

Improving Lives Select Committee

December 2021

Education Recovery - Education Review - 2020/21 Academic year.

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Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council 

Overview of 2020-2021 Academic year

- The Covid-19 pandemic has again had a significant impact on learning across the borough in all phases of education.
- Education data across a range of attainment measures, statutory assessments or accredited pathways including GSCE/ A Levels has not been benchmarked or validated in the last academic year and school level performance measures will not be available.
- School attendance has fluctuated due to high volumes of cases in school age population.
- Special schools, Pupil Referral units and Early years settings remained open across whole of last academic year.
- Impacts of the pandemic is now becoming apparent across a range of cohorts.
- Remote learning became enshrined in legislation and was utilised for the first time in the January 21 lockdown.
- Right across early years, school age, further education and higher education staff have consistently worked above beyond to support a very complex situation across education.
- Reciprocally all RMBC Education and Inclusion teams continued to adapt and work very hard to support the ongoing pandemic challenges.



Early Years

- Early years and childcare sector has been responsive to needs during the pandemic.
- Ongoing sustainability of sector remains challenging particularly in light of increase to minimum wages to be introduced in April 2022.
- Although 2 year Early Education take-up remains lower than pre-covid rates, Summer 21 take-up has increased on last term, and at 77%, is higher than the last published national average of 62% and is ranked 43rd out of 151 LA's. Take-up is still varied across the borough with the Central areas remaining below 60%.
- A number of awareness raising activities are taking place both borough wide and with additional focus in the Central area.
- There has been increased demand for additional support with significantly higher numbers of children requesting Inclusion Support Grant to support low level / emerging needs with Communication and Interaction being the predominant need identified.
- The local authority is in a strong position to support the sector to identify and support speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) through the implementation of the government funded South Yorkshire SLCN project. To date 559 children's workforce professionals have received universal SLC training with further Enhanced SLC training being delivered in the Autumn term.



Primary

- The priority schools this year is to support pupils catch up lost learning in Reading, Writing, Maths
- Recovery funding is being targeted to support disadvantaged pupils through the national tutoring programme or through the use of existing school staff.
- Rotherham has designated 2022 as the year of reading focusing on raising attainment in phonics and reading, developing fluency and comprehension skills and raising engagement in reading both at school and for pleasure. Funding has been allocated to support the implementation of strategies to raise attainment.
- In the Autumn term 2020 Y2 children took the phonics screening check. 75.9% passed compared to a national average of 78.3%. The percentage of pupils eligible for FSM achieving the standard mark is at 60.2%. This compares to the national average of 64%. The gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils in Rotherham is 19.9%. Funding has been allocated to provide phonics training to all schools to close this gap.
- Primary schools are also focusing on the development of their wider curriculum, staff subject knowledge, pupil and staff well-being and Ofsted readiness. This is being supported through RoSIS training and school to school support
- From September 2021 the new EYFS curriculum will be implemented by all EYFS settings. This has a focus on language, communication and quality interaction between children and adults. Less time assessing is increasing the time for quality interaction enabling early years practitioners to support identified children to close learning gaps.
- No assessment across primary key stages in 2020 or 2021 but these will return in 2022.
- Schools have and will continue to provide remote education to those pupils who are self-isolating.



Virtual School – Early Years and Primary

- 0–2-year plan is embedded and starting to show impact – Virtual Schools Advisers are regularly attending LAC reviews and complete Early Years Development Plans (EYDP) to enable early identification and supporting parents/carers to provide stimulating learning opportunities within the home. VSA are promoting community groups within local areas and are sharing information around child development. VSA are working with key professionals Early Years providers, Portage team, Social care, IROs and Health
- 100% of Rotherham LAC 2,3- and 4-year-old are accessing in and out of authority education provisions
- Virtual School provide Parent are Expert's training to parents/carers, settings/schools, health professionals, social workers, IRO, edge of care.
- Affinity 2020 have delivered Tiny Tots' college training to foster carers/parent (early learning and development skills).
- New Designated Teachers' Network for Early Years– Target Early years and Early intervention
- Reading project – new to care packages delivered to children aged 2-11 to enhance shared reading opportunities and support attachments. Feedback is collected during PEP meetings to collect carers views.
- Speech, Language and Communication therapist – Rapid response, assessments for all new LAC and closing the gaps of unidentified SPLC needs (offer in IO/OOA)
- Improving and developing SMART Targets with designated teachers to improve attainment and progress for LAC.
- New SMART target guidance has been sent to all Primary Schools. All targets are quality assured and followed up with tailor-made training where extra support is required



