

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

20 October 2020

Commenced:
3.30 pm

Terminated: 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Feeley (Chair), Boyle, Cooper, Fairfoull, Patrick and M Smith, Paul Jacques, Elizabeth Turner and Andrea Radcliffe.

In Attendance:

Richard Hancock	Director of Children's Services
Tim Bowman	Assistant Director, Education
Catherine Moseley	Head of Access Services
Jane Sowerby	Lead Primary School Performance and Standards Officer
Christine Mullins	Business Partner, Finance

1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Andrea Radcliffe, Headteacher of Hyde High School and Elizabeth Turner, Headteacher of Millbrook Primary and Nursery School for their attendance. Councillor Feeley recognised the enormous pressures that schools and their staff were under at this time and asked both Headteachers to pass on thanks to all those involved in schools for their tremendous work during the current climate. These sentiments were echoed by the Members of the Board.

The hard work and flexibility of Education Service staff was also praised and Councillor Feeley expressed particular thanks for the hard work, support and guidance that had been provided to all stakeholders during, what continued to be, a very fast-moving situation.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of The Minutes of the Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 23 June 2020.

RESOLVED

That that the minutes of the meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board held on 23 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4 EDUCATION RECOVERY PRIORITIES

The Assistant Director, Education, submitted a report outlining the work that had been undertaken by all in Tameside to ensure that schools remained open to their pupils in a safe and sensible way. The report also outlined the recovery priorities within Education Services, including the challenges associated with delivering these priorities and how these would be met.

The Assistant Director, Education explained that, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, headteachers and school leaders in Tameside had worked tirelessly supporting children and their

families. In addition, he stated that special school leaders had to go to significant additional lengths to ensure that students and staff were safe.

Members of the Board were made aware that the wider re-opening of schools had been carefully planned with a safe and sensible approach, involving all stakeholders, and it was stated that this was a credit to the hard work and commitment of Tameside headteachers. It was also highlighted that effective support had been available for schools and colleges in all sectors and that a borough wide approach to identifying collective processes and supporting local decisions had been adopted. This view was echoed by the attending headteachers, who praised Education Services for the invaluable support, encouragement and guidance, which had been provided.

Risk Assessment measures in schools were discussed and it was explained that these had been successful. Despite a number of positive cases of COVID affecting schools, instances of transmission within schools and settings had, thankfully been incredibly rare. However, a number of schools had been affected by more than one positive COVID case.

Concern was raised with regard to the impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and it was acknowledged that, although all children have had their education disrupted, it was likely that these groups would have been hardest hit. With this in mind, the Head of Education, Improvement and Partnerships went on to outline the measures that had already been put in place to support local schools and families.

It was explained that Tameside had been allocated a number of digital devices to support vulnerable children, including 964 laptops and 124 4G routers. These had been distributed to children with social workers and through schools and colleges, in accordance with the criteria determined by the DFE. In addition, the DFE had supplied a number of laptops directly to Tameside secondary schools, specifically for disadvantaged Year 10 students without digital access. Discussion ensued with regard to the effectiveness of this scheme and feedback was sought from the attending headteachers.

Andrea Radcliffe explained that the allocation of devices had been beneficial for students and had allowed many of them to access remote learning from home. She explained that, after some time back in school, it had now been possible to teach children how to access this remote learning more effectively and stated that students were now better able to continue with a parallel curriculum, should the need arise for them to work at home. Andrea also suggested that a number of additional issues had also been brought into focus, including access to wifi, suitable places to work in the home learning environment and parental support and engagement. These ongoing issues were also acknowledged by the Assistant Director, Education.

Elizabeth Turner shared some information with regard to how remote learning had been adopted within the primary setting and discussed the effective use of Class Dojo at Millbrook Primary and Nursery School. Elizabeth stated that this platform had been particularly effective in terms of parental engagement and explained that there had been much positive feedback received from parents with regard to this blended approach to learning.

It was stated that a significant part of recovery support for schools centred around a strong remote learning strategy and that Education Services were working with their research school and local EdTech Demonstrator School, as well as key school leaders, to support schools in developing their offers.

Following the feedback on digital devices and remote learning, discussion ensued with regard to the number of pupils in the North West who had needed to self-isolate. Concerns were raised that these students may, in the longer term, be disproportionately disadvantaged when compared with other areas of the country. It was stated that children in Year 11 would be likely to experience a significantly disrupted year of learning due to the impact of COVID-19. With a system calibrated to produce continuity and comparable outcomes, concern was expressed that this disadvantage

would be disproportionately greater for children in Tameside and the North West and could have a significant, detrimental impact on students in this key year group.

