
NOTICE OF MEETING

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

MONDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 4.00 PM

VIRTUAL REMOTE MEETING

Telephone enquiries to Anna Martyn Tel 023 9283 4870

Email: anna.martyn@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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

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

A G E N D A

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declarations of interests**
- 3 **Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 July 2021** (Pages 3 - 10)
- 4 **Support and challenge for Local Authority maintained schools** (Pages 11 - 30)
- 5 **Ongoing response to Covid-19** (Pages 31 - 40)
- 6 **Strategy to reduce fixed-term exclusions and improve school attendance**

(Pages 41 - 58)

The report originally marked on the agenda "to follow" was published on 28 October.

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board held remotely on Wednesday, 14 July 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Ryan Brent
Terry Norton
Jeanette Smith
Judith Smyth

Apologies for Absence

7. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Reeder, Teacher Liaison Panel and Alison Jeffery, who both had other meetings. The Chair welcomed Councillor Brent, the new Chair of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel, and Frances Soul, the newly appointed chair of the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP).

8. 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 Brent declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he works at the City of Portsmouth College (to be created from a merger between Highbury College and Portsmouth College). 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 is a trustee of Portsmouth College.

Mike Stoneman declared an interest as he is a trustee of UTC Portsmouth. Debbie Anderson declared an interest as she sometimes works as an Ofsted inspector. Frances Soul declared an interest as she is a trustee of Coram Life Education, a trustee of the Future Frontiers careers charity and a consultant for the Confederation of School Trusts.

9. Minutes of previous meeting held on 8 February 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

10. Update on inspections

Before moving to the first agenda item Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education, gave an update on recent Ofsted inspections.

The UTC (University Technical College) Portsmouth had had a Section 8 inspection which turned into a two day Section 5 inspection when it became clear substantial progress had been made, and that safeguarding was now effective. The UTC is now Outstanding across all judgement areas. Staff have been informed and the outcome has been published on the Ofsted website.

Just under 92% (91.7%) Portsmouth schools are Good or Outstanding and 93.4% children attend them. Wimborne Primary is excluded from these figures as it is a new school created from the amalgamation of Wimborne Infant and Wimborne Junior Schools, both of which were both Good prior to the amalgamation. Four schools Require Improvement (Castle View Academy, Stamshaw Junior, Milton Park Primary, Westover Primary) and Corpus Christi Catholic Primary is Inadequate because of safeguarding concerns, which in turn means leadership is inadequate. It is hoped at the next Section 8 inspection the outcome will improve as was the case at UTC Portsmouth. Officers are satisfied that safeguarding is now effective. When schools are judged Inadequate they are issued with an Academy Order by the RSC. As a result Corpus Christi has become part of the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust (Oaklands School). However, the council still works closely with Corpus Christi. Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years, has worked with the new headteacher, who was appointed last September, and has visited regularly. Participation in the Destination Reader programme and the use of systematic synthetic phonics have helped improve literacy at KS2. Ofsted monitoring visits in the autumn and spring were positive.

In response to questions from members about the Portsmouth Paradox (where despite schools having good Ofsted outcomes attainment and progress remains relatively low), officers explained there is no easy answer and attainment and progress still need to improve. Poor school attendance remains a significant factor, particularly at secondary level. There is also a high rate of fixed-term exclusions. There were a number of schools in difficult circumstances some years ago (most of which are now academies) and although they are moving in the right direction improvements are gradual. It takes time to improve a failing school. There are significant variations across Portsmouth; some schools improve but then have a difficult cohort which leads to turbulence. Officers are optimistic that the implementation of the priorities that make up the Portsmouth Education Strategy will lead to further improvements. The proof of this will not be available until next year (2022) when the first set of results since the pandemic will be published.

It was noted that two-thirds of schools belong to 14 Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), which the RSC holds accountable for improving standards. The council works with the remaining third of LA maintained schools and focuses on those who need additional help.

In response to concerns that the 2020 and 2021 results would be inflated or inconsistent, officers said they would examine the 2022 results carefully. They are not taking their foot off the pedal when it comes to improving standards and recently requested a meeting with the Schools Minister Nick Gibb to discuss the issue and the paradox described above. They acknowledged that

some areas with higher levels of deprivation achieve better results but some like London receive significantly more funding per pupil. Areas like Hastings and Medway have results very similar to Portsmouth, especially for white British boys, whose low attainment is a national issue.

11. Response to Covid-19

Mike Stoneman presented the report and highlighted the support provided since schools re-opened on 8 March, including the Studybugs initiative which is providing live attendance data. He noted that vouchers for free school meals pupils (provided by EdenRed) would be available for the whole of the summer holidays, including for eligible early years pupils.

Sarah Christopher, PEP and School Inclusion Manager, gave an update on anti-racism work and mental health support. Although there is no requirement for schools to report prejudice-based incidents, headteachers are asked to provide information so that officers can track and monitor and provide appropriate education and training. Most incidents are race related with a few related to gender or sexual orientation. Sarah reported that children did some fabulous work for the UN Anti-Racism Day on 20 March, including a display of art work at Canoe Lake. A working group is co-producing work on nuanced conversations (those where even if there is not a racist intent it impacts the recipient). It is matter of educating people who make such remarks that they are not appropriate. One teacher has done good work on challenging stereotypes from a young age. Some schools have requested whole staff training which is linked to other work such as the Portsmouth Black History project.

It is unlikely other areas have the full mental health support that Portsmouth does. Despite delays caused by Covid relationships are being built with the Mental Health Support Teams. Co-production is taking place with parents to unpick pathways for mental health support as they can be confusing. Support can come from Kooth or the Mental Health Support Teams as well as CAMHS.

Absence due to children having to self-isolate has increased recently so remote education is still essential and will continue next year. TSAT (Thinking Schools Academy Trust) have supported schools with their digital learning offer under a contract with the council and officers have increased the number of children having access to a device and the internet. Details of the digital learning strategy were announced at the PEP summer conference on 2 July.

In response to questions from members, officers explained that

Uptake for vouchers for free school meal pupils was around 98%. Schools give parents the code to access the vouchers.

The laptops promised by the government have been received.

Anti-racism training is provided as soon as schools request it. A package around anti-racism has been compiled as a result of requests. When the

guidance is launched in September schools will be encouraged to base training around it. However, training is just one aspect of changing a school's culture.

Many events like assemblies have moved online, for example, there was online assembly with an LGBT theme for primary schools, which could be shared with other schools. It is hoped to continue online training events along with face-to-face ones. Training includes dealing with scenarios when very young children repeat parents' views without being disrespectful to the parents. There is a specialist team in early help who do a lot of work and training with schools.

The CAMHS waiting list varies according to the help needed; for example, it can be long for autism but responds very quickly to young people in crisis. CAMHS can offer consultation, support and advice while waiting and families can phone for advice. Waiting lists are longer because of increased demand rather than under-resourcing. There are also problems filling staff vacancies as recruitment to CAMHS posts is an issue regionally.

With regard to monitoring the outcomes of initiatives, attainment will not be known until next year but exclusion and attendance are still monitored. Vulnerable learners are tracked and, if not in school, are supported. Portsmouth currently has better rates of school attendance than other local authorities. Officers are now working on reducing fixed-term exclusions which will impact on attainment. The Chair said "big picture" factors are complex but officers can drill down to tangible results in some interventions such as Pompey Pirates. Members thought it would be helpful to see at the next meeting a brief table showing the effectiveness of initiatives and interventions.

Mike Stoneman confirmed that data could be provided by year group on those children that have had to self-isolate due to a positive case in school. The situation has been challenging in the last few weeks and is becoming more so as the end of term approaches. Schools have provided a good offer and access to devices so it would be disappointing if children and families were not engaging with school.

RESOLVED that 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.

12. Portsmouth Education Strategy 2020-2023: Refresh for Year 2

Mike Stoneman and Debbie Anderson presented the report, highlighting the Portsmouth Education Strategy's four key areas which would be the focus of Year 2.

Digital learning - officers will continue to work to reap the benefits of progress made during Covid; schools are now in a much better position to support digital learning. At the PEP summer conference TSAT set out a digital learning vision with a number of themes for the autumn term, for example,

reducing digital poverty by ensuring good access to the internet at school and home.

Peer review - Portsmouth is highly collaborative but can be inward-looking so the new peer review framework will be non-judgemental and focus on lines of enquiry such as how school improvement plans are working and how they can work better. A process has been written with LA maintained schools who do not have the access to peer review that academies have and which can be costly for smaller schools. Peer review teams will comprise different schools who can learn from each other. All schools have signed up to the process. A second PEP process encourages LA maintained schools and MATs to benefit from each other's expertise. The aim is to look outwards while using the best of what is available in Portsmouth.

Improving literacy outcomes - KS2 outcomes are still a concern though the Maths Hub has helped improve maths. The Early Language & Literacy Development Group is for all years, not just early years. The "plan on a page" has been refreshed to become a "commitment" with strands of expectations showing what families, the local authority, culture and leisure organisations are meant to be doing to improve early language and literacy. There is a particular focus on reading. Portsmouth is twinned with the Hastings Opportunity Area and as part of their funding Hastings has to assist other areas so Portsmouth benefits from Hastings' use of Hackney Learning Trust's Destination Reader programme. It is used in ten schools and has shown to be really effective - a 'game changer' for some. It comprises high quality teaching of reading and oracy and encourages a love of reading using high quality texts. Portsmouth's report on progress to Hastings can be brought to the next meeting. The twinning arrangement with Hastings will continue next year so another ten schools at KS2 can join. The Hackney Learning Trust have not used Destination Reader in secondary schools but they are willing to adapt it for Year 7 in Portsmouth schools. The aim is that all subject teachers are also teachers of reading as children need to read well to do well in the subject. Two secondary schools have expressed interest in being a pilot. Portsmouth's approach to reading is on the PEP website and is a useful source of information.