Secondary

- Provisional 2021 GCSE results indicated pupils achieving grades 4 (pass rate) or more in English GCSE above the national average.
- Provisional data shared suggests Rotherham's pupils achieving grades 4 (pass rate) or more in Maths GCSE was above the national average for Maths.
- Secondary school curriculum continues to support remote learning for those students who have to self-isolate. Secondary leads for English and maths are being funded to support schools to focus on catch up.
- The English lead has established a Literacy Leaders' Network for colleagues leading on reading in Rotherham secondary schools to raise the profile, importance and subject knowledge in relation to reading.
- There has been a focus on developing the understanding of secondary colleagues in basic early reading and synthetic phonics funded training has been provided.
- In partnership with RoSIS and through sharing best secondary practice the English lead is identifying effective strategies and initiatives that develop reading for pleasure and independent reading in secondary contexts.
- A Herts for Learning Reading Fluency Project has been launched to support students in participating schools read with increased accuracy, automaticity, prosody and understanding.



Virtual School – Secondary and Post 16

- 35% of the mainstream DfE cohort achieved GCSE level 4 passes in English and Maths, this is in line with last year's attainment.
- Return to terminal assessment this academic year requires a greater focus on COVID recovery for years 10 and 11.
- Recovery pupil premium, school-led tutor programme and Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding will to support academic and emotional health recovery programmes to minimise the impact of assessment changes and the COVID pandemic.
- In line with the Rotherham Year of reading, PP+ will be used to support improving reading skills across the secondary cohort, to enhance the love of reading and support access and understanding of terminal assessment examinations.
- Rotherham Virtual School was one of the 30 successful LA applicants to be awarded the Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) pilot. The outcomes of the pilot are to:
 - i. Raise the profile of looked-after children and care leavers in FE.
 - ii. Improve the attendance of looked-after children and care leavers in FE.
 - iii. Better support the delivery of Personal Education Plans, pathway plans or equivalent at both an individual and cohort level.



Primary and Secondary developments

- The Team Around the School is being developed to support children and young people with underlying social emotional mental health needs that have been impacted by the pandemic .
- From the Autumn term, school's in England will be able to nominate one school colleague to access funded Senior Mental Health Lead Training.
- A funded 'Making the Difference project' is being developed to enable primary and secondary colleagues to evaluate and share best practice and implement the most effective, research based strategies, to raise attainment of disadvantaged pupils
- Holiday and Food initiative. Funding from Department for Education of £1,267,000 for 2021 is being used to provide free holiday club places, including a meal, to children and young people eligible for free school meals. Funded holiday places Easter – 1 week Summer – 4 weeks Christmas – 1 week.
- Weekly Covid updates linked to statutory guidance, key Covid updates and mental health and wellbeing sent out to all schools.
- Free School Meals provided to all benefits eligible students across school holidays and targeted uniform cost relief was also provided in last academic year.



Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership (RESP)

- RESP is a mechanism where key partners within the borough education sector work collaboratively across priority focus areas or emerging challenges.
- RESP reformed in last academic follow hiatus in previous academic year due to pandemic.
- Focus of RESP linked to education recovery and key areas of pandemic response .
- Post pandemic role of RESP is developing and links to school led system approach which is Department of Education direction of travel.
- Examples include focus on Early Years take up, 2022 Year of Reading (Ofsted focus), academic attainment and school improvement.
- Work to enhance membership is ongoing so RESP becomes fully representative of Rotherham education system and drive partnership approach in areas of challenge/improvement.



Engagement with school leaders

- Monthly Covid meetings held with school and early years leaders.
- Meetings involve Public Health England and RMBC Public Health, this is very collaborative and transparent.
- Information is shared on Covid rates and transmission profiles, partnership approach to decision making, school leaders/early years leaders value the strong open element of this support mechanism. All questions are answered and feedback is followed up.
- RMBC education leaders meet unions weekly as part of pandemic response.
- Support processes remain in place in this academic year.
- Wider school and early years network meetings have restarted with a move back to in person meetings.



School attendance – 2020/21

- School attendance has been directly impacted by the pandemic in 20/21 academic year.
- We have seen large numbers of students in self isolation across the whole academic year.
- Rotherham sits in profile with other LAs with similar profile of Covid transmission.
- Concerns around disproportionate impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups against periods of school closure.
- Secondary phase has shown wider impact on attendance.
- PRU attendance also below normal levels of attendance
- Special schools have shown resilience as they have remained fully open.
- Parent anxiety, extremely critical vulnerable cohorts, and those with unrecognised SEND needs are areas of focus for education settings to take a tailored approach to school attendance.
- School attendance is an area of focus for education recovery cell and will remain a key focus across this academic year.



Rotherham Inclusion Pathway (ISOS).

- Following review of Inclusion practice across Rotherham in 2020/21 academic year, a focused report was garnered and shared across school sector in the Borough.
- First stage of implementation planning has move into actualisation with Primary and Secondary area wide Inclusion Panels sitting across the Autumn Term.
- Operational guidance, referral forms and stakeholder processes are in place.
- Steering group from ISOS review has remained in place and supported implementation.
- Next phase includes development of secondary SEMH outreach offer.
- Review and stocktake of implementation planned into this academic year involving stakeholders.



