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Merton Council

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

15 March 2022

Supplementary agenda

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Agenda Item 3

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

9 FEBRUARY 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.43 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Sally Kenny (in the Chair),
Councillor Hayley Ormrod, Councillor Stan Anderson,
Councillor Nick Draper, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor James Holmes,
Councillor Russell Makin, Councillor Dennis Pearce,
Mansoor Ahmad and Roz Cordner

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Eleanor Stinger (Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer), Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help), Jane McSherry (Director of Children, Schools and Families), Karl Mittelstadt (Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships), Tom Procter (Head of Contracts & School Organisation) and Keith Shipman (Head of Education Inclusion) Sukpal Uppal, Participation and Engagement Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Omar Bush and Councillor Thomas Barlow attended as a substitute.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 2)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

4 (Agenda Item)

5 IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Public Health reported that infections have fallen. There are still outbreaks in schools.

General hospitalisations are steady and in decline, not seen serious disease in children.

Vaccination roll out has slowed down and is now targeted to groups with lower vaccination uptake.

There is a vaccination offer for 5-11 year olds at high risk.

The next steps are looking at how to live safely with Covid. The Government will announce national plans on 24th February.

Resolved

The Director was thanked for her report

6 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH (Agenda Item 6)

The Head of Education Inclusion gave an overview of the report highlighting there is a significantly higher risk of mental health amongst young people. Off the Record reports numbers doubled during the pandemic. All Merton schools will have the opportunity to have a mental health team by Easter. The CAMHS Transformation Manager said the focus is on prevention and early intervention

A panel member asked about the impact of Covid and how can we support those who may have fallen out of the system during the pandemic

The Transformation Manager said the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Strategy was in place before the pandemic. Mental health complexities have increased and there are changes in the way young people need to be supported. There is increased capacity in services, recruiting into specialist areas and they are working with GP Surgeries to prevent hospital admissions.

A panel member asked if complexities increased or are we picking them up better, do we monitor for ethnicity and if resources sufficient.

The Head of Education Inclusion said there are increases in conditions such as ticks, related to social media. Some conditions may be being identified more because young people are more willing to talk. CAMHS does receive data on ethnicity. There has been increased investment in CAMHS over the last 5 years.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for their report and asked for a progress report.

7 MERTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Children Schools and Families gave an overview of the report highlighting that the independent chair is for both the adults and children safeguarding partnerships.

A panel member said they would like a better understanding what officers think of the work that has taken place.

The Director of Children Schools and Families said this is partnership report between health, police and the local authority. The Partnership is pleased with work on early help, and there is concern across the wider partnership on domestic abuse

In response to questions the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion reported that numbers of looked after children are low in Merton and boys are more likely to be looked after. Early intervention is keeping younger children out of care.

In response to questions on the success of foster care recruitment, the Director of Children Schools and Families said they are planning a big recruitment drive. There are potential foster carers in the system but Covid slowed down the recruitment process.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help said future reports from the Partnership will provide more detail on the impact of training courses.

RESOLVED

Officers were thanked for their report

8 HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL CONSULTATION (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Contracts and School Organisation gave an overview of the report and there had been a rich consultation. One of the major findings was that there was potential for independent travel to be supported more widely.

A panel member said independent travel is good for some young people but not all.

A further panel member welcomed the report but asked whether, rather than review the policy to potentially withdraw the service for some children, have we considered commissioning, for example putting more burden on the provider. The Head of Contracts and School Organisation reassured the panel member that whilst value for money in commissioning was not part of this paper it was consistently worked on both in establishing a competitive market, reviewing routes and improving the number of children on each vehicle. Transferring risk to a provider comes at a financial cost.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Education said there are increasing numbers of children with Education Health and Care Plans with specialist placements and so rising costs related to their transport to these placements – we are looking at policies to ensure they are fit for purpose so the right children get the right service and we commission as efficiently as possible. This consultation was specifically about the policy and eligibility.

Resolved
Officers were thanked for their report

Resolved
Officers were thanked for their report

9 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE - TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 8)

The Director of Children Schools and Families gave an overview of the report.

A member panel said we spent possibly £100m on expanding schools, and with the benefit of hindsight, should we have done this in a different way e.g. through temporary buildings.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Schools said estimating places is not an exact science, but based on the evidence the decision was taken to invest in better buildings. Families have appreciated the good quality classrooms rather than portacabins. The recent significant reduction in demand for school places is an issue across London and beyond and many council areas are in a worse position than Merton including needing to close schools. We have been creative in how this space is used and schools also hire out their spaces.

Resolved
The Director was thanked for her report

10 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE - VERBAL REPORT (Agenda Item 9)

The Cabinet Member said her key areas of focus include:

- Place planning and looking at projections to understand what is needed
- SEND provision - waiting for an update on Designated Schools Grant funding bid
- Youth voice and responding to the outcomes of survey
- Schools are preparing for Ofsted now that they have resumed routine inspection

The Cabinet Member reported that Harris Academy Wimbledon have consulted on making changes to admission their policy for 10% selection by music aptitude. There is concern regarding this kind of selection and should the Academy decide to implement this policy following the consultation Merton has the option to take this matter to the independent schools' adjudicator.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet Member was thanked for her report.

