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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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## EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 14 JULY 2021 AT 4.00 PM

## VIRTUAL REMOTE MEETING

Telephone enquiries to Anna Martyn Tel 023 9283 4870

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### Membership

Councillor Suzy Horton (Chair)

Councillor Ryan Brent  
Councillor Terry Norton

Councillor Jeanette Smith  
Councillor Judith Smyth

Diocesan representative - Church of England  
Diocesan representative - Roman Catholic  
Teacher Liaison Panel representative

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(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

### AGENDA

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declarations of interests**
- 3 **Minutes of previous meeting held on 8 February 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)**
- 4 **Response to Covid-19 (Pages 11 - 18)**
- 5 **Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020-2023: Refresh for Year 2 (Pages 19 - 26)**

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# Agenda Item 3

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board held virtually on Monday 8 February 2021 4.00 pm.

## Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Frank Jonas BEM  
Terry Norton  
Jeanette Smith  
Judith Smyth

Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families & Education  
Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education  
Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years  
Sarah Christopher, PEP and School Inclusion Manager

Rob Sanders, Deputy Director of Education for Portsmouth Diocese

### 1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Jeff Williams, Anglican representative. Mike Stoneman said that Fiona Calderbank, Co-Chair of the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP), had resigned from her post at Miltoncross in December and that Steve Labeledz has retired but would remain as Chair of the PEP until early July. Recruitment is taking place for an independent chair for a two-year term. The Chair asked that Mr Labeledz should be thanked for his contribution to the Education Advisory Board and his role in co-chairing the PEP.

### 2. **Declarations of interests**

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is Vice-Chair of the governing body at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through an external agency. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she works for Hampshire branch of Unison and represents support staff in Hampshire schools. Debbie Anderson works as an Ofsted inspector but not in Portsmouth schools. Currently all inspections are being carried out by HMIs.

### 3. **Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 October 2020**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.**

### 4. **Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020-2023: Update on progress in Year 1**

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education, together with Debbie Anderson and Sarah Christopher, presented the report and highlighted points from each of the nine priorities.

1. The School Leadership & Effectiveness Board (SLEB) took some time to establish in view of Covid but now has an extensive membership. SLEB is keen to gather partners' views on best processes and practices in order to for schools to set ambitious targets and consider how they will meet them. Schools are asked to consider what similar schools achieve and if below the median level of performance to consider how they could achieve similar. The specific questions to be put to schools were discussed at a recent meeting. Although there are no formal assessments or exams in 2020 and 2021 the aim is to have to more consistent and robust best practice processes in place from September 2021.

2. Digital learning has been a key focus in the Strategy's first year. Education was working on digital learning before Covid and has seized on the opportunity to develop it further. A contract with TSAT (Thinking Schools Academy Trust), a leading digital pioneer, has provided dedicated support and part-funded a Digital Development Officer, which has strongly progressed digital learning. The work in schools to enable education and interactivity between teachers and pupils, the latter especially important during lockdown, has been transformational. The contract has also enabled schools to meet DfE deadlines, for example, remote education plans for parents are on school websites and there is a dedicated page on the PEP website. Access to devices is key. As well as an allocation of devices from the DfE, Education has supplemented provision for primary schools through the EEF (Elementary Education Foundation) Trust. In addition, Education has launched a digital donation scheme with Shaping Portsmouth.

In response to questions from members on the extent of IT access and provision for children, Mr Stoneman said all schools have surveyed parents about access and devices. He cannot give a city-wide answer but schools are managing the situation so far and are in dialogue with Education where there are gaps. There is considerable support from the DfE as well as more local schemes. However, support for infant schools is weak as they are not in the DfE allocation of devices, which is shortsighted and disappointing as remote education is needed for Early Years and KS1. Education is stepping in to remove barriers through the Shaping Portsmouth donation scheme.

Mr Stoneman was aware of larger network companies who had signed up to offer free data to schools, but some of the offers were of poor value and more of a sales pitch. Sometimes if children were struggling at home it could be because of lack of space or having to share devices, in which case they would be deemed as vulnerable and schools would offer a place where possible. Education and schools are doing all they can to ensure access to learning, either at home or school.

Electively Home Educated (EHE) children are monitored to satisfy that suitable education is provided. However, it is made clear to parents that additional IT support is not offered.

The Chair noted that the digital divide, whether it is about quality of devices or IT access, would not go away and should be monitored. The enormous change in using digital technology could provide plenty of opportunities for

day-to-day education. Mr Stoneman said removing the divide was a long-term aim, not just for the short-term. Education is planning an event with TSAT in the summer on how to prepare for the next academic year but for the time being Education is building on what has been learnt and has a blended offer.

3. As a result of the 2019 literacy outcomes, particularly for KS2, literacy became a priority in its own right and the PEP Early Language and Literacy Group was set up. The group has three workstreams and membership includes representatives from speech and language therapy, health visitors, the University of Portsmouth and the cultural sector, in addition to schools and MATs. Reading needs to be improved across Portsmouth. There were two full days of training in January on the Hackney Learning Trust's Destination Reader programme, which is built on very secure subject knowledge for teachers to build on and sequence learning. The Pompey Pirates lead the third workstream focussing on the vocabulary schools want children to have when they transition to the next stage of education.

