

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 4th November 2021

SUBJECT: Update on the Report on the opening of schools in September 2021 dated 7th September 2021

REPORT FROM: Councillor Tariq Tamoor, Cabinet member for Children and Education Services

CONTACT OFFICER: Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead for Schools
Wendy Jackson, Service Lead: Quality Standards and Performance

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides an updated on the report dated 7th September 2021 on the opening of schools in September. It considers information up to 15th October 2021.
- 1.2 Communication with education leaders has continued to be a key priority. Regular e-briefings have continued however these are now thematic wherever possible. The themes of briefings since 7th September have been the COVID vaccination programme, safeguarding and mental health, headteachers' conference and inspection update, school improvement and a COVID important information briefing.
- 1.3 The content of the e-briefings is now uploaded to Perspective Lite, a portal, as news items so that school leaders can access the briefings in one place.
- 1.4 A School/ LA partnership briefing for primary headteachers was held via MS Teams on 8th September with a further briefing on 21st October. Secondary headteachers and college principals have been informed via the fortnightly Bury Association of Secondary Headteachers meetings.
- 1.5 The headteachers' conference held on 28th September included feedback from a Section 8 school inspection and an update from Bury's link Her Majesty's Inspector. 57 headteachers/ CEOs attended the briefing. Given the return to the Education Inspection Framework, with some amendments to the handbooks, this session was designed to support schools in knowing the latest information on which they would be judged should they be inspected.

2.0 IMPACT OF COVID

- 2.1 COVID-19 continues to have a disproportionate impact on Bury schools. Based on attendance returns submitted by schools to the Department for Education, this enables a snapshot of attendance levels on particular dates. Not all schools complete the daily return and so the figures below are not based on a 100% return.

	Attendance (all pupils) primary			Attendance (all pupils) secondary		
Dates	16/9/21	30/9/21	14/10/21	16/9/21	30/9/21	14/10/21
Bury	95.7%	93.6%	94.0%	90.1%	85.6%	87.6%

On 30th September the overall attendance of Bury pupils across all schools that submitted information on that day was 88.1% compared with 89.5% in England.

- 2.2 In relation to the number of positive COVID cases, looking at data on those same dates:

	Confirmed cases primary			Confirmed cases secondary		
Dates	16/9/21	30/9/21	14/10/21	16/9/21	30/9/21	14/10/21
Bury	0.31%	0.37%	0.26%	0.63%	0.86%	1.16%

- 2.3 As of 15/10/21 Bury had 24 active clusters/outbreaks of COVID-19 in education settings reported to Infection Prevention and Control. Within the 24 settings, there have been 553 positive pupils/students and 55 positive staff. There are proportionately more staff testing positive in the special schools which is likely to relate to the close contact staff have with these pupils. This poses a challenge for these schools in levels of staffing.
- 2.4 The vaccination programme for 12 – 15 year olds in our secondary schools is being co-ordinated by Public Health utilising the School Aged Immunisation Team. As the team had limited staffing, the strategic decision was taken to temporarily step down the School Nursing Team so that they could administer the programme, not least as they have experience in successfully delivering vaccination programmes in schools.
- 2.5 As of 19th October, 19% of the eligible cohort for the 12-15 programme have received their vaccine. By Friday 22nd October, all schools except one will have received at least one onsite session. The remaining school is scheduled for an onsite session after the half-term break.
- 2.6 A session has been held at the Elizabethan Suite for home schooled children.
- 2.7 A number of children were deferred on the day of their session, primarily due to having had COVID within the last 28 days. 'Mop up' sessions have been booked in with all schools during the first 2 weeks of the next half-term. The 'mop up' sessions will require reduced staff capacity which will allow a number of school nurses to be released back into their full-time role.
- 2.8 Uptake in schools in the early stages has been variable at between 10% and 30%. There will be additional sessions held after half-term.
- 2.9 The DfE has announced (20th October) the intention to facilitate drop in vaccination clinics to work alongside the school based programme. Discussions

are ongoing with Health colleagues about local arrangements for the delivery of these drop-in arrangements.

- 2.10 The local authority facilitated links between Public Health and the two local colleges, Bury College and Holy Cross Sixth Form College to encourage an increase in uptake of the vaccine in 16 and 17 year olds. Council communications has also been involved in supporting delivery of the message to students about the benefits of being vaccinated. The week beginning 11th October 2021 was a 'week of action' including a video featuring students from both colleges speaking about why they had the vaccine, social media graphics and messages, advertising vans and promotion teams talking directly to students about the vaccine and where and how they can access the vaccine. The Elizabethan Suite walk-in clinic saw an increase in young people coming forward for the vaccine.

3.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- 3.1 The learning of pupils has been disrupted by the pandemic. The government has provided schools with a range of grants, namely catch-up premium, recovery premium and, most recently, the school-led tutoring grant. The use of the government's National Tutoring Programme has been limited as the majority of Bury schools would prefer to use staff who know their children in any tutoring programme. Human Resources are providing guidance to schools on paying staff to undertake this tutoring.
- 3.2 The self-improving school led system has been reset through a refreshed Bury Toolkit which describes the system. The primary cluster leads have proposed new school improvement clusters and a meeting is scheduled with the heads of secondary maintained mainstream schools to discuss the best model for secondary going forward.
- 3.3 The school improvement clusters are being asked to focus on recovery of learning. The primary clusters and the meeting with secondary mainstream maintained schools will focus on priorities for improvement where collaborative activity will add value. There is also a role within, and across, the clusters for sharing good practice.
- 3.4 Two programmes, delivered online, are now underway with Manchester Communication Academy, our local Research School. These are 'Making a difference for disadvantaged learners' and 'Learning behaviours'. These programmes are underpinned by research from the Education Endowment Foundation.
- 3.5 A secondary 'Literacy for Learning' two year programme, through the National Literacy Trust, is also underway with five Bury high schools working with schools for other Greater Manchester schools.
- 3.6 A structured peer review programme 'The Schools Partnership Programme', involving 16 schools (7 primary, 9 secondary), restarted in the summer term is continuing with a progress check scheduled for November.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The overarching priority is for all our children and young people to be in school experiencing face to face learning. We retain our focus on those pupils who are not in school or are not accessing full-time education in school.

- 4.2 The focus on recovery of learning is the ask of the school improvement clusters.
 - 4.3 We continue to work in partnership with health colleagues to support effective communication with schools regarding COVID-19 outbreaks, home testing and vaccinations.
 - 4.4 There has been high take up of the universal entitlement for a Quality Education Assurance visit for all schools in the autumn term 2021. The trained Quality Education Professional team has been expanded to meet the demand.
 - 4.5 Categories of support have been revised as part of the refresh of the Bury Toolkit. Support plans for Targeted and Intensive schools are being formalised.
 - 4.6 Committee members are asked to consider and comment on the information in this report and the planned next steps.
-

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

Isobel Booler, Director of Education and Skills
i.booler@bury.gov.uk

Executive Director sign off Date:

JET Meeting Date: