
NOTICE OF MEETING

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

FRIDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 1.00 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 - 1 November 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)**
- 4 Ofsted school inspections summer and autumn terms 2021 (Pages 11 - 20)**
- 5 Support and challenge for LA maintained schools (Pages 21 - 24)**
- 6 Response to Covid 19 (Pages 25 - 34)**

EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the virtual meeting of the Education Advisory Board held on Monday, 1 November 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Terry Norton
Jeanette Smith
Judith Smyth

13. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Critchley, Head of Sufficiency and Resources, as she had another commitment. The Chair welcomed Sally Hodges, the new Interim Director of Children, Families & Education.

14. Declarations of interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is Vice-Chair of the governing body at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through an external agency. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she works for Hampshire branch of Unison and is a governor of the City of Portsmouth College.

Mike Stoneman declared an interest as he is a governor of the City of Portsmouth College. Debbie Anderson declared an interest as she sometimes works as an Ofsted inspector. Frances Soul declared an interest as she is a director of two educational charities - Coram Life Education and Future Frontiers.

15. Minutes of previous meeting held on 14 July 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.

16. Support and challenge for Local Authority maintained schools

Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and Early Years, introduced the report, which builds on previous ones and incorporates requests for more data as shown in the appendices, and highlighted the main points.

One of the two schools which was less than Good for Overall Effectiveness, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary, is now part of the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust, and at the time of conversion was moving in the right direction. The other school, Milton Park Primary, is due to convert to an

academy on 1 December 2021; termly HMI visits have reported that it is improving.

Ms Anderson has made a second bid for funding for a second year of participation in the Hackney Learning Trust's Destination Reader programme. The approach is flexible so schools can roll it out to a particular class or a year group. Visits to participating schools show it is successful. Eight further schools are taking on the programme, two are trialling Destination Reader Plus at Year 7 and one is adopting a programme tailored for KS1.

Not all schools who were eligible for funding had accessed it but some has been secured to purchase resources to improve achievement in Phonics, up to and including KS4, in view of its importance as all teachers are teachers of reading. Schools have been made aware of the Systematic Synthetic Phonics programmes that will be validated by the DfE in March 2022. If schools adopt other phonics programmes they need to ensure the resources match robustly the phonics children are being taught.

Although EYFS moderation is no longer mandatory it is still offered. Education continues to support with recruitment, for example, Ms Anderson was on the panel to recruit a headteacher for Cottage Grove Primary even though it is converting to an academy on 1 December.

The HISP (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth) Teaching School Hub has replaced the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance. Early Career Teachers (ECTs) have replaced Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and have a two-year development programme to which most schools have signed up.

About three peer reviews are planned before Christmas and others in the spring and summer. A group comprising three schools (one LA maintained, one from the ARK MAT, one from the University of Chichester MAT) will trial training programmes before they are disseminated across the Portsmouth Education Partnership (PEP). There is already a training video and now face-to-face training is being developed ready for trialling.

Pompey Literacy Pirates is expanding with a second hub planned from January 2022 and another 100 children will be offered places.

Ms Anderson is preparing training modules on the inspection process for forthcoming Ofsted inspections which are underway again.

Mike Stoneman added that much of this work is city-wide and many academies are involved as well as LA maintained schools. Education's Senior Leadership Team have recently agreed to carry out informal visits to maintained schools each term to keep in touch, check they are managing and see if they need any support.

In response to questions from members, officers explained

The only other school in the Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust is Oaklands Catholic School in Waterlooville. There is not a lot of intelligence yet but early indications show that matters are improving. Oaklands have Leadership judged as Outstanding. The National Leader of Education work Corpus Christi received was from an Outstanding Catholic primary. There may be a different demographic in the Oaklands area but officers will work closely with the Trust, and the annual meeting with all the MATs is this term. Corpus Christi is part of the PEP and is using Destination Reader so the LA (Local Authority) is still keeping in touch with projects. Quite a high number of pupils from Catholic primaries in Portsmouth go to Oaklands.

The situation with waiting lists for CAMHS is similar both nationally and locally. A draft pathway to clarify the help available is out for consultation. People think they may need CAMHS support but other professionally backed support is available such as Kooth. Officers agreed staff recruitment is still a challenge but are addressing it as a priority.

As to whether face-to-face assemblies have resumed it very much depends on individual schools. Initially they returned as schools value assemblies but it depends on the level of Covid cases. Some schools hold hybrid assemblies with some children attending in person and others remotely though technical problems may mean children sometimes miss out.

With regard to measuring outcomes, evaluating success or noticing early indication of problems, there are currently no national standardised tests and benchmarking measures. Instead, schools will concentrate on the best quality teaching, learning and catch-up programmes, for example, phonics and Destination Reader which is based on good quality pedagogy. It will not be long before there are tests and measures again. However, at the moment schools have nothing to compare themselves with. PiXL is an organisation which puts schools in a family group so they can benchmark themselves against other schools. If not, officers have to track schools individually and they have been told they cannot use data for accountability. Sarah Hilditch, Lead Moderator, has already started training teachers new to Years 2 and 6 and appointing moderators.

Schools are funded for release time for mentoring and supporting Early Career Teachers.

By and large relationships with MATs are good (there are currently 13 and soon to be 14 when the University of Portsmouth takes on two schools). The policy is not to push schools into becoming academies and the remaining ones want to be LA maintained. The choice is only removed if a school is judged Inadequate or goes into special measures and is forced to become an academy. Frances Soul said the PEP meets MAT leaders and this half-term the focus is to ensure it has spoken to all of them so they feel they can contribute; ARK have already responded.

The Teach Portsmouth website and campaign has given teaching careers a high profile and is encouraging people, including teaching assistants, to consider teaching. Teachers are very tired because of Covid and there is

concern there are fewer applicants for school leadership posts than previously. Schools have also had increasing difficulties recruiting teaching assistants as they are competing with organisations that offer more attractive wages and flexible hours such as supermarkets. The Mary Rose Academy in particular is struggling so officers are doing additional work to address issues in this sector.

