

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2022

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Martin Potter, Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools

Summary

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools for the period from April 2021 until March 2022. In the case of education services, it covers the academic year 2020-2021 and activity during that year and then the first half of the current school year.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, according to the Council's constitution are:

- Child Friendly Medway Champion (including Medway Youth Council)
- Early Career Teachers
- Early Years
- Education Safeguarding
- Further Education
- Further Education and Higher Education Liaison
- Mainstream School Transport
- Primary and Secondary Educational Improvement
- School Organisation and Capital Projects
- School Services (including Admissions and Medway Test)
- Schools Liaison

1.2 Cllr Mrs Josie Iles as the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services is the designated lead member for children's services (LMCS) under the Children Act 2004. The Portfolio Holder (Lead Member) is responsible for leadership, strategy and the effectiveness of education and children's social care.

2. Child Friendly Medway Champion (including Medway Youth Council)

Child Friendly Medway

- 2.1 The Portfolio Holder attends the Child Friendly Medway Partnership Board as a member promoting the Voice of the Child in the new programme of work the board is championing. Child Friendly Medway (CFM) is about a whole system and whole community approach to ensuring Medway is a place where we create, promote and celebrate opportunities for all our 64,000 children and young people to thrive, be healthy, contribute and enjoy life in Medway.
- 2.2 CFM launched in April 2021, with a core focus on consulting children and young people (up to 25) to better understand what it is like to be growing up, going to school, and working in Medway. Children and young people are playing active roles in shaping the plans for Child-Friendly Medway through our survey (over 3000 responses), focus-groups, and Child-Friendly Medway City Hall events at the Brook Theatre in Chatham. Their ideas are helping to shape our plans for making Medway an even more child-friendly city.
- 2.3 As part of our outreach and engagement with children, young people, parents and carers, and to achieve our goals of making Medway a Child-Friendly City, we are delivering a variety of free programmes and activities labelled “Seeing is Believing” across Medway, including: soft play events, drop-in football, film events, Friday family sport night at Medway Park, learn-to-swim courses, themed events (i.e. holidays, superhero and Disney characters), free tickets for children, families and classes to attend Christmas Pantomime at the Brook Theatre, Capital Theatre and Mid-Kent College. We even built a community garden in Strood for children and young people to learn to grow their own vegetables and fruit.
- 2.4 We are offering a mixture of universal and targeted programming through Seeing is Believing to help narrow the gap for children and young people – some of the targeted work we have done includes fit and fed sports programming over half term, learn to swim (crash courses) and providing tickets to children and families on the school meal programme.
- 2.5 We have also supported schools by sponsoring the Mini Youth Games, Swimming Charter, October Walk to School Challenge, Climate Change Poetry Contest, Youth Councils, and by providing tickets to a handful of schools in areas of high deprivation to access programming and activities like theatre tickets to Christmas Pantomime at MidKent College and a play at the Brook Theatre and creative workshops in classrooms.
- 2.6 The concept of CFM champions in schools is being considered and we are planning to work with children and young people to co-design this offer, then rollout to schools potentially in Autumn 2022 or January 2023.

Medway Youth Council

- 2.7 Medway Youth Council (MYC) were unable to do a face-to-face conference due to covid and the restrictions, so they held a live Q&A via Teams on 'Covid - The effect on Youth' looking at how covid had impacted on young people's mental health and wellbeing. This was undertaken as a research project, with a survey gathering information from young people aged 11-18. MYC also put together a wellbeing pack of useful information which included coping strategies and where to access support. The Portfolio Holder was a panel member for the MYC conference Q&A, joining education leaders and children's services representatives to respond to a wide array of questions submitted by young people.
- 2.8 During lockdown the MYC membership had dropped considerably and there was on average eight young people attending the online meetings. The reduction was likely to be due to young people being online at school all day, and probably how they were socialising. From May the MYC meetings were held in person at Woodlands Youth Centre as Gun Wharf still had restrictions in place.
- 2.9 In June there were elections for the positions of Interim Member of Youth Parliament, Chair, Health Lead, Marketing, Campaign and Digital Engagement. In October there was a second round of elections for second Interim Member of Youth Parliament, Community Engagement, Vice Chair, Finance and Equality and Diversity. All positions have been filled.
- 2.10 Over the summer some MYC members have started a Let's Talk Climate group, including work on an online climate change game for use in schools. Other initiatives include tree planting. The Community Engagement Lead and one of the Climate Change Group sits on the Member Advisory Group. For COP 26 Youth Empowerment Day the Let's Talk Climate group organised an event at Woodlands Youth Centre to talk about climate change including looking at sustainable fashion. We linked up with Youth Workers in Finland and young people that we are doing joint work with. A couple of these young people also took part in the Climate Change Conversation that was organised at the Corn Exchange.
- 2.11 The MYC Cabinet also attended the British Youth Council Convention in London in October, the first face to face meeting they have been able to attend outside of Medway. MYC took part in this year's online Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration event with one member doing an introduction and two members saying a prayer one of them had written.
- 2.12 MYC have started work on the 2022 Conference looking at 'Poverty and Young People'.
- 2.13 To date we have 60 names of young people interested in MYC and regularly have 20 attend the meetings that are now taking place at Gun Wharf. The Member of Youth Parliament elections are coming up and 13 young people

from a variety of schools are running for the two positions in Medway. The ballot papers will be in schools for the first two weeks of February and counting the following week. In many of the schools we have Polling Clerks who are responsible for running the polls in their schools.