In response to questions from members, there are termly monitoring reports for Destination Reader which members can see if they wish. Attainment information is available for the Pompey Pirates reading scheme for up to April 2021; the average improvement in reading age was 11 months and 35% children improved their reading age by a year or more. Members thought successes should be widely publicised and be part of future reports to the Board.

Portsmouth is looking to expand Pompey Pirates to three literacy hubs across the city so more schools can benefit. Officers are currently looking at sites in north and central Portsmouth. The Chair encouraged people to volunteer with Pompey Pirates, having found it a very rewarding experience.

Attendance and fixed-term exclusions (FTE) - there is concern with statistical neighbours and disappointingly FTEs are rising. Great work is being done with

restorative practice. Claire Copeland of Trafalgar School has significantly reduced FTEs with restorative practice at the heart of work. FTE figures rise where there is a more punitive approach. Collective efforts to address similar issues have resulted in change. Portsmouth was at the bottom for permanent exclusions but is now in the top ten, likewise with electively home educated children; there is no evidence of any off-rolling now. Mark Finnis, a guest speaker at the PEP summer conference, gave great examples of how restorative practice greatly reduced FTEs in Hull.

Officers recently held an attendance workshop for schools. Portsmouth has adapted attendance campaigns during Covid so that Miss School Miss Out is on hold with Welcome Back / Return to School campaigns used instead. The theme of *what children could become* will be resumed in the autumn with images of careers rather than sharks. The three LA Link Co-ordinators focus on chronic non-attenders (less than 50% attendance). Schools are challenged when they use reduced timetables for more than six weeks and there have been improvements.

In response to questions from members, officers explained giving a clear picture of attendance is complicated due to Covid and some figures do not look good, mainly as so many children are having to self-isolate. Next year's figures will reflect attendance more accurately and hopefully it will have improved due to measures implemented during Covid.

The Chair noted that with regard to the impact of long Covid on attendance, some families are being over-cautious about sending children to school whereas other children are badly affected. Attendance may have to be approached on a case by case basis as it is a complex issue.

NEETS (not in education, employment or training) - the PEP has endorsed adding NEETS as a tenth priority. Portsmouth has a statutory duty to prevent NEETs and compared with other local authorities is good at tracking and monitoring them. Significant progress had been made since 2013 when NEETs were at the highest, but in recent years the figures have begun to increase again, exacerbated by the pandemic. Officers referred to the various initiatives that have been run to help reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET.

In response to questions from members as to the effectiveness of initiatives, it was made clear that without such initiatives the figures would be substantially worse and in some LAs the situation is far worse. Officers would not recommend reducing or changing the initiatives as they have had an impact. Funding is a big issue for programmes as they tend to rely on external funding but Portsmouth is doing the best it can with limited resources. Tracking and monitoring young people helps.

RESOLVED that 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.

The Chair thanked officers for their reports.

Members passed on their thanks to Alison Jeffery for her hard work and wished her the best in her new post. She has worked tirelessly to help children, families and education in Portsmouth.

The next meeting is on Wednesday 13 October at 4 pm (location to be confirmed).

The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 4



THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Education Advisory Board
Subject:	Support and challenge for LA Maintained schools
Date of meeting:	Monday 1 st November 2021
Report from:	Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education
Report by:	Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement & Early Years
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director - Education

2. Purpose

- 2.1 This report sets out how LA Maintained schools have been provided with support and challenge by the council's school improvement service since the previous report was presented to the Education Advisory Board in February 2021. This therefore covers the period that saw the full re-opening of schools from 8th March 2021 and the disruption that was caused during the summer term due to positive cases and pupils and staff having to self-isolate.

3. Summary of the support and challenge to LA Maintained schools

- 3.1 Support and challenge for LA Maintained schools has built upon the report of 14th October 2020, which recommended the school improvement prioritisation and support for 2020-2021, delivered by the Head of School Improvement & Early Years and the update provided in February 2021.
- 3.2 A key focus of our work has continued to be the support and challenge provided to the two LA Maintained schools which have less than Good Ofsted judgements for Overall Effectiveness.
- a) On 1st April 2021 **Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School** joined the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust and ceased to be LA Maintained. However, the LA support and challenge was recognised in the Ofsted remote monitoring inspection of 27th and 28th January 2021. *"The local authority has monitored recent improvements through visits to the school and frequent conversations with leaders. This has supported leaders in focusing on*

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

improving the school's curriculum and how it is delivered in the current circumstances." Inspectors found that *"leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances"* which bodes well for the school's first Section 5 Ofsted inspection that it will receive as a legally designated new school.

- b) **Milton Park Primary School** received Ofsted monitoring visits during the Autumn 2020, Spring 2021 and Summer 2021. In June 2021 HMI reported that *"leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school."* The positive report letter also noted that *"the school has benefited from a range of well-targeted support from the local authority and some external consultants"* which testifies to the proportional support and challenge that has been given to the school and its leaders.
- 3.3 Building on the successful school to school support secured for two LA Maintained schools (Corpus Christi and Mayfield), a further opportunity has been proposed for Milton Park. This support comprises five days of National Leader of Education (NLE) work for each school through a 'Recovering from Covid' DfE funded opportunity, with timescales extended due to the pandemic.
- 3.4 Following a successful twinning bid to Hastings Opportunity Area, ten Key Stage 2 LA Maintained schools have been fully funded to participate in the Hackney Learning Trust **Destination Reader** programme. The **'Reading for Purpose and Pleasure'** project has proceeded despite challenges of the pandemic and early impact after two terms for both staff and pupils seems very positive (refer to Appendix 1). As a result, Hastings has invited us to apply for a second year of funding to extend the project. Given the priority to improve literacy standards in Portsmouth, this reading initiative is a key element within the PEP Education Strategy.
- 3.5 In our meeting with the then School Standards Minister Nick Gibb in May 2021, we were challenged to improve the achievements of Portsmouth children in the annual Year 1 **Phonics** Screening Check. Both the Primary National Curriculum and the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework highlight the importance of phonics in developing children's early reading skills. Follow up actions to the meeting have included liaison with our local English Hub, who then put on a webinar specifically for Portsmouth schools. Training, guidance, resources and funding can all be accessed from Springhill English Hub in Southampton and LA Maintained schools who have not previously pursued this support have now been specifically targeted to ensure they maximise their eligibility and entitlement.
- 3.6 A sub-group of the PEP Early language and Literacy Development Group has also been established to promote both the robust teaching of phonics and

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

progression in phonics through Year 2 and into Key Stage 2 as this has an effect on skills in reading, writing and spelling. Schools across the PEP, including those that are LA Maintained have been clearly informed about Systematic Synthetic Phonics programmes (SSPs) and the implications if schools choose not to adopt a DfE validated SSP.

- 3.7 The DfE has made it clear that as in 2020 data will not be published at an individual institution level and that any 2021 results are not to be used for any sort of accountability. Whilst all end of KS1 and KS2 assessments were cancelled again in 2021, and the **Early Years Foundation Stage Profile** assessment not mandatory, we have continued to offer **optional moderation sessions organised by our Lead Moderator and the Early Years team** as appropriate, with LA Maintained schools prioritised. This is vital in ensuring teachers make accurate judgements and assessments accurately reflect children's achievements, then are challenged to plan next steps in learning which will drive improved pupil progress.
- 3.8 LA Maintained schools have had proportionate contact with the Head of School Improvement & Early Years to discuss current and future priorities, strategic plans, challenges and opportunities to agree support and development. Support for LA Maintained schools' head teacher and deputy head teacher recruitment has continued to ensure that robust processes are in place to secure the best possible appointments.

New head teachers to headship in LA Maintained schools have been further supported by a **specific coaching group** led by an external consultant and additional contact with the Head of School Improvement & Early Years. This has been particularly important where they are responding to the challenges of Covid-19 alongside the other demands of their school leadership. Feedback at the end of the school year in July 2021 anecdotally illustrates the value of this, such as *"Thank you so much. I couldn't have done it without your ongoing support and guidance. Truly appreciate it."*

- 3.9 The local authority **brokers additional support from local and regional partners**. For example, prioritised LA Maintained schools have had commissioned work undertaken by our local Lead Moderator and the Assistant Solent Maths Hub Lead for Primary. We have a working relationship with the new HISP (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Southampton and Portsmouth) **Teaching School Hub** and have suggested that our LA Maintained schools use the services of this body to support new Early Career Teachers (ECTs) with their entitlement to the training and development of the new Early Career Framework for teachers within the first two years of their career along with the Appropriate Body designation to assess and verify that ECTs are meeting the Teachers' Standards.

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

- 3.10 During the academic year 2020 - 2021 the LA Maintained schools **peer review** process entitled 'Reflective Improvement' has been co-produced. Experienced school leaders have offered to be lead reviewers and all LA Maintained schools except the two converting to academy status in November 2021 have signed up to the process. The scheduling has been planned with school and senior leaders visiting other schools over the year to help reflection and provide an objective view by trusted colleagues to develop school improvement. This aligns to the Portsmouth Education Partnership peer review process.
- 3.11 With a focus on the most vulnerable, the local authority has supported the work of the Literacy Trust local project **Pompey Pirates** and the learning and motivation that disadvantaged children have been supported with by attending this initiative. Whilst it is not solely focused on LA Maintained schools and their pupils, it is undoubtedly a positive resource that is having an impact that will support our drive to improve literacy standards across the city overall moving forwards (refer to Appendix 2). A second hub will be opening in January 2022 in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard where space has been secured in the National Museum of the Royal Navy.
- 3.12 Half-termly briefings for LA Maintained schools have included training on the peer review process as well as a presentation on Ofsted updates. Having attended the regional Ofsted conference for inspectors, it is a great opportunity to cascade information and enable our schools to prepare for forthcoming inspections. LA Maintained schools are also being offered bespoke **Ofsted training modules** and this has included 'Understanding the Education Inspection Framework' and 'understanding the Ofsted Early Reading Deep Dive'. An understanding of the process will enable our schools to feel more in control when they are inspected and that the process is 'done with' rather than 'done to'.
- 3.13 Undoubtedly, the Coronavirus global pandemic has presented all school leaders with enormous and ongoing challenges. LA Maintained school leaders along with those in multi academy trusts have benefited from **wellbeing sessions** facilitated by the local authority, weekly communications and the swift response of officers to their needs and requests in these unprecedented times. It has been vital that we continue open lines of communication with LA Maintained schools, that our focus on both high support and high challenge is not forgotten, in order to ensure that they are supported to deliver the very best education for our children and young people.

.....
Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

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:

Title of document	Location
Hastings Opportunity Area Final report (July 2021)	
Pompey Pirates Term 3 Impact Report 2021	

This page is intentionally left blank

This final monitoring report is designed to give us a full understanding of how your project was delivered and implemented against your key performance indicators and outcomes. We want to know how you have spent your funding and the difference it has made to everyone involved; this may include young people, teachers and parents.

Providers/ School: Portsmouth City Council

Name of project: Developing Reading for Purpose and Pleasure

Project start and end dates: September 2020- July 2021

The aims and objectives for your project as per application form:

The funding is to enable 10 Portsmouth schools to access the Destination Reader programme & 1 school Daily Supported Reading. Additionally, funding will support on-going contact with Hackney Learning Trust, staff from the schools to be released from the classroom to 'visit' (face to face or virtual) their colleagues in other schools involved in the project, liaison with the project lead & supply cover to ensure quantitative & qualitative data is gathered throughout.

Standards in both Reading & Writing at KS2 in Portsmouth have long been lagging behind the national average & are also not favorable when compared against local statistical neighbours, in spite of improving Ofsted judgements. Standards are unlikely to rise significantly without schools employing a rigorous & pedagogical based approach.

The project is targeted at LA maintained schools, as those within MATs tend to follow consistent directed programmes for teaching & learning.

Delivery of Destination Reader at the following schools- Copnor Primary, Milton Park Primary, Medina Primary, Craneswater Junior, The Harbour School, Mayfield School, St Paul's Catholic Primary, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary, St George's Beneficial C of E Primary, Cottage Grove Primary

Daily Supported Reading at the following schools - St George's Beneficial C of E Primary

Key performance indicators and Outcomes/ targets that you were aiming to deliver.

Please provide information under each outcome in the box below on what you have achieved

Outcomes that you are aiming to achieve and for which pupils?

- The % gap between Portsmouth LA & the national average for KS2 Reading EXS+ narrows significantly from 7% in 2019 to within +/- 2%. Previously, 2017 - 2019: 67%, 69%, 67%). [Unable to report due to no statutory KS2 SATs in 2021.](#)
- All schools within the project are in line with or above KS2 Reading EXS+ national average in 2021. [Unable to report due to no statutory KS2 SATs in 2021.](#)

- The % gap between Portsmouth LA FSM6 & not FSM6 for Reading KS2 EXS+ narrows from 13% in 2019 to within 5%. [Unable to report due to no statutory KS2 SATs in 2021.](#)
- Raised enjoyment & improved levels of confidence amongst teachers & pupils (especially those who are disadvantaged & lower attainers). [Completed.](#)

For all 5 key questions on the pupil audit entry and exit survey / questionnaires the response to the most positive answer of 3 available has increased, and the response to the least favorable decreased.

[For detailed analysis please see the appendix to this report.](#)

Termly outcomes

- Baseline - scrutiny of in-school data & assessment information from September 2020 to gauge % of pupils expected to achieve EXS+ initially in return to school from 1st lockdown. [Schools conducted own but then severely affected by further lockdown and Covid issues.](#)
- Baseline - information on reported levels of pupil confidence & enjoyment in Reading (questionnaires & anecdotal). [Completed in mid-year report.](#)
- Baseline - information of teacher levels of confidence in teaching Reading in relation to subject knowledge & pedagogy (teacher survey). [Completed in mid-year report.](#)
- End of term 4 (July 2021) KS2 Reading EXS+ results from 2021 SATs in comparison to 2019, both for individual schools in the project & across the project group as a whole. [Unable to report due to no statutory KS2 SATs in 2021.](#)
- End of term 4 (July 2021) Revisit levels of pupil confidence & enjoyment in Reading. [Completed on the basis of the schools that have submitted returns. See appendix.](#)
- End of term 6 (Dec 2021) Revisit teacher levels of confidence in teaching Reading. [Future outcome.](#)

KPI's

- Lead teacher & member of SLT from all project schools to attend training on January 2021 dates. [Completed.](#)
- Project schools cascade training to all relevant staff by end of January 2021. [Delayed but now completed.](#)
- Baseline data assessed by February half-term 15.02.2021, with target pupils or groups of pupils identified. [Delayed but now completed.](#)
- SLT member in each project school to have monitored teaching & learning in DR & DSR lessons before the beginning of the Summer term 19.04.2021. [Delayed but now completed. Additionally, project lead visited two schools to observe implementation of Destination Reader in lessons with pupils. Visit records completed.](#)
- Schools report to Project Lead on teacher & pupil survey/questionnaires. [All schools submitted baseline data but not all met the deadline for July 2021 revisiting of the data, mainly due to Covid pressures and issues of staff and pupils self-isolating. The analysis is based on those schools that did revisit the pupil audit survey / questionnaires as requested.](#)

How many children/teachers did you anticipate working with/training?

The project covered working with 10 schools to implement Destination Reader, with one of these also accessing Daily Supported Reading.

The schools range from 1 form entry primary, to a 3 form entry junior school and one specialist provision school which caters for children with SEMH needs.

Daily Supported Reading is being introduced in KS1 in a 2 form entry primary school.

Project schools were able to choose who to implement the work with, single class, year group or across all of KS2.

How many children/teachers/other staff did you work with and over what time period?

From the Destination Reader baseline audits undertaken by the schools involved in the project, just under 1000 children have been involved and approximately 100 staff. Those involved in Daily Supported Reading is over and above these figures.

The project began in January 2021 with training and has covered two terms worth of work through the Spring and Summer terms 2021.

Have there been any additional outcomes, what were these and what was the impact of these? Please set out in the box below.

The support network group created has led to even greater collaborative working between schools, which has been particularly supportive to staff working in education throughout the pandemic.

Being just one strand of the work of the Portsmouth Education Partnership Early Language and Literacy Development Group, the project has highlighted the focus on improving standards of Reading across the city. It has also led to more joined up working between partners e.g. both the schools' library service and the educational psychology service worked with the education service on a hugely successful literacy session in our PEP summer education conference: sharing reading research and a webinar by Michael Morpurgo for Year 6 pupils.

What has worked well – please set this out

The schools have appreciated the flexibility to begin implementation with a trial class or year group, especially through 2 terms which have included lockdown, delivering remote education, staff and pupils continuing to self-isolate and catch up work.

Support, advice and guidance from Hackney Learning Trust has been extremely timely, sensitive but also robust and reassuring. This has enabled schools to gain confidence in adapting to new ways of working or building upon good practice in the teaching of reading and cascading training.

The support network group that we have set up for the 10 project schools has been effective in enabling schools to liaise with each other, share experiences, resources, training and planning. This has been so important to introducing the project whilst managing the complexities of issues arising from the pandemic.

Collaboration between schools to share training and lessons learned along the way has been a real strength e.g. videos of teachers teaching a DR lesson.

Positive attitudes and a 'can do' approach has built confidence and a willingness to focus on the moral imperative of children successfully learning to read in KS2 alongside catch up work.

What have been the challenges you have experienced? How did you address these?

The Covid-19 global pandemic and national lockdown from 4th January 2021 to the wider reopening of schools to all pupils on 8th March 2021 significantly affected the capacity of schools to initially engage in training and then to fully implement the project in the way intended. Staff were balancing the needs of delivering high-quality remote education with providing for pupils attending school, ensuring safety and pastoral care, and responding to changing and detailed government guidance. Flexibility and support have addressed this.

With staff and pupils unwell or self-isolating attendance and participation have been affected so ensuring a supported consistent and continued implementation has been significant.

Demands on staff and infection prevention control measures have meant that staff have not visited other project schools and shared experiences in the way initially conceived.

All of the above have been addressed through regular communication and support. Hackney Learning Trust have remained in contact with each project school and our support network group has had half-termly virtual meetings. Having the Head of School Improvement and Early Years to co-ordinate and oversee the project has meant there has been one single point of contact.

What have you not been able to deliver and why?

All of the project has been implemented albeit not so fully or so timely as intended. The aspect on which we have not been able to deliver is consideration of the quantitative measures of impact such as KS2 Reading SATs data, given the cancellation of formal statutory assessment in 2021.

It has been difficult to gain full revisiting of baseline data for pupil confidence and enjoyment given the pressure on schools, so the reporting is based on the return that was received.

What impact did your project have for those children/young people/staff that took part - and how do you know this?

Regular dialogue and communication with schools and Hackney Learning Trust has rekindled an enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, the teaching of Reading amongst school staff. School DR Leads have described higher pupil engagement and anecdotal evidence of impact on positive pupil outcomes and the increased skills of staff from the CPD they have received.

Whilst attainment cannot be measured, schools are recording increased progress in reading when compared to 2019 e.g. report from Copnor Primary School.

What are the key points you have learnt from the project?

- Flexibility is vital - allowing each school to move at its own pace and to implement as they see fit and appropriate within their own organisation and curriculum, especially when balancing issues from the pandemic.
- Regular communication aids focus and maintains a high priority of continuing development and momentum of the project.
- Schools value support networks and opportunities to share experiences with each other.
- School leaders, teachers and support staff have been re-energised in their enthusiasm for the teaching of reading.
- Oracy and pupil interactivity is driving higher engagement and enjoyment of reading, which is promoting greater participation and practice that is impacting upon outcomes.
- Whole class teaching and partner work is supporting the lowest 20% who are not withdrawn from DR lessons.
- Investment and support makes schools feel as if their work is valued and promotes commitment and enthusiasm for new initiatives.

