

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: SCHOOL PERFORMANCE – THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

REPORT FROM: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CONTACT OFFICER: JULIEN KRAMER, INTERIM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
(EDUCATION & INCLUSION)

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Our ambition for education in Bury is to become and to stay 'One of the Best' services nationally: it's where we were, and we are well advanced on the return journey to excellence.
- 1.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has paused us in our work; and, to recover the position, we have chosen to reset the entire strategic programme for school improvement, with all the associated safeguarding, intervention and schools-led arrangements.
- 1.3 The planning framework we are building, as educational professionals, will continue to change and evolve as the national and the local situation changes.
- 1.4. Schools re-opened to all pupils from start of the autumn term.
- 1.5. Risk Assessments have been reviewed and where appropriate refreshed.
- 1.6. There will be some use of zoning, bubbles, scenario planning, and curriculum adjustments to suit specific situations and environments.
- 1.7. There will continue to be careful audit of practice in other Local Authorities, attention to guidance from Government, and Public Health England: and supportive discussions with the Regional School Commissioners team.
- 1.8. We will continue to hold weekly meetings with: Advisory Heads, Unions and Professional Associations, school clusters, and the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- 1.9. We will continue to provide pastoral support to schools.
- 1.10. We will continue to provide regular briefings to parents and carers.

- 1.11. We have forged good partnership with Public Health colleagues, and there is an emerging body of good practice in how to manage spikes: based on experiences during the initial lockdown period.
- 1.12. Covid Catch-Up Grant of £2.4 million to schools. Plus National Tuition Scheme to support schools.
- 1.13. We envisage three phases to our reset:
 1. Autumn Term: - return, assess, reset
 2. Autumn- Spring Terms: - Consolidation and recovery
 3. Autumn - Summer Terms: - Development.
- 1.14. HMI feedback from their residency in Bury –
“we were made very welcome. It was a focussed and well organised residency. Relationships between Heads and the Local Authority were felt to be excellent, with high levels of trust and confidence. There was a determination to succeed; and much passion!”

2.0 ISSUES

For the purpose of future agenda planning, Overview and Scrutiny may wish to consider an number of key issues. In this first report of the new academic year we focus on school improvement in the context of our response to COVID-19.

Future items that Overview and Scrutiny may wish to consider could include:

- Attendance
- Performance monitoring
- Policy development
- future activity
- risk assessment

School Improvement Agenda

- 2.1. Since the 'closure' of schools to all but the most vulnerable children, and children of key workers, the vast majority of Bury schools have remained open including during the Easter period, summer half-term and on Bank Holidays. Throughout, Headteachers have worked tirelessly in interpreting ever changing guidance from central government.
- 2.2. The Quality Standards and Performance Service has prioritised communications with headteachers through Keeping in Touch calls (April/ May) and through facilitation of weekly primary cluster Teams meetings (from May onwards). Guests were invited to the cluster meetings to support school leaders in opening schools to more children e.g. health, catering, cleaning, finance. The Service Lead has attended Bury Association of Secondary Heads meetings which took place more frequently.
- 2.3. The service has focused on The Recovery Curriculum, including sharing resources for supporting both pastoral and academic development. Following allocation of three HMI to Bury LA, the service has taken overarching responsibility for oversight of the work liaising with colleagues from Early Help, SEND and Inclusion. The theme for HMI work has been on supporting 'Recovering the Education System in Bury under COVID-19' and has had three

strands. An overview of the strands, progress and next steps has been reported.

- 2.4. For 2020/21 school categories of support will remain as they were in 2019/20 with the exception of any changes linked to inspection outcomes. The likely windows for school inspections have been updated however this does not take into account the time period when Section 5 inspections are not taking place. We await guidance from Ofsted on future timings and clarification of the Section 8 'Interim Visits' from autumn 2020.

