

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

10 MARCH 2022

EDUCATION COVID RECOVERY – IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES 2021 INCLUDING APPRENTICESHIPS

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and the Director of Children's Services/Chief Executive, Worcestershire Children First have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on educational outcomes for the academic year 2020/2021, in particular the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the measurement of educational outcomes; and apprenticeships.
2. Representatives from the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) have also been invited to attend for the discussion about Apprenticeships.

Background

3. The reporting period 2020/21 continues to be impacted by the pandemic.
4. The use of internal assessment of children's progress to inform teaching is an inherent part of school's normal practice. It enables the delivery of an effective curriculum that meets children's needs. Although the pandemic caused Key Stage assessments to be suspended, teachers have continued and adapted their assessment methods to ensure the most effective provision is available for children. Although the requirement for statutory moderation was also removed, Worcestershire Children First (WCF) School Improvement Team provided professional development opportunities to support teachers in making accurate assessment judgments for internal purposes. This has been taken up by both maintained and academy schools.
5. As in 2020, in 2021 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 SATs, phonics and multiplication tests were cancelled, and Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes were based on Teacher Assessment. School Performance tables that refer to these end of Key Stage outcomes continue to be suspended for the 2020 to 2021 academic year and no school will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2021. Until a new data release is available, all those working with schools, including Ofsted and Department for Education (DfE) regional teams, should refer to the 2019 data.

Raising Standards in Schools

5. Weekly meetings between WCF and DfE representatives have continued to take place since 23 March 2020 to feedback challenges and successes of education provision continuing through the pandemic. In addition, throughout this

period regular meetings have also taken place with school leader phase representatives, including Early Years and Further Education (FE), and WCF officers as a mechanism for identifying issues, collaborative problem solving and consistent communication.

6. Support was provided to both academy and maintained schools through the DfE National Leader of Education support programme. Schools were identified as a result of their Ofsted category and WCF knowledge of their need, and in consultation with the DfE. Twenty schools were supported through this programme during the academic year 2020/21 and feedback indicates this support has been of benefit to these schools in ensuring consistency of education provision for children.

7. The School Improvement Team works with all maintained schools through a named School Improvement Advisor. The role of a School Improvement Advisor is to ensure that all children have access to consistently high-quality opportunities to learn and achieve. They therefore ensure that robust quality assurance and appropriate levels of support and challenge are provided to schools, and promote strategies to raise outcomes for all pupils, including vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs. They have a close working relationship with Headteachers and are a regular point of contact, and support for Headteachers. Academies were also offered a point of contact, a School Improvement Advisor during the pandemic. As part of supporting the provision for good educational outcomes the School Improvement Team developed guidance and training including:

- The development of a recovery curriculum to support the full reopening of schools in order to support the adaption of the curriculum to meet pupil needs as a consequence of lockdown (June 2020)
- Planning and delivering remote learning provision required for pupils required for restricted attendance (September 2020)
- Best practice of how leaders should quality assure the quality of a school's remote education offer to ensure provision is as effective as possible (January 2021)

8. In June 2020, the government announced £1 billion of funding to support children to catch up on missed learning caused by the pandemic. This funding included:

- a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020/2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all children make up for missed learning
- a £350 million National Tutoring Programme to provide additional, targeted support for those children who need the most help. During the first year of the programme introduced in November of the 2020/2021 academic year, state-maintained primary and secondary schools in England were able to access high-quality subsidised tutoring provision for 5 to 16-year-olds using 2 routes, tuition partners and academic mentors. In 2021/22 this has been expanded to offer an additional third route of school-led tutoring. Although subsidised, the expectation is that the remaining costs will be funded by schools using, for example, the recovery premium or pupil premium

9. Schools are expected to use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils' education recovery in line with the curriculum expectations. While schools can use their funding in a way that suits their cohort and circumstances, they are expected to use this funding for specific activities which will help pupils catch up on missed learning.

10. To support schools to make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a coronavirus (COVID-19) support guide for schools. This provides further guidance on how schools should implement evidence-based approaches to catch up and supporting case studies to highlight effective practice. This guidance has been extensively shared via the weekly Education Bulletins available to all schools, and through the work of the School Improvement Team.

11. Schools could also use catch-up premium funding to support summer holiday catch-up provision. In Worcestershire, most secondary schools offered this opportunity to support children who were transitioning to the school in September 2021.

12. Whilst national measures and restrictions have gradually been lifted since September 2021, schools have continued to experience disruption relating to staff and pupil COVID absence. Schools have therefore continually needed to be flexible using a range of methods and delivery to adapt and meet children's needs.

Impact on Learning – Autumn 2021

13. Qualitative feedback from schools, and from Ofsted Autumn visits in 2021 indicated that the newest cohorts of children in primary and secondary schools arrived with lower starting points than previous years. Schools also found that some pupils were taking longer than usual to settle in and get used to the school routine, which they attributed to the pandemic disrupting the previous academic year and pupils' transition arrangements. The pandemic continues to affect pupils' attendance and leaders have reported an increase in pupils with poor mental health and well-being.

14. Some pupils in primary schools have gaps in phonics knowledge, and in both primary and secondary schools, some pupils are catching up on practical skills, such as in the sciences and in physical education (PE). These 'gaps' in knowledge are either attributable to limitation of content delivery due to restrictions in school and restricted attendance. Schools have adapted curriculum plans in order to provide increased opportunities for pupils to revisit and consolidate previous learning and are focusing on areas of the curriculum that have been missed and need to be covered.

15. The use of regular, informal assessments to determine what knowledge pupils have (and have not) remembered from their teaching during lockdown are a key element of school's approach to recovery curriculum planning. Most teachers are using this to inform their curriculum planning. Many schools are using assessment to identify pupils who may benefit from additional support, such as one-to-one intervention, to catch up. Schools describe this as a dynamic,

ongoing process of assessing, adapting teaching and supporting specific pupils where needed.