- 2.14 The Portfolio Holder is the Council appointed director of Dynamics, Medway's Arts Council England funded music hub. The music hub have enjoyed a successful period, despite the issues of the pandemic, with technology being utilised to ensure music lessons could continue. There has also been some excellent virtual concerts with content available on the music hub's website.

3 Early Career Teachers

- 3.1 September 2021 saw the introduction of the revised 'Induction for Early Career Teachers (England)' which replaces the previous 'Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers'.
- 3.2 Not only has NQT been changed to ECT (Early Career Teacher), but induction now lasts two years for the majority of teachers and all ECTs must receive an ECF-based training that covers the Early Career Framework (ECF).
- 3.3 Schools can select from 3 ECF models (full induction programme, core induction programme or school-based induction programme) and the programmes from six providers. If selecting the full induction programme, the school must register with a delivery partner who is providing the training for their selected ECF programme. Delivery partners can be local authorities (LAs) who choose to provide ECF-based training and one of the 87 Teaching School Hubs from across England.
- 3.4 LAs provide an Appropriate Body role for the induction of ECFs; they must provide a named contact and be the Appropriate Body for their geographical schools where a school cannot reach an agreement with another provider.
- 3.5 Medway LA offers Appropriate Body services to its schools and those from outside Medway, and follows the Statutory Guidance as set out in the 'Induction for Early Career Teachers (England)'. Medway LA does not provide ECF-based training but does provide central and bespoke support for Induction Tutors and network meetings for its ECTs.
- 3.6 In the academic year 2020/21, 133 NQTs were registered with Medway LA Appropriate Body. Of these, 108 successfully completed induction, 15 continued their induction into 2021/22 and 10 resigned.
- 3.7 The Medway LA Appropriate Body continues to be part of the LA Appropriate Body group London Councils Induction Group (LCIG). The group provides support, guidance, and information.
- 3.8 The key priority for 2020/21 was the introduction of the 2-year induction programme, the role of the Appropriate Body and the Early Career

Framework (ECF). Furthermore, the monitoring of the impact of the introduction of Teaching School Hubs who are statutorily required to offer an Appropriate Body service and provide training on the ECF. Changes were successfully implemented and the impact of the introduction of the ECF, with schools being able to register for the AB services provided by their ECF delivery partner, has seen a reduction in the number of ECTs registered with Medway AB. However, there may be other reasons for the decline, including schools recruiting ECTs and the number of trainee teachers entering the profession in 2021/22.

- 3.9 The key priority for 2021/22 is implementing the quality assurance responsibilities as suggested in the Appropriate Body guidance and 'Induction for Early Career Teachers (England)' guidance.

4 Early Years

- 4.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare provision, as far as reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment. Medway early years sufficiency team engage with all early years providers across Medway, facilitating access to the government funded childcare offer and providing support for Medway children to achieve and be ready for school.
- 4.2 The Medway Family Information Service (FIS) is part of the early years sufficiency team and acts as a brokerage service to Medway families who require early years provision for two, three and four year olds, including children with special educational needs. The FIS can also support Medway families in many aspects of family life, such as childcare choices, parenting support, welfare assistance and is a free confidential service. The Family Information Service directory has a wealth of services for families to access and a telephone service for families and practitioners.
- 4.3 Currently there are 241 childcare providers registered with Medway Council to deliver government funded childcare, this equates to 114 childminders, 41 school nurseries and 86 private, voluntary, and independent settings. Medway early years providers have sufficient registered places to accept all the potentially eligible children who are two, three, and four years old.
- 4.4 Since January 2021, there have been 30 new providers registered with Medway Council offering funded childcare.
- 4.5 Throughout the pandemic, the early years sector across Medway has continued to stay strong in delivering early years education and childcare. Settings that have been required to temporarily close due to public health reasons have reopened after the designated timescale to continue to deliver quality early years provision.
- 4.6 Early years settings have been supported by Medway Council through regular communication, ensuring all settings receive the latest DfE guidance daily and understand the required action.