Embedding. Please explain how you will continue to embed and deliver for the future

The 10 project schools are very committed to the project and despite challenges are keen to build upon early indications of impact from this year. They have all match-funded payment towards the annual subscription with Hackney Learning Trust in 2021 - 2022 to continue to access training, support and guidance to support implementation and rollout.

Impact and success stories have been cascaded across the local authority and this has meant that there are further schools interested and we are looking to extend the project with a second phase of up to another 10 KS2 schools.

A strong relationship with Hackney Learning Trust has been established, such as we are working to innovate and trial a new concept of 'Destination Reader Plus', whereby Destination Reader is introduced into Year 7. This has not been tried before but two Portsmouth secondary schools have signed up to this new initiative for 2021 - 2022.

Your budget: £ 25,000

How much funding have you spent on your project? Please give a detail breakdown

Training for 10 schools to participate in Destination Reader and 1 school in Daily Supported Reading cost £22,100.

£1,000 has been paid to the School Library Service to purchase high quality text reading books for project schools to borrow for Destination Reader lessons.

Given Covid restrictions schools have requested that a further £1,000 intended for supply cover to pay staff to enable them to visit each other schools, is spent on additional resources before the end of the school year.

£500 has been paid to enable administration, leadership and attendance of the DR support network group.

£400 remains to be carried over into 2021 - 2022.

Any other comments

Portsmouth City Council is grateful for this twinning opportunity and looks forward to continuing the relationship with Hastings in the future, in addition to working on innovative developments with Hackney Learning Trust regarding reading in secondary schools.

Completed by:

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years, Portsmouth City Council

19th July 2021

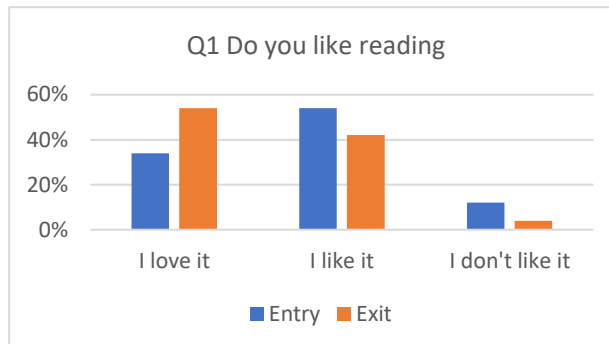
Appendix

Data collection summary

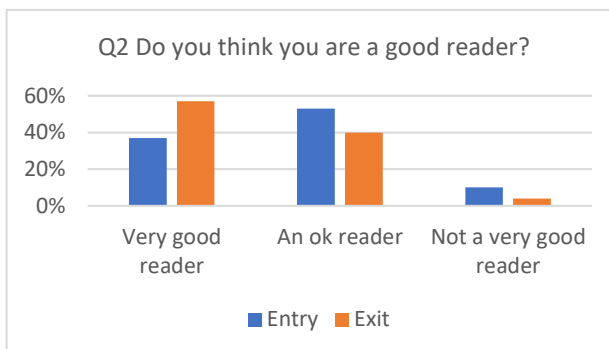
Pupil survey 'Audit on entry and exit' headline

- For all 5 questions, the response to the most positive answer of 3 available has increased, and the response to the least favorable decreased.

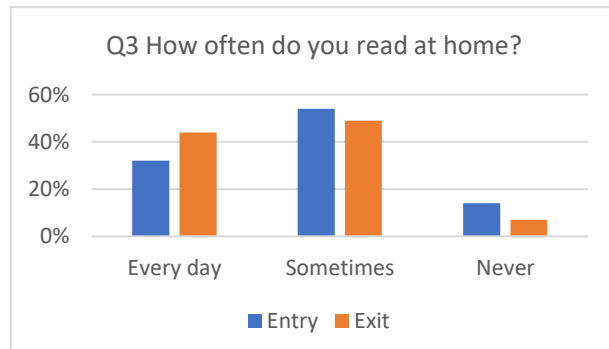
Do you like reading?	Entry	Exit
I love it	34%	54%
I like it	54%	42%
I don't like it	12%	4%



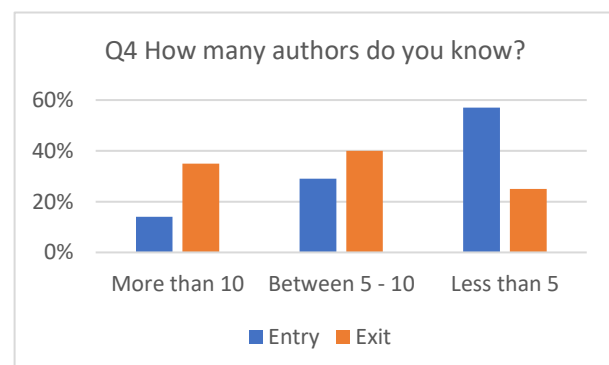
Do you think you are a good reader?	Entry	Exit
Very good reader	37%	57%
An ok reader	53%	40%
Not a very good reader	10%	4%



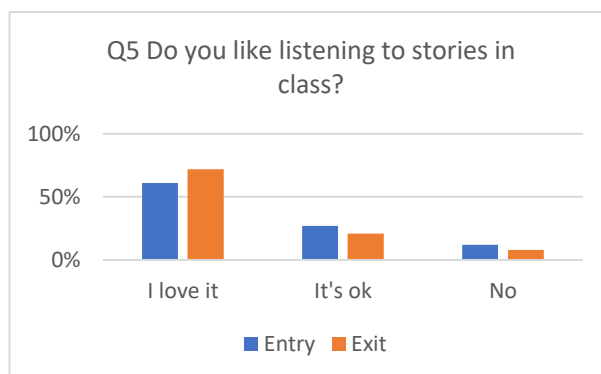
How often do you read on your own at home?	Entry	Exit
Every day	32%	44%
Sometimes	54%	49%
Never	14%	7%



How many authors do you know?	Entry	Exit
More than 10	14%	35%
Between 5 - 10	29%	40%
Less than 5	57%	25%



Do you like listening to stories in class?	Entry	Exit
I love it	61%	72%
It's ok	27%	21%
No	12%	8%



Case study excerpt - School C

For the 57 children that took part in both audits, their results have increased across the board, with the most significant increase being 'Do you know how to improve your reading?', which is potentially because of the explicit way DR structures this for children, as well as staff developing their pedagogy in this area (seen from the staff audit) . The only statement that has decreased is 'Do you like listening to stories in class?'. This has decreased by 21%, which we are going to dig a bit deeper into. My hypothesis is that this has decreased because more children now enjoy reading as they are better readers, therefore they would prefer to read themselves than listen to stories as a whole class.

The weakest area for the cohort is their knowledge of authors, which is an area we are going to continue to focus on during the remainder of this year, but also going into the next academic year.

In terms of the staff audit, their perceptions of reading have improved across the board. They are much more confident in how to create an effective learning environment, knowing how to elicit good quality discussions and debates from the children, as well as knowing how to model explicit strategies effectively in reading, for example.

Case study - data analysis from one project school

Year 3 Reading data from 2020 - 2021 compared to the academic year of 2018-19 as this was the last year that we were not in a lockdown.

<u>2020 – 2021</u>	<u>2018 -2019</u>
ARE: 60%	ARE: 73%
GDS: 15%	GDS: 28%
Average points progress summer term: 1.7	Average points progress summer term: 0.83
% increase from points progress: 104%	

2020 – 2021

90% of pupils made 3 or more steps progress

45% of pupils made 4 or more steps progress

Of the 10 % of pupils who have made 2 steps or less progress, all of these pupils were home learners during the spring term. They are also all PP children, and 5 out of 8 children are SEND learners.

2018 – 2019

82% of pupils made 3 or more steps progress

4% of pupils made 4 or more steps progress

Narrative

Although the attainment this academic year is lower than 2018-2019, the progress is significantly greater than the previous year, with an increase of 104%.

Lower attainment for the Year 3's during this academic year could be attributed to the children missing a large quantity of school since the first lockdown in March 2020. In direct correlation with this, the percentage increase in points progress this year could be a direct impact of Destination Reader, with teachers having a greater pedagogical understanding of how to teach reading effectively, as well as being given an effective structure for teaching reading, with dialogic talk used frequently to improve standards.

Staff and pupil audits have suggested there is a positive correlation between Destination Reader and improved progress. However, the presence of other potential causes could also impact outcomes.

Factors such as:

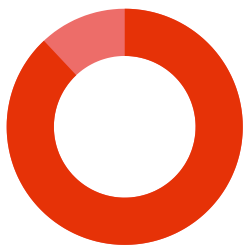
- children's participation and support in reading outside of school;
- extra reading interventions given to pupils inside school;
- phonics being explicitly taught to pupils in Year 3 – something that hasn't historically been taught consistently before;
- as well as the fact that it has also only been implemented for 1 ½ terms could be reasons why we have seen a great improvement in progress.
- Other factors at school, such as the increased teachers' urgency in the catch up programme, could also be a contributing factor as to why children have made significant progress.

With increased motivation in Reading from staff and pupils, as well as a greater knowledge and understanding of how to teach and answer reading skills from teachers and children, we will continue to embrace DR and continue to monitor the impact of DR across KS2.



**On average the Pompey Pirates made progress
50% faster
than age related expectations.**

Their reading age improved by an average of 14 months over the course of 9 months, whilst they would otherwise have been expected to make less than 9 months progress.



88%
of students feel more
confident in their reading
abilities, with 54% of these
students feeling a lot more
confident.

31% of students
improved their reading
age by more than a year,
**with some making
as much as three
year's progress.**



According to The Accelerated Reader Student Growth Percentile
- which compares students with others of the same age and
ability level nationally -



**43% of Pompey Pirates are making
progress at an above average rate
with 21% being classed as making
progress at an 'exceptional' rate**

The Literacy Hubs

Impact Report: 2020/21

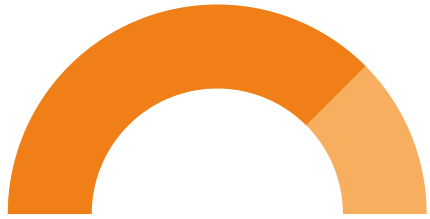


The LiteracyHubs
Learning that inspires, spaces to enthral

Over 80% of students reported feeling **more confident telling people their opinion** since attending Pompey Pirates with 50% saying they felt a lot more confident in this area.