Elective Home Education

- At the start of the of 2020/21 academic year there were **201** children on our caseload
- The academic year ended with 303 children on our caseload

During the year:

- Involvements resulting in child remained in school – **156**
- Returned to school - **74**
- Transferred LA - **11**
- Referred as CME - **3**
- There were over **500** children known to the EHE team at some point during the 2020/21 Academic Year
- Children open to Social Care
 - CP/ S 47 – **2**
 - CIN - **4**
- Children open to or previously E/Help – **14**
- Children with EHCP's in place – **12**

EHE - As of now

2021/22 Academic Year

- **329** children are on our EHE caseload presently.
- **34** children have returned to school.
- **37** Involvements have resulted in the child remaining in school where parents were considering withdrawal to EHE.
- Recent reasons for children becoming EHE include: Bullying / peer relationships, Covid related anxieties, Social / Emotional linked to personal issues / behaviour / attendance etc ,New to LA area and previously EHE / older sibling already EHE, Relationship with school, No reason stated (parents do not have to give a reason) .
- Highest numbers are in Key Stage 3 and 4 (Secondary aged children)
- 50/50 split between Male / Female in cohort
- The cohort is largely white British heritage



Steps to support – EHE across Rotherham

- **2 EHE summits held in June / July 2021** bringing together multi agency partners to ensure strong oversight and understanding
- **Refreshed EHE policy – approved by DLT Sept 2021 following OSMB**
- **EHE Governance Group refreshed**
- (Commitment to a collaborative approach from across the multi-agency partnership to support Safeguarding and Visibility of EHE cohort - Focus broader than a single education issue).
- **Work with schools to accelerate return to education if appropriate – through Admissions and Appeals statutory processes and Fair Access Protocol where necessary.**
- **DFE and OFSTED increased focus.**
- **Enhanced staffing through Covid recovery monies due to cohort rise.**



Parent/carers engagement across 2020/21 academic year

- Strong work to take a collaborative approach as last academic year again placed significant pressures of parent/carers.
- SEND focused listening events in partnership with Rotherham Parent Carers Forum.
- Education recovery funding distributed to parent/carers groups to support post Covid challenges with a focus on our Local Offer.
- Regular co- productive dialogue between RMBC and parental groups.
- Recognition around parental/carer anxiety around pandemic and this impacting on range of educational areas.
- Focused communication plans have targeted return to school dates after lockdowns/ starts of terms/ as Rotherham went into tier 3.
- Continued work to enhance engagement with parent/carers across a range of key areas including SEND, School Attendance, reduced education provision, and the ongoing challenges of the Covid pandemic.



Covid surveys

- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Rotherham we have undertaken 3 Covid surveys across secondary schools in Rotherham. Over eleven thousand responses were received from across 13 schools and 3 pupil referral units.
- The responses showed an increase in students feeling more anxious, stressed, unhappy, worried and angry during the Pandemic. With 8% of students reporting, they were too embarrassed to ask for help or support and 9% of students saying they did not feel there was any support that was suitable for them to access.
- In response, 28% of students said they had either put their own strategies in place or accessed some support to help themselves. These included learning something new for example arts, crafts, baking, writing a journal/diary, or undertaking a new hobby examples included playing piano, guitar, boxing and drawing.
- A number of schools responded to advise they are implementing new practices to support children and young people including one school who has presented a detailed analysis of their own school findings to leaders. Schools who are reviewing and implementing new well-being strategies to support pupils and updating their websites to ensure they include support, advice and information and how to access this.
- Responses received from partners have included the sharing of NHS Guidance for children and young people's mental health by Health colleagues including how parents and carers, can access services, and self-care recommendations for young people. The VAR CYPS Consortium has commenced a 6 month 'Response' project which will include actions to address findings from the surveys.



Challenges as we move forward

- Growing number of pupils and students with SEMH needs.
- School leader and staff wellbeing as they face the daily uncertainty of staffing levels in schools .
- The impact of staff absence on the delivery of catch up interventions.
- Avoid the narrowing of the curriculum for the most vulnerable pupils as they attend reading, writing or maths interventions.
- To ensure that pupils and students who are self-isolating have the opportunity to keep up .
- Long term impact of the pandemic on the education of vulnerable groups.
- Social interaction in early years as children learn to interact with others after long periods of isolation from children and adults outside of their immediate family.
- Lack of assessment in primary has inhibited the understanding of the impact of the pandemic on educational attainment and progress.
- Despite the impact of the pandemic on school improvement, there is a need to increase the number of schools judged by Ofsted as being good or better.