DRAFT

Distance and Virtual Learning

- 2.5 Context; We must be realistic and recognise that despite the intention for all pupils to return to school from September 2020, there remains the potential that remote education may be necessary at some point during the next academic year.
- 2.6 Therefore, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools are now being encouraged to develop remote education provision, with an expectation that it is fully integrated into strategic curriculum planning:
"Remote education may need to be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum for some pupils, alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of a local lockdown being implemented". (DfE, July 2020)
- 2.7. There is an expectation that all schools plan to ensure any pupils educated at home for some of the time are given the support they need from their teachers to ensure seamless curriculum continuity, especially at short notice in the event of a lockdown.
- 2.8. Distance learning in Bury schools – what has worked and what's worth sharing? A specific piece of work has been commissioned through the Teaching School Alliance, the purpose of which is to capture the experiences of remote learning provision in Bury schools and to contribute to a resource that will quality assure and evaluate the many online learning materials and courses that have supported children and staff alike during lockdown.
- 2.9 This evidence capturing opportunity complements and supports the 'Recovery Curriculum' focus that Bury LA have been working on in partnership with HMI.
- 2.10 We are asking primary and secondary school leaders to support us in creating an online suite of resources that teachers can readily access in a lockdown situation.
- 2.11. We want to find out from teachers, pupils, students and parents which Apps and platforms have been most successful in helping and supporting them whilst teaching, learning or working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.12 Since June 2020, some schools have been distributing stakeholder questionnaires and have been sharing feedback from parents, children and school staff to assist us in evaluating what has worked and what is worth sharing including the barriers encountered and to disseminate these findings more widely.
- 2.14. To facilitate this type of provision, school leaders are also being encouraged to take advantage of government grants to fully train staff in either the Google Classroom or Microsoft 365 learning platforms.

Performance of Bury Schools in 2020

- 2.15 Due to COVID-19 the government announced that there would be no statutory assessment in primary schools and no examinations in schools and colleges in summer 2020. The government made clear that there would be no performance tables in 2020 and that no data should be used for accountability purposes.

- 2.16 In order to support transition of our Year 6 pupils into Year 7 we facilitated the transfer of teacher assessment predictions for reading, writing and mathematics from 78% primary schools to the high schools. We offered a range of options to primary schools to support their strategic planning with 66% of schools requesting a School Education Profile for 2020. We were able to fulfil our Traded Service commitment to primary schools in terms of assessment booklets in a timely fashion.
- 2.17 GCSE results were released on 20 August however BTEC and Cambridge National results were to be finalised by 28 August. At this point headline figures for Bury are incomplete and are non-reportable. What is evident is that provisional headline results reflect the national picture of improvement. No comparisons can be made with past or future years. As with the primary schools we are collecting results to produce documentation to support strategic planning and to gain a view as to patterns emerging from the GCSE results, not least, in case the situation arises again.
- 2.18. Students at Bury College and at Holy Cross Sixth Form College received their A level results on 13 August however these 'calculated' results were replaced and reissued to students. BTEC qualifications were delayed and reissued.
- 2.19 We acknowledge the hard work of our schools with the vast majority remaining open to children of key workers and vulnerable children since March 2020. Some schools have opened during school holidays and Bank holidays and/ or offered summer holiday provision in order to cater for need. Since June, our primary schools have opened to more pupils whilst our high schools have opened to Year 10 pupils for face to face sessions. School leaders have shown commitment, dedication and resilience throughout and are to be congratulated. The focus now is firmly on the safe return to school of all pupils giving staff the opportunity to assess need and put in place provision to address these.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to the Council and its schools, and school leaders should be applauded for the manner in which they have responded. Throughout the lockdown, schools have continued to support their pupils in many ways, and endeavouring to minimise the impact on their learning.
- 3.2 Inevitably, the disruption to the lives of pupils, seen most starkly in respect of examination and assessment, will have an impact and the focus of the current academic year is on re-setting the education system in Bury, and ensuring that schools support pupils in catching up for lost time. This of course, at the same time as continuing to respond to the challenges that still exist in responding to the pandemic.
- 3.3 School performance in its conventional form, looking at examination outcomes and Ofsted judgements will continue to be important, but current context means the focus is very much on recovery, and how the Council and its schools can work together to achieve this.

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

[Report Author]

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____

DRAFT