11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 10)

The Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships gave an overview of the report and highlighted that more detail had been provided to indicator 16 as requested by the Panel at the last meeting.

A panel member said we need to look at things we can scrutinise including areas of challenge. The report contains too many indicators which are green, and some do not have a target at all. The role of panel should be to monitor improvement of amber or red indicators.

The Director of Children Schools and Families said the Panel may wish to be informed about important areas which may not have a specific target but will impact on resources, such as numbers of looked after children.

The Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships said the purpose of the dashboard is to provide an understanding on how system is behaving and the population we are working with. The dashboard also shows how well the system is doing and these measures have a target. This quantitative report and the qualitative departmental update provide the panel with a picture of how the service is working overall.

RESOLVED

Officers were thanked for their report

12 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 11)

The work programme was noted.

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 15th March 2022

Apprenticeships update

- Dheeraj Chibber – Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care & Youth Inclusion
Keith Shipman – Education Inclusion Manager
Peter Little – Head of Organisational Development

Overview

- New Apprenticeship Strategy agreed December 2021
- Embedding a strategic approach to how we attract, retain and develop our workforce to meet our communities' needs, both now and in the future, is a vital aspect of our future workforce strategy.
- Apprenticeships are an integral part of this and can make a positive contribution by creating opportunities for people to develop, and by providing a framework for the workforce, of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications, helping to raise skills, performance and aspirations.
- London Borough of Merton, along with other public-sector organisations, has a responsibility in helping to create these opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader.
- Our strategy includes Apprenticeships and how we support wider Youth Employment, which includes, but is not limited to, Care Leavers.

Resources

- Peter Little joined Merton in September 2021.
- Dheeraj Chibber joined in November 2021.
- On arrival, whilst there was some great activity taking place, there was no dedicated Apprenticeship resource, nor was there an Apprenticeship strategy.
- Over the past few months we have:
 - Established, and had endorsed by CMT, an Apprenticeship strategy for Merton
 - Received approval for the following dedicated resource:
 - Apprenticeship Lead focusing on all apprenticeship activity across Merton, including supporting local businesses through the levy transfer (currently out to advert)
 - Apprenticeship officer (to be recruited as an entry level apprentice once the lead position has been filled)
 - CSF dedicated Apprenticeship co-ordinator, focussing on supporting Care Experienced Young People and other vulnerable cohorts (such as children with SEND) with a specific focus of identifying and supporting young adults into apprenticeship with the council (role currently being written and evaluated prior to advertising).

Recent Activity

- New Apprenticeship Strategy approved by CMT in December 2021

Main focus since has been to:

- Commence reducing levy underspend (at the time c.£41,000/month)
- Increase organisational awareness and appetite for apprenticeships through proactive communication campaign
- Support Heads of Service and Schools to understand the benefits and responsibilities for apprenticeships
- Introduce Levy transfer policy to help boost local economy through apprenticeships
- Care Leavers:
 - Received approval and funding for a CSF dedicated Apprenticeship co-ordinator, focussing on supporting Care Experienced Young People and other vulnerable cohorts (such as children with SEND) with a specific focus of identifying and supporting young adults into apprenticeship with the council (role currently being created and evaluated prior to advertising).
 - Ensured our Levy transfer policy criteria requires businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities with added social value for disadvantaged groups. For example, Care leavers; young people Not in Education, Employment of Training (NEET); individuals with disabilities; long term unemployed

Wider Youth Employment

- As well as apprenticeships, we have supported the national Kickstart initiative.
 - The Kickstart Scheme is open to people aged 16-24 who are currently claiming Universal Credit and are at risk of long-term unemployment. It offers a six-month job with a local employer, funded by central Government to offer exciting opportunities for young people to gain valuable work experience.
 - Our target was to provide 33 placements.
- Page 11
- We have 40 young people currently in kickstart placements, with 5 vacancies actively seeking to be filled.
 - 2 kickstarts have secured internal permanent appointments
 - 3 kickstarts have secured external permanent appointments
 - We have therefore tremendous support in enhancing skills and encouraging youth employment

What is an Apprenticeship

- The Organisational Development team, working in conjunction with Children’s Social Care & Youth Inclusion team, are responsible for creating and embedding apprenticeships in Merton.
- Apprenticeships are available to anyone wishing to train in a specific job role.
- Apprenticeship learners need to be in paid employment to be eligible for the programme and will be required to stay on the programme and in employment for at least 12 months.
- Apprentices spend 80% of their time in the work setting and 20% of their time as “off the job” learning.