- 4.7 The Early Years Recovery group was set up to support all providers throughout the pandemic and has continued under the new heading of the 'Early Years Leaders Forum' and this has further strengthened the work between providers and Medway Council.
- 4.8 The Early Years Sufficiency team continue to work closely with the Department for Education to protect the funding of school-based nurseries and the Private Voluntary and Independent sector, thus enabling sustainability of childcare businesses and childcare places across Medway.
- 4.9 As a result of the additional support provided, the Medway Early Years Sector has remained strong throughout the pandemic and seen very few closures of settings as a result.
- 4.10 Childcare provision throughout Medway continues to be of a high standard as shown in the table below. Good quality Early Years settings make a significant impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds through providing access to resources and experiences they might not have at home. Quality settings can reduce gaps in development for children and support all children in being ready for school.

| Type of provision | Total number of providers inspected | % Achieving good or outstanding |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Childminders | 88 | 95% |
| Nursery classes in schools | 41 | 98% |
| Private and voluntary nurseries | 78 | 100% |

5 Education Safeguarding

- 5.1 The Education Safeguarding Officer (ESO) role is currently held by an interim member of staff, covering maternity leave. The current ESO has been in post since December. She has over 15 years' experience in education senior leadership posts, including 4 years as Principal of a 52-week residential special school. She was headteacher's representative on a Local Safeguarding Children Board for 5 years and had responsibility for raising standards by delivering safeguarding and Designated Safeguarding Lead training across an LA. Her area of expertise is in working with children with disabilities, particularly autism. She also is a qualified Play Therapist and has worked with children who have experienced significant trauma and abuse.
- 5.2 The ESO has responsibility for overseeing safeguarding in schools and offers guidance regarding education safeguarding enquiries to school leaders and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs).
- 5.3 The ESO supports schools, and other education settings to develop best possible policy, practice, and safeguarding culture, to respond to wider safeguarding concerns and highlight emerging themes in safeguarding. This could include giving advice, signposting, sharing, and developing training and resources, liaising with other services within the Local Authority and working

in partnership with outside agencies. Consultations from schools are recorded and reviewed to identify themes to ensure that training priorities can be targeted to areas of need. Since April 2021 there have been a total of 64 contacts from schools and other stakeholders.

- 5.4 Part of the ESO role is to contact schools to discuss complaints against schools (CAS) made to Ofsted about the safeguarding practice in schools. Where a complaint involves the welfare of an individual child, Ofsted has no power to investigate the concerns. The officer works with schools to explore concerns and offer support and guidance to assist in addressing and resolving the issues raised within complaints. The officer responds to Ofsted by summarising their findings and recommendations; with a duty to report if they find a school-wide safeguarding issue.
- 5.5 Since April 2021, there have been 25 CAS received and concluded and two further reports made to the Education Skills and Funding Agency.
- 5.6 The ESO circulates and supports schools to complete the annual safeguarding audit, required to be completed by schools, under Section 175 of the Education Act. The Education Safeguarding Officer collates and analyses the audits, using the outcomes to complete an annual report to the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) as a part of its Section 11 duty to oversee safeguarding practice across partners. The report is used to identify development priorities for the next academic year, in line with strengths and weaknesses that schools report on.
- 5.7 As a part of education safeguarding quality assurance the ESO undertakes reviews of safeguarding practice in Local Authority schools, reviewing the effectiveness of their safeguarding practice and culture, feeding back to head teachers, governors, the MSCP and the local authority where appropriate. A follow up offer of targeted and time limited safeguarding support to schools is agreed where a need is identified.
- 5.8 The officer facilitates training, covering various safeguarding topics for schools' designated safeguarding leads and wider education staff to ensure that they are appropriately supported and trained in safeguarding and child protection matters, as led, and set by local and national requirements. This is a training offer that sits alongside the MSCP.
- 5.9 The ESO supports the work and vision of the MSCP and attends relevant subgroups, leading on relevant pieces of work as requested. The ESO supports schools to contribute to MSCP case file audit groups; these ensure effective interagency working and the identification and actioning of key learning points.
- 5.10 The ESO works with the MSCP to deliver training to partners, including schools. This provides an opportunity to develop and promote interagency relationships. Training ensures that schools understand their role and responsibility in relation to keeping children and young people safe from all

forms of exploitation, how this may present in an education setting and how to respond effectively.