Members of the Board were made aware that detailed risk assessment guidance was developed to assist schools to plan for their September re-opening and both attending headteachers commented that these had been useful and very supportive. It was also highlighted that this had ensured consistency across the borough, whilst also retaining the flexibility for local decisions. In addition, Members of the Board were made aware that webinars on the latest guidance and local response were made available to all schools and education providers in the borough.

With specific regard to planning and communication, it was explained that, at the start of lockdown, daily telephone calls were made to all schools and early years providers from Link Officers. These had been invaluable in providing good quality and consistent, two-way communication, a view echoed by the attending headteachers. In addition, there had been regular Scenario Planning Group meetings, the launch of the schools and colleges intranet and at least weekly emails from the Assistant Director, Education to update schools and providers on the latest national and local guidance.

Members of the Board were informed that schools had continued to provide free school meals to eligible children during the COVID period and throughout the summer break. These had been provided in a variety of ways, including the provision of vouchers, daily lunch packs taken to homes and within schools themselves, with many schools also contributing to local foodbanks.

In terms of supporting transition for pupils, it was explained that a series of protocols and documents had been developed with PVI, schools and colleges to support transition from early years to primary school, from primary school to secondary school and from secondary school to post-16 provision. This had been particularly important as many of the usual events were unable to take place. These had been shared with all schools and early years' providers and had proved to be effective.

With regard to supporting schools and families moving forwards, the Head of Education, Improvement and Partnerships outlined the plans for COVID recovery. She explained that the Government had announced £1billion of funding to help support children and young people to catch up. This included a one-off universal £650m catch up premium for the 2020-21 academic year. It was stated that schools' allocations would be calculated on a per pupil basis, providing each mainstream school with a total of £80 for each pupil in Reception through to Year 11. Special Schools would be provided with £240 for each pupil.

It was explained that the National Tutoring Programme was one of the offers being provided by the Government and that this would start from November 2020. The aim of this would be to provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged children. As part of this offer, it was also stated that schools had been encouraged to apply for funded training for NELI (Early Language Intervention) and that the Council would support schools taking advantage of this by establishing support networks to embed practice. In addition, other such offers, including the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) focussing on catch up of early language development and early literacy for disadvantaged pupils and the Ogden Trust, focussed around a long-term partnership to increase the Physics take-up in Tameside, were discussed.

It was explained that, during the first half of the Autumn term, early years leaders from across Greater Manchester had developed a series of research-focussed seminars aimed at supporting primary headteachers and leaders to understand how the Year 1 curriculum may need to be adapted as a result of time lost due to COVID-19. This had proved to have significant reach and had established effective school-level collaborations across the authorities.

Members of the Board were also made aware that funding had been secured for two important research programmes to support secondary age students, their families and schools. The 'Social Workers in Schools' project was outlined, with the intention of improving relationships and

supporting early intervention for hard to reach students and families. It was explained that this was a one-year trial and would be used in 50% of randomised secondary schools.

The Head of Education, Improvement and Partnerships informed Members of the Board that Inclusion and School Improvement Task and Finish groups had been established in order to develop an enquiry-based approach to the challenges faced by school leaders, including support for the most vulnerable, Tameside Loves Reading, digital learning and attendance.

The Assistant Director, Education provided an update with regard to specialist pupil support services for children with additional educational needs and explained that all specialist outreach services were now back in full operation. He also made Board Members aware that there was a new intervention facility specifically targeted for Key Stage 1 children with SEMH, based at Discovery Academy. It was explained that this facility was providing temporary, bespoke and specialist intervention for Key stage 1 pupils who were struggling to cope in their mainstream school environment.

With regard to those pupils in Tameside who required regular Aerosol Generated Procedures (AGPs), an update was provided. It was explained that, in order for these procedures to be carried out safely in schools and settings, very particular and precise arrangements and protocols must be adhered to. Due to the current context of COVID-19, any AGP was considered a high-risk procedure and, as such, relevant training and preparation in schools and settings had been undertaken. Training in terms of transport was still ongoing in order to ensure that settings would be able to receive this small cohort of children safely back in school over the coming weeks. Members of the Board were made aware that, whilst preparations were made to welcome these learners back, regular outreach support and educational opportunities had continued to be provided to the children/ young people and their families.

An update was also provided in relation to the self-isolation of vulnerable students. It was explained that clear processes were in place in order to support these students and their families. In response to the rising rate of vulnerable students self-isolating, representatives from SEND, Children's Social Care, the CCG and Healthy Young Minds had come together to design and implement a multi-agency response process. Members of the board were informed that, to date, this process had been used to support 4 families, allowing young people to benefit from enhanced multi-agency support and intervention during the period of self-isolation and, consequently, mitigating the previously identified risks.