The Chair noted that although the Education Advisory Board is primarily concerned with LA maintained schools, there are close relationships with the MATs and the LA invests beyond just its own schools, which is shown when people talk holistically about Portsmouth schools. However, the Board should be mindful of schools' autonomy when they become academies.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the report.

17. Ongoing response to Covid-19

Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education, presented the report, highlighting sections 9 and 10 which cover the summer and autumn terms respectively. EdenRed provided food vouchers as they have done previously. Over 3,000 children participated in HAF Fun events. Covid infection rates are now decreasing after a rise at the start of the autumn term. The pressure caused by staff absence is a particular concern; one school had to close for a couple of days and return to remote learning. At the start of term the Director of Public Health had written to schools to say if there is clear evidence of outbreaks then they can bring back measures such as masks in communal areas. Some LAs have taken more radical measures whereas Portsmouth gives more autonomy. The only schools yet to participate in the vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds are the Harbour School and Mayville but they are due to do so within the next week or so. Support from NHS Solent has been superb, headteachers have given good feedback and take-up is just under 50%. Take-up figures are expected to rise as parents can now book at vaccination clinics such as the one at St James' Hospital.

In response to questions, officers said that

There are no figures as to how many school staff (teaching and non-teaching) have been vaccinated though Alison Critchley could check. Officers can check if it is the case that vaccination is going to be mandatory for school staff.

Officers will produce a few more Covid update reports like the current one but then they are likely to stop.

With regard to remote learning schools are in a much better situation than they were and have an improved offer; in some cases pupils at home can join an actual lesson remotely. Officers are looking to build on the successes of the last 18 months.

Officers have kept track of devices that were given to children via the local authority. They have no knowledge of those given directly to schools but understand that they are still being used. Most are not struggling to provide

devices now. Some secondary schools have arranged for all children to have a device for which parents have to pay unless they are subsidised under the pupil premium.

Members commented that it would be a pity to lose any gains made during Covid, for example, pupils could use their devices to recap what they did at school. Remote learning has become "business as usual"; at first it was essential but is now essential either at school or at home. Remote processes such as parents' evenings have the advantage of no parking problems so will probably continue.

RESOLVED that 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.

18. Strategy to reduce fixed-term exclusions and improve school attendance

Mike Stoneman introduced the report, noting that officers had worked on the strategy for the last few months and it had gone to the PEP Strategic Board a few weeks ago. It represents a collective effort to reduce learning loss in addition to that caused by Covid. Although 2020 figures show a significant improvement they need to be viewed with extreme caution because of Covid. More reliable evidence will be seen this year. Mr Stoneman highlighted the success of the relational practice used at Trafalgar School (part of Salterns Academy Trust). They have very few exclusions and have done much work on their in-house alternative provision which enables children to return to mainstream classes as quickly as possible. The approach has had fantastic success in Hull and Leeds. Mr Stoneman outlined the support schools will receive to help them implement the approach.

In response to suggestions that a presentation on the differences between restorative and relational practice would be helpful, officers explained the former concentrates more on the individual child and their family whereas the latter concentrates more on a whole school approach involving all pupils. Relational practice incorporates both approaches and also others such as trauma-informed approaches. The relational approach is about the way of being, classroom management and leadership style. It is not an intervention that is done "to" families but "with" them so hopefully they feel they have been heard so when there is a need to challenge there is some goodwill. Officers agreed a short information session on the different practices would be helpful.

There is some funding already but it is proposed that the Schools Forum asks for more funding from the Designated Schools Grant carry forward reserves to fund the approach.

The permanent exclusion (now known as expulsion) rate in Portsmouth is one of the lowest in the UK as a result of protocols established when it had one of the highest rates. However, the rate of fixed-term exclusions (FTE, now known as suspensions) is relatively high. One FTE may be effective but multiple ones are no help at all. The relational approach done well helps

teachers feel supported in the classroom. Schools have to buy in to the approach but it will not be forced on them. However, officers will strongly challenge schools with high FTE rates.

Figures for chronic absence (less than 50%) include absence due to disability or health conditions including long Covid. Children with chronic absence should have a Family Support Plan and a Lead Professional. Officers can bring an update on figures on how many children have Lead Professionals to the next meeting as the current figure is low. They are carefully monitoring chronic absence figures. The Chair had met officers that day about how it is important for families with children who have long Covid to feel understood and supported. The Long Covid Working Group has made progress with the CCG in providing support for children with long Covid.

Officers acknowledged The Harbour School has a waiting list in KS3 but said it will improve when the provision at Wymering is in place. The Inclusion Outreach Service (IOS) and the Portsmouth Inclusion Education Quality Mark can support children on the waiting list. Officers would support schools who are struggling to avoid exclusions and work with the IOS. If a child is on a dual registered place which their school is paying for officers would help support them. The Harbour School has space but it is a question of managing it so places can be released for other children. Schools can share best practice with each other about alternative provision. Members noted The Harbour School was very successful in equipping children to return to mainstream education. Officers confirmed the Fair Access Protocol is used to allocate places to The Harbour School; officers manage the process but schools effectively make decisions through the Inclusion Support Panels (ISP).

Trafalgar School funded their work on exclusions from their own budget though officers are giving all schools some funding so they can adopt relational practice. They will have training and support from the Salterns Academy Trust and Mark Finnis (L30). Ofsted expects schools to embed the approach.

The Chair said it was exciting to pull together the different strands of discussion on exclusion and restorative and relational practice. The best way for children to learn is to be in school so it is essential to look at how schools and families are supported so they can support children. It is the behaviour that is not wanted, not the child. The step change at Trafalgar is already apparent.

Members thanked all school staff, including governors and non-teaching staff, for their work during a difficult time.

RESOLVED that the Education Advisory Board note the following:

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.

The next meeting is on Thursday 10 February at 4 pm (location to be confirmed).