- 5.11 The ESO has worked closely with the Prevent education officer (PEO) for Medway, North and West Kent to promote and create awareness of the prevent agenda in Medway schools. The ESO circulates the PEO newsletter to all schools to ensure they are up to date with knowledge, information and training that is offered.
- 5.12 The ESO attends the Medway primary and secondary head teacher forums (MELA and MSHA), on request, to provide regular updates and information relating to safeguarding policy and procedures. The ESO sends regular updates and communications to all school leaders and DSLs in Medway, via a newsletter, to share information, resources, and updates. The new ESO is working to re-establish the strong links previously held with Medway schools. Schools are keen to engage, and relationships are positive. There is a shared aim of better safeguarding the children of Medway. Working with the Virtual School Role Extension Coordinator, the ESO is re-establishing regular meetings with DSLs to provide updates, training based on current need and the sharing of good safeguarding practice.
- 5.13 The training programme for the DSLs is provided by The Education People, in liaison with the ESO. Delivery has been adapted because of the pandemic, although face to face training is now resuming. The 'new to role' training is delivered either face to face as a one-day training, or virtually as two interactive half-day sessions. 'Refresher' training is delivered either face-to-face or as an e-learning course (which must be renewed annually). Feedback has been positive, and schools have commented that the training is informative and useful to their role.
- 5.14 A model whole school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is updated annually and posted on the MSCP website, the latest is in line with the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021'. This policy is adapted and used by most Medway schools.
- 5.15 The ESO is committed to strengthening relationships with schools and improving safeguarding practices. The ESO works closely with the MSCP and Family Solutions to strengthen and support relationships between partners.
- 5.16 Current immediate priorities are:
- Maintenance and development of strong and positive working relationships with schools and education settings across Medway.
 - The completion and publication of the Education Safeguarding Handbook, so Medway schools and other partners have a clear understanding of the role and services provided. The Handbook is Medway's local offer to Schools and Education provisions.
 - Implementation of the safeguarding review programme in LA schools, to further support the development of 'gold standard' safeguarding practice.

6 Further Education and Higher Education Liaison

6.1 Medway Council has successfully established an Enterprise Adviser Network with advisers working with secondary schools to improve the quality and breadth of their career's strategies and programmes. This is achieved through recruiting senior leaders from the world of work to become Enterprise Advisers, they work with the Enterprise Coordinators in Medway and school senior leadership teams to support embedding a nationally accepted framework for good careers education, information, advice and guidance called the Gatsby Benchmarks. Benchmark areas include:

- encounters with employers
- experience of the workplace
- informed about further and higher education options
- addressing the needs of all students.

6.2 There are 18 mainstream schools, 1 college, 3 SEND schools and 3 alternative provisions in the network to date. The network has 31 active Enterprise Advisers from a range of different sized companies and varying sectors. All schools/college in Medway can access full support from the Enterprise Coordinator/Enterprise Advisers and are invited to Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) network meetings four times per academic year. All Enterprise Advisers have opportunities for continuous professional development to support them in their roles and are invited to networking events three/four times per academic year.

6.3 Achievements in the second academic year include:

- An Enterprise Adviser from Scotline has developed a curriculum-based project named Scotline Enterprise Challenge which links subjects taught in school to the world of work and highlights the skills learned to the young people. Additional Enterprise Advisers supported the challenge in July 2021 and their employers provided equipment to run the challenge free to the school. The enterprise day was a huge success, and the challenge has now been tailored for another schools' curriculum to run in March 2022. The aim is for the challenge to be offered to all schools and MidKent College in Medway including SEND/alternative provisions (SEND/AP).
- Schools and the college are invited to network meetings to share good practice and resources. Careers Leaders in the same Academy Trusts in Medway work closely together and Chatham Grammar School is supporting the Skills for Life Trust with a peer mentoring scheme. The Rowans Alternative Provision will be supporting the network with how to improve the careers sections on their websites as an effective 'window' for Ofsted to view before they visit.
- The Enterprise Coordinators are actively searching for current and relevant resources and regularly share the information with the schools and MidKent college. The Enterprise Coordinators have become key conduits between careers providers and the schools and college.
- CXK is successfully delivering the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools and Colleges Programme (ASK) in schools in Medway to promote apprenticeships.

- The skills framework developed by the Skills for Life Trust has inspired schools to consider a deeper dive into skills education. Thomas Aveling School is planning to highlight the skills learned in their curriculum and Chatham Grammar School for Girls has also designed their own skills framework to embed skills education.
- The SEND/AP schools and their Enterprise Advisers are invited to join a separate networking session to share good practice and resources.
- Medway schools and the college were invited to join the Kent and Medway Careers Hub at the start of the 2021/2022 academic year. Eight schools are included in year one of a two-year plan and all other schools/college will be invited to join the Hub in September 2022. The Hub builds a community of practice for schools/colleges in Kent and Medway, additional connections with businesses and extra continuing professional development (CPD) for school/college Careers Leaders and wider colleagues.

“Careers Hubs lead partnerships of schools, colleges, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities, businesses, Cornerstone Employers and careers providers, to help young people connect closely to local skills and economic needs through a responsive careers education programme.”

[\(https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-network-careers-hubs/careers-hubs/\)](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-network-careers-hubs/careers-hubs/)

- 6.4 The Portfolio Holder is a member of the Council’s Skills Board which has driven forward the Enterprise Adviser Network in Medway and provides oversight of its delivery. Medway Council (as a major employer) has engaged very well with the programme and the Network. The Network has supported different Council departments with information sharing to schools and businesses. These include the youth service, economic development and public health.
- 6.5 Mid-Kent College are represented on the Covid-19 Headteacher Reference group and they have received the regular briefings from Medway Council throughout the pandemic. A combined representative of the universities in Medway attends the Medway Education Partnership Group and Mid-Kent college also sit on this strategic partnership forum.