4. Interest in teaching vacancies has increased during Covid and the ITT (Initial Teacher Training) providers report good numbers. Part of this increased uptake is due to is likely to have been due to the Teach Portsmouth campaign. The TP newsletter is well-received with over 300 subscribers. A third webinar will focus on recruitment. The annual Teach Portsmouth Awards used to be held in October but will now be a virtual event on 8 July and include an award nominated by the community. However, recruitment efforts cannot be relaxed as there may be a dip in interest when Covid recedes. Mr Stoneman confirmed that in the last three years recruitment has reached out to people from other backgrounds as far and wide as possible, including the armed services.

5. Infection control is absolutely critical to support attendance. Schools have benefitted from the involvement of the Infection Control & Prevention Group, chaired by Helen Atkinson, Director of Public Health, together with support from Alison Critchley, Head of Sufficiency and Resources. The focus this term has been on testing. Vaccinations have started to be rolled out to school staff.

In response to questions from members, Mr Stoneman said the majority of lateral flow testing is for staff, particularly in primary schools, though some pupils are tested. Some secondary schools have continued with weekly testing for pupils. Three schools are already doing weekly saliva testing of staff and pupils in conjunction with the University of Southampton; four more will follow. Much work has been done to ease parents' anxieties. Schools have reported good feedback, engagement and uptake. It is hoped to roll out saliva testing to all secondary schools and colleges after half-term, then other schools depending on laboratory support. It could be a challenge when more children return to school. Schools will follow DfE guidance at that point. It is unclear whether there will be need to be saliva tests as well as lateral flow tests.

There are teachers and support staff both at school and at home, teaching children at home and school, so there is a mix of models. As a headteacher in the first lockdown Mrs Anderson stated that support staff were not penalised

financially if they were not in school. The Chair noted that pragmatism often decides who will be in school or at home.

6. The UTC (currently judged Inadequate by Ofsted due to safeguarding concerns) has received considerable support from the local authority, who have worked with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Principal. The authority is grateful to the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership (PSCP) training team for the support and training they have given the UTC. The UTC now has three DSLs rather than one, is using CPOMS to record safeguarding and is now fully engaged with the local support and regularly attends the DSL network. There has been good uptake amongst schools of the training offered by the PSCP.

In response to questions from members, Mr Stoneman said the Portsmouth Safeguarding and Early Help Compact Audit was completed by schools and other agencies every two years which feels an appropriate timeline. The local authority is more closely scrutinising the completed audits by schools particularly where a school judges itself to be outstanding across many of the standards. Completion of the audit by schools is 100%.

The UTC has a full timetable and all teachers are fully engaged so their time cannot be deployed to safeguarding. The UTC has allocated significant time and resources to meet the requirements of the Ofsted inspection, for example, having three DSLs rather than one. There is a senior staff member as the new pastoral lead so training is in place and staff understand when to report, escalate and refer safeguarding concerns. As a trustee of UTC, Mr Stoneman is as confident as he can be that safeguarding is effective.

During Covid and the extended closure of schools there has been more identification of vulnerable learners. Alison Jeffery noted an increase in the autumn, then fewer over Christmas, then another increase but less than in the autumn. Numbers have plateaued over the last two or three weeks. There were more referrals from the police over the summer because of more young people being out and about. Social Care and Early Help have about 130% more referrals than usual. Early Help have the largest number of families in their three-year history. Issues are mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence; the latter represents the same proportion of cases at about 30%. Overall there is increased pressure and a changing pattern of referrals from schools.

7. Emotional health and wellbeing has been very important, especially over the last six to eight months. The third Mental Health Support Team (MHST) has just been recruited and has started their one-year training programme though training programmes have been impacted by having to use remote learning. The other two MHS Teams are already operational. Additional posts have been recruited to the MHS Teams, with a particular focus on behavioural needs. More concerns are expected when children return to school. There is a workshop for primary schools after half-term and one for secondary schools this week on how to support children when they return to school. Pathways are being mapped out to prevent children from falling through the net.

The free Kooth digital mental health service offers a number of counselling hours per day all year around and is confidential and secure. There are safeguarding mechanisms in place to capture concerns at an early stage. Some children and young people have already signed up. It is available for up to age 18 (25 for SEND).

Education has refocused government work on wellbeing during return to education on to staff so they can support children and young people. Education has invested considerable support for senior leaders.

The Chair said it was good to focus on wellbeing from the "end user" point of view. She commended Kooth's focus on wellbeing and the range of activities available.

Welfare sessions for all staff are recorded and can be re-visited. Education receive feedback from schools on staff wellbeing and asked headteachers last week if they needed any other support. Officers agreed there would be pressures after Covid. The MHS Teams can take a whole school approach and most schools have an employee assistance programme. Members commended the support available. They thought the situation should be monitored carefully in case more individual than group support was needed, for example, for those with PTSD.