The meeting concluded at 5.22 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair

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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:	Ofsted school inspections Summer and Autumn terms 2021
Date of meeting:	18 th February 2022
Report by:	Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director - Education
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Sarah Daly, Director - Children, Families and Education

2. Purpose

2.1 This report sets out the outcomes of 9 Ofsted school inspections that were carried out by Ofsted during the Summer and Autumn terms 2021 since all inspections were suspended by Ofsted due to the pandemic. This follows a report that was provided to Board Members in February 2020 with a summary of the outcomes of Ofsted inspections for the late summer and autumn terms 2019 and a subsequent paper which updated the situation to June 2020.

2.2 The report also provides:

- a summary of the overall position for Ofsted judgements across schools in Portsmouth (Appendix 1)
- a brief update on the resumption of Ofsted inspections in 2021.

3. Ofsted school inspections - summer and autumn terms 2021

- 3.1 During the summer and autumn terms 2021 there were 9 Ofsted school inspections, 7 of which were section 8 inspections and 2 of which were section 5 inspections. A summary of all 9 inspections is given in the below in Table 1.
- 3.2 The purpose of a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school is **to confirm whether the school remains good or outstanding under the definition of overall effectiveness** set out in the school inspection handbook. A section 5 inspection is a full inspection with graded judgements in the areas of overall effectiveness, quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal

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development, leadership and management; and where applicable early years education or sixth form provision.

Table 1: Summary of Ofsted school inspections in Portsmouth - Summer and autumn terms 2021

School	LA / Academy	Type of inspection	Dates	Outcome
UTC Portsmouth	Stand alone Academy Trust	Section 5 Inspection	29 th & 30 th June 2021	Outstanding (from previous Inadequate)
Moorings Way Infant	Thinking Schools Academy Trust	Section 8 inspection	21 st & 22 nd Sept 2021	Continues to be Good
Meon Junior	Thinking Schools Academy Trust	Section 8 Inspection	29 th & 30 th Sept 2021	Continues to be Good
Arundel Court Primary & Nursery	University of Chichester MAT	Section 8	19 th & 20 th October 2021	Continues to be Good
Mayfield All-though	LA Maintained	Section 8	10 th & 11 th Nov 2021	Outcome 3 Remains Good
Mary Rose Special	Solent Academies Trust	Section 8	23 rd & 24 th Nov 2021	Continues to be Outstanding
Langstone Infant	University of Chichester MAT	Section 8	30 th Nov & 1 st Dec 2021	Continues to be Good
Highbury Primary & Nursery	University of Chichester MAT	Section 5	1 st & 2 nd Dec 2021	Good (Good previously)
Langstone Junior	University of Chichester MAT	Section 8	8 th & 9 th Dec 2021	Continues to be Good

- 3.3 Whilst Mayfield **retains its judgement as a Good school**, the findings of the Ofsted inspection determined an Outcome 3: "The lead inspector is not satisfied that the school would receive at least its current grade if a section 5 inspection were carried out at the time of the section 8 inspection." The school is informed that its next inspection will be a section 5 inspection within the statutory timeframe, which will typically take place within 1 to 2 years of the publication of the section 8 report. The school is working with the local authority to address the areas for improvement.
- 3.4 The UTC Ofsted inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 but given the significant improvement made was then deemed to be a section 5 inspection under the same act, with resulting **graded judgements of outstanding in all areas**.

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- 3.5 All 9 schools inspected in this time period have maintained, retained or improved their previous Ofsted inspection judgement, with Mary Rose **continuing to hold their outstanding judgement** from their previous inspection.

4. Ofsted inspections in 2021/2022

- 4.1 Ofsted resumed its routine inspection schedule under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) from September 2021, having only conducted monitoring visits throughout the pandemic since March 2020, mainly focused initially on remote education provision and safeguarding but also on schools graded requires improvement or inadequate.
- 4.2 Following continued challenges from the pandemic for schools in the autumn term of 2021, with staff and pupil absences due to Coronavirus positive cases or self-isolation many deferrals were requested by schools. Ofsted became increasingly alert to, and understanding, of this.
- 4.3 At the beginning of January 2022 secondary schools were not inspected initially when children returned after the Christmas break as on-site testing was being administered and Ofsted inspectors who are also serving practitioners were not required to undertake any inspection work until after 26th January 2022.

5. Overall summary

- 5.1 In Portsmouth, 90.2% of inspected schools are now either Good or Outstanding (91.7% of all schools) and 91.7% of pupils are taught in inspected schools that are Good or Outstanding (93.6% of all pupils).
- 5.2 Appendix 1 provides a series of graphs and charts which show the trends between end of June 2020 and end of December 2021. Please note in June 2020 there were 63 schools (all with inspection data) and now there are 61 schools (60 with inspection data). This includes judgements for predecessor schools that have become academies but not Wimborne Primary, as the infant and junior schools closed and it is now designated as a new school.
- 5.3 With 1 more school moving from Inadequate to Outstanding, even though there are now less schools judged neither Good or Outstanding, the number and percentage has decreased slightly due to closures described above.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

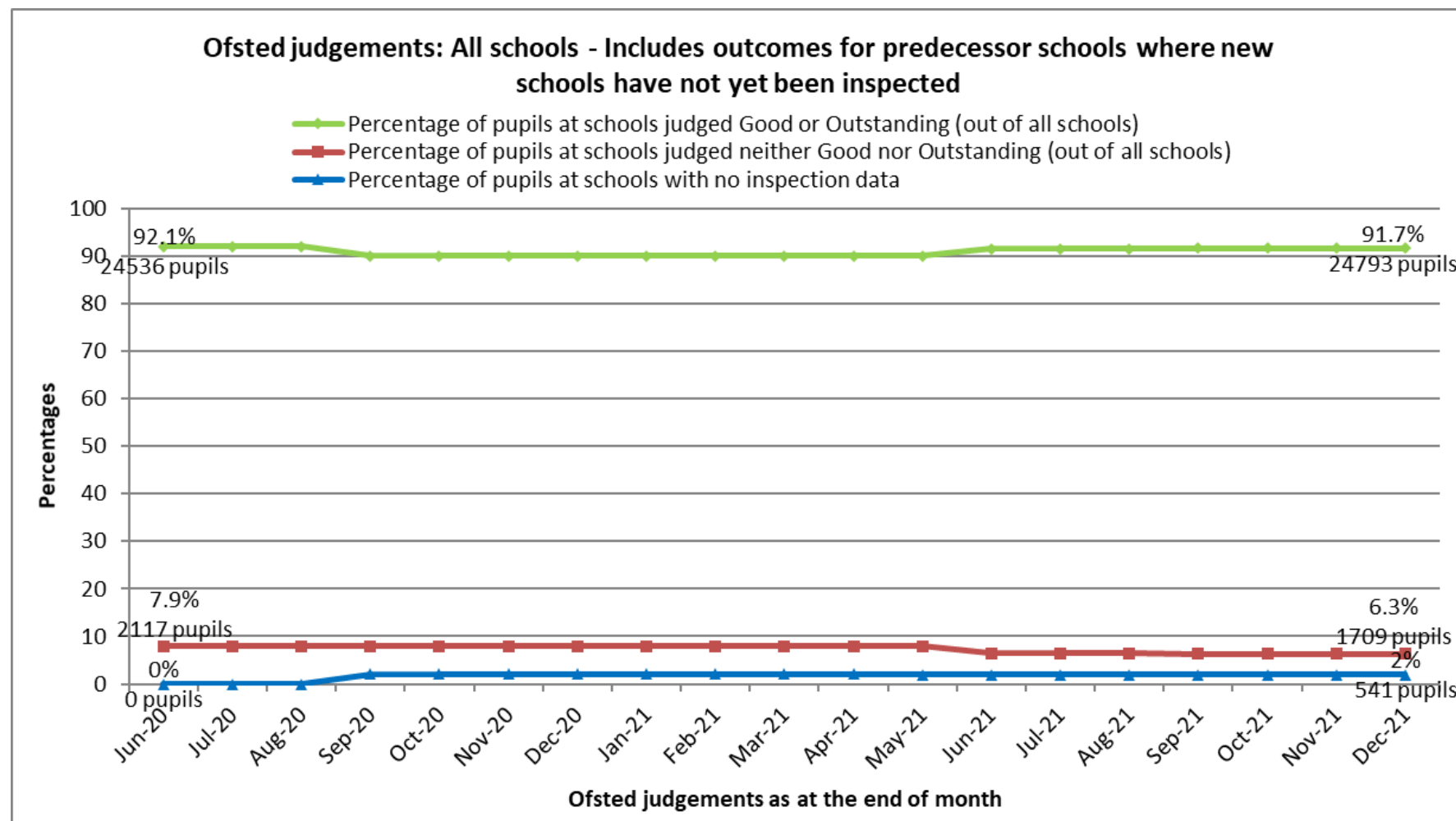
Appendices:**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

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

Title of document	Location
Appendix 1: Ofsted judgements for Portsmouth LA Maintained Schools and Academies	