Over 80% feel **more confident in their writing abilities**, with 48% feeling a lot more confident.



74% of students feel **better at persevering**, with 35% of these students feeling a lot more confident.



Over **80%** of parents noticed an **improvement in their child's ability to persevere**.



Students felt they'd shown perserevance by:

- 'Trying over and over again'
- 'Always trying my best'
- 'Pushing through when my friend wasn't there'
- 'Working alone'
- 'Not giving up and working hard'
- 'Trying my best even when I don't want to'



Parental Feedback

A high proportion of parents specifically mentioned an improvement in confidence particularly in the work they produce, as well as an increased enthusiasm in learning.

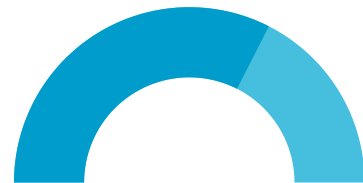
"I have seen a lot of positive changes in my daughter's willingness to read and write"

"Amazing work by everyone. A short story being published and being on the radio were such big events for them and Isabelle was so proud of her achievements as were we."

"My daughter loved every session. [...] It boosted her confidence."

"I was skeptical at first but have seen a real improvement in Zach since attending Pompey Pirates."

88% of parents felt their child's confidence had improved. 47% felt it had improved by a lot.



65% of parents felt their child was **more willing and more interested in reading** at home after attending Pompey Pirates sessions.



71% of parents felt their child was **more willing or interested in writing** since attending Pompey Pirates sessions.

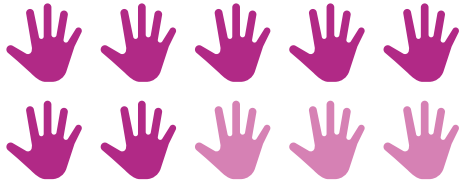
The Literacy Hubs

Impact Report: 2020/21



The LiteracyHubs
Learning that inspires, spaces to enthral

School Feedback



72% of students who attended Pompey Pirates feel **more confident** in asking for help in lessons.

"Mimi now puts up her hand in class without being asked and will speak out loud in front of everyone. She will even repeat what she has said if I think it's too quiet. So much more confident."

"Jake's enthusiasm for writing has grown, he has earned his pen licence and clearly really enjoys writing lessons. He also has been writing his own stories at home."

"Kim is more enthusiastic about English and does now ask for help."

"Harley has made significant improvements in his word choices, tenses, handwriting and also the flow of his writing."

"Confidence and belief in herself has improved. Written work and creative writing has improved drastically."

"Niko will read out loud to the class with a clear and confident voice now."

"Louis has gone from hating writing, to looking forward to writing lessons."

"He seems more focused in lesson and certainly starting to put his eloquence into his writing..."

The Literacy Hubs

Impact Report: 2020/21



The LiteracyHubs
Learning that inspires, spaces to enthral

2020/21 Highlights

Mark (Year 7)

Mark came to us with a reading age of 7 years and 5 months, 3 years and 7 months below where he should be for a year 7 student, Mark has made fantastic progress. During his time at Pompey Pirates he has improved his reading age by 2 years and 1 month, bringing it up to 9 years and 6 months. Mark's teachers noted he was more confident since joining Pompey Pirates and that he was starting to use a wider range of vocabulary in his writing. His parents felt he had improved in confidence and perseverance, as well as enjoying reading and writing more.

"[It's helped] by giving new vocabulary that I can use"

"I have lots of people to support me"

"[My favourite part was] doing projects that something would actually happen with it not just stuck in a book"

Lola (Year 5)

Having joined us with a reading age of 6 years 8 months, 2 years and 4 months below the expected reading age for a year 5 student, Lola has made good progress. In the 11 months she has been attending The Pompey Pirates she has improved her reading age by 2yrs 2 months to 8yrs and 10 months. Lola is now only 2 months behind her age related expectations. Lola has shown a huge increase in her confidence and her willingness to engage with reading and writing tasks. She now frequently asks questions and will seek out help when she needs it.

Frederick (Year 6)

After improving his reading age by an impressive 3 years and 3 months, Frederick now has a reading age of 13 years and 3 months - well above his age-related expectation. Having started the year as a very shy and quiet student, Frederick reported feeling a lot more confident in his written work as well as feeling more confident expressing his opinion and asking for help. This was demonstrated in his enthusiastic participation in our final film project.

"It has helped a lot with my spelling and writing"

"We learn whilst having fun!"

"It has given me more confidence"

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 5



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Meeting: Education Advisory Board

Subject: Response to Covid-19

Date: Monday 1st November 2021

Report from: Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

Report by: Alison Critchley, Head of Sufficiency and Resources

1. Requested by Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

2. Purpose of report

- 2.1 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 14th October 2020, 8th February 2021, and 14th July 2021.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken over the past twenty 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.**

4. The initial response to the pandemic

- 4.1 Following the decision by the government to close education settings from 23rd 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 4.2 to 4.7:
- 4.2 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.

4.3 **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.

4.4 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

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

- 4.7 **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.

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

- 5.1 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 5.2 to 5.9.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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.

- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 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.

6. Ongoing support during the Autumn term 2020

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The council continued to support schools in the **tracking and monitoring of vulnerable children** and we were able to confirm in November 2020 the appointment of 3 full time LA Education Link Co-ordinators.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.

7. Response to 3rd national lockdown and closure of schools from 4th January 2021

- 7.1 On 4th January 2021 the 3rd national lockdown was announced which included the closure of schools until 8th 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.

- 7.2 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 7.3 to 7.7.
- 7.3 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 25th January 2021. The council reviewed the plans for all our LA maintained schools, the majority of whom have used the DfE optional template.
- 7.4 **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.
- 7.5 **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.
- 7.6 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/remotelearning
- 7.7 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

8. Support for the reopening of schools to all pupils from 8th March 2021

- 8.1 Schools reopened to all pupils on 8th 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.

- 8.2 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 dashboard 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.
- 8.3 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 8th 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.
- 8.4 The council also prioritised the introduction of **lateral flow testing for early years staff** ahead of the community testing programme.
- 8.5 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 8th March.
- 8.6 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.
- 8.7 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
- 8.8 **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.

- 8.9 During the school Easter holidays we also launched the **Holiday Activities and Food programme**, working with 14 providers to make available 3,371 days of activities for children eligible for free school meals at venues across the City, with provision focused in areas with higher numbers of children eligible for free school meals.
- 8.10 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
- 8.11 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.
- 8.10 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.
- 8.11 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 2nd July.

9. Summer holidays 2021

- 9.1 During the school summer holidays **food vouchers for FSM pupils** using a Covid Grant Fund. Vouchers were made available to children of statutory school age (including Year 11 school leavers) and also children whose families would have been eligible for benefits-related school meals in early years settings. Due to the reduction in government funding it was

not possible to extend these vouchers to the families of young people in FE colleges.

- 9.2 In the summer holidays we also substantially increased our **HAF Fun Pompey** programme working with 36 providers to make available 13,925 days' worth of provision
- 9.3 We estimate that over 3,000 attended HAF provision, which would be over 37.5% of the free school meals eligible population of around 8,000 pupils. The detailed breakdown below shows 3123, although we know that some children attended places with more than one provider so there will be some overlap

Breakdown of children and young people attending HAF provision		
	Primary Aged	Secondary Aged
FSM eligible, no SEND	2306	487
FSM eligible, with SEND	195	55
Non-FSM eligible (agency referred), no SEND	53	16
Non FSM eligible (agency referred), with SEND	8	3
TOTALS	2562	561

10. Autumn term 2021

- 10.1 At the end of July, in line with England moving to "stage 4" of restrictions, the rules around how schools should operate were significantly amended, with these changes coming in from the start of the new school year. Key changes were:
- Schools were advised against using some of the mitigations that were in place during parts of last year, including the principle of keeping groups of pupils in separate 'bubbles'
 - Whilst the definition of a 'close contact' was unchanged, the requirement for close contacts of people with confirmed cases of coronavirus to self-isolate has been removed for all children and young people up to 18 years and 6 months, and for fully vaccinated adults
 - Schools will not be routinely asked to do contact tracing
- 10.2 Following the approach taken throughout the pandemic, schools and MATs worked closely with PCC education and public health colleagues to provide timely support and advice to Portsmouth schools
- 10.3 When schools returned at the start of September Portsmouth's infection rate was the highest in the South-East region, and the tenth highest

nationally. The Director of Public Health therefore wrote to all schools giving support and encouragement to schools that wanted to put additional mitigations in place where coronavirus was present in the school or wider community. We have worked closely with health to put in a stepped process where schools experience outbreaks

- 10.6 The removal of the requirement for whole bubbles to self-isolate where one member of the class tests positive has kept more children in school. However, over recent weeks in Portsmouth and nationally we have seen the infection rate in school age pupils, particularly secondary school age pupils, increase sharply, although there are now some signs that this is levelling off.
- 10.7 Absence amongst staff, including cases of coronavirus in fully vaccinated staff, and staff who are not fully vaccinated needing to self-isolate, is creating considerable pressure across all Portsmouth schools. One school has had to move to remote teaching for some year groups in the week before Half Term. If infection rates remain at their current levels we can expect more schools may need to move to remote learning over the coming weeks.
- 10.8 In mid-September the government confirmed that the go ahead had been given to offer a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine to teenagers aged 12-15, with these doses to be delivered primarily through schools. Again, there has been extremely close working between secondary schools, the school-age immunisation service, and the council to put the practical arrangements in place for vaccinations to be offered at all schools by October half term, and support high take-up of the vaccine from parents that choose for their child to be vaccinated.
- 10.9 Following recent government announcements arrangements are now being put in place to enable parents of children who missed their vaccination at school to book an appointment at St James's. This will benefit children who missed their vaccine at school because they were ill or had tested positive for coronavirus in the previous 28 days, or because they had changed their minds about receiving their vaccine,

.....
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:

Title of document	Location

Agenda Item 6



Title of meeting: Education Advisory Board

Subject: Strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions

Date of meeting: Monday 1st November 2021

Report from: Sally Hodges, Interim Director of Children, Families and Education

Report by: Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

Wards affected: All

1. Requested by Sally Hodges, Interim Director of Children, Families and Education

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to share with Board Members the draft city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions, a major strand of which is relational practice. A copy of the draft strategy is provided at [Appendix 1](#).