8. The rating system for monitoring vulnerable children now includes a P (Purple) category for those who are most vulnerable. About 3,000 children are being monitored. There was a small spike in the number of electively home educated (EHE) children in the autumn as parents were very anxious about them returning to school. The number of EHE children is very small compared with those in other LAs but there may be another spike when schools re-open. Other LAs are concerned about possible spikes in the number of EHE children.

In response to questions from members, Mr Stoneman said it was difficult to confirm if parents were using school places unnecessarily and if the children of keyworkers were being denied places. Schools are consistently applying criteria but these are subject to capacity and transmission. For example, Court Lane is very stretched and is almost 50% full as it is near QA Hospital so has a lot of children whose parents are keyworkers. The criteria are applied rigorously as far as possible but sometimes schools have to prioritise places so there is consistency on principles rather than places. Portsmouth is above average for attendance but slightly below average for children with an Education Health & Care Plan, which is a concern and Education are encouraging schools to offer places to vulnerable children. Alison Jeffery said the authority can encourage discussion on applying the government's admissions guidance but does not have enough resources to oversee individual decisions by individual schools, for example, checking evidence of parents' employment status. Education cannot guarantee that no keyworkers have been told they cannot have a place. However, Education can intervene with individual schools if public service organisations have had problems with their employees' children getting places.

9. The capital bid approval for the programme of works required for the SEND and AP Accommodation Review will be considered at Full Council on 9 February. The special free school for autism will be in Wymering and is due to be completed in 2022. Members commended the progress on school building work, especially as it had taken place during Covid.

In response to questions from members on the three cross-cutting themes, Mr Stoneman said Portsmouth monitors ethnicity against achievement and has the benefit of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS). Often children with EAL (English as an Additional Language) achieve better than their peers, which is encouraging as it shows the results of investment and the work of bilingual support assistants. With regard to identifying children with SEND mainstream schools are more inclusive and better at identifying needs and providing support; the position is better than many years ago. There has been some spectacular work on diagnosing autism with the support of Educational Psychology service.

The Anti-Racism theme builds on existing work like the Kick It Out campaign as well as new initiatives. The theme will be promoted on the United Nations Anti-Racism Day on 20 March with which all schools will be involved. Education has contacted headteachers and resources will be compiled and shared amongst schools. Children will design posters with a slogan "Portsmouth Against Racism - One City, Many Cultures."

Members commended resources being co-ordinated and overseen by headteachers. The Chair noted there was a cross-cutting theme across everything schools do and it is good to consider key issues in-depth.

**RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the progress that has so far been made in Year 1 in respect of the nine priorities that are contained within the Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023.**

**5. LA Response to the re-opening of schools in the Autumn term and the subsequent lockdown at the start of the Spring term**

Mike Stoneman presented the report, noting that it built on the report at the October meeting. Much of the content had already been covered in the update on the Portsmouth Education Strategy. He highlighted two areas:

- During Christmas funds were used from the Covid-19 Winter Grant to provide food vouchers through a contract with EdenRed for children eligible for Free Schools Meals. The Covid grant and EdenRed will be used to provide vouchers during the Spring half-term as families and schools are familiar with the scheme.
- There is a focus on Year 11s as applications to post-16 education have decreased this year. Additional support includes the Flying Start website, webinars for parents and carers, and identifying pupils where there are the most concerns about post-16 destinations through the Youth Neet Prevention Programme (a traded service) by offering dedicated support from careers advisors. Despite challenging circumstances some face-to-face work has taken place.

**RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note details of the work and ongoing work that has, and is continuing to be undertaken, by the council and partners to support education settings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**6. Support and challenge for LA Maintained Schools**

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years, introduced the report, which builds on the report at October's meeting, noting that support for schools is proportionate to need. Two schools had had less than Good Ofsted judgements. Support included risk-assessed visits to the schools and commissioned support. Mrs Anderson was interviewed as part of the Ofsted monitoring visit to Corpus Christi Catholic Primary and has worked closely with the new headteacher.

Commissioning external support such as NLE (National Leader of Education) provides continuity for schools. Risk-assessed visits for schools with headteachers new to Portsmouth are useful as although they have a fresh perspective it helps them to have someone quality assuring their judgements.

The work with the local Lead Moderator supports teachers and leaders but also challenges accuracy of judgements about what children should be achieving. When reviewing schools' strategic plans they are asked how they will focus on impact and outcomes and not just actions. Education has reviewed all 21 LA maintained schools to see if their remote education information for parents meets the DfE's expectations on remote education. From 12 February it is a legal duty to publish the information. The DfE expectations emphasise that interactivity between staff and pupils is just as important as lessons.

The Hackney Learning Trust's Destination Reader project (renamed Reading for Purpose and Pleasure) has a systematic sequencing of reading skills which will enable the ten participating schools to progress. Annual subscriptions to the Trust will continue next year so schools can access updated resources. A network of participating teachers will enable collaborative working as way to support and challenge.