The Head of Education, Improvement and Partnerships drew Board members' attention to the Tameside Loves Reading, All Age Plan. She explained that this continued to be a project that was shared across all agencies. This was described as a commitment to bring together services, projects, initiatives and strategies being delivered to children, young people and adults across the borough, harnessing a love and enjoyment of reading and improving literacy skills. A snap shot of the projects taking place was provided for Members of the board. It was stated that these initiatives were predominantly focussed on those children who were most likely to have been and continued to be disadvantaged by the circumstances relating to COVID-19.

It was explained that, as part of The Ripple Project, work had been undertaken with GW Theatre Group based on what lockdown had been like for different groups of people and that this would culminate in a performance to share between and across schools in the near future.

In addition, Elizabeth Turner shared the experiences of Millbrook Primary and Nursery School in relation to WELL-COM, a language identification and intervention tool in the early years. She explained that this intervention had been implemented in Nursery and Reception and had also been successfully used to identify and plug gaps in children's speech and language within Key Stages 1 and 2, where appropriate. It was also stated that schools across the borough had been actively encouraged to apply for Nuffield early Language Intervention (NELI).

Tameside's Attendance campaign, 'Back to School – Tameside Loves School', was highlighted, including a variety of new initiatives to promote and encourage school attendance. Board

Members were also made aware that free school meals continued to be provided for eligible families who were unable to attend if they were:

- were self-isolating
- had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- were a close contact of someone who had coronavirus (COVID-19)
- were not attending as a result of local lockdown arrangements.

With regard to wellbeing in schools, 'Wellbeing for Education Return' was outlined. It was explained that Tameside had been allocated £35,462m by DFE and DHSC. In addition to strengthening wellbeing and resilience, the aim of this initiative was to prevent the onset of mental health problems and to ensure those with pre-existing or emerging difficulties access the right support.

Staff wellbeing was also discussed, with some schools having set up their own 'Wellbeing Champions' and confidential one to one discussions having been held with senior leaders. Concern was raised with regard to headteacher wellbeing and it was explained that the Council had committed to a package of support, which would be made available to headteachers.

The Contain Framework was outlined for Members of the Board, in relation to how schools and settings would respond to various levels of the R rate within the local community. However, it was re-iterated that, in local areas where restrictions had been implemented (from national direction), the Government anticipated that education and childcare would usually remain fully open to all. Each of the 4 tiers of restrictions were outlined in detail and all schools, nationally and in Tameside, were currently within Tier 1.

The Head of Access Services led discussion with regard to the challenges this service was currently facing and drew Board Members' attention to the issues associated with cared for children. She stated that it was of the utmost importance that the attendance of cared for children was maintained in schools, wherever possible, and that digital learning opportunities and equipment would be provided in order to access the curriculum if they were required to self-isolate. In addition, she explained that it would be ensured that all cared for children had an up to date PEP for this term and that it was the aim for 100% of cared for children to have a PEP. Moving to online PEPs had ensured that this was the most effective way of meeting this target. The new Early Years funding model was also explained.

Members of the Board were made aware that there had been a significant increase in the numbers of parents who had elected to provide home education for their children, with 55 new notifications in September 2020. This was significantly higher than usual, with the previous highest month over the last three years having been 15 and an average of six per month. However, it was also highlighted that this was a national picture and that there had been a surge in demand experienced across England. It was acknowledged that this created a challenge in arranging home visits, as these would usually be carried out within a short period of time of being notified of the intention to home educate. It was explained that each visit would be carefully risk assessed and carried out virtually, where possible. However, decreased staffing levels within the School Admissions Service were highlighted and this, along with unprecedented levels of applications for in-year school transfers, had placed the service under significant strain, particularly when scheduling a large number of home visits (EHE) with a static staff team.

Music tuition was discussed and members were made aware that risk assessments had been carried out to ensure that music tuition had been maintained in a safe and sensible manner, whilst being responsive to schools and their changing needs. Indeed, various examples of innovative and creative practice in this area were shared with the Board, who echoed the view that a continued focus on the creative arts was extremely important. With this in mind, it was stated that, where teaching in schools was not possible, tuition would be provided digitally.

In conclusion, Board members were made aware that the range of measures and guidance in place had been significant and, whilst there would undoubtedly be additional challenges ahead, the

approach taken so far continued to stand the borough in good stead to meet ongoing challenges and disadvantage.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted by the Board.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of Education Attainment Improvement Board be held on Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 3.30pm.

CHAIR