

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2022

ANNUAL REPORT ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020 TO 2021

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Summary

The Medway Annual Schools' Performance Report 2020-21 is attached at Appendix 1. This report summarises the activity in Medway's schools to raise achievement during the academic year 2020 -21. The annual report is usually rich in comparative data for the local and national picture, but due to the pandemic many of the assessments that feed the data were cancelled nationally, or there has been national agreement to withhold publication because of a lack of standardisation and comparative ambiguity. Consequently, all raising achievement analysis for early years foundation stage, key stage one, two, four and five is not available to drive this report. Where data is available through census or local, internal, granular data then comparisons to national have been made.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 This report falls within the Council Plan, in particular the priority "Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential". One of the outcomes under this priority is all children achieving their potential in schools.
- 1.2 The report falls within the people strategy, in particular the priority "Children and young people in Medway will develop well" and the outcome to ensure all children and young people receive a high standard of education locally, including a focus on supporting those with special educational needs are educated alongside their peers and in their local school and support their preparation for adulthood.
- 1.3 The report supports our vision for a Child Friendly Medway.
- 1.4 This report is linked to activity carried out as part of the following strategies or plans:

Strategy/plan	What the strategy/plan will help us to do
Medway Education Partnership framework	To ensure continued educational improvement in Medway, within the landscape of academisation - a strategic framework for education in Medway in the twenty-first century.
Medway SEND Strategy – 2019-2022	Medway Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND). To provide the best quality education and support for children and families, securing good outcomes and effective transition to adulthood.
Education Strategy 2021-2025	Medway Council Strategy outlining the council’s role interpreting statute and legislation: the champion of pupils, parents and communities; a maker and shaper of effective commissioning; and a convenor of partnerships.
School Effectiveness Strategy 2021-2024	Medway Council Strategy outlining the Council’s approach to fulfilling its statutory duties as set out to support and challenge ‘schools of concern’ and ensure that all maintained schools remain or become at least ‘good’ as judged by Ofsted.

2. Background

- 2.1 Elected members champion children and young people and have an important role in scrutinising overall performance and standards in all schools. The analysis in the report provides Members with both an overview and detailed information to support this role.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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 department for education and/or local authority. Schools did submit GCSE and AS/A Level results. These are available publicly by region (not LA) and cannot be used to hold schools to account.
- 2.4 National data / information on attendance for the academic year 2020-21 was due to be published at the end of March. The attendance data for 2019-20 was not published due to pandemic so the Annual Report refers to the final published data of 2018-19.
- 2.5 National data / information on exclusions and Looked After Children was due to be published at the end of March so the Annual Report refers to the final published data of 2019-20. Information for Not in Employment, Education or

Training (NEET) and destinations is also published a year in arrears, so the annual report refers to the final published data of 2019-20.

- 2.6 A school effectiveness strategy was shared with both primary and secondary head teacher associations in the summer term 2020. The strategy placed emphasis on school effectiveness, rather than school improvement and outlined how the local authority planned to fulfil its legal duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of (pupils') potential.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.

3. Covid 19 Support for Schools

- 3.1 Early in the pandemic a 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 and SEND and Education colleagues. The reference group met initially met twice weekly 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.
- 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 provides 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 are able to 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.

4 Performance summary and highlights

4.1 This section details strengths and weaknesses of school performance. Due to the lack of new attainment and achievement data, the comments in *italic* are taken from the 2019 performance data and are true for that time. It is expected that these priorities will have changed and likely that gaps will have widened for our most vulnerable pupils during the pandemic.

4.2 Strengths in Medway's school performance include:

- 89.5% of our primary schools and 94.4% of our secondary schools are judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding. 100% of our PRUs and Special Schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or Outstanding. This means that 90.3% of pupils attend a good or outstanding school, compared to 92% last February and 84% nationally.
- Permanent Exclusion and Suspension rates continue to improve and remain in line with national. Medway has a higher proportion of permanent exclusions reported that are "drug and alcohol related", than National and a significantly higher proportion reported with "damage" as the reason. The main reason reported for suspensions is "persistent disruptive behaviour", 49.1% of Medway suspensions give this reason compared to 33.5% nationally.
- *Compared to other local authorities, Medway has moved 54 places up the LA league table for KS2 combined achievement of reading, writing and maths and is now ranked 95th/149.*
- *Phonics is a strength because performance throughout KS1 remains stable in line with national.*
- *Key stage one is a strength in all measures because Medway continues to perform above national.*
- *The rate of improvement in key stage two is a strength because performance has improved faster than the national rate and the achievement gap is now only 1 percentage point.*

4.3 Areas for improvement include:

- Improve the proportion of pupils with SEND who are catered for effectively in our mainstream schools. Currently 1.9% of pupils in primary school and 1.3% of pupils in secondary school have an EHC plan, compared to National figures of 2.1% and 2% respectively.
- No pupils with EHC plans should be catered for in a PRU. Currently 4.9% of pupils in our PRUs have EHC plans.