The PiXL (Partners in Excellence) organisation does not just provide assessment but resources to help schools use the findings. One LA maintained school is particularly supportive of the PiXL approach.

As there are no formal assessments this year moderation and assessment activities have been re-purposed in order to judge children's work accurately. Support will be given to help with transition.

External consultancy has been commissioned for coaching for five new headteachers. There is also a networking group to help support them. It is especially hard being a new headteacher during Covid.

In response to questions from members about the amount of 1:1 feedback from teachers, Mrs Anderson said although some teachers use pre-recorded

sessions they have put considerable effort into ensuring they are suitable. If there are problems parents should speak to the school first and then Ofsted. So far Ofsted has received one complaint and 40 positive comments. Remote education is light years away from what was offered in March 2020. Schools have been asked to send in positive quotes about remote learning to celebrate achievements.

The Chair said that if individual complaints can be investigated and lead to a positive outcome then schools are keen to hear them. Officers agreed the purpose of the Board is to scrutinise and consider difficult questions.

Members thanked officers for their reports and all those who are contributing to success as well as families who are engaging in education during very difficult circumstances.

**RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note how LA Maintained schools have been provided with support and challenge by the council's school improvement service in this academic year to date.**

The next meeting is on Wednesday 14 July at 4 pm (location to be confirmed).

The meeting concluded at 5.45 pm.

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Councillor Suzy Horton  
Chair



**Meeting:** Education Advisory Board

**Subject:** Response to Covid-19

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Report from:** Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education

**Report by:** Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

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## 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the work and ongoing work that has, and is continuing to be undertaken, by the council and partners to support education settings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It builds on the reports that were presented on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken over the past sixteen months by the council and partners to respond to the pandemic and the ongoing work that is in place in order to continue to support education settings.**

## 3. The initial response to the pandemic

- 3.1 Following the decision by the government to close education settings from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the council worked closely with partners to agree and quickly put into place a response that would support education settings and protect and safeguard vulnerable learners. The initial response is set out below in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.7:
- 3.2 A **Covid-19 working group** was established and chaired by the Deputy Director. This included a broad range of education leaders from schools, colleges, Multi Academy Trusts and early years settings as well as council officers and a representative from the Regional Schools Commissioner office. This group provided an important vehicle to consult on what was needed, agree priorities to focus on and to have oversight of the workstreams that followed and the actions that were being taken by each workstream. This was summarised in an overarching plan which was continually updated.

3.3 **Six workstreams** were quickly established, brief details of which are given below:

- **Infection control and health & safety** - chaired by the Director of Public Health. Weekly updates and guidance on infection control were provided to education settings and basic packages of PPE were delivered to all schools.
- **Digital learning and home learning** - chaired by the seconded Ofsted HMI. The work supported the delivery of remote access to education and the preparations of a more comprehensive offer for the Autumn term exploiting the advantages of digital technology. A baseline survey was completed during the summer term to support this.
- **Emotional health and wellbeing** - chaired by the PEP and Inclusion Manager. A range of resources were developed to support schools both in terms of the emotional health of pupils and staff.
- **Safeguarding and vulnerable learners** - chaired by the Head of Service for Inclusion. Work included the deployment of the LA Link Co-ordinators details of which are given in paragraph 3.6
- **Transitions pre-school through to key stage 2** - chaired by the Early Years Advisory Teacher.
- **Transitions key stage 2 through to key stage 5** - chaired by the Post-16 Commissioning Manager. Work included the development of the Flying Start website and resources which supported the transition of Year 11 learners to post-16.

3.4 To ensure there were good **communications** between the council and headteachers, weekly virtual meetings were held with headteachers consisting of 3x primary heads (central, north and south), secondary heads and special school heads. Bi-weekly meetings were also held with CEOs of multi academy trusts and also with heads of LA maintained schools. These were chaired by the Director, Children, Families and Education. In addition to meetings a daily email from the Director went out to all school leaders and partners providing key information and resources with links to dedicated pages on the PEP website

3.5 In addition to the workstreams and above communications, a weekly **'recovery and reset' reference group for early years settings** was established and business sustainability service (Hempsalls) was commissioned to support the market.

3.6 An early decision was also made to deploy **LA Link Co-ordinators to every school in the city to support the tracking and monitoring of vulnerable children and young people**, particularly those that were not accessing school, to ensure they and their families were getting the right support. Schools welcomed the opportunity to triangulate their understanding of the situation of different children with that of council services. A Children's Hub was also established as part of the HIVE to

provide support and help to families in need, identified by the Link Coordinators and by schools directly.

- 3.7 **LA Link Officers** were deployed to LA maintained schools in order to provide support and sign off health & safety checks, risk assessments and plans for re-opening schools to specific year groups as required by government.