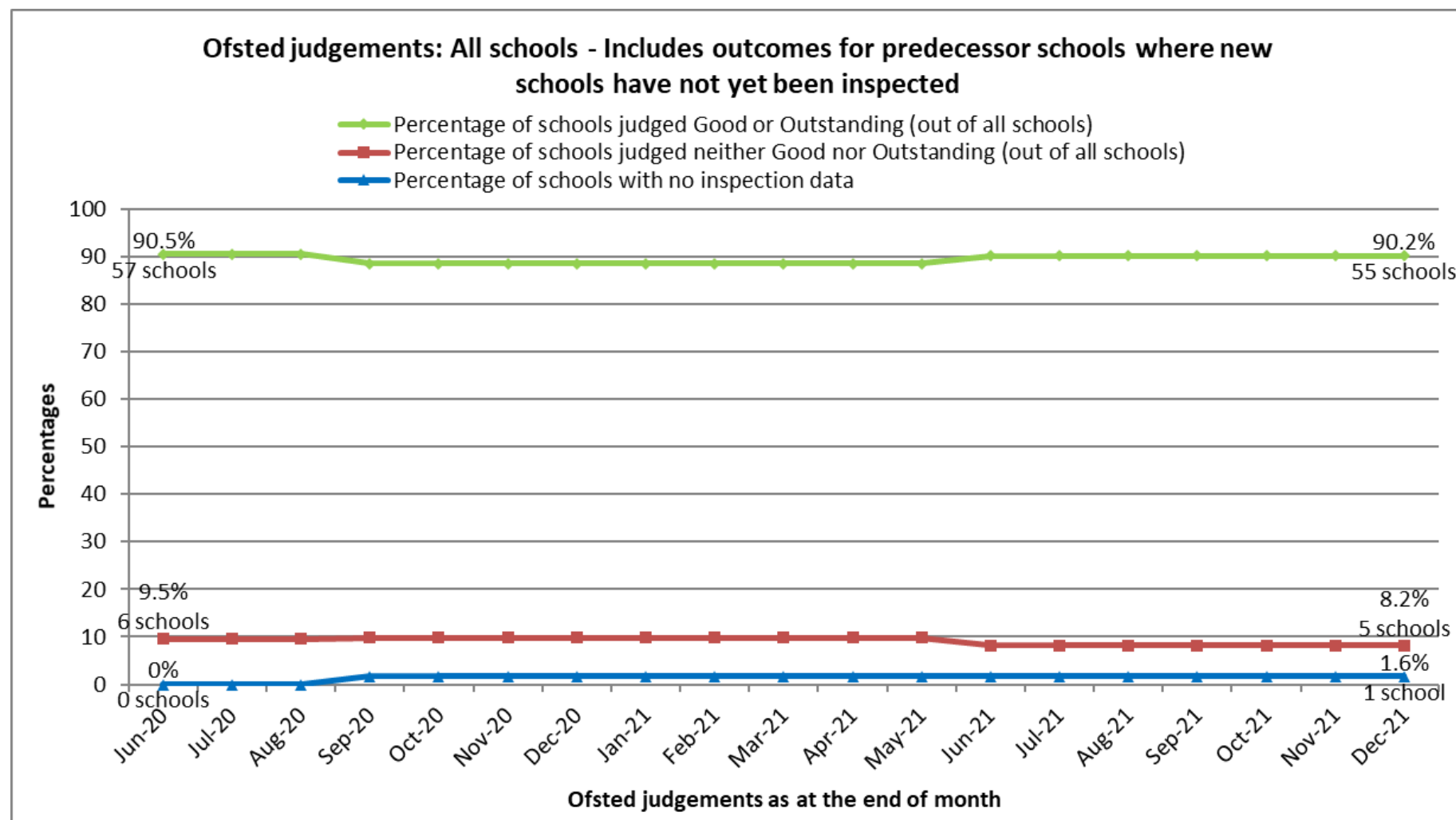
Appendix 1

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



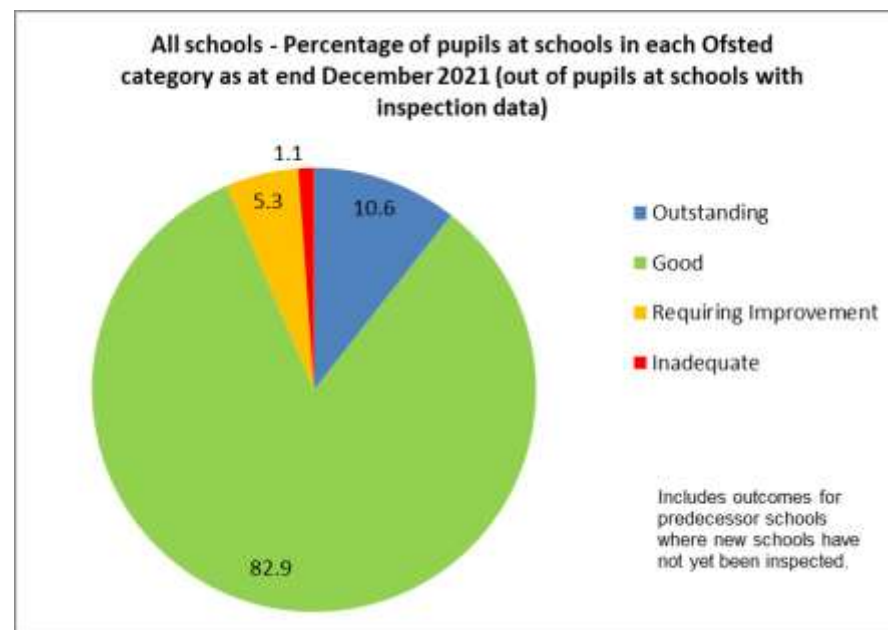
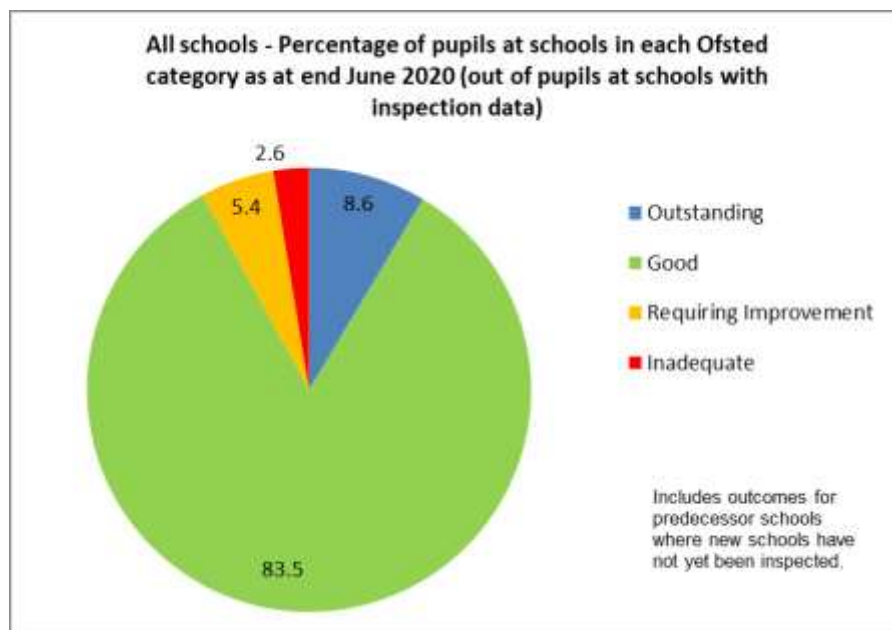
Percentage of pupils out of all pupils (including schools that have not been inspected yet).