7 Mainstream School Transport

- 7.1 The Council provides mainstream school transport to those eligible under the policy which is reviewed and revised as appropriate and published on the Council’s website. The cost of transport has seen year on year increases as pupil numbers rise, and all pupils are assessed for eligibility. Currently, there are 1337 pupils eligible, and this is provided in the form of a bus pass, a rail card or fuel allowance.
- 7.2 With Covid-19 restrictions, additional bus services were provided up until July 2021 comprising of duplicate public services and an increase in the dedicated school buses to ensure that pupils could be transported to school safely and in line with government guidelines.

7.3 Central government provided a grant to cover the cost of the additional services. This funding has been jointly managed by the education team and the Council's integrated transport department. From September 2021, services have returned to the appropriate levels and timetables.

8 Primary and Secondary Educational Effectiveness

8.1 School Performance

8.1.1 Education policy in Medway reflects the Council's ambition that all schools should be good or outstanding in order that life chances for all children and young people are improved. This ambition is being secured by working in partnership with education leaders, governors, trusts, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted.

8.1.2 Both the Local Authority and the RSC have mechanisms in certain circumstances to intervene where there are concerns about school performance, including leadership and governance. Such intervention may include formal warning notices, removal of governing bodies and, in the case of academies, re-brokerage to another Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The relationship with the RSC is strong and is maintained through regular formal and informal communications to share intelligence and discuss a wide range of issues including the performance of all schools within Medway.

8.1.3 During the pandemic normal school inspection visits undertaken by Ofsted were suspended. Urgent inspections where there were specific concerns did continue to take place, prioritising the immediate safety of children. Full inspections resumed in September 2021, with schools being allowed to defer their inspection if they were amidst a Covid outbreak. Due to the disruption Ofsted is about 18 months behind in its inspection volumes.

8.1.4 No standard Ofsted inspections were undertaken during the pandemic. At the end of the academic year, 94.4% of Medway Secondary schools were judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding, compared to 76.5% nationally and 89.5% of Medway primary schools were judged good or outstanding compared to 87.9% nationally.

8.2 School performance – Academic Outcomes

8.2.1 Due to the pandemic, nationally all key stage one, key stage two and GCSE, AS/A level exams were cancelled in 2020 and in 2021. Schools were not required to submit primary data to the DfE and/or local authority. Schools did submit Autumn 2020 Year 2 Phonic Check results, GCSE and A Level and vocational results. Secondary exam results were made available publicly by region (not LA) and could not be used to hold schools to account. In Early Years Foundation Stage, schools made 'best endeavours' to provide profile information to parents and Year 1 colleagues.

8.2.2 For the academic year 2021/22 it is the DfE's intention that primary assessments, including SATs, are carried out as normally scheduled. Schools with pupils in Year 2 undertook the 2021 autumn phonic check and data has been submitted to the DfE via the LA for the purpose of identifying pupils who would need to retake the phonic check in June 2022 and for schools to use the data to provide support for pupils as appropriate. Moderators have already received their training in preparation for the moderation of Key Stage one and Key Stage two teacher assessments.

8.2.3 Despite the disruption to learning, no changes have been made to the content or application of the frameworks for moderating teacher assessment or the expectations of the SATs papers. This will allow the DfE to measure the impact of Covid on children's learning in English, maths, science and phonics. Furthermore, KS2 data will not be published on School Performance tables and all 2021/22 performance data available to LAs and Ofsted cannot be used to hold schools to account.

8.3 Covid Support and Recovery

8.3.1 Early in the pandemic a head teacher reference group was established to support schools. The group had representation from headteachers across Medway schools as well as a range of Council partners including Public Health, SEND and Education colleagues. The reference group met twice weekly to begin with to discuss the various challenges and receive advice and guidance. The group covered topics such as outbreak management, transport, free school meals, creation of Covid "bubbles" and staffing policies. Small task and finish groups were also established around specific areas of concern such as vulnerable children or SEND transport. This group continues to meet, as required, to address issues and challenges as they arise.

8.3.2 During the 2020 Christmas break, Public Health worked with schools, the Council and voluntary sector providers to deliver healthy food parcels to families eligible for free school meals. Since then, the programme has evolved at a national level and there is now a holiday activities and food programme. The holiday activities and food programme provide grant funding to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision for eligible children. Working with schools and a range of voluntary and statutory providers, Public Health ensure vulnerable children can access healthy meals and fun activities during school breaks. The Household Support Grant was also launched in 2021 allowing vulnerable households in Medway to access support to help them with essential household costs over the winter months.

8.3.3 One of the biggest impacts of the pandemic has been on the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people. Schools have a key role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students and are under a statutory duty to promote their welfare. This has been supported through the following courses and programmes:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).
- Teacher Training on leading health and wellbeing education within the curriculum, in all education settings.

