

# **Meeting: Children Education and Skills Sub Committee**

**Date: 9 September 2021**

**Title: Educational Update – COVID recovery**

---

**Author: Diane Buckle**

**Service: HECS**

**Wards affected: All**

---

## **1. Purpose of Report**

**1.1** To provide members of the sub committee with an update on the academic year 2020/2021, the work of Local Authority Officers in their support of schools, and any impact seen in pupils' attainment and wellbeing because of COVID.

## **2. Introduction**

**2.1** Education in the academic year 2020/2021 has rapidly evolved to meet the dynamically changing needs of our children and young people. Local Authority Officers from a range of departments continued to support schools navigate the plethora of legislation and guidance documentation presented by government.

**2.2** The academic year 2020/2021 was beset by further disruption to pupils' education, because of COVID. High rates of outbreak within schools and repeated periods of enforced isolation led to an extended period of closure in the spring term 2021. It required schools to move to on-line learning at haste.

**2.3** Previous periods of lock down and isolation had enabled most schools to hone their approaches to home learning and ensure that all pupils had access to appropriate devices and data. The facilitation of regular 'teach meets' by Local Authority officers and the support of the Research School and 'Ed Tech demonstrator schools' ensured good practice was shared.

**2.4** Continuing high levels of infection during the summer term, particularly within the 10 – 24 age range led to further disruption for pupils. By the time schools began summer holidays over half were deemed in outbreak.

- 2.5** Despite the challenges that COVID has brought, Local Authority officers continue to work with our schools to support recovery and to tackle the priorities outlined within the Ambition for Education document to improve outcomes for all our pupils.
- 2.6** The full extent of the impact of two interrupted academic years of education is yet to be realised.

### **3. Details**

#### **Attendance**

- 3.1** Attendance in the autumn term 2020/2021 showed improvement at 2.88%, which was a positive picture for half terms 1 & 2, and better than 4.93% absence in 19/20 over the same period. This also compares well to North East absence for the same period of 3.57% and with national at 3.68%. Please see Appendix 1.
- 3.2** Local Authority officers from the school support team alongside early help practitioners had prepared well to work with school colleagues and tackle absenteeism, following the disrupted summer term of 2019/2020 academic year. Systems were established so schools could refer families causing concern. All referrals were triaged, and wider support provided for a better return to school.
- 3.3** Unfortunately, despite best efforts the spring term was spent almost completely in lockdown, which makes it difficult for data comparisons. We do know that between a third and half of all pupils continued to attend school during this period under the category of vulnerable or key worker pupils. This was much higher than rates seen during first lock down.
- 3.4** The summer term became increasingly difficult as the impact of increasing COVID infections and contact tracing affected schools. Such was the extent of the problem that 48 North Tyneside schools were classified in outbreak as the term ended. There are no good national comparisons yet to determined what the impact of repeated school closure has been on North Tyneside schools and their pupils.
- 3.5** We await to see what the long-term impact will be on pupils' attendance in school because of the pandemic. We know that there was an increase in the proportion of pupils electively home education rising from 90 in 2019/2020 to 112 in 2020/2021 a 23% increase.

#### **Transition**

- 3.6** Pupils transferring to another phase of education had mixed transition arrangements for a second year. Many arrangements were beset with problems caused by outbreak, staff absence and changing government guidance as infection rates soared in the 10 – 19 age range. Schools tried many creative alternatives but found it difficult to complete anything remotely in keeping with previously detailed transition arrangements.
- 3.7** A Y6/7 enhanced transition project run by the Local Authority School Support Team started off successfully in the summer term. Pupils were identified by their feeder primary schools as in needed of additional support to improve coping strategies and prevent exclusion in the autumn term 2021. One of the common factors in identifying pupils for enhanced transition was social and health care problems, with domestic violence and parental addiction also common factors. However, some aspects of this

programme were curtailed because of increasing infection rates and amended government guidance which prevented mixing bubbles, as a mechanism to slow the progress of the virus. To compensate additional time will be front loaded in the autumn term to support the same pupils as they enter Year 7 and ensure transition procedures for these pupils are smooth.

