

## **Children And Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**7 March 2024**

### **Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Education**

Report presented by: Councillor Tracy Coombs, Portfolio Holder for Education

#### **Summary**

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Portfolio Holder for Education. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

#### **1. Recommendation**

1.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the report.

#### **2. Budget and policy framework**

2.1. The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- Attendance
- Children missing education.
- Early Years
- Education Safeguarding
- Elective Home Education
- Further Education
- Liaison between Further and Higher Education and Schools
- Quality of Education: Primary and Secondary Education
- School Sufficiency
- Mainstream School Transport
- Early Careers Teachers
- Post 16 participation (including children not in education, employment and training)
- School Organisation and Capital Projects
- School Services (including Admissions and Medway Test)

### 3. Background

- 3.1. I was delighted to be appointed to the role of Portfolio Holder for Education when the Labour party took over the administration of the Council in May 2023. Since then, I have been working closely with early years settings, schools, the college, post 16 providers and the Education department at the council. We continue to strive for the highest quality inclusive education for all our children and young people, providing families with support and assistance. I would like to thank all our staff and partners for their hard work and continued commitment to driving improvement.
- 3.2. I have sought to visit a range of education providers over the last year to listen to the challenges being faced on the ground and ensure the priorities moving forward are aligned. These challenges include: The lower than national attainment in Medway from KS2 onwards; Low levels of literacy and communication issues, exacerbated by the pandemic; High levels of persistent absence; Increasing demand, in line with national changes, to childcare and wrap around provision for working families; and a growing demand for our school places.

### 4. Providing political leadership and challenge

- 4.1. I am a member of the Medway Education Partnership Group (MEPG). This group is a system leadership forum which provides system leaders with oversight, scrutiny and decision-making responsibilities across the key areas of education provision and performance in Medway. Membership of the MEPG is comprised of representatives of key stakeholders across Medway's education network. Members of the MEPG attend as representatives of their respective areas/agencies. Feedback from the stakeholder groups helps inform the priorities, which in turn underpins some of the activity of these stakeholder groups. The MEPG operates as a collaborative space across the partner network, allowing for sharing of good practice, timely identification of areas for development and jointly coordinated approaches to take action against areas of concern. All members of the MEPG hold a responsibility to share key messages within their professional networks.
- 4.2. I am a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board ensuring that the education inequalities that we see across Medway are being considered at every appropriate opportunity. Education and Skills is a key building block for health and wellbeing, and 'All children achieve a good level of education leading to secure employment in adulthood' is a key activity within one of the strategy's themes. I have seen improvements such as 92% of our primary schools and 88.9% of our secondary schools were judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding as well as 100% of our PRUs and Special Schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or Outstanding. I have provided a clear vision for the steps I would like to take following our results in both KS2 and KS4 – work has already begun on our Literacy Strategy and Post 16 Action Plan.

- 4.3. I am a member of the Children's Oversight Board, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member). I ensure oversight of the effectiveness of education, and provide strong strategic leadership, support and challenge to the service. The Board is attended by DCS, the Assistant Director's for Education and SEND and Children's Services, and all Heads of Service. The board reviews performance data monthly. This provides an opportunity for me to challenge, question and better understand compliance with statutory requirements across all service areas. Where there are identified shortfalls, I can question this with the operational managers and ensure they have plans in place to address this.
- 4.4. I am mindful of our role as a Council in ensuring a 'good' education for all children and young people in Medway. With this in mind, I regularly attend the termly meeting between the DfE South East Regional Group and Medway Council to ensure the provision for those attending academy trusts is maintained and improved as necessary.
- 4.5. I attend Medway Parents and Carers Forum Liaison meeting and coffee mornings.
- 4.6. I regularly meet with the Assistant Director for Education and the Strategic Head of Education (Planning and Access) and would like to thank both of them as well as their teams for the support they have given me over the past year since the election.
- 4.7. I attend the working groups on the literacy strategy.

## 5 Championing the Interests of Children and Young People

- 5.1. I have actively supported the work of Child Friendly Medway which sets out a vision for making Medway a better place for children to live, learn, and contribute to our community. This has included attending several Town Hall events aimed at seeking the views of children and young people about the services they receive.
- 5.2. I regularly visit our schools and services in the community.
- 5.3. I am pleased to be able to celebrate the achievements of our children and young people in Medway and this year I have attended our Time to Shine Awards which is a ceremony to celebrate achievements of our children in care and care leavers and our Youth Awards

## 6. Support for key service areas

### **Attendance**

- 6.1. Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) offers support to schools ensuring children are safe and in receipt of education. The AASSA is in part, a statutory service and continues to provide a traded service to many of the schools in Medway.