Apprenticeships provide for:

- Professional Qualifications available to all employees at all levels of the organisation
- Learning on the job
- Centrally funded programmes via the levy
- New talent entrance pathway to the organisation, including supporting youth employment
- Programmes relevant to the work the employee undertakes
- Greater opportunities to upskill our workforce as part of a clear career pathway

Apprenticeship Levels

Apprenticeship level	Examples of qualifications/ Academic Equivalent
1	Functional skills level 1, GCSEs (grades 3-1: previously D-G)
2	GCSEs (grades 9-4: previously A*-C), CSE grade 1, O level grade A, B or C
3	Advanced level (A level) grade A-E, AS level, Vocational level 3
4	Vocational Qualification level 4, Certificate in Higher Education, HNC
5	Vocational Qualification level 5, Foundation Degree, Diploma in Higher Education, HND
6	Bachelor's Degree (with or without honours)
7	Master's Degree, Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma, PGCE
8	Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil or PhD).

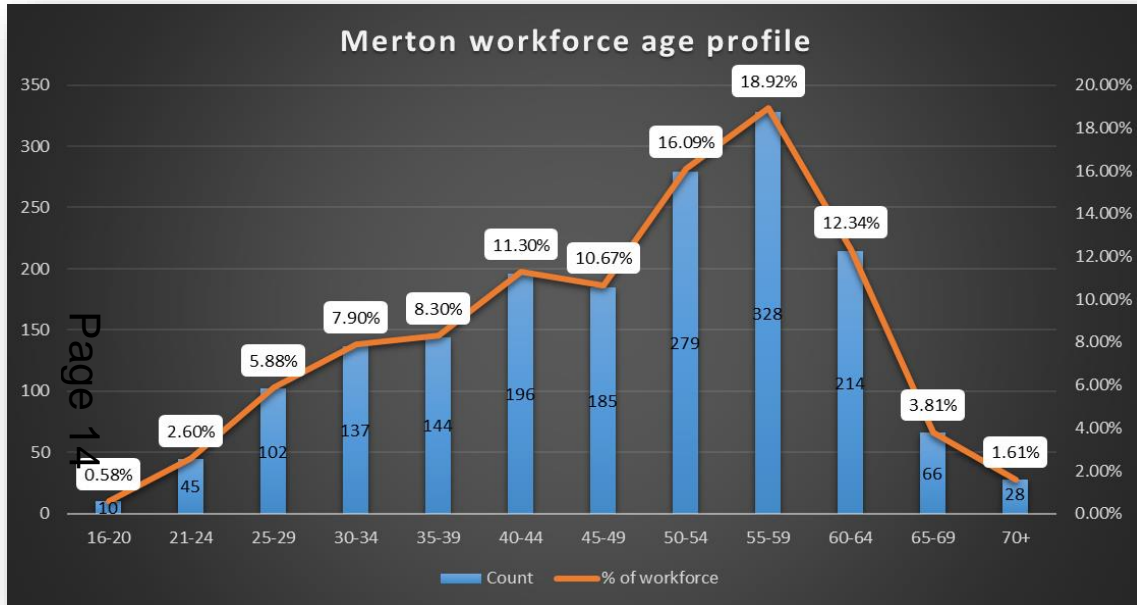
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The table on the left shows the potential levels available under apprenticeships. We offer levels 2-7 (there are no training providers who offer level 1 and there is no demand for level 8).