## **Curriculum and Assessment**

- 3.8** The last national comparative data for all our schools' dates to 2019. Both 2020 and 2021 examination series have been severely disrupted. This year's results have been awarded from teacher assessed grades, based upon what pupils have completed rather than against nationally defined examination outcomes. There are no accountability measures for a second year against which schools will be judged compared to national comparative data.
- 3.9** Local Authority Officers from the secondary team have supported our schools to ensure the effective deployment of systems for Teacher Assessed Grades 2021 through regular updates, and the establishment of best practice forum and collaborate working practices. At a strategic level Lisa Cook SIO Secondary worked with Heads and Senior Leaders to ensure the effective completion of the Centre Assessed Grade policy including appeals processes, and the creation of a delivery plan. Subject Advisors worked closely with Heads of English/ Maths/ Science to support the process of marking, moderation, and standardisation. The Secondary Team facilitated the collaboration between schools during the Summer Term to achieve accurate data, schools also used FFT50 for a national data context. All our schools sent samples to the exam boards for at least 2 subjects, at GCSE Maths or English GCSE along with one other subject, 2 post 16 courses from each centre were also requested.
- 3.10** As a result of the preparation completed, A Level and BTEC exam results have gone smoothly (10<sup>th</sup> August) with no further requests for samples. GCSE results (12<sup>th</sup> August) were similarly without issue. To date, none of our schools have received a request for information due to malpractice allegations. we know these have been received in schools outside of our area.
- 3.11** Appeals against teacher assessed grades can be made at 2 stages. Stage 1 is a Centre Review. Any student may submit a request for a centre review on the grounds that the centre has: failed to follow its procedures properly or consistently in arriving at that result; made an administrative error in relation to the result. Stage 2 Appeal is to the Awarding Body and can only be made after completion of Stage 1. For students applying to Higher Education there is a priority appeal process. We are aware of only 1 appeal that is ongoing, although this is not preventing access to the next stage of education employment or training.
- 3.12** The assessment and identification of the precise impact of COVID continues to be a priority for all educationalists and particularly challenging for some schools. This will be a continued focus for Local Authority training and support teams over the coming year. Whilst some schools have robust gap analysis systems in place and have been proactive in assessing pupils' attainment throughout the pandemic, others have been less successful in their efforts.
- 3.13** A 'Different Summer 2020', primary documents, were created by North Tyneside Local Authority Advisers and serving practitioners and based on National Curriculum programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2. They were designed to support subject

leaders to plan their curriculum in a more targeted way, by focusing on those objectives that could be delivered remotely and those that required face to face teaching for optimum impact. They were provided free to all schools. These were subsequently extended to include autumn and spring term curriculum plans. Extremely positive feedback was received by those schools who adopted them, with teachers reporting that they gave them a clearer understanding of progression in subjects across year groups and phases. These recovery documents will continue to be promoted in the autumn term to support transition into the next year group.