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



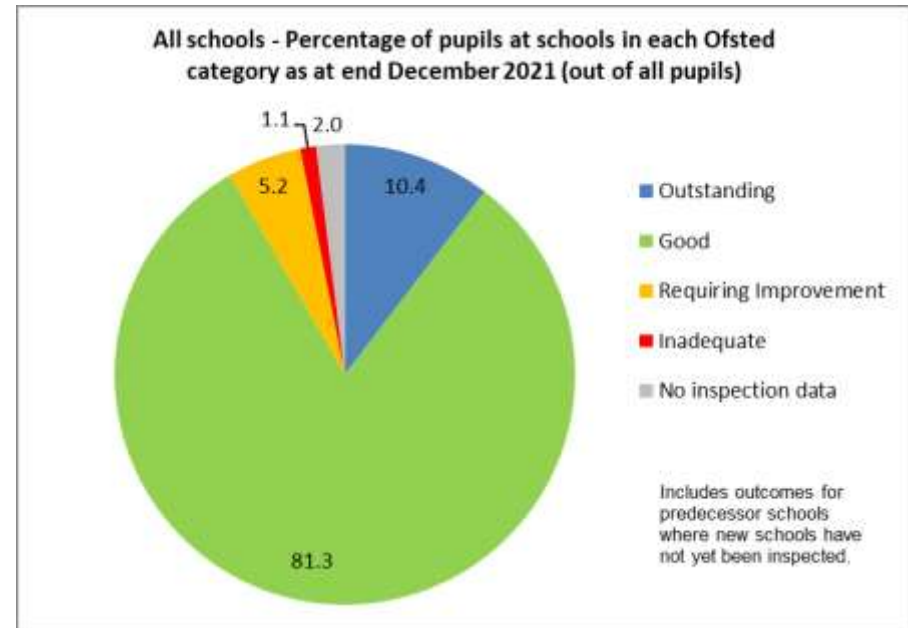
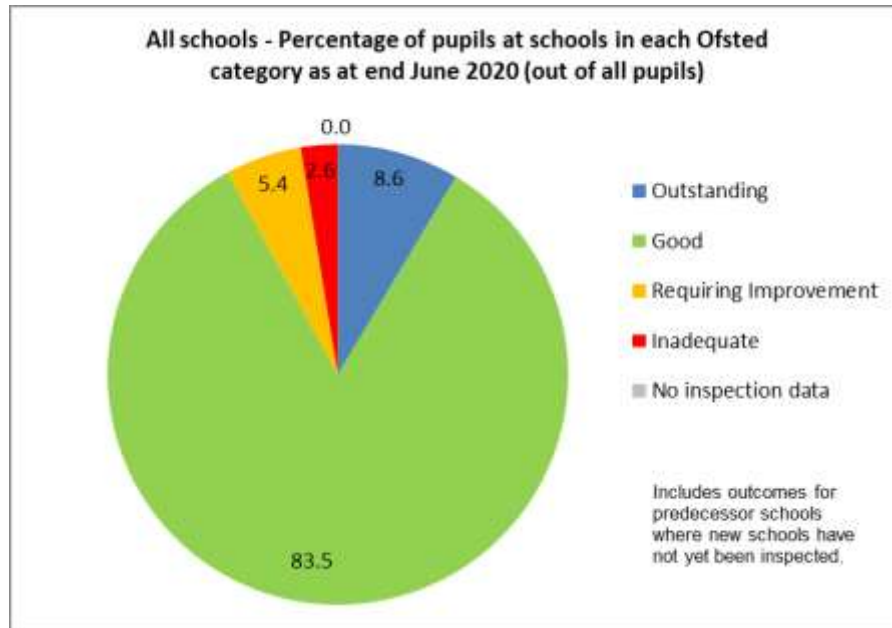
Percentage of schools out of all schools (including schools that have not been inspected yet).

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



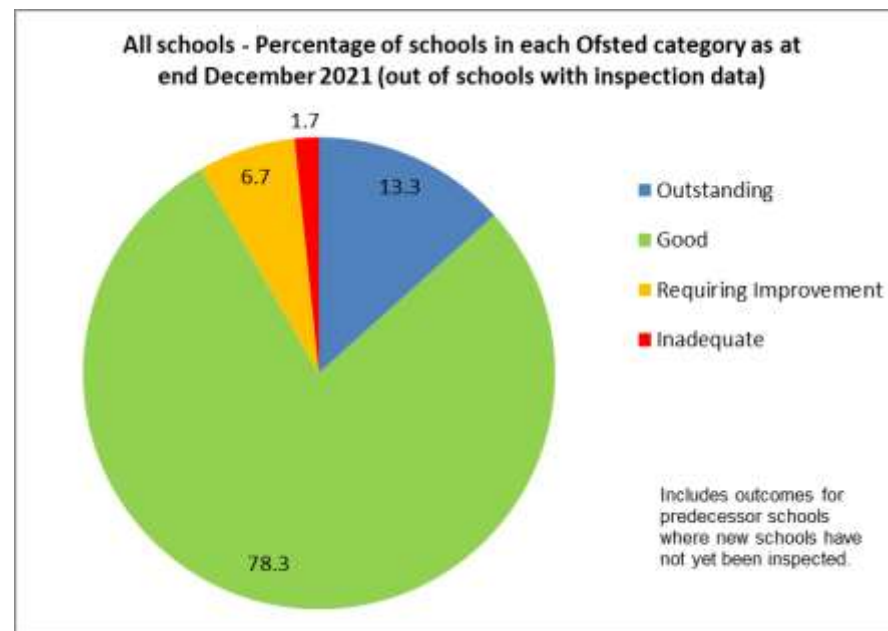
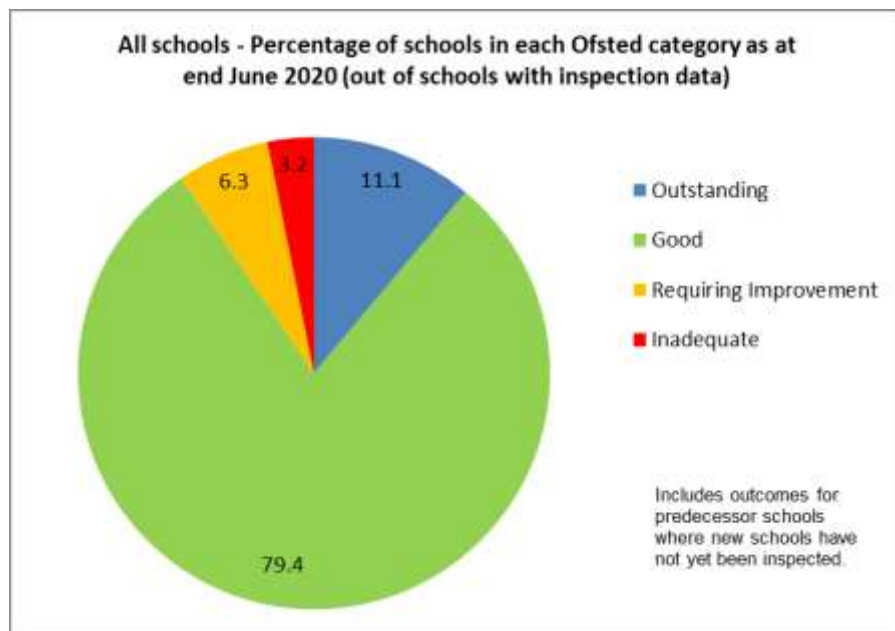
Percentage of pupils out of pupils at schools with inspection data only.