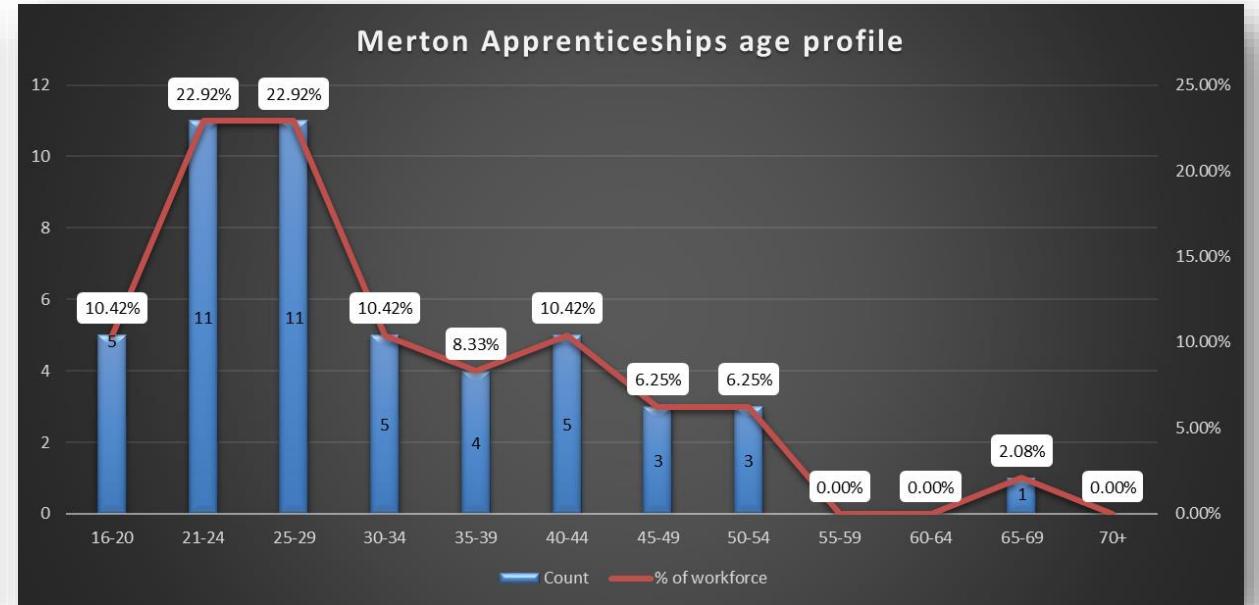


The table on the right shows the range of levels which Merton apprenticeships have either completed or are currently undertaking.

Age Profile



The graph on the left shows the current age profile for Merton's workforce. This shows an ageing workforce and over the coming years we will lose much of our current experienced workforce to retirement.

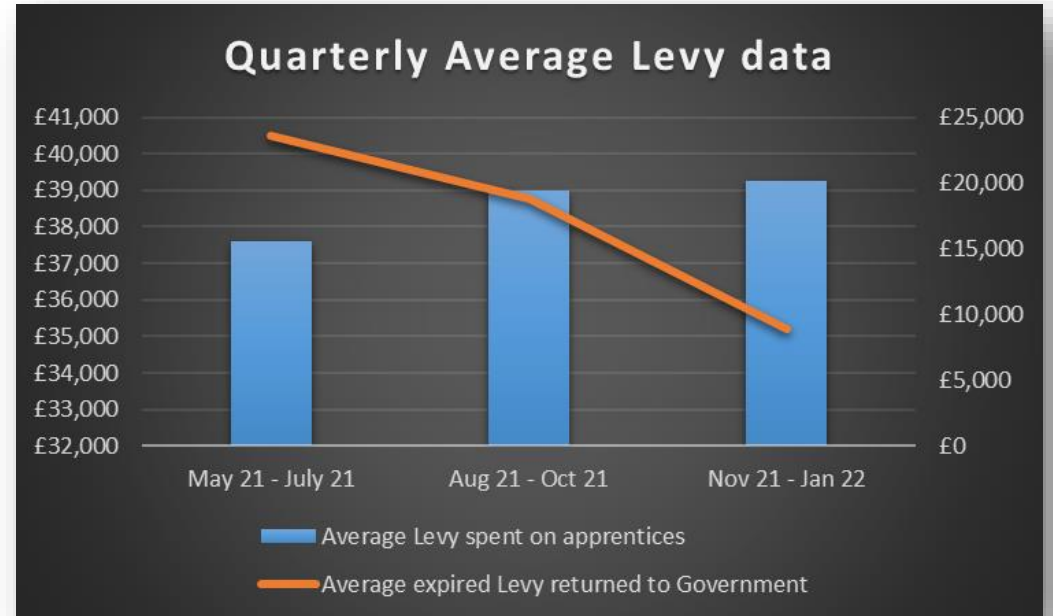


The graph on the right shows the same age parameters but of those undertaking apprenticeship programmes. Whilst there are no age limits to apprenticeships, it is important to see more people in the younger age parameters to start building the future succession experience pipeline.

Apprenticeship Levy

- The Levy can only be spent on the apprenticeship training programme itself. It cannot be used to fund or part fund salaries, travel expenses, meals whilst learning or any other costs.
- We have two years to spend the contributions apportioned to the fund before they expire and are returned to central government.
- Expenditure against the fund occurs, calculated as the overall cost of the programme, divided by the number of months the programme runs.
- The chart on the right shows how the levy position has moved steadily over the past three quarters. Data production is always in lag; at the time of writing we have information to the end of January 2022.
- Since we introduced our Apprenticeship Strategy and initiated our communication campaigns this autumn, we are trending more favourably, increasing our monthly spend on apprenticeships and reducing the amount of levy sent back to Central Government.

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RESPONSE TO ADVANCE QUESTIONS



Question 1

Provide an overview of how the council works in partnership with employers to support local young people into jobs and training, including statistical information on the number of young people supported over the last five years

- Towards Employment is an employability project that sits within Merton's Public Health Team, works closely in partnership with Tooting and Mitcham FC and Future Merton and receives funding from CIL, the DWP, MOAT PHCC and Groundworks. One of their target groups are care experienced young people (funding is temporary)

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TE have developed exclusive employment pathways with employers within and external to our supply chain. I.e. UPS, Id Verde, Surrey Envelopes, Surrey Steel, Caterlink, Amazon and Abelio. They are currently working with Wimbledon Tennis on a guaranteed interview project for work during the championships.