- 3.14** In September 2020, the secondary team produced and shared a detailed paper for Blended Learning. It drew together best practice internationally and evidence and research to support the rationale and development of schools own Blended Learning policies and approaches. This pre-empted subsequent government and Ofsted guidance for remote learning. Emerging and best practice was shared at 'Teachmeets' which were run by the secondary team. These were virtual sessions where classroom practitioners shared something which worked well for them and attendees were able to ask practical and developmental questions. This has developed into a professional collaborative enquiry group of around 50 teachers from across North Tyneside. A lively and innovative group, which will continue into the forthcoming academic year.
- 3.15** To facilitate remote learning, schools were able to access devices for their disadvantaged pupils, with support from the Local Authority officer team and access to DfE and locally funded schemes. For example: one high school had devices in place for every pupil by October 2020 and was able to transition to live learning seamlessly in January. Educationalists in North Tyneside have embraced the opportunity to develop their approaches to blended learning and have plans to bring the best elements of learning in an era of Covid to everyday practice. Google Classroom to support independent learning has been an impactful development.
- 3.16** The new Statutory Early Years [Framework](#) is in place from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021, following its publication on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Over the summer term 2021, there was much high-quality training offered to schools to support implementation. This was supplemented by an early year's virtual conference which focused on key elements of talk. Many excellent materials and templates have been provided by the early years team to support schools.
- 3.17** A continuing school focus throughout 2020/2021 has been to maintain as well as possible approaches to the teaching of reading, particularly developing pupils' phonic knowledge. A sample of indicators from in-school data shows that standards have remained high in most schools, due to a strong emphasis on maintaining quality teaching through remote learning and for vulnerable pupils attending school. The next DfE data collection for phonics screening check for year 2 pupils only is in December 2021. Year 3 pupils who missed their second attempt to pass in year 2, are not required to take the test, but schools must keep phonics teaching until it is secured. There will be a phonics screening check in June 2022 as usual, for the current Y1 & 2 pupils.
- 3.18** On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, the government announced changes in their guidance for schools on choosing a systematic synthetic phonics [programme](#). Thus, removing Letter & Sounds from the validated list of programmes by 2022. For some schools, there is some work to do on improving their approaches to the teaching of phonics in line with this new guidance.

**3.19** Reading for pleasure has had a high priority during lockdown, with creative approaches used to keep pupils engaged with reading. Those pupils engaged in pupil voice activities have maintained their enthusiasm for reading. However, there will be a renewed focus on the teaching of reading in primary and secondary, following the Ofsted webinars during the summer term & DfE publication on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2021 “The Reading [framework](#) teaching the foundations of Literacy.” now established all schools to have a detailed approach to the teaching of reading. Several Secondary schools have already booked phonics and reading training for SEND staff.

**3.20** Over the course of the year, the retention of mathematical knowledge and skills has generally been reported to have been more successful. This relates in some way to the types of activities delivered during periods of remote learning. However, fluency in applying mathematical skills through discussion and extended problem solving has been more difficult and is a priority for the new academic year.

## Interventions

**3.21** Across the academic year, schools have more generally struggled to deliver the range and frequency of interventions as would previously have been the case. Risk assessments, staffing shortages and bubble restrictions have made it difficult. That said, several vulnerable pupils who accessed a school place during lock down have made accelerated progress due to the more intensive adult interactions.

**3.22** Catch up funding has been used in a range of ways as schools saw fit. For example, some did after school booster classes and others did pre-teaching and follow up sessions. The national tutoring programme has been used by some schools with mixed responses: for some it has engaged pupils more and others found it restrictive in what it offered. There has been a similar picture with schools who used the academic mentor programme, the success of which very much depends on the quality of the mentor. This is the central pillar of the government’s recovery programme and will come with greater flexibility and additional funding in the new academic year.

## Ofsted Inspections

**3.23** Schools are preparing for full Ofsted inspections programme to resume in the autumn term 2021. Several schools received monitoring inspections during the summer term, only one school was identified as not taking effective action although this school had several longstanding staff absences.

**3.24** From September 2021 all schools will now be part of routine inspection, this includes our 16 outstanding schools, which have previously been exempt.

## Personal Development

**3.25** Elaine Robson has worked closely with PHSE/ RSE leads in schools to enable them to prepare to meet the statutory changes for RSE from April 2021. All schools should now have the policy approved by Governors and on their website. Curriculum plans for the delivery of RSE are now in place. Schools have been advised to have completed their consultation with parents, one secondary school has produced a ‘top 10 facts every parent and carer should know about RSE’ as part of the consultation process. Elaine has led network meetings and webinars to support and challenge schools to meet the needs of their children and young people for mental health. The

mental health and wellbeing (MHWB) sessions were well attended in the autumn term 2021 and facilitated schools in their development of MHWB practice.