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



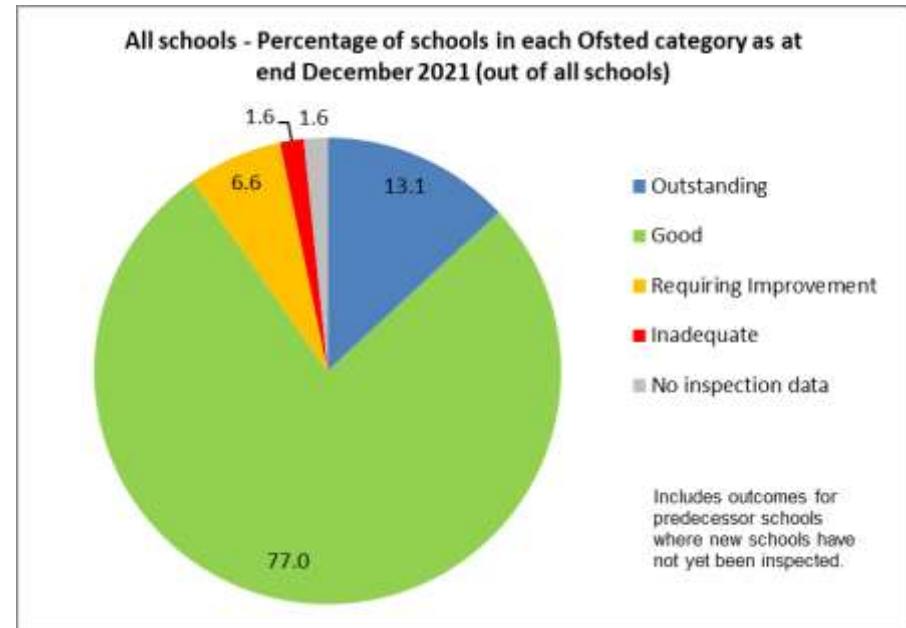
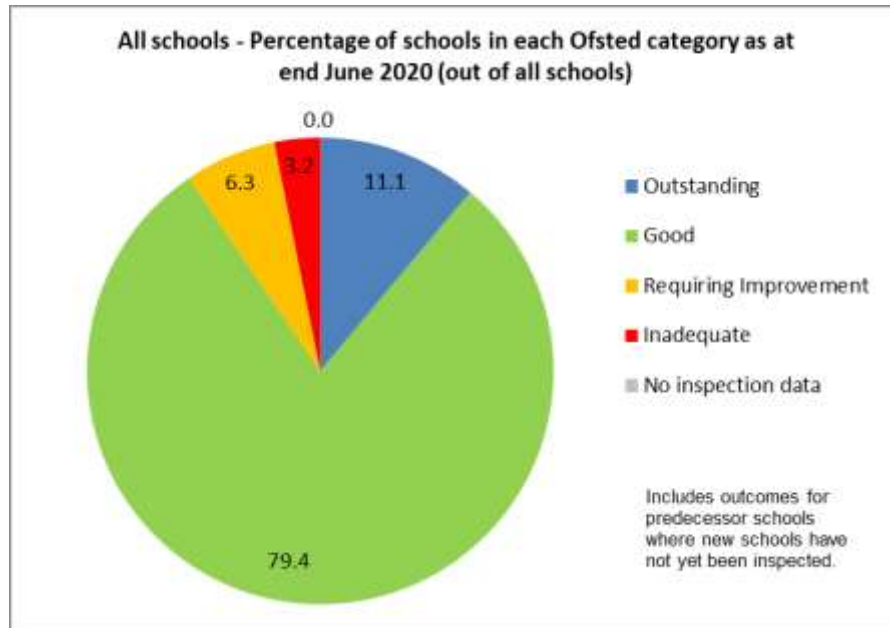
Percentage of pupils out of all pupils (including schools that have not yet been inspected).

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



Percentage of schools out of all schools with inspection data.

Changes in Ofsted Judgements from the end of June 2020 to the end of December 2021.



Percentage of schools out of all schools (including schools that have not yet been inspected).

Agenda Item 5



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Title of meeting:	Education Advisory Board
Subject:	Support and Challenge for LA Maintained Schools
Date of meeting:	18 th February 2022
Report by:	Debbie Anderson, Head of School Improvement and 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 to the Education Advisory Board in October 2021. This therefore covers the period that has seen continued challenges and disruption due to the significant absences of both staff and pupils because of Covid cases and self-isolation.

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

- 3.1 Support and challenge for LA Maintained schools has built upon previous reports delivered by the Head of School Improvement and Early Years since appointment in September 2020. The service has provided support and challenge in an unprecedented period of our schools operating throughout a global pandemic.
- 3.2 A key focus of our work has continued to be the **support and challenge delivered through training and development**.
- a) **Ofsted** - 6 of our LA Maintained schools were last inspected in 2017 hence are past the four-year period that schools judged 'Good' at their previous inspection would normally be re-inspected within. This period has been extended by up to six terms due to the pandemic. Given that the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) was introduced from September 2019 superseding the Common Inspection Framework, school leaders need to understand this most recent inspection framework and what to expect during an Ofsted inspection, be it a Section 5 or Section 8.