- TE have supported Care Experienced Young People into the Civil Service Roles
- Over the past year they have supported 75 care experienced young people.

Question 2

Provide an overview of challenges in developing apprenticeships

- Lack of general awareness of apprenticeships, their value and available funding
- Lack of awareness and management buy in to support development of entry level apprentices
- Preference from managers to recruit experience staff rather than “taking a risk” on developing and growing our own talent via apprenticeships
- Budgetary constraints on managers to fund apprenticeship salaries, plus lack of awareness of available “apprenticeship reserve fund” that could be accessed
- Certain professions lacking suitable and/or available apprenticeship standards. For example Youth Worker Level 6 and Learning & Skills Teacher Level 5 have been in demand but unavailable and only approved by institute of Apprenticeships in February 2022
- Concerns from managers over the required 20% “off the job” element
- Lengthy process to acquire new training providers
- Previous lack of dedicated resource to unblock challenges and promote activity
- Impact of Covid diverted collective attention to pandemic, drawing it away from apprenticeships
- Absence of cohesive strategy to address above challenges

Question 3

Provide an outline of plans for the future of apprenticeships

Given the aforementioned activity, including encouraging existing staff to embark on apprenticeship programmes, we feel we have now created a stronger and more receptive learning environment within Merton and as such the business will be more ready to provide a positive learning experience for new entrant Apprentices.

Done this way, our Apprentices will be best placed to have the greatest support and opportunities to succeed.

Additional plans we have in place to make apprenticeships a success are as follows:

- The Apprenticeship Strategy will be a major part of our future Workforce Strategy (Scheduled for launch July 2022).
- Recruitment for 3 dedicated apprenticeship positions
- Greater business partnering to understand and meet each business areas' development needs
- Work with local schools, colleges and universities to improve their own uptake on apprenticeships and support future options for education leavers
- Continued partnership working between CSF & Organisational Development teams
- Run Myth busting and information drop in sessions for managers and staff (see slides 22 onwards)
- Utilise the available levy transfer (next slide)
- Comprehensive communication campaign
- Continued focus from the Care Leaver team to encourage more Care Leavers to apply for available apprenticeships
- Continued support from directorates to make positions available for education leavers moving into Apprenticeships
- Continue to promote and take advantage of the available apprenticeship reserve

Question 3 continued...

Helping the local economy

We are now able to transfer up to 25% of our levy funds to a non-levy paying organisation or business. This means that here at Merton, we can transfer a proportion of our own apprenticeship funds to businesses across the borough, who do not have their own funds available.

We know apprenticeship programmes provide a very effective skills development and recruitment tool for such businesses so we are more than happy to pay for their apprenticeship training programmes.

High level criteria will apply and companies should be able to demonstrate meeting at least one of the following points:

- **Addressing skill shortages in Merton.** These could include Social Care, Digital skills, Engineering, schools and nurseries, employing local people in local jobs.
- **Creating apprenticeship opportunities with added social value for disadvantaged groups.** For example, Care leavers; young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET); individuals with disabilities; long term unemployed; asylum seekers.
- **Supporting charities, community and voluntary organisations.** This could help support their work by developing key roles in their organisation, improving mental health and wellbeing, offering social interaction and responding to local needs.
- **Assisting small and medium sized businesses** in providing training for staff which will help them to recruit to hard-to-fill vacancies in their business, or to upskill an existing member of staff to fill a skills gap.

Question 4

Provide an overview of schemes to support vulnerable young people such as care leavers

- Skills and experienced Personal Advisors – Pathway Planning, Support, Advocacy, Befriending and Advising
- Virtual Schools – University support and dedicated ETE worker who specifically targets hard to engage YP; Youth Justice – dedicated ETE worker
- Kickstart Programme – government scheme – paid for by DfE which allows for creative posts
- Towards Employment, and My Futures – key workers team which supports all young people needing support with education, employment and training
- Panel supporting care experienced young people into education, employment and training
- Dedicated resource agreed which will help promote apprenticeships for care leavers

QUESTIONS



SUPPORTING SLIDES

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- 1) MYTH VS FACT
- 2) AVAILABLE APPRENTICESHIPS
- 3) CURRENT & PIPELINE APPRENTICES

Myth vs Fact

The EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency), the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE), produced some common myths and answers, see below.

“My apprentice will spend a lot of time away from the workplace”

- Apprenticeships are about upskilling an individual. Reaching occupational competency takes time. Many employers and apprentices have praised the positive effect off-the-job training has on their productivity and apprentices feel valued by the significant investment in their training.
- Off-the-job training must be away from the apprentice’s normal working duties and must teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their specific apprenticeship.
- It can be delivered flexibly, for example, as a part of each day, one day per week, one week out of five or as block release.
- You may already have existing training programmes or materials you can use to deliver elements of the apprentice’s off-the-job training.