- 6.2. A dedicated DfE attendance Advisor has been working with us. A revised action plan has been developed outlining how we are meeting the new statutory duties on attendance, and we are working in partnership with Kent on a joint Attendance Alliance, supported by the DfE, focussing on disseminating good practice across the region.
- 6.3. In the lagged published data for the academic year, 2021-2022, the proportion of absence, whilst significantly increased, was in line with National at 7.55% and persistent absence was greater than National at 24.2%
- 6.4. In Jan 2023, the DfE introduced a monthly attendance reporting mechanism for all schools to enable better real time monitoring. Note: this reporting isn't compulsory for schools. In Medway. 75% of Medway schools report their data to this dashboard. This dashboard evidences the significant strides we are making in improving attendance, which in Dec 23 was at 93.3%.

### **Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME)**

- 6.5. Numbers of our children and young people who are electively home educated have continued to rise since the pandemic. As of the 31st January 24, 870 pupils were electively home educated.
- 6.6. Whilst we recognised and support parents have right to make an informed choice to provide their child's education at home, work is on-going to assure ourselves that the provision of home education is appropriate in all cases, and that prior to removal all other routes were open to and carefully considered by parents, including mediation and child remaining on roll at their home school.
- 6.7. The increasing numbers of EHE has impacted on the capacity on the team to assess the quality of EHE provision and ensure that risk factors are identified, and appropriate actions taken in a timely manner. The team are working on a proposal, through their new structure, which aims to resolve this.
- 6.8. Currently the majority of requests to EHE do not state a reason. Tracking and analysis of those that do identify the three primary reasons for children being removed from mainstream school as:
  - Dissatisfaction with school provision
  - Philosophical or preferential reasons
  - Mental health
- 6.9. We are working to strengthen the culture of inclusion across all Medway schools through identified actions within the Safety Valve programme. There is a specific focus on responding to increased ASD and SEMH needs, including increasing Resource Provision within mainstream.
- 6.10. The team continue to work with school leaders to promote understanding of EHE responsibilities and processes. Fair Access Panel (FAP) protocols and reintegration criteria have been revised through coproduction with headteachers to assist timely reintegration of pupils back into school. We are

also working with Mid Kent College, our tuition offer for KS4 pupils who are EHE has been extended.

- 6.11. There is strengthened communication pathways with officers across the education team and within Social Care, where a child or young person is EHE to address barriers to pupils returning to school. Including organising joint EHE, Social Care and Family Solutions / Early Help visits to identified families.
- 6.12. The proportion of our children who are missing education was higher this year than previously, however with the work of a dedicated team, this is now beginning to reduce towards pre-pandemic levels.
- 6.13. Following the Education and SEND service restructure, the allocation of officers for EHE and CME will be based in Hubs to provide front facing support for families and to be able to provide advice and support to families to address issues before alternative options are sought.

### **Early Years**

- 6.14. 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. Our 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.
- 6.15. Our Medway Family Information Service (FIS) 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. It 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.
- 6.16. Currently there are 245 childcare providers registered with Medway Council to deliver government funded childcare, this equates to 118 childminders, 42 school nurseries and 85 private, voluntary, and independent settings. We have enough early years providers have sufficient registered places to accept all the currently eligible children who are two, three, and four years old. We are currently reviewing the sufficiency of our provision to accommodate the additional offer 15 hours free childcare for 9 month to 2 years olds which comes in from Sept 24 and increases to 30 hours from Sept 25.
- 6.17. Our 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.

- 6.18. 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. Our childcare provision continues to be of a high standard as shown in the table below.