#### 4. **Preparing for the opening of schools to all year groups**

- 4.1 During the summer, the council and partners worked hard to support schools to re-open to all year groups from September. A summary of the response is set out below in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.9.
- 4.2 Whilst the Covid-19 Working Group was stepped down a number of the **workstreams were retained** including: digital learning; infection control; emotional health & wellbeing; and safeguarding & vulnerable learners. These have now been merged into the PEP structures which are shown on page 4 of the new education strategy 2020 - 2023.
- 4.3 The **infection control and health & safety** group stepped up their work to pull together a package of support that included guidance, resources, flowcharts and template letters that schools could send out to parents to cover a range of scenarios where there was a positive case, outbreak, local lockdown, etc.
- 4.4 A **Welcome Back to School campaign** was launched over the summer in order to reassure parents and carers about their children returning to schools and to demonstrate that schools were doing everything that was necessary to make schools safe. The previous school attendance campaign 'Miss School Miss Out' is currently on hold.
- 4.5 Alongside the Welcome Back to School campaign, a **Welcome Back toolkit and resources for schools** was produced and distributed. Similar versions were done for front line practitioners working with families and also a version for partner organisations.
- 4.6 The arrangements for **tracking and monitoring vulnerable children and young people** were continued but due to the fact services were being stood up again and those redeployed as LA Link Co-ordinators were having to return to their roles, a decision was made to recruit 3 full time Co-ordinators.
- 4.7 To further support vulnerable children and in particular those that might struggle to return to school, a template for **Welcome Back Plans** were distributed which many schools have used during the first few weeks of the Autumn term.

- 4.8 Also distributed ahead of the first week of term was a **Welcome Back to School wellbeing support package for schools** based on a similar package that was developed in Medway.
- 4.9 The arrangements that were in place during the summer term to support **communications** continued into the Autumn term but on a less frequent basis. Briefings for headteachers were held bi-weekly rather than every week and the daily communications were reduced to a weekly message on a Friday. Bi-weekly meetings with MATs continued and briefings for LA maintained schools returned to half termly.

## 5. Ongoing support during the Autumn term 2020

- 5.1 During the Autumn term the council, working closely with schools, MATs and our partners, continued to focus on supporting **school attendance and support for our vulnerable children**. Attendance remained relatively high but there was significant disruption due to rising numbers of positive cases in schools which led to many pupils having to self-isolate and access remote education.
- 5.2 The council continued to support schools in the **tracking and monitoring of vulnerable children** and we were able to confirm in November the appointment of 3 full time LA Education Link Co-ordinators.
- 5.3 Significant work was done to support **remote education**. Through our contract with the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT) we have been able to offer dedicated support to all schools including a range of webinars and resources. A key focus has been on developing interactivity between teachers and pupils. This has included live lessons which many schools are operating and regular feedback and communication between the teacher and pupils. Support was also provided to our primary schools to purchase devices and equipment through funding from the local Elementary Education Trust.
- 5.4 Support was also given to our school leaders in terms of **emotional health and wellbeing** and included regular sessions being delivered by Joy Squibb and Ian Hunkin, together with an offer of a coach / mentor.
- 5.5 In the absence of any national voucher scheme, and using funds from the Covid-19 Winter Grant scheme, the council established a **food voucher scheme for eligible FSM children**, through a contract with EdenRed. This was successfully delivered.

## 6. Response to 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown and closure of schools from 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021

- 6.1 On 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 the 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown was announced which included the closure of schools until 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Children of key workers and vulnerable children continued to be offered places by

schools as far as they are able to and special schools and AP provision are expected to be fully open as all pupils are deemed vulnerable. In the case of the latter and due to staffing capacity issues and health and safety around one third of pupils with SEND were able to attend school on any one day. Early Years settings were required to remain fully open to all children throughout but faced extreme pressures in meeting this demand due to staffing capacity issues.

- 6.2 The council continued with many of the arrangements that were put in place last term and which are described in sections 4 and 5 of this report. In addition to this the council provided a range of other support which are set out below in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.7.
- 6.3 With the majority of pupils learning from home the focus on remote education was more important than ever. TSAT's dedicated support remained in place and all schools were expected to set out for pupils, parents and carers, **information about their remote education provision** on their websites by 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The council reviewed the plans for all our LA maintained schools, the majority of whom have used the DfE optional template.
- 6.4 **Engagement in remote education** varied between 80 to 95% in January and early February, but started to drop off somewhat once the return to school date of 8 March was confirmed, affecting disproportionately our most vulnerable learners.
- 6.5 **Access to devices** remained an issue. In addition to the DfE allocations and the local scheme for primary schools that was launched in the autumn term, we were also able to provide a small number of second-hand devices to schools through the Shaping Portsmouth partnership.
- 6.6 The council's corporate communications team produced new **social media assets as part of the Protect Portsmouth / Ready to Learn campaign**. The aim is to help parents with 'top tips' for remote learning, details of which can be found at: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/remotelarning](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/remotelarning)
- 6.7 The council provided significant support in terms of **covid-19 testing and prioritising vaccinations** of staff and **food vouchers for FSM children**, a more detailed and up to date summary of which is given in Section 7

## 7. Support for the reopening of schools to all pupils from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

- 7.1 Schools reopened to all pupils on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. There had been concerns that worries about coronavirus may have resulted in a reluctance on the part of some children and/or families to return to school, but on the whole attendance after schools reopened was high, with some schools reporting 100% attendance. In some schools attendance was adversely affected by pupils shielding, or families having travelled abroad and being unable to return.