- Youth Health Champions programme with a focus on health education.
- Thrive being embedded in schools through a series of workshops and the development of a Thrive framework tool that helps schools identify the right level of support and services in their area.
- Mental Health Support Teams - Medway was successful in their bid for 2 teams (known locally as the Emotional Support Teams; EST) for 33 schools (covering 32% of Medway state-funded schools) hosted by NELFT. After the initial one-year training programme at University of Sussex, the 8 Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHP) began working in schools from January 2022 with a full service live from May 2022.
- The Education Mental Health Leads Network
- The Mental Health directory - an online tool which helps individuals to navigate services with a few simple filters
- Mental Health Webinars, providing education settings an opportunity to ask Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health services any questions they may have or to find out more around what the service provides or how to refer.
- Positive Behaviour Support - Since 2018, Medway has been taking a community wide approach to Positive Behaviour Support implementation (PBS) working with the organisation BILD, including offering training at various levels, facilitating a schoolwide approach pilot and developing a community of practice and expert practitioner network.
- Medway Early Years are also offering training to support early year settings and we continue promoting BILD's free e-learning training course to extend reach.
- Medway was part of the School Wide EU Pilot in which 3 of our schools are completing the training element ready to embark on the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) culture changes. Since implementation, one of our primary schools, previously holding the highest fixed term exclusions within Medway primary schools, no longer excludes and other schools involved have seen a reduction in the number of behavioural incidents.
- Medway Youth Service Participation Team are undertaking a project where young people, parents and carers can offer feedback from their experience using the Mental Health and Wellbeing Services. This project aims to collect feedback from as many young people, parents and carers as possible, then work with young people to analyse the feedback, and make recommendations to the Commissioning team for recognition or improvement.

8.4 School support

- 8.4.1 The establishment of the headteacher reference group at the beginning of the Pandemic, and the work with school leaders throughout the pandemic, has helped us build upon prior initiatives by the education team to improve engagement and provide more structure to support system leadership in Medway. There has also been a cultural shift both within the Council and in the sector with children's services and other Council services now closer integrated into the engagement structure and dialogue directly with schools.

The headteacher reference group has continued to be utilised as required and has been supported on a multi-agency basis, including RSC and public health.

- 8.4.2 Communication was further improved by the introduction of a regular online publication, called 'Headway'. The publication not only delivers transparent, regular communication to support education leaders, but provides a single place where key documents and resources can be accessed
- 8.4.3 The School Effectiveness team works alongside leaders and in collaboration with the wider strategic education partnerships within Medway and across the Southeast region. Within the national landscape of change, the focus of this team is to bring strategic coherence and effectiveness to the local education system. The service fulfils the statutory duties of the Council, which are broadly contained within the 1996 Education Act 13a, *to promote high standards within education*, permeating all aspects of the Council's plans.
- 8.4.4 This educational excellence role is the responsibility of the Director of Children and Adult Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services, supported by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools; operational effectiveness is distributed primarily through the School Effectiveness Team. The first strategic council plan priority is the driver for all School Effectiveness work, aiming to enable *all children to achieve their potential in schools*. School Effectiveness works in partnership with the following groups to realise this ambition:
- Medway Education Partnership Group
 - Medway headteacher associations (MELA and MSHA)
 - The four Medway zones
 - SEND Partnership Board
 - Medway Cultural Strategy
 - Child Friendly Medway
 - Thames Gateway Teaching School Hub Partnership Board
 - Medway and Swale ICP Children's Clinical and Professional Advisory Board
 - Medway Emotional Health and Well Being Board
- 8.4.5 The service is committed to strengthening the operational and independent effectiveness of school system leaders, so that they can champion the child and realise the council vision for all pupils. Furthermore, the relationship between Council officers and the Regional Schools Commissioner is well established, enabling regular dialogue and the sharing of intelligence for the benefit of all children and young people.
- 8.4.6 At a school level, the service works with leaders to support professionals to make a positive impact on the goals they seek and aspire to achieve. The service supports colleagues at all points of their career from early career teachers to executive leaders and into system leadership in partnership with the local Teaching School Hub and Canterbury Christ Church University.

- 8.4.7 School Effectiveness also work beyond the national curriculum remit and offer a conduit for integrated working for services across the Council promoting education and awareness of initiatives including climate change, obesity, Child Friendly Medway and Positive Behaviour Support programmes.
- 8.4.8 Colleagues in education who evidence success with learners, are often drawn upon to promote best practice and professional development within learning zones. Work with the Teaching School Hub offers the potential to further expand local professional networks and accreditation.
- 8.4.9 A key improvement across the education service has been the co-ordination of intelligence and the registering of risk across the wider education service. In 2021, this included the following areas: school effectiveness, attendance, inclusion, safeguarding, SEND, admissions, finance, governance, health and safety, human resources and property.
- 8.4.10 Through discussion with maintained schools, officers achieved a shared understanding of the key priorities for each school, a clarity that was expected to align to the risk categorisation and to the school's strategic plan priorities.