Type of provision	Total number of providers inspected	% Achieving good or outstanding
Childminders	105	92%
Nursery classes in schools	42	95%
Private and voluntary nurseries	85	96%

### **Education Safeguarding**

- 6.19. We have expanded the Education Safeguarding Team (EST) to include two Education Safeguarding Officers and two MASH Education Leads.
- 6.20. The strength of relationship of the EST with schools enables any school practice issues identified by MASH to be quickly and effectively addressed, thus improving safeguarding for Medway children.
- 6.21. The EST supports schools, and other education settings, to develop the best possible policy, practice, and safeguarding culture. The service identifies and responds to wider safeguarding concerns and highlights emerging themes in safeguarding. This includes giving advice, signposting, developing, and sharing training and resources, liaising with other services within the Local Authority and working in partnership with outside agencies. Consultations with schools are recorded and reviewed to identify themes to ensure that training priorities can be targeted to areas of need.
- 6.22. The team have introduced Designated Safeguarding lead training for Medway schools and strengthened our quality assurance role by offering a programme of safeguarding reviews to Medway schools.
- 6.23. We have seen an increase in numbers of Complaints About School (CAS) received from Ofsted. When a complaint about a school (CAS) is made to Ofsted, the regulator does not have the power to investigate complaints regarding the welfare of an individual child and passes the CAS to the Local Authority. In the last 12 months there have been 64 CAS received from Ofsted, representing a 25% increase in the last 12 months, on top of a 50% increase the previous year.
- 6.24. A significant part of the EST's role is to contact schools to discuss these CAS and to be assured of their safeguarding practice. The EST works with school leaders to explore concerns and where necessary or appropriate offers support and guidance to assist in addressing and resolving the issues raised within complaints. The officer responds to the complainant, or regulator, by summarising their findings and recommendations; with a duty to report if they

find a school-wide safeguarding issue. The EST is also asked to provide assurance to DfE and ESFA for CAS received regarding Academies and Independent schools. When a CAS contains a serious allegation one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) may liaise directly with the EST prior to contacting the school.

- 6.25. The EST hold responsibility for the annual safeguarding audit requested to be completed by schools and colleges under Sections 175 and 157 of the Education Act. This self-assessment audit allows governors to fulfil their statutory duty to assure themselves of the safeguarding practice of the school and to report this to the Local Authority. We have been working with MSCP, jointly with Kent, and have purchased an online S11 QA AUDIT tool for partners to provide assurance of its safeguarding practice. This tool enables completion of the audits in a timely, efficient manner, supports continuously development of outstanding safeguarding practice and allows the EST to make the most effective and efficient use of the data submitted.
- 6.26. Increased capacity to the EST has enabled a well-developed programme of safeguarding reviews offered to LA maintained schools. LA schools due Ofsted and all schools where there is a significant cause for concern (e.g. Inadequate inspection outcome or a number of complaints) are prioritised for a full and comprehensive in-school safeguarding review. In addition, we offer full programme of focused and topical "Safeguarding Snacks" to all Medway schools. To date 4 full safeguarding reviews and 9 Safeguarding Snacks have been completed this academic year.
- 6.27. The EST contributes to the Education Quality, Challenge and Improvement Risk Tracker meetings. The EST has updated its risk tracker criteria and developed its own safeguarding tracker for all Medway schools. By triangulating safeguarding reviews with S157 returns and other known information about schools, we now have a more fully informed and evidenced assessment of safeguarding practice.
- 6.28. The EST 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 wider MSCP training programme for Schools in Medway. The EST also contributes to the MSCP training programme.
- 6.29. We have updated our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training, we now have a "New to Role" and a "Refresher" DSL training package in place. To date we have run two new to role courses and 3 refresher courses, with a further 4 courses planned for the rest of this academic year. We have trained over 130 members of Medway school safeguarding teams and submitted our course materials in order to gain accreditation from CPDUK.
- 6.30. A significant achievement this year has been the setting up of an Microsoft online Education and Safeguarding Team, with a range of topical channels. This allows us to communicate effectively with school safeguarding teams and

to ensure that they can easily access local and national safeguarding resources. The channel has 416 members, with at least one representative from the vast majority of Medway schools. In the past 90 days it has been accessed by members over 250 times.

- 6.31. Termly, online DSL information meetings are offered. This structure gives DSLs the opportunity to attend the most relevant meeting for their needs. The DSL meetings promote partnership working within the Local Authority and the sharing of best practice between schools.
- 6.32. Whilst Early Years (EY) follow an educational curriculum, our oversight of EY safeguarding practice remains with an external provider. Having identified that there is not an EY partner in the MASH and that EY providers are not always consulted in the same way as schools on safeguarding matters, I have brought this to the attention of the MSCP and Children's Services colleagues and there is now ongoing liaison with the Early Years Sufficiency Manager and attendance at the Early Years Providers Forum.

