families, and to ensure high quality plans, which had impact on outcomes of children and young people. This protocol was presented at the SEND Local Area Partnership Board meeting in December 2023 for comment and approval.
- A Post-16 Multi-Agency Panel had been established and held the first meeting in December 2023. This panel would give a greater understanding of what parents, carers and young people felt about their final EHC plan, and their experiences in the process. This would be crucial feedback on the quality improvement journey.
- Monthly Quality Assurance sessions of EHC Plans commenced in October 2023 and would ensure that all staff were responsible for the plans they produce.

Improved Focus and Self-Evaluation

- After constructive discussions, a new reporting method had been agreed for the Written Statement of Action (WSOA). New work streams were being developed to support this new way of working. This new approach would focus on the impact that improvements were having on children, young people, parents and carers.
- The SEND SEF had been presented to Ofsted in November 2023. The SEF focussed on the ten areas of weakness identified by Ofsted in the WSOA and would form the basis of the SEND Improvement Plan.
- A new SEND Improvement Plan and SEND Scorecard was being developed to support and drive the improvements identified in the SEF and ensure there was a robust plan to provide the best outcomes for the children and families.
- The SEND Improvement Group had been refreshed and the SEND Local Area Partnership Board had been established and included an independent Chair and Multi-Agency representation. The first meeting was on 6 December 2023 where Terms of Reference and Improvement planning were discussed and agreed. The Board would meet bi-monthly as will an Executive Board meeting. DfE and CQC representatives attended Board and met with key Area leads in between meetings to offer support and challenge.

The next steps were outlined and included the SEND Improvement plan and Performance Scorecard to be completed in January 2024 and implementation on actions identified in the SEF was already underway. Practice and resource would be focused on getting the basics right for children and adopting the Children's Services 'Brilliant at the Basics' principles. A cycle of learning and continuous improvement would be embedded through the implementation of a Performance Management Framework, due to be finalised in January 2024. This would see the implementation of a detailed delivery plan, overseen by the Directorate Management Team via a set of performance management and quality meetings, centred around a monthly Brilliant at the Basics Meeting and Performance and Accountability Meeting linked to the scorecard and SEND Local Area Partnership Board bi-monthly.

It was highlighted that the monthly performance cycle of meetings and actions would create a methodology of ensuring a shared focus and accountability regarding performance management to ensure children's best outcomes from all levels across the Service. The cycle operated as a 4-weekly cycle, informed by key performance data for each service area. This would support a high

standard of service delivery and performance, via a review, analysis, learn, plan and action methodology

Board members were informed that the SEND Local Area Partnership Board would continue to provide oversight of the delivery of the SEND Improvement Plan; advanced multi-agency preparation for any upcoming Ofsted visit had already commenced that would incorporate reflection and learning from the recent Children's Social Care Inspection. Annex A information was being finalised and completion prioritised and the next formal DfE Monitoring Meeting would take place in January 2024.

In conclusion, the creation of the SEND Area Partnership SEF had allowed a refocus on the ten identified areas of weakness. The Improvement Plan would allow continuous improvements at pace ensuring that the team were better able to evidence the impact the changes were making to children and young people and their families and carers. The SEND Local Area Partnership Board and Education Attainment Improvement Board would focus on rapid improvement of outcomes and experiences for children and their families and evidence and evaluate quality and impact.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the summary of progress be noted; and**
- (ii) That it be noted that work streams currently detailed in the Written Statement of Action plan were now included in the SEND Self Evaluation Framework and SEND Improvement Plan. Going forward, progress would be reported to the Education Attainment Improvement Board against the Improvement Plan and Self Evaluation Framework.**

19. VIRTUAL SCHOOL AND COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT

The Assistant Director for Education submitted a report, which summarised the activities and outcomes of the Virtual School and College 2022/23 and improvement plans for 2023/24.