- 7.2 To support the tracking and monitoring of school attendance and to understand better how Covid was affecting schools and in particular vulnerable learners, the council entered into an agreement with **Studybugs** which allowed the council to have access to 'live' attendance data and provide a helpful summary dashboards for each school. Schools were also given the opportunity to try out a range of add-ons to support school attendance. All schools participated in this with the exception of St Edmund's Catholic School. The pilot will be reviewed in the summer term with a view to agreeing a two year commitment for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 7.3 A key focus during the Spring Term was on **testing and vaccination**. Regular lateral flow testing was introduced for all staff and secondary aged pupils starting from January 2021, but with a significant increase in the numbers of tests from the return of all pupils on 8<sup>th</sup> March. During the Spring Term three secondary schools also piloted **weekly saliva testing** as part of a programme across the sub region and led by the University of Southampton.
- 7.4 The council also prioritised the introduction of **lateral flow testing for early years staff** ahead of the community testing programme.
- 7.5 In terms of **vaccinations**, Portsmouth followed the JCVI guidelines and included approximately 600 education based staff who work closely with clinically vulnerable children amongst our high priority staff. As a result the majority of our special school staff, some staff in mainstream schools, a limited number of PCC Education staff who work directly with CEV children, and all of our passenger assistants on home to school transport were offered a first dose of the vaccine by mid-February 2021, ensuring these staff had some protection before the wider return of pupils on 8<sup>th</sup> March.
- 7.6 The council was then able to include school-based staff in the local **zero waste policy**, meaning that teachers aged 50+ in schools started to be invited to vaccine appointments in March 2021. The council was able to offer all staff in schools the opportunity to receive a vaccine through the zero waste policy by April 2021.
- 7.7 Other infection control measures in schools have worked broadly as they did in the Autumn Term 2021, with the additional mitigations of lateral flow testing and face coverings
- 7.8 **Food vouchers for FSM pupils** were provided during February Half Term, the Easter Holidays, and May Half Term using the Covid Grant Fund. Vouchers were made available to children of statutory school age and also children whose families would have been eligible for benefits-related school meals in early years settings and FE colleges.

- 7.9 Following the government's recent announcement that a further round of Covid funding will be available to pay for school age pupils who receive benefits related FSM to receive vouchers during the summer holidays, the council is putting in place arrangements for a summer holiday voucher scheme.
- 7.10 Through our progression career advisors the council has been focussing our work to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, training and employment (NEET) including a focus on Year 11s as part of our **Youth NEET Prevention Programme work**. This has included building on last year's successful **Flying Start** website which this year will be supported by a range of webinars for parents and carers to support progression to post-16 education
- 7.11 As part of our **Black Lives Matter and Anti-Racism** priority, schools across the city participated in UN Anti-Racism Day as part of their ongoing work to challenge and prevent racism. In line with other areas, concerns have been raised about an increase in prejudice-based incidents, in schools and in the community. We have relaunched our [Prejudicial Language and Behaviour Toolkit](#). Schools are now completing monthly returns so that we can start to identify patterns and trends and provide support where it is needed. A training package and guidance on **preventing and responding to racism** is being co-produced, and will be available in the Autumn Term.
- 7.10 The third **Mental Health Support Team** has now been recruited and training is underway. This means that all schools in the city are now able to access support from the MHSTs. Work is underway to map the current offer of support for **Social Emotional and Mental Health** needs and any remaining gaps in the offer. Guidance for professionals and parents will be piloted during the Autumn Term to help children, young people and families get the right support and the right time.
- 7.11 Support to ensure schools could continue to provide a good **remote access to education** offer continued, but attention turned to the next phase of work supported by a survey to schools and the development of a digital learning strategy, details of which will be outlined and showcased at the PEP Summer Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

#### Appendices:

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>



**Meeting:** Education Advisory Board

**Subject:** Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023: refresh for Year 2

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Report from:** Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education

**Report by:** Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

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## 1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Board Members with details of proposed changes to the Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023 for Year 2 of the strategy (2021/222) which includes an additional priority focussing on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The report also sets out the agreed focus of the PEP Strategic Board for Year 2 following the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 **It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the following:**

- a. **The agreed focus of the PEP Strategic Board for Year 2 of the strategy as set out in section 3 of the report, namely: digital learning, peer review; improving literacy outcomes; and improving school attendance**
- b. **The inclusion of an additional priority to the Education Strategy that focusses on NEETs as set out in section 4 of the report**
- c. **The next steps and the refresh of the Education Strategy for Year 2 as set out in section 5 of the report.**

## 3. Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023: Year 2 refresh

3.1 Section 4 of this reports sets out the detail of the new priority (priority 10) of the Portsmouth Education Strategy: 'Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) through NEET prevention and re-engagement activities'.