### **Liaison between Further Education, Higher Education and Schools**

- 6.33. Through our work with the Careers Enterprise Company (CEC), Enterprise advisers have been working with secondary schools to improve the quality and breadth of their career's strategies and programmes. Enterprise Advisers are senior leaders from the world of work.
- 6.34. 28 secondary school and higher educational institutions Medway are in the Kent & Medway Careers Hub including one college, SEND schools and alternative provisions. Some achievements recently include:
- Schools and the college are invited to network meetings to share good practice and resources. They are invited to complete their Compass Evaluations in Trusts to encourage working proactively together and the upskilling of new Careers Leaders.
  - 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 and T Levels.
  - The skills framework developed by some schools and the promotion of transferrable skills has inspired schools to consider a deeper dive into skills education. The Hub is working on a project to develop a skills curriculum for schools.
  - The SEND/AP schools were provided with a free resource to support their careers programmes from Talentino funded by the Hub and their schools and Enterprise Advisers are invited to join a separate networking session to share good practice and resources.
  - The Hub funded START Profile to support with Gatsby Benchmark 2 and the promotion of local market information.

- The Gatsby Benchmark scores remain an average of 6.4 benchmarks achieved, higher than the national average of 5.5.
  - The Medway Business Pledgers list is growing year on year, these are pledges employers/employees can make to engage with education, upskill their workforce and support the community.
  - We have successfully worked with universities and the college to design an individual skills and employment plan for businesses. The plan includes their plans for engagement with schools as Enterprise Advisers and Business Pledgers including support for apprenticeships, work placements and T Levels.
- 6.35. We continue to work closely with MidKent College with regular meetings and updates. Recently, we are working with the College to promote their courses to years 9 and 10 during pilot open mornings and meeting to develop data sharing agreements to improve the student learning journey for young people in Kent & Medway.
- 6.36. We are working closely with Medways Further and Higher Education colleagues through the Medway Learning Partnership. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for Council and Higher and Further Education senior officers to engage on a regular basis around issues that affect their organisations, and strategically plan together.
- 6.37. The partnership has three strategic objectives:
- To work together to exploit opportunities and address challenges in priority areas identified by the community.
  - To drive forward and heighten the aspirations of all learners in Medway
  - To encourage the engagement and retention of higher education learners within the community of Medway

### **Quality of Education: Primary and Secondary Education**

- 6.38. Our ambition is 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 Regions Group (RG), the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted.
- 6.39. Both the Local Authority and the RG have mechanisms 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). Our relationship with the RG is established 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.

- 6.40. The education system leadership shares a collective responsibility for the quality of education for all children and young people in Medway. Partners work together through:
- Medway Education Partnership Group
  - Medway headteacher associations (MELA and MSHA)
  - The four Medway primary zones
  - SEND Partnership Board
  - Child Friendly Medway
  - Thames Gateway Teaching School Hub Partnership Board
  - Medway Health and Well Being Board
- 6.41. The Medway Education Partnership Group (MEPG) Partnership's priorities are:
- All children and young people in Medway access high-quality, inclusive education provision and are appropriately supported to achieve their potential.
  - Services provided to children and young people in Medway, to support their education and development, are provided in a timely way; demonstrate value for money; operate within robust and efficient processes; and are informed by the voice of children, young people and their families.
  - All children and young people are educated and supported within the local provision(s) most appropriate for their needs.
  - Children and young people in Medway are healthy and resilient and supported throughout their education and development to continue to lead healthy and positive lives into adulthood.
- 6.42. 89% of pupils attended a good or better Medway primary and secondary school, matching the national figure. 92.5% of pupils attended a good or better primary school, compared to 92.3% nationally. 85% of pupils attended a good or better secondary school in Medway, matching the national figure. (Jan 2024)
- 6.43. 93% of Medway schools are judged by Ofsted as good and better, compared to 90% nationally. 95% of primary schools in Medway are judged as good and better, compared to 91% of the same nationally. For secondary schools, 83% are judged Good or better which is the same figure as national. (Jan 2024)

### **School performance – Academic Outcomes**

- 6.44. **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** - Pupils in Medway achieve a good level of development in the EYFS, and this performance has improved compared to 2021-22. Pupils with SEN support in the EYFS stage achieve above children with SEN support nationally. However, children with an EHCP continue to perform less well than their peers nationally.
- 6.45. **Phonics** Outcomes have improved in Y1 and Y2 compared to the outcomes achieved in 2021/22. However, these remain lower than pre pandemic levels and below national.