It was reported that following the restructure of the Virtual School and College in April 2022, as previously reported, there had been a change in leadership in March 2023 with the appointment of a new Virtual School Head Teacher. The academic year 2022/23 was, therefore, characterised by the identification and implementation of new systems, made possible by the expansion of the team and responding to staffing and leadership changes. A graphic detailing an overview of the team structure was provided and it was highlighted that there was a wide variety of experience offered by the post holders in the team.

The Board were informed that at the end of 2022/2023 academic year there were 515 cared for children on Tameside's Virtual School roll from Reception to Year 13 with 466 cared for children attending 191 separate schools across 41 local authorities - 83% of pupils attended a mainstream setting, 15% attended a specialist setting with a further 2% attending provision at Tameside PRU. 79% attended either a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' school and for those who attended a school rated less than good, the team prioritised attendance at termly PEP meetings and progress of pupils was monitored through PEP QA

A table demonstrating average attendance was included in the report and average attendance of all cared for children was 87%. The overall Persistent Absence rate for all Tameside compulsory school age cared for children for the year 2022-2023 was 24%. An attendance action plan for 2023/24 was outlined with priorities and actions for the next academic year including timely intervention; continuing close work with educational psychology; monitoring of term time holidays; the impact of school and placement moves on attendance; understanding of factors that affected attendance and attendance of children with a social worker.

Board members were notified that there were no permanent exclusions in 2022/23, but there were several cases where the Virtual School Head and members of the team had intervened, in line with

the national guidance on exclusions, to support or co-ordinate an alternative package of education to avoid a permanent exclusion. This included addressing the reasons for the risk of permanent exclusion, supporting both pupil and school, and ensuring access to full time education that could meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils had enhanced support and monitoring to address concerns and prevent the risk of exclusion reoccurring, supported by positive relationships with the schools.

A case study, which demonstrated the positive effect the intervention of the Virtual School achieved with a student was detailed in the report and highlighted to the Board.

During the academic year 2022/23, it was reported that a total of 413 days were lost to suspensions. The data showed a continuing rise in suspensions for cared for children with 76 pupils within 43 schools receiving a suspension last year. A Suspension action plan for 2023/24 was outlined. Over the last academic year, part-time timetables and alternative provision were used in exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests to support their presenting needs and in accordance with DfE guidance.

It was highlighted that PEP completion rates had remained consistently high over the 2022/23 academic year and the Virtual School team had attended 22% of PEP meetings to offer advice, guidance and support to schools, social workers and carers.

Levels of Pupil Premium funding were outlined and it was highlighted that the Virtual School had actively promoted schools utilising Pupil Premium Plus to provide cared for children with enriching experiences beyond the classroom such as extracurricular and residential experiences, access to programmes like the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and there had been a successful partnership with the Tameside Music Service for young people struggling to attend school with academic tuition.

It was reported that as at July 2023, 146 (31%) school age cared for children were in receipt of an EHCP and a further 91 school age children (19%) were in receipt of SEN support in school. The Virtual School had increased efforts to offer further support and training for schools on Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs and strategies to support presentation in schools. This had included specific training commissioned by the educational psychology service and a case study demonstrating how the Virtual School Head had utilised the close partnership with the educational psychology service to support a young person with significant emotionally based school avoidance was provided.

Tables detailing the attainment of Tameside cared for children during 2022/23 were highlighted with the results as follows:-

- There had been an increase in the number of children achieving the expected standard in phonics, reading writing and maths at the end of year 1 and achieving good level of development at the end of early years and foundation stage.
- The Key Stage 2 cohort had performed better in reading, writing and maths compared to the previous academic year, 2021/22.
- In Key Stage 4, there has been an increase in the number of pupils achieving at least 1 higher grade (6 or above) with an increase in the number of pupils achieving grade 4 or above in English and Maths.