3.2 The PEP Strategic Board at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021, approved the addition of the 10<sup>th</sup> priority focused on reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET and noted the ongoing work to deliver the nine other priorities and the cross cutting themes of inclusion, early years and black lives matter.

3.3 The PEP Strategic Board also made a commitment to focus on four key areas in Year 2 which were felt to be the most critical and where most impact would be felt, details of which are set out in sections 3.4 to 3.7 of this report. All four areas featured in the PEP Summer Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

3.4 **Digital learning strategy** - the links to the highlight report and the digital strategy which were recently presented at the PEP Strategic Board are given below. This sets out the next phase of our ambition to become a digital learning city and to build on the progress that has been made during the pandemic in terms of the application of digital technology to improve learning both in school and at home.

[Digital Learning - highlight report  
Portsmouth as a Digital City](#)

3.5 **Peer review** - following a survey to all schools and academies earlier in the year, the PEP School Leadership and Effectiveness Board have been working on the development of a framework for peer review that all schools can sign up to regardless of designation, whether part of a Multi Academy Trust or LA Maintained. The framework sets out a minimum set of expectations and a 3 stage review process. The link to the highlight report which was recently presented to the PEP Strategic Board is given below.

[Peer Review](#)

3.6 **Improving literacy outcomes** - led by the PEP Early Language and Literacy Development Group, the objective is to work collectively to look at how as a city we can improve literacy outcomes for all children and young people regardless of age or phase of learning. A link to the most recent highlight report presented to the PEP Strategic Board is given below. There are 3 workstreams. :

- Relaunch of the Portsmouth Early Language Plan on a Page document,
- developing reading in Portsmouth,
- improving literacy at transition points

[Early Language and Literacy - highlight report](#)

3.7 **Improving school attendance and reducing fixed term exclusions** - a link is provided below to a paper that was presented to the PEP Strategic Board and which considers the case for a renewed collective PEP focus on reducing time lost from school through non-attendance, exclusion or reduced/part-time timetables against the background of learning loss through the pandemic, holding ourselves and each other to account in a restorative and relational *high support: high challenge* way.

[Education Recovery: Attendance and Exclusions](#)

#### 4. **Priority 10: Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) through NEET prevention and re-engagement activities**

##### 4.1 **Background**

Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. Specifically these are to:

- Secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained. To fulfil this, local authorities need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.
- Make available to all young people aged 13 to 19 and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training.

Tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage. Since 2017, local authorities have been required to track and report on years 12 and 13.

The DfE monitors the participation of young people in employment, education or training in all local authority areas. This data is supplied by each local authority, all of whom have a statutory duty to do so on a monthly basis. The overall performance measure used is a combined average figure of young people who are NEET and unknown over a three month period. Reporting includes a combined figure for young people who are NEET or unknown to the local authority. This change was made after a number of local authorities reported low NEETs whilst having a high number of unknowns.

As a city we have made some significant improvements over the past 8 years. In 2013 NEET and unknown figures were significantly higher than the national average with NEETs at 7.7% and unknowns at 18.7%. To address this the council worked with schools and post-16 providers to improve progression outcomes for young people aged 16 to 18.

A key part of this work was the **Youth NEET Prevention Programme** which was launched in 2014. This partnership programme was initially funded by local colleges and the council. The pilot programme offered support to 108 year 11s who were considered at risk of not progressing to post-16 education. A Progression Adviser worked with the young people

during the spring term of year 11 through to post-16 enrolment. During the autumn term advisers were based in the colleges to support these young people and other Portsmouth students who were at risk of becoming NEET. The project had a positive impact on the NEET figures and this combined with close and collaborative work with the Data Team brought the unknowns down to 3.8% and the NEETs in line with the national averages at 4.8%.

The work of the council's Data Team in collaboration with schools and colleges has been instrumental in reducing the number of unknowns. There are robust data sharing agreements in place with colleges and at the end of 2016 the figures for unknowns and NEETs were 1.1% and 3.8% respectively.

Since 2017 the NEET score card has reported data for a three month average.

**Table 1: three month average 2017 - 2021**

	<b>2017 (Dec 2016 - Feb 2017 3 months average)</b>	<b>2018 (Dec 2017 - Feb 2018 3 months average)</b>	<b>2019 (Dec 2018 - Feb 2019 3 months average)</b>	<b>2020 (Dec 2019 - Feb 2020 3 months average)</b>	<b>2021 (Dec 2020 - Feb 2021 3 months average)</b>
<b>NEET</b>	3.8%	3.7%	3.8%	4.2%	4.4%
<b>Unknowns</b>	1.1%	1.6%	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%
<b>Combined</b>	4.9%	5.4%	4.8%	5.0%	5.6%

The most recent figures for April 2021 however show a concerning trend and it is clear that the pandemic has had a negative impact on the figures. Due the high quality and robust data gathered by the data tracking team we have an accurate picture of the number NEETs and unknowns in Portsmouth. We are aware that some local authorities do not have this level of current information so will have higher numbers of unknowns the majority of whom are likely to be NEET