- 6.46. **Key Stage 1** - There has been an improvement in the percentage of pupils at Key Stage 1 achieving expected levels in reading, writing and maths. Key Stage 1 scores in writing and maths are improving, with the 2023 scores improving at a faster rate compared to national.

Pupils with SEN support perform better than national in all Key Stage 1 measures. Pupils eligible for FSM perform higher than their peers nationally in writing and are broadly in line with national averages for reading and maths.

- 6.47. **Key stage 2** - There has been a decline in the percentage of pupils at Key Stage 2 achieving expected levels in all reading, writing and maths, compared to national improvement. Medway pupils achieve 5 percentage points below the national average.

Particularly, KS2 reading scores have declined and are 5 percentage points (pp) below the national average. Medway's average dipped by 3pp, and the national average performance dipped by 2pp.

Pupils with SEN support provision achieve above the national average in Key Stage 2 writing, but significantly below the national average in reading and maths. Pupils eligible for FSM also perform below national averages in these measures.

- 6.48. **Key stage 4** - The percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate has returned to pre pandemic levels and is in line with the national average.

The attainment 8 score is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils with SEN support provision achieve broadly in line with national for their respective peers, whilst children with EHCPs perform significantly less well than their peers nationally.

Pupils achieving 5+ in English and maths fell both in medway and nationally by approx. 5 percentage points. Medway's performance remains 2.4 percentage points below national.

Pupils achieving 4+ in English and maths showed an increase following the pandemic, however these have fallen by 5 percentage points in 2022-23 in line with the national trend; however, outcomes in Medway have fallen by a larger margin, and the gap between Medway's average and national average has therefore increased.

The average progress 8 score for Medway is -0.10. Although this is a slight improvement on the previous year, this remains well below the national average progress 8 score -0.03. This measure is below national average for all SEN groups and pupils with FSM.

- 6.49. **Key Stage 5** - The Average Point Score (APS) per A level entry, academic entry, general entry and technical level entry have all declined further as have the respective measures nationally. In all these measures Medway remains below the national average.

The percentage of pupils achieving grades AAB in 2 facilitating subjects has declined further and remains significantly below national.

### **Literacy**

- 6.50. I am driving a particular focus on literacy across Medway. It is widely acknowledged that through effective nurturing of early communication skills at home, children move into school with a confidence and aptitude for their next steps in learning. High quality, inclusive teaching in school assists children to develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills resulting in pupils reaching the required standard of learning by the close of primary education. Without these necessary skills, transition into secondary education can be challenging. For adults transitioning into employment, the connection between levels of literacy and successful entrance into the workforce is well documented.
- 6.51. There is already significant activity taking place to support this agenda. Existing support includes contributions from: Adult Education, Children & Family Hubs, Education Psychology, School Effectiveness, Child Friendly Medway, Public Health, Libraries, Culture and Heritage.
- 6.52. I am keen that we have a Medway wide coordinated approach and have an officer task and finish group, which I attend, working to align all the support into a strategic plan. A draft Literacy strategy is now in place and is being rolled out for co-production with wider stakeholders and partners.

### **School Sufficiency**

- 6.53. We have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient good quality school places are available to meet demand from the resident population. The School Place Planning Strategy 2022-27 sets out the framework upon which appropriate decisions are made. An annual review of the strategy is presented to Cabinet each year highlighting emerging need and offering proposals to meet demand based upon the latest pupil forecasts.
- 6.54. The strategy has been successful in ensuring sufficient places are available and the councils forecasts are recognised as being accurate to within the 1% margin of error indicated by the DfE.
- 6.55. Pressure on places continues with significant inward migration the main driver currently. To meet this demand a number of expansions to schools are underway and planned to cater for longer term demand, along with various bulge classes created to meet immediate need.
- 6.56. Recently urgent bulge classes have been created in the primary sector in Gillingham to meet demand from the NHS recruitment drive and in Hoo where inward migration due to new housing schemes has created pressure on school places.

- 6.57. As part of the annual reviews of the School Place Planning Strategy planned bulge classes and expansions are identified in a table which covers the secondary sector for the next seven years. These have been planned and agreed with schools and will help to ensure that sufficient places are available.
- 6.58. Forecasting will continue to be undertaken twice each year to ensure that the council remains best placed to react to surges in demand covering mainstream and specialist sectors.