**3.26** The mental health pilot project, led by Lisa Cook and funded by Barnardo's and delivered on the Mental Health First Aid England plan, has produced some interesting results. Fifteen schools took part in the first tranche of training for universal mental health awareness training. They completed: audits, surveys, accessed training to increase their staff understanding of Mental Health and created action plans for improvement. Outcomes from the surveys completed by children and young people, parents and school staff showed; an increase in awareness of different types of mental health issues, a better understanding of identifying emerging needs and being able to signpost to appropriate support. Mental Health Literacy has improved markedly in a 6 month period. In each of the 15 schools there are 3 or more mental health first aid trained adults and 5 further adults who have completed mental health awareness training. The schools met at a network meeting each month facilitated by Local Authority Officers to support and challenge each other to improve and to share best practice. The second and third cohorts of schools to complete the project have been identified and will start the process in the Autumn term 2021.

#### **4. Background Information**

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

- Early Year Statutory Framework
- The Reading Framework: Teaching the Foundations of Literacy
- DfES Remote Learning expectations

#### **5. Appendices**

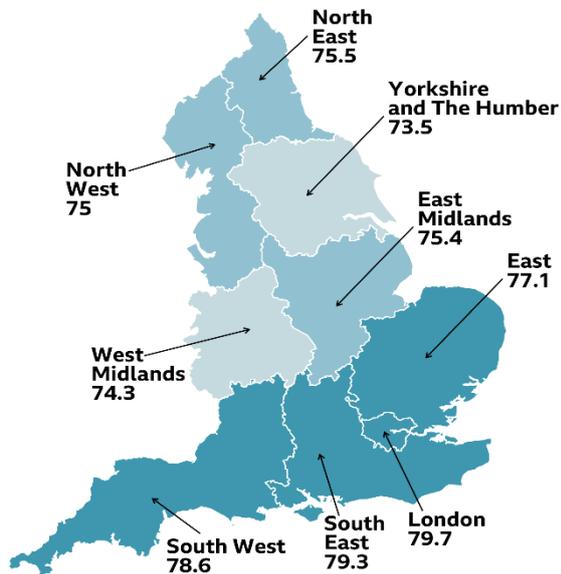
- Appendix 1 - Attendance data
- Appendix 2 –National GCSE and A level data

## Appendix 2 Regional GCSE data

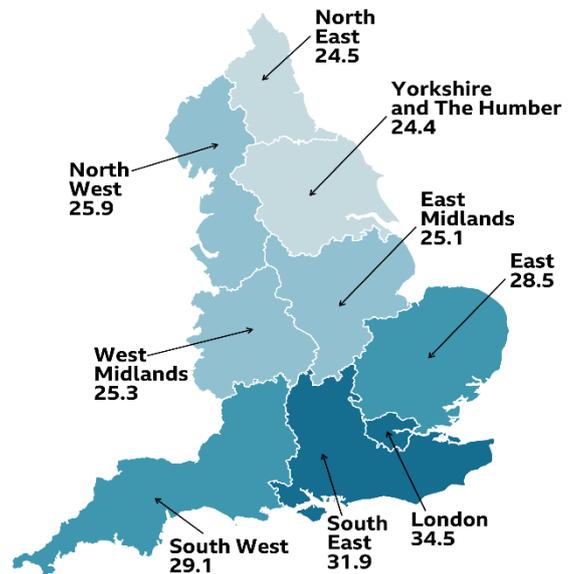
### England's GCSE results 2021

Percentage of students achieving grades by region

Grade 4 (formerly C) and above



Grade 7 (formerly A) and above



Source: Ofqual

BBC

### England's A level result 2021 main findings

- Girls got more top grades, 46.9%, than boys 42.1%
- A\* and A grades:
  - Northern Ireland 50.8%
  - Wales 48.3%
  - England 44.3%
  - Independent schools: 70.1% A\* and A grades
  - Comprehensive schools: 39% A\* and A grades
  - London 47.9% A\* and A grades
  - North East of England 39.2%