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 **Board Members are recommended to comment on and endorse the draft city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions. A final version of the strategy and an update on the implementation of the action plan will be brought to the next Board meeting in February 2022.**

4. Summary

- 4.1 This strategy sets out the case, and a proposed way forward, for a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school through non-attendance, exclusion or reduced timetables against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have experienced throughout the pandemic and unfortunately for some continue to do so.
- 4.2 The draft strategy builds on several years of work and a range of initiatives, many of which will continue to be delivered under this strategy. However, this strategy takes a whole system strategic approach to tackling school absence and exclusions, a major strand of which is around a whole school approach to

relational practice building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools.

- 4.3 The strategy sets out **the case for why a renewed effort is required**. Relatively low levels of attendance and high levels of fixed term exclusions, particularly in secondary schools, have been a feature of the Portsmouth education landscape for a long time - these are not new findings. We remain concerned about the impact of low attendance and continuing high levels of fixed term exclusions on the life chances and wellbeing of individual children. We know that being in school consistently is crucial to children making progress and gaining the qualifications they need for success in their lives. We also know that being out of school places children at significant risk in terms of criminal exploitation, involvement in criminal activities and other safeguarding risks. Children also miss out on support for special educational needs and mental health problems
- 4.4 **Data** from the last set of reliable data in 2018/19 highlights the distance we have to travel if we are to match national averages and those of our statistical neighbours.
- 4.5 The strategy provides details of **what has been done over the past few years to improve attendance, including more recent work that has been initiated during the pandemic**. Much of this work will continue as will the significant efforts by every school in the city to increase attendance. It should be noted that all of these initiatives build on a long standing set of very good arrangements in terms of the local authority's Inclusion Services (statutory and traded), the Multi Agency Behavioural Service (MABS) and wider health, early help and safeguarding services.
- 4.6 But clearly we need to do more and the focus on **Relational Practice** represents a key strand of this strategy which we believe has the potential to make the greatest impact based on similar work done in cities such as Hull and Leeds. We now have a stand-out example in the city, **Trafalgar School** (part of Salterns Academy Trust), who have exemplified what can be achieved by taking the whole-school approach (referred to **relational** rather than restorative practice) with one clear measurable impact being very low exclusions. This is in addition to other anecdotal and measurable impacts in several other Portsmouth schools since 2016
- 4.7 Schools have been invited to participate in 'Waves' of implementation over the next 2-3 years. 17 of our 61 schools have expressed an interest to be in Wave 1 starting in 2021/22, with the addition of The City of Portsmouth College.
- 4.8 There are three key resources that will be needed to roll out relational practice in our schools:

- A commitment from each Headteacher and their senior leadership team, governing board and Multi Academy Trust (where relevant) to ensure a whole-school approach is adopted and followed through
- Support from the Local Authority which will be through a partnership with the Salterns Academy Trust who will lead this work on behalf of the Portsmouth Education Partnership facilitating school visits, school-to-school support and networking
- Support from L30 (Mark Finnis) who will provide a bespoke package of support for schools in Wave 1 during the course of 2021/22 working closely with Salterns Academy Trust

4.9 We believe that there are a number of **positive success factors** which it is realistic for us as a Partnership to achieve:

- **High quality external challenge and support for families** who need it by services beyond school which work hand in hand with schools, and which champion strongly the importance for children of full attendance and positive participation in school life. .
- **A consistent approach to championing school attendance by all agencies** including the NHS.
- **High quality early help support and challenge for vulnerable families by pastoral teams in schools**, using the revised Early Help Assessment (EHA) planning tool (Family Support Plan).
- **A consistent city-wide culture in schools of high expectations for all**, in which all children feel both challenged and supported to meet those expectations and where all children know that they belong. A key strand of this strategy is to take forward a whole school approach to relational practice building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools as referred to above
- **High quality, effective teaching of an appropriate and ambitious curriculum**
- **A rich extra-curricular offer, and expectation, for all children.**

4.10 In terms of **governance** Portsmouth Education Partnership and SEND Board already have in place structures which can oversee and monitor this strategy in the shape of the Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group (RBIC) and the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG) which reports into the RBIC. Much of the current and planned work set out in the strategy sits within these groups and it is therefore proposed that the implementation of this strategy and the work on Relational Practice will be monitored through these structures

4.11 Finally, the strategy contains some **ambitious targets** by which the strategy will be measured and which will provide the baseline for reports and updates to future meetings of the Education Advisory Board, details of which are contained within the draft strategy at [Appendix 1](#).

.....
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:

Title of document	Location

A city wide multi agency strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions

DRAFT V3



Contents

	Page No
Purpose	3
Rationale and why this matters	3
Background	4
The evidence base and why change is needed	5
Previous and current work in the city to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions	7
What collectively we need to do - positive success factors	10
Focus on chronic absence	11
Focus on relational practice	12
A shared mission	13
Governance, accountability and targets	13
Appendix 1: Action Plan 2021/22 (to be completed)	15

A. Purpose

1. This strategy sets out the case, and a proposed way forward, for a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school through non-attendance, exclusion or reduced timetables against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have experienced throughout the pandemic and unfortunately for some continue to do so.
2. The strategy **builds** on several years of work and a range of initiatives, many of which will continue to be delivered under this strategy. However, this strategy takes a **whole system strategic approach** to tackling school absence and exclusions, a major strand of which is around a whole school approach to **relational practice** building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools.
3. A central theme of the PEP education strategy is **inclusion** and this will be the case for this strategy - *creating an educational environment that is welcoming to all children and young people and not giving up on any child whatever their circumstances*. Inclusion is about ensuring that there is in place comprehensive Ordinarily Available Provision that meets the educational needs of the majority of children; that any additional needs are identified early and support is put in place, as part of a graduated response, to avoid exclusion and enable children to make progress with their learning; and that children are able to attend their local mainstream school wherever possible
4. The strategy has strong links with the PEP Education Strategy (Priority 8) and the SEND and SEMH Strategies, focusing on improving inclusion for all children, but with a particular focus on the provision of education for children with SEND / additional needs and improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people including children in need, looked after children, children at risk of or already being exploited and/or experiencing the criminal justice system, children receiving targeted early help and other children identified by schools as requiring additional support.

B. Rationale and why this matters

5. Relatively low levels of attendance and high levels of fixed term exclusions, particularly in secondary schools, have been a feature of the Portsmouth education landscape for a long time - these are not new findings. We remain concerned about the impact of low attendance and continuing high levels of fixed period exclusions on the life chances and wellbeing of individual children. We know that being in school consistently is crucial to children making progress and gaining the qualifications they need for success in their lives.
6. We also know that being out of school places children at significant risk in terms of criminal exploitation, involvement in criminal activities and other safeguarding risks. Children also miss out on support for special educational needs and mental health problems.
7. Where children are looked after, periods out of school or with poor attendance can threaten the stability of their placements, leading to more enforced changes for them and harming their emotional wellbeing. Being fully part of their school community is essential to the sense of belonging and self-worth which is the right of all children. It is

crucial to the developmental progression and social networks which will sustain them beyond their statutory school years.

8. The argument for **fixed term exclusions** (now officially renamed as **suspensions**) is we believe generally weak based on the evidence available to us. For some children fixed term exclusions can work first time round, but for the majority of children who receive more than one exclusion, however, it quickly ceases to act as a deterrent to poor behaviour. Instead it becomes normalised by children as something they come to expect, and contributes to a vicious cycle of low self-esteem and expectations. For teachers who suffer from the impact of poor behaviour and lack of respect, the temporary exclusion of a child demonstrates that school leaders acknowledge the impact and also provides them with a short period of respite. It is also sometimes seen as the only equitable way to maintain clear consistent and expectations of good behaviour. However, the price paid by a minority of children for this approach is very high. There is moreover no evidence that the threat of exclusion is what keeps the behaviour of other children good.
9. In the case of **reduced timetables** for children, the reasons for such measures should be exceptional and limited, short term and require parental consent. A clear plan should be in place to support early transition back into full time education. Early Help Assessments should be considered for all cases. Reduced timetables that go well beyond six weeks rarely succeed in positive outcomes for the children concerned.

C. Background

10. Schools in Portsmouth have had to endure two extraordinary academic years in which the global Coronavirus pandemic has put significant pressure on school leaders, teachers and other staff. This has extended to early years settings and post 16 providers. They have all been faced with the immense challenges of providing Covid secure and safe environments when children and young people have been in school, developing and delivering remote learning options at speed to ensure learning can continue at home and supporting families practically and emotionally in a wide range of ways. Despite the full return to school and easing of restrictions, the impact of Covid on school attendance continues and many children are continuing to have learn at home for short periods as a result of having to self-isolate.
11. It is true to say that the vast majority of children have returned to face to face learning since the restrictions were eased in June 2021 and most have returned with enthusiasm and are keen to learn, with some having developed new resilience and adaptability through their experience of the pandemic. However, in common with other areas we know that there are still a significant number of children who are not regularly returning to school when they could be. We also know that some children have experienced fixed term exclusions from school over this course of time. We also know that a significant number of children are on reduced timetables, which whilst not subject to a formal fixed exclusion, are nevertheless not able to attend school full time.
12. It is clear from the studies which have been undertaken nationally, and from the evidence Portsmouth school leaders have shared, that the pandemic has had a significant impact on children's learning. Historically, we also know that children in Portsmouth have experienced, pre-pandemic, more lost school time than most other

areas, including areas with as much or greater levels of social and economic deprivation than Portsmouth.