### **Mainstream School Transport**

- 6.59. Numbers of mainstream pupils eligible for travel assistance continues to rise and has reached in excess of 1800 pupils with the previous high being last year with 1330 pupils.
- 6.60. The majority of these pupils will receive a bus or rail pass to enable them to independently travel to and from school with a small number granted a taxi.
- 6.61. The council continues to provide bus services to transfer pupils from the Strood area to Twydall Primary School which is the temporary location for the Maritime Academy. This will cease in July, with the new premises in Strood planned to open for September 2024. At this point these pupils will be assessed for their eligibility based upon the usual criteria with the Education Travel Assistance Policy.

### **Early Career Teachers (ECT)**

- 6.62. All ECTs must be registered with an Appropriate Body. TSH (Teaching School Hubs) and ISTIP (Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel) can act as Appropriate Bodies. The ability to be the registered body was removed from LAs in September 2022, however ECTs already registered with an LA have been allowed to complete induction with the LA. This will end July 2024 with any remaining ECTs being transferred to a TSH or ISTIP.
- 6.63. 17 ECTs are completing their induction with Medway.
- 6.64. We have an SLA with Thames Gateway TSH for this academic year to support the TSH with its monitoring of ECT reports (submitted 3 times a year) and quality assurance visits to 4 Medway schools who are using Thames Gateway TSH for their Appropriate Body.

### **Post 16 participation (including children not in education, employment and training)**

- 6.65. There has been a marked improvement in the numbers and proportion of pupils classed as NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) and Unknown (where no destination for the young person has been identified).

- 6.66. Our DFE annual performance scorecard for 2022 records NEETs and Not knowns at 6.1% of 16 and 17 years olds, placing Medway in the 4<sup>th</sup> quintile compared to other authorities. This is taken from an average of the December, January and February figures. Although NEET data fluctuates during the year, monthly comparisons to similar periods show an ongoing reduction in Not knowns. The scorecard is yet published for 2023, however, we expect this to place us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile.
- 6.67. The Information and Guidance Team (IAG) continues to work closely and proactively with the young people to assess the pathways required for their ongoing participation and collaboratively with schools and local providers to seek out opportunities for the young people.

### **School Organisation and Capital Projects**

- 6.68. The schools capital programme team ensures that the proposals presented to, and approved by, the Cabinet through the School Place Planning Strategy to create additional capacity within the school system such as expansions, new provision and bulge classes are delivered to budget and to time.
- 6.69. Since 2018 and until 2025 when the current educational capital programme is expected to complete, the council will have delivered over 6000 additional primary, secondary and specialist places.
- 6.70. Funding for the projects comes from various streams including central government grants, section 106 contributions and in the past council borrowing.
- 6.71. New Free Schools, through the governments Free School Programme, are funded and delivered by the DfE directly, and by 2026 this will have provided an additional 2670 places.
- 6.72. We will continue to explore all avenues to acquire additional funding to ensure that we continue to maintain a good supply of school places.
- 6.73. The team also manage the local authority maintained schools' condition and maintenance programme, and through this we ensure that the schools under the LA's control are fit for purpose, and provide safe and warm environments for our young people to learn and thrive in. Academies are directly funded by the ESFA for their maintenance needs.

### **School Services (including Admissions and Medway Test)**

- 6.74. The Medway Test is an immense logistical challenge, which the team delivers successfully. The number of pupils who sat the test in September 2023 for September 2024 intake was the highest on record with 4422 pupils registering for the test.
- 6.75. 39% of those Medway pupils who sat the test achieved a pass and 61% of the out of area pupils. More children with Free School Meals and SEND sat the

test than in previous years and we expect this number to continue to rise in the coming years as.

- 6.76. Changes to the test for September 2024 were approved by the Cabinet in December 2023, which will ensure that the test reflects the current primary education system and curriculum and will also be a fairer assessment for all pupils. The changes are also expected to increase the numbers of Medway children achieving a pass in the test and accessing a selective secondary education.
- 6.77. Over 99% of all school applications are now completed online, and all statutory timelines are met.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. I am proud of the achievements of the partnership and will continue to work with our education providers, wider stakeholders and excellent staff to ensure all children and young people in Medway receive the highest quality of education.

## Lead officer contact

Celia Buxton, Assistant Director Education and SEND, Gun Wharf, 01634 331013, [celia.buxton@medway.gov.uk](mailto:celia.buxton@medway.gov.uk)

### [Appendices](#)

[None](#)

### [Background Documents](#)

[None](#)