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On Friday 7th January 2022 a training session on Ofsted preparation was held, organised by the Southsea Cluster of schools but with an invite to all LA Maintained schools. 14 of our 18 LA Maintained schools attended this training represented by their headteachers and deputies, with all 6 schools last inspected during 2017 present. The training led by the Head of School Improvement and Early Years covered:

- **Understanding the Education Inspection Framework**
- **Understanding Electronic Evidence Gathering**
- **The Top-Level View Conversation** (between headteacher and lead inspector)

Additionally, individual schools have requested training sessions for their senior leaders and/or staff on any of the above topics or **Understanding the Ofsted Early Reading Deep Dive** which is a crucial element of any Ofsted inspection of a primary school. One session has also been delivered to a Local Governing Board of a LA Maintained school. Over 90% of attendees at the sessions have given the highest satisfaction grading for the content, presentation and resources (notes/handouts).

- b) In order to ensure that teachers make accurate judgements about the standards and assessments accurately reflect children's achievements **moderation and assessment** are vital. In addition to leading training for school leaders, training for teachers new to Year 2 and Year 6, and for moderators who will be going out to schools to conduct moderation visits, our lead moderator is working with a small cluster of LA Maintained schools in the north of the city. These schools are somewhat isolated, with their most local neighbours being part of Multi Academy Trusts. Our lead moderator has initially set up this working group then supported them to look at pupils' work making standardised judgements then challenging them to plan next steps in learning which will drive improved pupil progress. This is not a one-off but part of an on-going process leading up to Key Stage 1 and 2 SATs in the summer term.
- 3.3 Building on the successful school to school networks that have always existed across the city, our co-produced **LA Maintained schools' peer review process 'Reflective Improvement'** is now being implemented. Copnor Primary School hosted the first peer review in November 2021 and Bramble Infant and Nursery the second in January 2022. Both headteachers have provided very positive verbal feedback in the opportunity to have trusted peer colleagues conducting an objective review of their schools with senior school leaders themselves involved. Unfortunately, the peer review at Mayfield had to be rescheduled due to the school's Ofsted inspection and those at St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary and Portsdown Primary due to staff absence from

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Covid. The next two at Fernhurst Junior and Devonshire Infant are proceeding as planned.

- 3.4 **Reading** in Key Stage 2 continues to be progressed through the Hackney Learning Trust **Destination Reader** programme. The 'Reading for Purpose and Pleasure' project has been extended to another eight Key Stage 2 schools and two secondary Year 7 cohorts. The support group network led by Sarah Hilditch, PCC School Improvement Adviser, enables teachers to share practice and resources. This has also been supported by the Schools' Library Service who have purchased multiple copies of high-quality texts for schools to borrow, thus easing the financial strain.
- 3.5 Building on the amazing Michael Morpurgo 'Boy Giant' webinar and reading opportunity for Yr 6s across the city last year, the Library Service are looking to hold another **Big Read** event. They have secured Ross Welford's 'When we Got Lost in Dreamland' and will again be able to purchase multiple copies at a much reduced rate so Yr 6 children receive their own copy of the book. The PEP Early Language and Literacy Development Group plus local teachers are working on planning activities and learning resources for schools to use with this text and to support transition from Yr 6 to Yr 7.
- 3.6 To support our younger children with reading decoding skills which are assessed at the **Year 1 Phonics Screening Check** the PEP Early Language and Literacy Development Group have recently devised an information overview whereby LA Maintained schools in particular can access strengths and weakness of various validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics programmes (SSPs) to support them before deciding which to purchase and adopt. Where many academy trusts dictate which phonics programme their schools should use, LA Maintained schools have the freedom to make this decision but find that the time and energy involved for staff to undertake this research burdensome. This tool should provide a quick first-stop shop for schools to access and share precious information.
- 3.7 With a focus on the most vulnerable, the **Literacy Trust local project Pompey Pirates** has expanded to a second location within the Historic Dockyard. Working together with the founder and CEO, Becca Dean MBE, we have been able to identify which schools are ideally placed to engage with this initiative ensuring that LA Maintained schools have access to a very positive resource that is having an impact to improve literacy standards.
- 3.8 The Autumn term 2021 saw the introduction of a **termly Education Senior Leadership Team member face to face visit** to each LA Maintained school. The purpose of these visits is to strengthen the relationship with, and knowledge we have, of the schools that we are particularly responsible for. Without a fixed agenda as such, school leaders were able to talk freely, share

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concerns and successes, whilst leaving officers with follow-up actions related to either Inclusion, Sufficiency and Resources or School Improvement and Early Years. Headteachers have welcomed these visits and noted that this close relationship with local authority officers is even more important for support and challenge since the educational landscape has changed to include now 14 Multi Academy Trusts across the city.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

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

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

Title of document	Location

Agenda Item 6



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Meeting: Education Advisory Board

Subject: Response to Covid-19

Date: 18th February 2022

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, 14th July 2021 and 1st November 2021. Section 11 of the report provides the latest update.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 **It is recommended that members of the Education Advisory Board note the actions that have been taken over the past two years 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 and 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/remoterelearning
- 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 dashboards for each school. Schools were also given the opportunity to try out a range of add-ons to support school attendance. All schools participated in this with the exception of St Edmund's Catholic School. The pilot will be reviewed in the summer term with a view to agreeing a two year commitment for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 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.
- 8.12 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.
- 8.13 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

- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 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.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 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.

11. Spring term 2022

- 11.1 The arrival of the even more transmissible Omicron variant shortly before Christmas has meant that cases increased rapidly again from January 2022, with the increase initially seen amongst primary pupils. Over half of Portsmouth schools have reported a coronavirus outbreak (5 or more cases in a single class or 10% of people in a group testing positive) since the start of January.
- 11.2 As last term, the high levels of coronavirus are continuing to create significant staffing pressures on schools, where fully vaccinated staff (including those who have received the booster) are testing positive, sometimes for the second or even third time. The changed requirements around self-isolation mean that some pupils and staff are able to return

after a shorter self-isolation period, but many staff are still testing positive on day 6 and others are unable to return immediately even when their 10 day self-isolation period ends, as they are not fully fit.

- 11.3 We have continued to have excellent engagement between schools and health so that all Portsmouth schools with secondary age pupils will be hosting vaccination clinics during the Spring Term to offer first and second vaccines for children aged 12-15.

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Signed by Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendices:

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

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

Title of document	Location