Attendance

16. Attendance is and will remain an area of sharp focus. Nationally and locally schools report that absence reasons related to COVID-19, include:

- pupils testing positive for COVID-19
- COVID-19-related anxiety among both parents and pupils
- poorer mental health among pupils as a result of the pandemic/lockdowns
- parents rescheduling or rearranging term-time holidays
- children having low resilience due to setbacks or illness

17. Some schools also reported they had more COVID-19-related absences among disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and specific year groups, for example, Year 8, Year 11 and sixth form. Leaders are tackling this through family support, designated staff members, follow-up phone calls or home visits, and clubs for those whose attendance is particularly low.

18. During the pandemic, schools were expected to submit daily attendance to the DfE. In Worcestershire, two thirds of schools have regularly supplied the DfE with daily attendance figures allowing WCF to monitor trends and make comparisons. Since the beginning of January 2022, Worcestershire attendance figures have risen from 85% to 90%, broadly matching national figures at the same point. Primary schools are showing the highest attendance with the most recent figures at 93%, whilst Middle schools are showing 92% and the Secondary schools at 89%. Comparing to attendance pre-covid shows that Primary and Middle schools' attendance has dropped by 3% whilst Secondary schools have dropped by 6%, and although much of this decrease is directly COVID related, schools are reporting their need to respond to absence related to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

19. This term WCF have been invited to work with Wyre Forest Secondary Schools that are leading sector led local activity to address absence. We expect to identify collaborative actions and share this practice as it develops.

Inspection Outcomes

20. In September 2019, a new Ofsted framework was introduced for the inspection of schools. Under this new framework inspections focus on the curriculum, spending less time looking at test data, and more time looking at what is taught and how it is taught. Hence Ofsted grades assess the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management.

21. Due to the pandemic, no routine inspections occurred during the period 23 March 2020 to 31 August 2021. Inspection outcomes as at July 2021 were:

	Maintained schools (116)			Academies (127)			All schools (243)	
Outstanding	24	21%	91%	17	13%	75%	17%	83%
Good	82	71%		79	62%		66%	
RI	10	9%		11*	9%		9%	
Ofsted category	0	0%		19*	15%		7%	
No Ofsted judgement				1	1%			

22. In July 2021, 83% of Worcestershire schools were judged Good or Outstanding, which is below the national average of 86% (August 2021). In July 2021, nationally compiled data showed that 84% of Primary pupils, 75% of Middle school pupils and 83% of Secondary pupils in Worcestershire attend a Good or Outstanding school. 89% of state funded special schools in Worcestershire are Good or Outstanding. Held within this data are 23 schools (*) who have converted to an academy since an inspection judged them to be less than Good but are now technically a new school with a full inspection expected within three years of conversion. Due to the suspension of inspections nine of these schools are now 'overdue' inspection.

23. As previously described, in the Autumn term, 2020 Ofsted undertook school visits. The aim of these visits was to talk about the barriers that the school faced in managing the return to opening fully, how pupils were getting back into expected routines and their behaviour, and the school's safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors also spoke to school leaders about how remote learning fitted into their wider curriculum plans. As these visits were not inspections, they did not result in a grade, but a short letter published on the Ofsted reports website. The 18 visits included schools of different types and of all Ofsted grades: 1 'outstanding' school, 5 'good' schools, 3 'requires improvement' schools and 9 schools in an Ofsted category were visited.

24. From January 2021, Ofsted resumed monitoring inspections of schools judged inadequate at their previous inspection and some schools graded as requires improvement. These do not result in a grade, but a judgment as to whether the school is taking effective action. During 2020/21 there were 10 inspections with the outcome that the school was 'taking effective action', including one which converted to a full inspection moving the school from 'Serious Weakness' to 'Requires Improvement'

25. Emergency inspections of schools continued as they had done throughout the pandemic, in response to any serious concerns raised with Ofsted. For the academic year 2020/21 no emergency inspections were triggered.

26. Routine inspections, which result in a school being awarded a new grade or being confirmed in its current grade were recommenced September 2021.

Covid Impact on Apprenticeships

27. The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged Apprenticeship delivery in Worcestershire, reducing numbers across 2020 and 2021. Initially in the first few months, the impact was felt by those wishing to become apprentices, as

opportunities were limited where businesses started to internally focus on applying covid measures such as social distancing and furlough. Education establishments also faced challenges in delivering careers interventions exacerbated by the impact of online learning and engagement levels.

28. HM Government responded to this, developing an initiative to offer financial incentives to businesses to encourage thinking about Apprenticeships and opening up opportunities. By the end of the academic year 2019/20 Apprenticeships in Worcestershire were at 78% of the previous year levels, but recovery of this position commenced in 2020/21 with the county having achieved 106% of the previous year's level.

29. Over this time, Worcestershire County Council added to the successful Worcestershire Apprenticeships brand and introduced its own measures to support young people and potential apprentices. This was through offering online webinars to engage in apprenticeships, finding ways to engage young people within school settings and through its new Careers Worcestershire helpline to offer advice and support to young people around their next steps from Education.

30. Worcestershire County Council has also opened up its own Levy to transfer to smaller businesses in county and assist with costs of training apprentices, as well as leading the way by supporting our own schools and internally within the County Council to increase our own numbers of apprentices.

31. The first quarter of 2021/22 is showing a recovery position for Apprenticeships, with Apprenticeship starts up 52% on the previous year, and positively showing numbers of new entrants to professions increasing - recruitment of Under 19s up 92% and Under 24s up 56%.

Purpose of the Meeting

The Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information in the update;
- Determine whether any further information or Scrutiny was required; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on [16th March 2021](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)