

# Improving Lives Select Commission

## Education - Covid-19 Response and Forward Planning

March 2020 – March 2021

# Introductions

- Nathan Heath, Interim Assistant Director Education.
- Aileen Chambers, Head of Service, Early Years and Childcare.
- Dean Fenton, Head of Access Services.
- Vicky Helliwell, Head of School Improvement



# Key areas of discussion

- Educational response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Updates across service areas and key areas of consideration.
- Forward planning and future areas of focus.
- Areas of concern and steps to address these.
- Post pandemic and a Rotherham response.



# Our Covid-19 response

- Our Education services have been at forefront of the Rotherham Covid response and the co-productive work with schools across pandemic has been a strength of this response.
- Work across key areas of challenge including Free School Meals, digital poverty, supporting schools to interpret multiple updates to statutory guidance, and Incident Management Team meetings (IMTs) have supported schools to have an expedient response to emerging critical issues.
- Education Services have adapted their offers to align new ways of working to make sure statutory responsibilities have been delivered effectively. This includes a strong offer recognised by Ofsted from the Virtual School
- RMBC has provided a strong leadership across all stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes collaboration with DfE, Ofsted, and regional LA to address emerging challenges and support schools with future implementations of defined 'catch up' funding from central government.



# Areas of concern

- Increased numbers of EHE students at the start of this academic year raises concern around vulnerable students.
- Concerns are distinct around the wider impact that the Covid- 19 pandemic is having on the education of our children & young people. This includes significant gaps in missed education through school closures or reoccurring periods of self isolation.
- School staff wellbeing is a key challenge as response approach to pandemic has led to fatigue against fast moving pace of change or pressures on schools to continually adapt their offer against pandemic.
- Long term impact of pandemic on the education of vulnerable groups of students is still to be fully understood.
- Lack of assessment of students academic progress across all key stages in the period of the pandemic and into summer 2021 will inhibit understanding of the educational progression at key stages of educational transition.



# Early Years

- Early years and childcare sector have been fundamentally essential to the whole system approach across Rotherham in the pandemic.
- Resilience of sector remains challenging due to funding, take up of places, viability of businesses and Covid related pressures including parental anxieties, Covid testing processes & fatigue across sector from impact of pandemic.
- Support has been provided to sector through adaptations/enhancement of funding, ongoing LA led support approach, and collaboration across education phase.
- Medium term impact of the pandemic will need considered support to support improved take up of places especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Work across Early Years and Childcare sector to improve Speech and Language outcomes has continued across last year, this remains a key strategic priority.



# Primary

- Pandemic has significant impact across phase with low levels of attendance and disruption to educational progress across key stages.
- Schools have had key role in leading community response to pandemic and pivotal role in safeguarding system.
- Schools have adapted and moved quickly to a strong remote learning offer in the most recent national lockdown.
- Primary attendance is significantly higher in January 21 national lockdown across all vulnerable groups/critical workers.
- No assessment across primary key stages in 2020 or 2021.



# Secondary

- Significant impact on school attendance across Rotherham from challenges of the pandemic. This includes low attendance during 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown, impact of pandemic on school attendance in Autumn term reopening and lower than primary level attendance in January 21 national lockdown.
- Secondary school curriculum able to support move to remote learning in a more succinct way.
- No GCSE examinations in 2020 or 2021, centre assessed grades will determine academic progression.
- Schools have had significant role in leading community response to pandemic and pivotal role in safeguarding system.
- School leaders have offered strong levels of support to most vulnerable families across pandemic, working distinctly outside their educational remit to support emerging challenges including FSM, IT issues and manage the sustained impact of confirmed cases in school settings.





# Further Education/Higher Education

- Significant disruption across education and move away from face to face learning has been more defined and for longer periods in these educational areas.
- Practical learning subjects have had a clear impact and adjustments to courses will need to be made to support student education.
- A Levels and BTEC qualifications impacted in both 2020 and 2021.
- Transition for students into FE/HE education has had a clear impact and uncertainty across education areas raises continued concern around mental health and wellbeing of young people.
- Opportunities for young people driven by the skills agenda and Sheffield City Region workstreams will support future developments across these phases of education.



# Future areas of focus

- The mental health and wellbeing of our children, young people and those working in education settings, is essential to any response to Covid. Underpinning this needs to be a strong understanding of child and young person's experience of the pandemic which will support our recovery planning.
- Measurements of academic progress are yet to be determined for a number of cohorts, it is key that as a school community we support our most vulnerable students to overcome any barriers that the pandemic poses to future education progression .
- Role of key mechanisms including Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership and the SEND Board in driving a collaborative approach to Covid response is essential in holding strong support across system.
- A continued development of the co-productive partnership with parents and carers across any Covid recovery needs to be apparent. This will support work to address challenges around electively home education, anxieties impacting on attendance in school due to the pandemic and challenges embedded by the highly disruptive period in the education of our children and young people.
- Key work across Inclusion in Rotherham including the recent ISOS review have continued across the pandemic, and the implementation of the findings of this report will support further developments in enhancing inclusive practice in our schools.



# Any Questions?