- Attendance is declining and Persistent Absence is increasing. Whilst this is a national picture, exacerbated by the pandemic, data shows Medway's persistence absence (11.4%) continues to remain higher than the National figure of 10.9%.
- The proportion of young people who are NEET 7.9%, whilst improving for Medway is significantly above the National 5.5%.
- *Improve the achievement of all pupils' ability to read throughout key stage two to the required standard, so that they can fully access the year group curriculum and be ready for the next phase of their education; with particular emphasis upon pupils who are disadvantaged and /or require SEND support.*
- *Improve the achievement of pupils in key stage two in all subjects in order to close the gap to national in reading, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling.*
- *Improve the performance of Children Looked After (CLA) so that their achievement matches their non-CLA peers.*

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The LA shares with its schools the wish to provide an excellent education for all learners in the area. It is required to work effectively with its schools and academies to ensure that its actions promote this objective.
- 5.2 As such Medway regularly risk assesses the schools and categorises them so as to determine the appropriate level of support and action. Decision making is based on a clear evidence base, drawing on both the performance data and shared understanding of each school in order to identify which are performing well, which are under-performing, and which are vulnerable. All schools are re-evaluated each term so that no school is left unsupported, and improvements acknowledged and celebrated. The school effectiveness strategy sets out this process.
- 5.3 Priorities within the strategy are to ensure:
- all schools at risk of being eligible for intervention under section 60 (2) of the Education and Inspections Act, 2006 are identified through quality assurance and monitoring protocols.
 - informal notices are given to schools that LA officers believe are eligible for intervention (an informal warning notice being a written notification to the governing body of a maintained schools, but is not formalised through copying the letter to the RSC and HMCI);
 - warning notices under section 60 (2) of the 2006 Act are issued in all instances where school effectiveness officers are satisfied that the specified

conditions are met, and an informal notice has been served or deemed to be inappropriate in the particular circumstances of the school concerned.

- maintained schools judged to require improvement are supported to be good swiftly; and
- LA officers cooperate with the office of the RSC to ensure appropriate arrangements are made for any maintained school judged to be inadequate.

6. Financial implications Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

- 6.1 The Local Authorities 2021/22 DSG allocation is calculated in four separate funding blocks (Schools, Early Years, High Needs and the Central Service Schools Block) using national funding formulas.
- 6.2 The DSG is calculated initially using the pupil numbers for all schools in Medway, including academies. Subsequently the Education Skills Funding Agency will reduce the Council's DSG allocation in respect of schools that have converted to academies and to include lagged funding on the early years block.
- 6.3 Schools receive a separate grant to improve the attainment of pupils from deprived backgrounds based on pupils eligible for a free school meal, 'looked after children' (LAC), and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- 6.4 The High Needs (HN) DSG Budget remains under significant financial pressure. A further £6.070m was added to the HN DSG deficit at the end of the 2021-22 financial year; increasing the cumulative HN deficit to £20.423m and a total DSG deficit of £22.331m as 31 March 2022. A High Needs Budget Recovery Plan is in place to control and help reduce the overspend.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Education and Adoption Act 2016 introduced new measures to improve school standards across the country. The measures in this Act are designed to speed up the process by which failing schools become sponsored academies. The Act also introduces measures to identify underperforming schools.
- 7.2 The Local Authority's role in school improvement has changed with the increase in the number of schools that are academies. Local authorities have formal powers of intervention for maintained schools, however they do not have the same powers for academies.
- 7.3 The Schools Causing Concern Statutory Guidance 2020 emphasises the different roles of local authorities, schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). The guidance confirms the Government's intention to build a supportive schools culture in which local authorities and RSCs work with school leaders to drive school improvement through system leadership.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. The Committee is asked to note the Annual Schools' Performance Report, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Medway Annual Schools' Performance Report – Academic Year 2020/21

Background papers

None