**4.2 Currently, there are a number of programmes that are running in the city to support NEET prevention and re-engagement details of which are set out below:**

- **Youth NEET Prevention Programme** - following the successful pilot project, the programme has continued with ongoing financial contributions from the colleges. Schools now contribute £135 per pupil referred to the programme (this was waived for 2020 due to concerns about the progression of year 11). Further funding has been available via the ESF funded STEP programme although this will cease in

2022. This project is now underfunded and will require a review and a new approach moving forward. A bid has been submitted to the Careers and Enterprise Company for a 3 year project to support progression from year 10 for 60 students. This will be a joint research project with Hampshire, IOW, Portsmouth and the Solent LEP.

- Currently the **STEP programme** also funds support for young people who are NEET to support them to re-engage. Advisers work within the community to support young people to re-engage and progress to education and employment with training. Prior to March 2020 the team used a variety of venues across the city for regular drop-ins for young people who are NEET. Youth Centre premises are now subject to rent for these purposes so we will need to look for alternative options.
- The Southern University Network Programme has grant funded a progression programme for 60 **Uni Connect** students over the past 3 years. We have confirmation that this will continue to for at least one more year and had been held up as an example of good practice.
- The **Virtual School & College** currently funds a 0.5 term time Careers and Progression Adviser. From August 2021 this will move to a full-time post to support both Care Leavers and Looked after Children. This post will be based within the Careers and Progression Team.
- As part of the DWP funding, the **Youth Hub** service is funded for one post to support young people aged 16 to 25 who are claiming universal credit to seek employment. The majority of the referrals are likely to be over 18 so will not support the majority of young people aged 16 to 18.
- Funding from Southern Universities Network (SUN) has supported delivery of a year 11 transition website **Flying Start**. This brand has been used for the post-16 transition programme - Flying Start Live.

#### 4.3 **Key actions for 2021/22:**

1. **Establish a network of Year 11 progression leads in schools -**  
Year 11 progression and post-16 destinations are a key responsibility for schools. At the start of the academic year each secondary school will be asked to identify a lead for year 11 progression who will be the link for the school for specific progression issues including resources, group meetings, September Guarantee, updates from post-16 providers and delivery of support from Portsmouth City Council.

- 2. Securing suitable provision** - the curriculum review has highlighted the ongoing issue of a lack of roll-on roll off provision. Discussions with other statistical neighbouring authorities, including Coventry, has confirmed that this is vital in re-engaging NEETs. Portsmouth has been impacted by the closure of Catch 22 and the lack of a traineeship offer in the city. Before the second lockdown Fareham College offered a traineeship programme from the Enterprise Centre and this was delivered virtually during lockdown. The council will therefore work with the new City of Portsmouth College and other local providers to improve the provision for young people who are NEET. This work will focus on courses with regular entry points and partnerships with other providers including the Princes Trust, MPCT and training providers. This work will be developed and led by a task and finish group to include providers and potential providers of post-16 provision and re-engagement provision.
- 3. Ensure there is proactive support from all professionals who work with young people** to help young people progress and succeed in post-16 education and training and in future employment or further training. This includes professionals from Children's Social Care, Early Help and Edge of Care Service.
- 4. Review of the Youth NEET Prevention Programme** - in order to ensure the long term viability of the Youth NEET Prevention Programme we will work with colleges and schools to review the model and programme funding. A proposal will be taken forward to the Post-16 Forum and traded service offer in Autumn 2021.
- 5. Embed Windmills iCAN programme across schools and colleges in travel to learn area** - for young people creating a meaningful vision for their future can be difficult. The complexity of choices and routes may impact on this. Research also shows that for many young people who have more limited networks e.g. through employment and mentors this will impact on successful planning and progression. In addition to this it is vital that young people's influencers (e.g. parents or carers) are enabled to support them with careers related activity. Funding from the SUN project has enabled the roll out of the Windmills iCAN programme. The programme enables young people to create a meaningful vision for their future, connect with people who can make that a vision a reality and contribute to their progress. The programme is designed to create social capital for young people. During 2021/22 will continue to training mentors and champions in schools and partner organisations to support delivery of the Windmills iCAN career development programme. In addition to this we will support parents/carers to access the programme and work with schools to implement a positive progression programme for year 10/11.

**5. Next steps**

5.1 A revised version of the Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023 will now be prepared which includes:

- the agreed focus of the PEP Strategic Board for Year 2 of the strategy;
- the additional priority focussing on NEET; and
- updates on all key actions for all 10 priorities for Year 2 of the strategy.

5.2 A final version will be circulated to Members of the Education Advisory Board later this month.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

**Appendices:**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020 - 2023 Year One	<a href="https://portsmoutheducationpartnership.co.uk/PEP_Portsmouth_Education_Strategy_2020-2023_Year_1.pdf">PEP Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020-2023 Year 1.pdf</a> (portsmoutheducationpartnership.co.uk)

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