8.5 The Medway Education Partnership Group (MEPG)

- 8.5.1 The Partnership's vision is for all learners to fulfil their full potential through an inclusive and aspirational education. By securing skills and resilience to succeed in education and career pathways, young people will enjoy life-long learning and contribute positively to society.
- 8.5.2 The Partnership has continued to gather momentum throughout the pandemic, focusing upon its remit to further strengthen and develop the school system in the local area. Groups represented include head teachers (both maintained and academy schools), Mid Kent college, academy trust chief executives, the early years sector, the Regional Schools Commissioner, governors, universities, independent schools and the Teaching School Hub. The workflow programme has been agreed and forms the agenda of an annual programme of presentations which contributes to evaluation and accountability.
- 8.5.3 The Partnership aims to improve outcomes for learners by:
- supporting education partner organisations to develop excellent teaching and learning
 - co-ordinating strategic planning and leadership on a multi-agency basis for education services
 - developing 'co-production' and collaboration across the education sector.
- 8.5.4 The core responsibilities of the Partnership are to:
- develop an education partnership strategy to ensure continued educational improvement in Medway within the landscape of academisation
 - challenge and support the leaders of all phases of education to strive for excellence and innovation
 - promote inclusion and access to excellent provision

- champion effective transition between education phases and encourage health and well-being initiatives for our young people and school communities.
- increase opportunities for learners to access effective career or progression pathways
- improve the skills and vocational offer to close the skills gap.

8.6 Curriculum Diversity

8.6.1 Promotion of curriculum diversity amongst Medway's schools followed a question at overview and scrutiny in July 2020 regarding the local school curriculums. The enquiry probed the extent to which the Council can influence individual school curriculums so that there is more local diverse content, particularly regarding positive examples and role models from all communities in Medway. A task and finish group, composed of school leaders, was established to take the diversity agenda forward. Still in existence, it focuses upon the sharing of existing good practice amongst schools and the creation of teaching and learning resources that promote the existing diversity in Medway's rich history.

8.6.2 The Council has a statutory duty to promote high standards of education for all learners in Medway. A good understanding of the historic and inspiring achievements of our local role models from all backgrounds is an essential component of a balanced history curriculum. The scope for this is already within the national curriculum but does not go so far as to detail names and events in each locality; this is very much the responsibility of each locality. Though there is no statutory expectation to define a local curriculum, nor are academies required to teach the national curriculum, Ofsted would expect that the curriculum serves pupils with a high level of cultural capital from their locality, past and present, their place within it and their responsibility to serve others through model citizenship and British Values.

8.6.3 Two work strands are currently underway to promote local heroes. One seeks to collect hidden stories from communities in Medway, and the second is the creation of some resources that schools can integrate into their existing curriculums.

8.7 The Reading Collaborative

8.7.1 School Effectiveness officers convened thirty-four leaders across Medway's primary and special schools to come together to work collaboratively and address a key improvement priority. Enabling children to read to the expected standard at key stage 2 has been a key priority in Medway for some time. With the pandemic likely to have further hindered children's reading, leaders were keen to tackle this pivotal issue and halt further decline. Framed by a paper from the School Effectiveness team, the leaders met to work across school and academy boundaries, targeting shared barriers to learning and pooling their expertise, in order to get as many learners as possible on track for a life of reading, success and pleasure.

8.7.2 By facilitating such collective discussion, system leadership is promoted; sessions encourage joint problem solving and sharing of best practice on a wide range of issues associated with reading, from effective lockdown recovery, KS2 progress, vocabulary rich classrooms to positive parent reading role models.

8.7.3 Currently, the reading collaboration involves system leaders polling their views on the top priorities for concerted action and shining a light on where resource and expertise already exists, so that all pupils achieve their potential. The impact of this collaborative approach to system wide improvement will benefit everyone who lives, learns and works in Medway.

9 School organisation, capital projects and School Services (including admissions and the Medway Test)

9.1 The School Organisation and Capital Services team ensure that sufficient good quality school places are available to meet demand when and where it is needed. This must be achieved within a limited budget and to a strict timeframe via the Capital Programme Board.

9.2 The team is also responsible for ensuring that maintained schools are quality learning environments, but the condition of academy schools is the direct responsibility of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

9.3 This has been another challenging year for the projects team as access to school sites has been restricted and the availability of contractors and supplies inconsistent. However, the team has continued to deliver the necessary capacity required to meet demand for school places across Medway, including sufficient specialist space to enable schools to meet the full curriculum where additional pupils have been admitted, including science laboratories at The Robert Napier School, Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School and The Victory Academy as well as additional classroom space at Greenacre, all of which have been added as a result of just under £1m of investment. Plans continue to ensure sufficient places and facilities are available.

9.4 Further bulge places were created to meet the demand and every pupil who required a place was provided with one. All secondary schools have worked with the council to provide these places in a great example of continued partnership working and collaboration.