Board members heard that analysis of Key Stage 2 outcomes showed that a large proportion of cared for children were not meeting the expected standard, which placed them at a further disadvantage at Key Stage 3 and 4. As a result of this trend, a focus needed to be on promoting the use of Pupil Premium Plus at Key Stage 3 to close gaps in learning for those pupils not meeting the expected standard at Key Stage 2. There also needed to be a focus to ensure those pupils at risk of not meeting the expected standard at Key Stage 2 were identified early and schools supported to ensure interventions were precisely and swiftly targeted to address this. Another area of development was to improve data gathering processes to allow attainment and progress of cared for children to be monitored and reported more effectively. This included amending the PEP to easily

identify children who were not making expected progress during the year and then work with schools to target existing or additional Pupil Premium Plus spend more effectively if needed.

Data summarising the further and higher education, employment and training activities of post 16 cared for young people and care leavers, as recorded at the end of the summer term, was provided alongside a case study. It was announced that the 2022/23 academic year saw the highest number of students entering into university and Tameside Council continued to provide opportunities for care leavers with four care leavers currently accessing employment. 'Cared for Children and Care Leavers' had been included as a protected characteristic in the Council's Equality Strategy 2023-2027 thereby ensuring guaranteed assessment to candidates who declared this and met the essential criteria of job roles advertised.

It was reported that an area of focus remained to be pupils who were not accessing Education, Employment or Training and there was a renewed and increased focus on multi-agency working to address this. In order to strengthen outcomes, the Virtual School partnership with Tameside College would continue in the academic year 2023/24 to further increase expertise in post 16 in the Virtual School team.

The report included information on the utilisation of the School Led Tutoring Grant, a revised reading initiative for cared for children to encourage reading at home and a comprehensive calendar of training opportunities for schools, social workers, foster carers and governors.

In conclusion, it was outlined that for the 2023/24 academic year, the Virtual School would continue to:

- develop an offer for care leavers and work to reduce NEET
- improve the quality of PEPs
- promote good outcomes
- reduce suspensions
- improve attendance
- develop an offer to fulfil wider duties for children with a social worker or involved in the youth justice system
- develop wider support for cared for children and means of recognising their achievements.

A detailed discussion ensued and Members enquired about Ofsted data and the steps that would be taken to reduce exclusions, to which it was responded that there were currently three ongoing projects, each of which were outlined in detail and included forest school, trauma informed practice and a relation inclusion champion in schools. Members also commented on children in receipt of an education health care plan and the importance of early intervention, good employment opportunities for care leavers in the borough and digital poverty.

RESOLVED

That the report and improvement priorities be noted.

20. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS AND SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING

The Head of Access Services submitted a report, which set out the proposed admission arrangements for Tameside community, and voluntary controlled schools for admission in September 2025. The Board were informed that the report would also be presented to Executive Cabinet on 14 February 2024.

It was reported that admission authorities were required to consult on their coordinated admission scheme and on changes to admission arrangements every seven years and determine their admission arrangements, on an annual basis, by 28 February to be published on websites by 15 March every year. The Council last consulted on amendments to the admission arrangements for September 2024 and as no changes were planned for admission in September 2025, consultation was, therefore, not necessary.

The latest information on school place planning was presented, which demonstrated that there were currently sufficient places to meet expected demand for mainstream primary and secondary schools with rising levels of surplus capacity in primary schools due to the current birth rate pattern in the borough. There was a need to engage in dialogue with primary school leaders to begin to consider options to reduce projected levels of surplus capacity. Whilst levels of surplus in secondary schools were not expected to increase significantly for a number of years, dialogue would begin to ensure that temporary places that had been added to cope with the increase in pupils over recent years were removed first.

The report concluded that there was a need to continue to develop capacity for specialist places given the predicted continuing rise in demand set out in the SEN Sufficiency Strategy. The school place planning process would need to 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 within the borough and the impact that would have on demand and travel to learn patterns.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on 12 March 2024.

Board members were notified that the Head of Access Services would shortly leave the Council after working in the Education service for 38 years. Thanks were extended to Catherine for her dedication, hard work and invaluable contribution over that time.

CHAIR