D. The evidence base and why change is needed

13. There are a number of key performance indicators around school attendance and exclusion which the DfE publishes for all upper tier Local Authority areas. The tables below outline the most reliable position (pre-pandemic) with regard to these key indicators, including our position against all 152 upper tier LA areas.
14. Exclusions data is also available for 2019/20 which paints a rather more positive picture but due to the impact of the pandemic the figures have to be treated with a high degree of caution. The DfE did not collect absence data for the Spring and Summer Terms 2020 due to the pandemic and there is therefore no full year 2019/20 absence data to provide comparisons with.

Overall absence primary	2018/19	2019/20
	4.1%	n/a
National rank	82 nd	n/a
3 year trend	Steady	n/a
Comparators: for this measure, Portsmouth is 2 nd highest compared to 11 most similar LA areas. Only Telford and Wrekin has better outcomes.		

Overall absence secondary	2018/19	2019/20
	6.7%	n/a
National rank	146 th	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: the only LA areas with worse performance are: Salford, Knowsley, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.		

Persistent absence primary (% of pupils)	2018/19	2019/20
	8.7%	n/a
National rank	94 th	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: for this measure, Portsmouth is 2 nd highest compared to 11 most similar LA areas. Only Telford and Wrekin has better outcomes.		

Persistent absence secondary (% of pupils)	2018/19	2019/20
	17.9%	n/a
National rank	144 th	n/a
3 year trend	worsening	n/a
Comparators: the only LA areas with worse performance are: Blackpool, Redcar and Cleveland, Salford, Knowsley, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough.		

Fixed term exclusions (suspensions) primary	2018/19	2019/20
	1.58%	1.1%
National rank	108 th	100 th
3 year trend	Improving	

Fixed term exclusions (suspensions) secondary	2018/19	2019/20
	17.94%	7.5%
National rank	134 th	97 th
3 year trend	Worsening (nearly quadrupled)	

Permanent exclusions primary	2018/19	2019/20
	0.01%	0.02%
National rank	39 th	104 th
3 year trend	No change	

Permanent exclusions secondary	2018/19	2019/20
	0.15%	0.09%
National rank	47 th	50 th
3 year trend	Improving	

15. There are three other key measures of educational absence where robust and official national data is unavailable:

- Reduced (or part-time) timetables
- Chronic non attendance (CNA) - less than 50%
- Requests for elective home education (pupil deregistrations from school)

16. Local data is provided below for reduced timetables. The figures indicated that the number of pupils commencing a reduced timetable has increased but this also reflects a greater level of tracking and monitoring by the Local Authority

Reduced Timetables				
	Autumn Term 17/18	Autumn Term 18/19	Autumn Term 19/20	Autumn Term 20/21
Number of pupils commencing a reduced timetable	55	60	100	125

17. A snapshot of data from October 2021 revealed 309 **chronically absent children** of which only 44% have a Lead Professional. Of the 309 children:

- 73 are open to Targeted Early Help
- 36 are on a CiN Plan
- 20 are on a Child Protection Plan

- 8 are LAC

18. Portsmouth is not a wealthy city and there is a **correlation between deprivation and poor childhood outcomes**. To provide further context, three deprivation indicators are given below with the city's ranking compared to other local authority areas. The figures demonstrate that there are other many other areas that have higher levels of deprivation than Portsmouth and yet are doing better when it comes to school attendance and rate of exclusions.

- 97th of 152 in terms of % children in low income families (where 1st is low)
- 127th of 152 for % of primary children eligible for Free School Meals
- 119th of 152 for % of secondary children eligible for Free School Meals

E. Previous and current work in the city to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions

19. Over the past few years there have been a number of pieces of work aimed at, among other things, improving school attendance and reducing exclusions. Much of this work has been city wide and multi-agency, involving the council, education settings, health, the voluntary sector, etc. Details of these are summarised below:

- a) **High profile school attendance campaign 'miss school miss out'** and the subsequent welcome back and return to school campaigns and associated resources for schools. The *miss school miss out* campaign was relaunched in Sept 2021 following a pause as a result of the pandemic.
- b) **Work of the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG)** - tracking and monitoring of school attendance and exclusions. The Group is now a sub group of the PEP Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group.
- c) **Implementation of the SEND Strategy**
- d) **SEMH Partnership, Vision, Principles and Framework** - in 2018 we established regular meeting with partners to co-ordinate provision in school (school nurses. CAMHS, MABs, etc). We also agreed a Vision for SEMH Inclusion, a set of principles and outlined a 4 tier framework to structure our work around reducing demand for Alternative Provision, including reducing exclusions.
- e) **Emotional Wellbeing Strategy** - in 2017 we rolled out the Strategy including a wide range of improvements to address a range of mental health issues impacting on children's inclusion and learning.
- f) **PACE** - in 2018 we launched the **Turnaround Project** and more importantly in terms of driving inclusion - the PACE Training - with over 160 school professionals trained in the PACE model.
- g) **Restorative Practice in Schools** - since 2017, we have trained professionals across 30 schools in RP, set up the RP School Network and provided intensive whole school support to some schools in partnership with Portsmouth Mediation Service.

- h) **Attachment Aware Schools** - up to 2019, 17 schools had received training from the Virtual School.
- i) **Near-to-School and Short Stay School** - have been developed as options to avoid long-term exclusions.
- j) **Ordinarily Available Provision** - in 2018 we published a shared OAP for the city including expectations of schools vis-à-vis SEMH support.
- k) **Portsmouth Inclusion Education Quality Mark (PIE QM)** - In 2018 we launched the PIE QM to improve school leadership, culture and practice around inclusion - this is a self assessment supported by peer moderation, in order to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to inclusive practice. Consistent use of the PIE QM across our schools offers a real opportunity to drive inclusion and reduce exclusions. Mainstream schools have been asked to self-assess against the first two standards 27 schools have now completed this. They will be completing the remaining standards over the course of this academic year - seven schools have already done so.
- l) **Elective Home Education (EHE) Protocol** - agreed by all schools in 2019 and which has successfully reduced demand for EHE pre-pandemic as well as resulting in only a small increase during the pandemic - in stark contrast to most other LAs in the South East who have witnessed significant increases in EHE.
- m) **Reduced Timetables** - revised process and tracking by the LA of those children on reduced timetables that exceed 6 weeks and where there is no clear plan in place to ensure a transition to full time education.
- n) **Team Around the School** - in 2019 the LA piloted two schools for joint work with leadership teams to improve SEMH and safeguarding practice, building on previous work.
- o) **Inclusion Outreach Service** - in 2019 the LA launched the new outreach model, with a more flexible, multi-agency offer of support for schools where they have concerns about meeting children's additional needs. The outreach support is available to all mainstream schools, delivered by a range of professionals from a partnership of services including Multi-agency Behaviour Service (MABS), Solent Academies Trust, Children's Therapy Service, and experienced Outreach SENCOs from mainstream schools in the city.
- p) **PCC traded services** including Attendance and Education Psychology.
- q) **Identifying schools needing focussed support** - in 2019 we used data (and a new way to stratify schools) which identified 9 'very high' or 'high' excluding' schools and 10 medium excluding schools to work with
- r) **Mental Health Support Teams** - in 2019 we commissioned (Wave 2) MHSTs with an additional (Wave 4) Team secured in 2020. All schools now have access to MHSTs

20. Since the pandemic started, more work and planning has taken place all of which have the potential to impact on school attendance and exclusions. These include:

- a) **LA Education Link Co-ordinators** - during the pandemic, systems were established with schools to track vulnerable children and respond to a wide range of issues impacting on families as a result of the lockdown, including RAG-rated child level data on spreadsheets, LA Link Co-ordinators attached to schools and colleges and the Children's Hub. These systems have now been adjusted with a particular focus on children who are chronic non-attenders, with attendance below 50%. The vulnerable children tracking team has now been established as a permanent team, with additional funding and recruitment to 3 dedicated Link Co-ordinator posts, due to the positive impact of this work. This being extended further to include Early Years and Post-16 providers.
- b) **Studybugs** - using real-time attendance and exclusion data at child-level to reduce absence and exclusions. 60 of 61 schools have signed up to this.
- c) **Early Help Assessments (EHA)** - a multi-agency working group is redesigning the EHA to make it easier to use for schools to be lead professionals and do holistic family-based assessment to reduce exclusions/raise attendance (to be known as Family Support Plans). This is being trialled with five pilot schools before it is rolled out to all schools.
- d) **Review of in-school Alternative Provision (AP)** - the LA has commissioned Delta Education Trust to review on site secondary AP (tier 3 of our model). The reviews are being undertaken during the Autumn 2021.
- e) **Tailoring MHSTs to meet local need** - extending the MHST offer, in addition to the CBT model to better focus on children with 'behavioural' challenges. Better alignment with MABS and a more sensible approach to whole school work in line with our principles and approaches.
- f) **Termly LA School Resource Allocation Meetings** - ensuring the local authority support services are appropriately and proportionally allocated to schools supported by a termly review of all schools.
- g) **Supporting neuro-diverse children in school** - Portsmouth has been successful in securing innovation funding from NHS England which will allow us to work in partnership with a number of schools across the City to transform support for children who have a level of neuro-diversity that is impacting on their engagement with and enjoyment of school. The programme will have 4 key areas of focus: training and development for the school; a programme of specific support for schools; development of our existing Parent Carer Forum to create a central hub from which small, local forums will be set up; and development of a digital platform that provides families, young people and practitioner's access to a range of resources and tools, up to date information and interactive functions, building on existing good practice such as the new Portsmouth ND Resource Pack.

- h) **Expansion of the health related absence project** which has been running for the last few years involving a handful of schools. The project has demonstrated impact and reduced levels of school absence due to health related issues. Plans are in hand to expand this as a traded service from Sept 2022.