9.5 Some of the work undertaken for 2020, when approximately £4m was invested in bulge classes, has also accounted for the 2021 intake, when further year 7 bulge classes were needed despite one of the free schools opening in September 2021. The delay to the second free school in Strood to 2022 has determined that even with the new school in Rainham opening, additional places were required. These have already been agreed with schools and the majority of the work, costing a further £1.2m, already commenced.

- 9.6 The DfE will fund and deliver the two new secondary free schools in Medway for 2300 pupils, one of which is already open at Leigh Academy Rainham, with the other targeted to open in temporary accommodation in 2022 for Strood. The DfE will invest around £75m in these two schools
- 9.7 In the selective sector, approximately £4.9m of investment has created over 600 additional places, sufficient capacity is available for all Medway resident pupils who are deemed as grammar through the Medway Test. Measures to prioritise places for Medway children (whilst adhering to the Greenwich ruling) include: school admissions policies; access areas for pupils on the peninsula; supporting the further expansion of schools as funding becomes available; and organising provision to enable an increase in the proportion of Medway pupils. We continue to explore the option of a grammar school satellite/annexe on the peninsula to meet increasing demand. Currently over 1100 pupils attend grammar schools from Strood and the peninsula, this creates travel patterns which contribute to traffic congestion. Having such a provision will reduce traffic levels and also the amount of time pupils spent travelling.
- 9.8 All Medway grammar schools now admit pupils based upon distance rather than on the score achieved in the test. As a result, Medway resident children have a much stronger opportunity to attend a Medway grammar school and will not be disadvantaged by out of area residents who achieved a higher score in the Test.
- 9.9 In the primary sector actions taken since 2013 to create over 3000 additional places, costing in excess of £33m, as reported to this committee in recent years, has meant that sufficient places are available for all pupils who require a place, and whilst there are some areas of pressure, for example around Hoo, there are sufficient places in neighbouring areas to meet this demand. However, as the demand for places in the Hoo area is expected, the Council has approved the expansion of Hundred of Hoo Primary provision by one form of entry. It is planned that the additional capacity will be ready for September 2023 with anticipated costs of £2.5m.
- 9.10 The new Rochester Riverside Primary School will open in September 2022 to cater for the demand created by the new development. This will be funded by the developer with the DfE topping funding up by £1.6m
- 9.11 We continue to monitor places through robust forecasting, which is recognised by central government as consistently accurate, and any areas of emerging demand are able to be addressed in good time. The annual review of the School Place Planning Strategy is presented to Cabinet and this committee each autumn, highlighting the successes of the capital programme and outlining future needs and proposed actions.

- 9.12 The current School Place Planning Strategy expires in 2022 and an updated strategy will be implemented from September 2022. This will provide a framework for decision making for the next five years, ensuring that the council continues to maintain a sufficient supply of good quality school places.
- 9.13 Schools continue to convert to academy status, but the rate has slowed significantly and as of January 2022 there are 73 academies out of 101 schools (72%). There is one further school (Will Adams) which is planned to become an academy in April 2022
- 9.14 The number of schools (101) has remained the same as last year, due to the merger of Stoke and Allhallows primary schools, and the opening of Leigh Academy Rainham secondary school.
- 9.15 The schools' condition programme continues to be managed within budget ensuring school environments are warm, safe, dry, and are compliant for the children and staff. The Condition Programme covers maintained schools only; academies are funded directly from the ESFA for their maintenance and condition work. The programme of work has been challenging during the past 18 months year due to Covid-19 restrictions, but a programme for 2022 is being developed to ensure the available funding is utilised in the most effective way.
- 9.16 The Medway Test has provided an immense challenge for the department for the last two years, but exceptional planning, which local authority lead officers lead, and exemplary partnership working between officers and schools led to the test being delivered to 3574 pupils in a safe environment. Appropriate measures were in place to ensure social distancing was maintained, face coverings and sanitiser utilised as necessary, as well as restricting the number of adults onto each site. Testing was undertaken over a whole weekend rather than a single day for out of area pupils, and feedback from parents and schools was positive and complimentary regarding the way the process was undertaken.
- 9.17 More Medway pupils achieved a pass in 2021 than 2020, with the proportion of out of area pupils reducing. 833 Medway pupils achieved the pass mark compared to 812 in 2020, with 1089 out of area pupils achieving the pass mark against 1126 in 2020.
- 9.18 Planning for the Medway Test is also underway for the 2023 secondary intake of pupils, and we are again working closely with schools to ensure the fairest and most appropriate testing process is in place. Feedback from schools indicates that they would support the permanent continuation of some of the measures taken over the past two years and we are working with schools with this in mind. This includes testing out of area pupils over more days to reduce the numbers on site and restricting the number of adults who can attend with each pupil.
- 9.19 Planning for this year's test will take account of any restrictions in place and will remain flexible to enable changes as necessary and appropriate.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None

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