

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION UPDATEReport of the Director of Education**1. At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it was requested that an update be provided by the Director of Education relating to his work experiences to date including what has worked well and the areas for improvement.**

1.1. Since starting work in Stockport in April of this year, COVID and its impact on children and learning has continued to be the major focus of the work of the Education service. This has continued into the Autumn term where despite the return to “normal” in schools COVID has continued to disrupt children’s learning. School leaders, teachers and support staff in Stockport have continued to provide exceptional leadership and our Council teams have been focused on ensuring school leaders have the support they need.

1.2. In addition to this in the summer term we prioritised developing, in partnership with school leaders, our education recovery plan. An Executive Summary of this work is attached to this note. The purpose of this plan is to describe the priority actions which will be our focus throughout the next few years. As well as devising and implementing this plan we have been working with Stockport Family colleagues to ensure we have clearly communicated to schools what the focus of transformation work will be. We have been clear with school leaders that our transformation priorities for 2021/22 in addition to education recovery are:

- Inclusion, this includes embedding and accelerating our SEND improvement work, finalising our inclusion strategy and implementing the DSG Review
- Completing the roll out of locality working in geographical footprints

1.3. Finally, our shared services work with Tameside Council is progressing well. A Shared Services Programme Board is in place to provide guidance to this work, this is not a decision-making forum. We have established a number of work streams looking at school improvement, SEND, virtual school, sufficiency and school place planning, external places and commissioning and the development of a quality and improvement hub. We are now working through the detail to understand where there are opportunities to reduce duplication, generate income and increase capacity and stability.

1.4. Considering the outcomes of the exploration and scoping phase, we have agreed that there is merit in taking a phased approach to implementation. Whilst development will continue against the other workstreams, work will be phased as follows:

1.4.1 Phase 1 – 21/22

- Exploration of opportunities to deliver aspects of school improvement across both authorities
- Focus on developing the quality and improvement hub

1.4.2 Phase 2 – 22/23 onwards

- Focus on SEND, Virtual School and School Place Planning

1.5 The intention of these joint working arrangements was to create sustainable leadership capacity for our education service which recognise the changed but enduring role the Council has in education. Whilst our partnership is still formative I am incredibly positive about our ability to achieve this. We are working diligently with school leaders to improve already positive relationships and establish lasting partnerships which are both agile and effective and ensure that we can remain relentlessly and impatiently focused on improving outcomes for all children and especially the most vulnerable.

2 The Chair suggested that an update be submitted to the Committee on pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school during the pandemic, identifying any issues and where improvements could be made.

2.1 The transition from primary school to secondary school has always been a key point in a child's life and schools have traditionally worked hard to give children as much preparation as possible. This has usually included at least one day at the secondary school supported by data sharing and qualitative conversations between key staff within both schools. There has always been an increased level of support provided for children with additional needs. The pandemic, of course brought significant challenges to school leaders about how to support children when so much of this approach could not take place.

2.2 In Stockport two key pieces of work were undertaken. A large working group was established to develop a borough wide approach to supporting those children with additional needs. This included school staff, LA representatives and parents/carers. Together they produced a suite of materials designed to be used by all schools. In addition, school leaders from both phases worked together to produce a common approach to data collection about children and agreed upon a common timeline to support the process.

2.3 These approaches were very supportive for children, but schools had to continue to work flexibly to deliver an effective transition. Some schools increased the information that was available of their websites and many now have 'virtual tours' designed for both children and parents/carers. Conversations between schools' staff did continue but were largely managed virtually. Many schools also began the Summer Term last year with a full intention of holding face to face transition days and a protocol was developed between school leaders and public health to ensure that this could be done safely. However, as the time drew nearer for these events the prevalence of Covid meant that many were cancelled for the majority of pupils. Schools worked hard to ensure that face to face transition did happen for as many children as possible with additional needs on an individual basis. Many schools also changed their programme of work at the start of this academic year to provide more bespoke support for Year 7 at the beginning of the year. Many took advantage of the staggered start that was available to them, because of the need for lateral flow testing, to enable Year 7 to be onsite at the beginning of the year for a short time without the whole of the school present.

2.4 Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic Stockport's educational community is keen to take positive learning from the last two years. This term work has already begun to develop a single transition document that is building upon the work outlined above, which will be supported by discussion about each child between the schools. Technology is being used differently to increase the efficiency of the process and there is a real determination to have a common process fully operational this year. This will continue to be a challenge given the autonomy that each school actually has to

determine the timeline of their own activity, but the pandemic has shown the real value of collective action.

3 Sexism and Misogyny in Stockport Schools (to include racism and bullying) within the 2021/22 Scrutiny Work Programme.

- 3.1 Following on from the Scrutiny meeting September 8th, 2021, a core task and finish group has been established to formally address concerns about prejudice-based behaviours, the group is next scheduled to meet on October 13, 2021. As the terms of reference become established other key partners and stakeholders will be asked to contribute.
- 3.2 In addition, this group will also consider approaches to sexual violence, sexual harassment and discriminatory attitudes towards all genders. This follows the request made in the meeting of September 8th, 2021. The decision to combine the group will allow officers and partners to ensure that inclusion is at the heart of both strands of work and to establish a synergy between the themes ensuring clear guidance on how we can work as partners to support children and young people.
- 3.3 We will apply the same methodology to this second strand and will develop guidance to share with schools. We will work to support schools in establishing preventative models of practice and include guidance on how to respond to sexual harassment and sexual violence and also incidents of prejudiced based behaviours. The guidance will be developed in consultation with Key colleagues and education unions.
- 3.4 We want to ensure that the needs of children and young people are understood and reflected through this project and will identify ways pupil voice can be included in this work. We recognise the importance of the curriculum in these areas and will reflect this in the development of guidance ensuring we are cognisant of recent communications and findings shared by the DfE/Ofsted. Once developed we will offer training sessions to education staff and Governors to raise awareness and facilitate the adoption of a shared approach.

Should further information be required please contact Tim Bowman, Director for Education at Tim.Bowman@Tameside.gov.uk