21. All of the above is in addition to the significant efforts by every school in the city to increase attendance and reduce exclusions. It should also be noted, that all of these initiatives build on a long standing set of very good arrangements in terms of the local authority's Inclusion Services (statutory and traded), the Multi Agency Behavioural Service (MABS) and wider health, early help and safeguarding services.

F. What collectively we need to do - positive success factors

22. We believe that there are a number of **positive success factors** which it is realistic for us as a Partnership to achieve, working together. They may seem obvious and we know they reflect many existing aspirations in schools, but we believe they are worth setting out here to underpin the work we want to take forward over the coming months and years:

- a) **High quality external challenge and support for families who need it by services beyond school which work hand in hand with schools**, and which champion strongly the importance for children of full attendance and positive participation in school life. The LA is committed to continuous improvement in its targeted tier 3 and 4 services for families and are aiming to be judged "Outstanding" by Ofsted. A key part of this is the best possible joint work with schools to support attendance and good behaviour by children. The LA want to hear from schools when they fall short in this aspiration and recognise that there will probably always be a feeling in schools that more of this support is needed than the LA is able to provide. Investment by the LA has been consistent over recent years with a cross party commitment to continue to invest in targeted early help as well as statutory social care. Ofsted judge the quality of the support to be "Good" and peer scrutiny continues to be positive. With continuing feedback from schools we should be able to build on this foundation to keep improving the contribution which these services can make.
- b) **A consistent approach to championing school attendance by all agencies including the NHS**. The LA and NHS partners are also committed to maintaining strong health visiting, school nursing and other NHS services which support families' understanding of the importance of education. Services which are not supportive, for example GPs who do not sufficiently challenge negligent behaviour by families, will be robustly challenged by the LA through the strong partnership networks and by colleagues in other parts of the NHS, particularly local commissioners of GPs.
- c) **High quality early help support and challenge for vulnerable families by pastoral teams in schools**, using the revised Early Help Assessment (EHA) planning tool (Family Support Plan). Across the country, schools provide early intervention support and challenge for families and Portsmouth schools are no exception. We know that pastoral capacity is stretched. We also know that the right conversation with a family, at the right time, including connecting families with other

support in the city such as VCS organisations, housing and welfare support, can make a real difference. The revised EHA, to be known as the Family Support Plan, will be trialled in five schools before it is fully rolled out to all schools. There will be an expectation that in the case of any child who is chronically absent there should be a Family Support Plan in place.

- d) **A consistent city-wide culture in schools of high expectations for all**, in which all children feel both challenged and supported to meet those expectations and where all children know that they belong. Developing and maintaining an effective restorative culture in schools with high behaviour expectations is not a "soft approach to discipline". It is very challenging for both children and adults. We know from examples both elsewhere in the country and in Portsmouth, however, that such a culture can be created and maintained. Consistently championed it could reduce significantly the school absence, voluntary and enforced, which blights the lives of too many children in our city. A key strand of this strategy is to take forward a whole school approach to relational practice building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools. Details of this approach is set out in Section G.
- e) **High quality, effective teaching of an appropriate and ambitious curriculum.** Planning to teach the knowledge and cultural capital that our children need in order to access and understand the curriculum is vital to enable them to engage with education and go on to thrive in later life. We know that this is already the key aim of all schools in the city, as is the identification of barriers that some children face in school and within each subject discipline. It is important to underline its importance, however, in increasing attendance and reducing exclusion.
- f) **A rich extra-curricular offer, and expectation, for all children.** Many children in Portsmouth take full advantage of the enrichment opportunities schools offer, in sport, arts or other interest areas. Children who look forward to doing things they love want to come to school and are motivated when they are there.

G. Focus on chronic absence

- 23. As referred to in section D and the snapshot of data from October 2021 we continue to have a relatively high number of children (309) who are chronically absent from school, i.e. less than 50% attendance. And of these children, less than half have a named Lead Professional.
- 24. A key strand of this strategy will be to ensure all chronically absent children have a plan in place either through an Early Help Assessment (Family Support Plan as it will be known as in the future) (refer to 21 c)) or plans developed as a result of being open to tier 3 and 4 services, including an expectation of having a Lead Professional in place.
- 25. Partners will continue to share information with the Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Group and Early Help, encouraging schools to complete an Early Help Assessment (Family Support Plan) and have a Lead Professional in place, working with Early Help and / or contacting MASH where school interventions and previous legal sanctions have failed.

26. The role of the LA Link Co-ordinators will be an important factor, working closely with schools to track and monitor chronically absent children and to make sure that appropriate plans are in place.

H. Focus on relational practice

27. The work on Restorative Practice in schools from 2016 - 2019 had some notable successes, with 32 of our (then) 64 schools engaged in training, our schools network and implementing various pieces of work. Most schools tended to focus on restorative practice with specific children and held the work in their pastoral and safeguarding functions, rather than necessarily taking a whole-school culture approach - more Restorative Justice than Restorative Practice. In addition, there has been a lot of work done on Restorative Practice in social care, early help and a number of VCS organisations in the city.
28. However, we now have a stand-out example in the city, **Trafalgar School** (part of Salterns Academy Trust), who have exemplified what can be achieved by taking the whole-school approach (referred to **relational** rather than restorative practice) with one clear measurable impact being very low exclusions. This is in addition to other anecdotal and measurable impacts in several other Portsmouth schools since 2016. We also know from cities like Hull and Leeds where this whole-school approach has been adopted by the majority of schools in these areas, that exclusions have been markedly reduced as a result.
29. The Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP) Strategic Board has agreed that the city needs to take a whole-system strategic approach to tackling the very high levels of absence and exclusion in the city and there is wide consensus that Relational Practice in schools should be a major plank of the strategy to improve outcomes in these areas.
30. Relational Practice is not a silver bullet and there are other things we need to do as part of a strategy to reduce schools days lost as set out in this strategy and detailed in sections E and F. Curriculum flexibility for particular pupils being one amongst many others. Moreover, we know the things that count can't always be counted and we do expect to see a wide range of other major benefits from relational practice in schools including improved relationships, children feeling safer and happier at school, reduced anxiety etc. The direct and indirect impact on mental health and educational progress and attainment should not be underplayed. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to set an early expectation that relational practice in schools will make a very significant impact on:
- Days lost to exclusion
 - School attendance, and in particular, reducing the proportion of children who are persistently and chronically absent
 - Number of pupils on reduced timetables
 - Demand for Alternative Provision
31. Schools have been invited to participate in **'Waves' of implementation** over the next 2-3 years. 17 of our 61 schools have expressed an interest to be in Wave One starting in 2021/22, with the addition of The City of Portsmouth College.

32. There are three key resources that will be needed to roll out relational practice in our schools:
- A commitment from each Headteacher and their senior leadership team, governing board and Multi Academy Trust (where relevant) to ensure a whole-school approach is adopted and followed through
 - Support from the Local Authority which will be through a partnership with the Salterns Academy Trust who will lead this work on behalf of the Portsmouth Education Partnership facilitating school visits, school-to-school support and networking
 - Support from L30 (Mark Finnis) who will provide a bespoke package of support for schools in Wave 1 during the course of 2021/22 working closely with Salterns Academy Trust.

I. A shared mission

33. Back in the late 1990s, Portsmouth was the highest permanent excluding (now referred to as expulsions) local authority in England - 152nd out of 152. Within three years, we had moved to the top half of that table. 20 years later we remain in the top quartile. We have also made improvements in recent years in the levels of reduced timetables and elective home education.
34. Whilst fixed term exclusions, part-time timetables and absence are more complex issues, history does suggest that radical improvement across the public service delivery system can be done at pace and be sustained. Under the auspices of the Portsmouth Education Partnership, and alongside partners in the police, NHS, parent representative bodies and the voluntary and community sector, we co-produce and jointly deliver a coherent, ambitious strategy to make a radical difference to levels of attendance and exclusions in the city. The success factors set out in section F reflect a view about some key elements, but we need to work together on a shared mission - with across the board commitment - to make that step change.
35. To do this, we believe that we should hold ourselves and each other to account in a restorative and relational *high support: high challenge* way. We should be prepared to do things differently, change the structures of accountability and planning, be unafraid to learn from what works and doesn't work locally, and be open to learning from other places and the evidence of what works nationally and internationally. Equally, we must not throw everything away - the long list of initiatives set out in section E includes some very good work, much of which has not had the chance fully to impact due to the pandemic. The city has an abundance of good thinkers, good developments and good practice from which to build. We see this mission as a joint leadership challenge, led by the PEP, but involving everyone with a role to play.

J. Governance, accountability and targets

36. The Portsmouth Education Partnership and SEND Board already have in place structures which can oversee and monitor this strategy in the shape of the Removing Barriers to Inclusion Group (RBIC) and the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG) which reports into the RBIC. Much of the current and planned work set out in section E sits within these groups and it is therefore proposed that the implementation of this strategy and the work on Relational Practice will be monitored through these structures.

37. The Groups will be accountable to the PEP Strategic Board who will receive reports on a termly basis. For 21/22 the PEP Strategic Board has agreed that one of its four top priorities will be a focus on reducing exclusions and improving school attendance, and will therefore be committed to scrutinising and supporting this work.
38. The success of this strategy will ultimately be measured by improvements in school attendance and a reduction in school suspensions, against the last set of reliable data from 2018/19.
39. A set of 3 year targets are set out below (i.e. by the end of the 2023/24 academic year):
- Overall absence rate in primary to reduce to 2%
 - Overall absence rate in secondary to reduce to 3%
 - Persistent absence rate in primary to reduce to 4%
 - Persistent absence rate in secondary to reduce to 8%
 - Fixed term exclusions / suspensions in primary to reduce to 0.5%
 - Fixed term exclusions / suspensions in secondary to reduce to 5%
 - 50% reduction in the number of children on reduced timetables
 - 100% of chronically absent children to have a plan in place (as a minimum - a Family Support Plan) and a Lead Professional