“Off-the-job training must be delivered by a provider in a classroom, at an external location”

- This is not true. Off-the-job training can be delivered in a flexible way. This can be at the apprentice’s usual place of work, or at an external location. It can include for example, the teaching of theory, practical training and writing assignments.
- Providers have developed a range of delivery styles to suit employer and apprentice needs. Employers should work with them to decide when and where off-the-job training should take place and who is best placed to deliver it.

Myth vs Fact

“English and maths counts towards the 20% requirement for off-the-job training”

- This is not true: English and maths do not count towards the 20% off-the-job training.
- Apprenticeships are about developing occupational competency and they are designed on the basis that the apprentice already has the required level (level 2) of English and maths. Training for English and maths must be on top of the 20% off-the-job training requirement.

“Off-the-job training can be done in the apprentice’s own time”

- An apprenticeship is a work-based programme so all off-the-job training must take place within the apprentice’s paid contracted hours. If planned off-the-job training is unable to take place, it must be rearranged. Apprentices may choose to spend additional time training outside paid hours, but this must not be required to complete the apprenticeship.

“Apprenticeships are for those who didn’t get good exam results”

- Apprenticeship opportunities can be very competitive so employers will be looking to employ the best candidates. In addition, individuals choosing to study an apprenticeship are expected to manage both working and studying a qualification so need to be ambitious and have the desire to develop the skills to succeed.

Myth vs Fact

“Apprentices have few career progression opportunities”

- The majority of apprentices in work felt that their apprenticeship had had a positive impact on their career and 36% of higher apprentices report getting a promotion after completing their apprenticeship.

“Apprenticeships are only for young people”

- Apprenticeships are open to anyone over the age of 16. There is no upper age limit.

“An Apprenticeship won't pay me enough”

There is a minimum apprenticeship wage that all employers must pay apprentices. However, London Borough of Merton agrees to pay London Living Wage for newly recruited apprentices. Existing employees retain their current terms and conditions.

“You can't go to university if you study an Apprenticeship”

- Similarly to GCSEs and A-Levels, apprenticeship qualifications attract UCAS points that can be used to access various university level programmes. You can also progress through the apprenticeship route with higher and degree level apprenticeships available.

“I need to document all of the apprentice's off-the-job training”

- A commitment statement must be in place from the beginning of the apprenticeship, setting out the training content an apprentice will receive, and which elements count towards the off-the-job training. The apprentice's evidence pack needs to demonstrate what training has been delivered against the commitment statement.

Available Apprenticeships

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Central Training Group	Credit Services Association	Damar Limited	HAWK Management LTD.	JGA Limited	Lifetime Training Group	National College of Education	Serco Knowledge, Skills & Children's Services	Skills Training UK	South Thames Colleges Group	The Centre	The Open University	TRN (Train) Ltd
Business administrator	3	18	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
HR support	3	18										✓			
Improvement technician	3	14				✓					✓				
Team leader and supervisor	3	12			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Associate project manager	4	24					✓	✓			✓				
Counter Fraud Investigator	4	24					✓								
Improvement practitioner	4	14				✓					✓				
Policy officer	4	24					✓								
Regulatory compliance officer	4	24		✓											
School business professional	4	18								✓					
Coaching professional	5	14						✓			✓				
HR consultant and partner	5	36										✓			
Improvement specialist	5	14									✓				
Education Management Programme	5	22							✓						
Operations and departmental manager	5	30			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Chartered manager (degree)	6	48								✓		✓		✓	
Improvement leader	6	18									✓				
Senior leader (degree)	7	24												✓	
Senior leader (degree) for School Business Professionals	7	24								✓					
Senior Leadership Degree for School Leaders	7	24							✓						
Senior leader (degree) for SEN Co-ordinators	7	24								✓					
Systems thinking practitioner	7	30					✓				✓				

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Available Apprenticeships

Care Services

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Lifetime Training Group	The Open University	TRN (Train) Ltd
Adult care worker	2	12	✓		
Lead adult care worker	3	18	✓		
Children, young people and families practitioner	4	24			✓
Lead practitioner in adult care	4	18	✓		✓
Children, young people and families manager	5	24			✓
Leader in adult care	5	18	✓		✓
Social worker (integrated degree)	6	36		✓	

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Health and science

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Lifetime Training Group
Healthcare support worker	2	12	✓
Senior healthcare support worker	3	18	✓
Healthcare assistant practitioner	5	18	✓

Available Apprenticeships

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	estio training limited	JGA Limited, trading as The JGA Group	Skills Training UK	South Thames Colleges Group	The Open University
Data technician	3	24	✓	✓		✓	
Infrastructure technician	3	12	✓		✓	✓	
IT Solutions Technician	3	18	✓				
Junior content producer	3	12		✓			
Software development technician	3	18	✓				
Cyber security Risk Analyst	4	24	✓				
Cyber Security Technologist	4	24	✓				
Data analyst	4	24	✓		✓		
Digital Community Manager	4	24		✓			
IS business analyst	4	18	✓			✓	
Network engineer	4	24	✓		✓		
Software developer	4	24	✓				
Software tester	4	24	✓				
Digital and Technology Solutions Professional	6	36					✓

Available Apprenticeships

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	HAWK MANAGEMENT UK LTD	TRN (Train) Ltd	Serco Knowledge, Skills & Children's Services
Early years practitioner	2	12	✓	✓	
Early years educator	3	18	✓	✓	
Teaching assistant	3	18			✓

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Credit Services Association
Intelligence analyst	4	18	✓

Available Apprenticeships

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Credit Services Association	CIPFA	Damar Limited	South Thames Colleges Group
Accounts or finance assistant	2	12			✓	✓
Credit controller and collector	2	12	✓			
Advanced credit controller and debt collection specialist	3	18	✓			
Assistant accountant	3	18			✓	✓
Compliance and risk officer	3	15	✓			
Debt adviser	3	18	✓			
Paralegal	3	24			✓	✓
Payroll administrator	3	18				✓
Professional accounting or taxation technician	4	18			✓	
Chartered legal executive	6	60			✓	
Senior compliance and risk specialist	6	36	✓			
Accountancy or taxation professional	7	36		✓		

Available Apprenticeships

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	Central Training Group	CIPS	Damar Limited	estio training limited	HAWK MANAGEMENT UK LTD	JGA Limited, trading as The JGA Group	Lifetime Training Group	Skills Training UK	South Thames Colleges Group	SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd
Customer service practitioner	2	12	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Bid and Proposal Co-ordinator	3	24						✓				
Customer service specialist	3	15	✓						✓	✓	✓	
Digital marketer	3	18				✓		✓		✓	✓	
Housing and property management	3	18									✓	
Marketing assistant	3	18						✓				
Procurement and supply assistant	3	18										✓
Commercial procurement and supply	4	24		✓								✓
Marketing executive	4	15						✓				
Public relations and communications assistant	4	12						✓				
Sales executive	4	18						✓				
Marketing manager	6	24						✓				

Available Apprenticeships

Construction

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	JGA Limited, trading as The JGA Group	South Thames Colleges Group
Property maintenance operative	2	12	✓	✓

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Engineering and manufacturing

Qualification Title	Level	Typical Duration	South Thames Colleges Group
Engineering operative	2	12	✓

Current & Pipeline Apprenticeships

Directorate	FTC Apprentices	Existing employee apprentices	Total number of apprentices	Types of apprenticeships
Environment and Regeneration	0 (plus 0 in pipeline)	3 (plus 4 in pipeline)	3 (plus 4 in pipeline)	<p>Current: 3x Team Leader/Supervisor L3 (Existing employee)</p> <p>Pipeline : 1x Building Control Surveyor L6 Existing 1x Accountancy L3 (Existing) 1x Operational/Departmental Manager L5 (Existing) 1x Chartered Manager L6 (Existing)</p>
Children School & Families	2 (plus 0 in pipeline)	4 (plus 5 in pipeline)	6 (plus 5 in pipeline)	<p>Current: 1x Property Maintenance Operative L2 (FTC Apprentice) 2x Children & Young People Social Care L3 (Existing) 1x Business Admin L3 (Apprentice) 2x Data Analyst L4 (Existing)</p> <p>Pipeline: 3x Team Leader/ Supervisor L3 (Existing) 1x Early Years Educator L3 (Existing) 1x Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children & Young People's Services</p>
Community & Housing	0 (plus 0 in pipeline)	8 (plus 2 in pipeline)	8 (plus 2 in pipeline)	<p>Current 2x Lead Adult Care Worker L3 (Existing) 4x Team Leader/Supervisor L3 (Existing) 2x Social Worker Integrated Degree L6 (Existing)</p> <p>Pipeline 1x Care Leadership and Management: General Adult Social Care L5 (Existing) 1x Occupational Therapist L6 (Existing)</p>

Current & Pipeline Apprenticeships

Directorate	FTC Apprentices	Existing employee apprentices	Total number of apprentices	Types of apprenticeships
Corporate Services	8 (plus 1 in pipeline)	7 (plus 11 in pipeline)	15 (plus 12 in pipeline)	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4x Accountancy Taxation Professional - CIPFA L7 (Apprentice) 1x HR Consultant/Partner L5 (Apprentice) 1x L&D Consultant/Partner L5 (Existing) 1x Business Administrator L3 (Standard) (Apprentice) 1x HR Support L3 (Apprentice) 1x Solicitor L7 (Apprentice) 2x Chartered Legal Executive Apprenticeship L6 (Existing) 1x Facilities Management L3 (Existing) 1x Paralegal Apprenticeship L3 (Existing) 2x Revenues and Welfare Benefits Practitioner L4 (Existing) <p>Pipeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Commercial Procurement & Supply L4 (Existing) 1x Paralegal L3 (Apprentice) 1x Compliance and Risk Officer L3 (Existing) 7x Operational/Departmental Manager L5 (Existing) 2x Team Leader/Supervisor L3 (Existing)

Current & Pipeline Apprenticeships

Directorate	FTC Apprentices	Existing employee apprentices	Total number of apprentices	Types of apprenticeships
Schools	5 (plus 3 in pipeline)	25 (plus 7 in pipeline)	30 (plus 14 in pipeline)	<p>Current:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Accounts or Finance L2 (FTC Apprentice) 1x Information communication Technician L3 (FTC Apprentice) 1x Support Teaching and Learning L2 (FTC Apprentice) 2x Teaching Assistant Level 3 (FTC Apprentice) 10x Operational/Departmental Manager L5 (Existing) 3x Senior Leaders Masters L7 (Existing) 5x Teaching Assistant L3 (Existing) 7x Teacher (standard) L6 (Existing) <p>Pipeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3x Property Maintenance Operative L2 (FTC Apprentice) 1x Finance Assistant L2 (Existing) 1x Operational/Departmental Manager L5 (Existing) 1x Professional Accounting L4 (Existing) 1x Senior Leaders Masters L7 7x Teaching Assistant L3 (Existing)
Total	15	47	62	62 current
			37 pipeline	37 pipeline

CELEBRATING
SUCCESS

*ACHIEVEMENT IN
MERTON SCHOOLS
2020 -2021*

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1. Executive Summary

1. This report provides information about the education standards, achievement and inclusion of children and young people in Merton over the academic year 2020 - 2021. It identifies how the Local Authority (LA) has worked in partnership with schools to secure and maintain improvement.
2. This report has a particular focus on the response of schools and the LA to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the efforts of leaders and teachers to maintain the best possible education in the context of the national restrictions at various points. Despite the pandemic (including the lockdown January – March 2021) some ‘normal’ school improvement activity was possible, and this report shows the impact of this. However, the focus of school leaders has inevitably been on keeping their pupils, staff and communities safe across the year, and support from the LA now needs to be on helping them to refocus on school improvement as much as possible. *For more information see section 2.*
3. Ofsted was not inspecting schools routinely during 2020/21. The proportion of schools judged to be good or better in Merton was maintained at 95% over the course of the academic year. This proportion continued to be above the London and national averages. All of the Council’s secondary and special schools continued to be judged to be good or better, with the proportion of secondary schools judged as outstanding remaining at 63% (well above national and local averages). Two out of the three special schools are judged as outstanding; 38% of special schools nationally are judged outstanding. Three of the Borough’s 44 primary schools were not yet judged to be good or better as of August 2021. This means that 93% of primary schools were judged to be good or better at that point, which is above the national average of 88% for this educational phase. All of the LA maintained schools not yet judged to be good are receiving intensive support and challenge from Merton officers. *For more information see Section 3.*
4. As a result of the pandemic, there were no formal assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2). The Phonics Screening Check for Year 1 pupils again took place a term later than normal (autumn term 2021), and these are the only data for the primary phase this year. There were no exams in the secondary phase, and assessments were calculated using Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). There were LA averages produced for KS4 and KS5, but these were not published in performance tables. It should also be noted that as a result of the use TAGs rather than the outcomes of exams to calculate grades last year, performance in all indicators nationally, locally and in Merton was, for the second year running, higher than in previous years.
5. The summary performance information (*in the next section of the report*) identifies how, where there is data available for this year, performance at all key stages and in most indicators continues to be better than national averages. This is with the exception of attendance, persistent absence and fixed term exclusions in special schools. However, national rankings and quartile performance, where available, show that Merton performance has dropped in comparison with last year with regards to attendance. This was obviously in the context of the pandemic. Improving attendance in special schools in particular will be a focus for 2021/22.
6. 83% of pupils reached the expected standard for phonics decoding in Merton, a decrease of one percentage point in comparison for the cohort the previous year. This is above the national average, and just below the local averages. *For more information see section 4.2.*

7. Performance in Merton secondary schools at KS4 remains strong. In the Attainment 8 indicator, Merton's average (53.2) is above the national and just below the London averages. The proportions of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in the EBacc subjects, including English and maths, and those students achieving a standard 9-4 pass in English and mathematics, are also above national and just below local averages. *For more information see section 4.4.*
8. At Key Stage 5 (KS5), the performance of Merton students is above national and London averages in all key indicators. The proportions of students achieving the higher grades at A level has again improved this year, as might be expected with assessment using Teacher Assessed Grades. *For more information see section 4.5.*
9. The performance of pupil groups varied across the key stages where there is data available. Disadvantaged pupils slightly narrowed the gaps with their peers at KS4 and in the Phonics Screening Check. It will however be important to maintain a focus on the outcomes for these pupils post pandemic and with return of public examinations. Girls outperformed boys in all indicators where there was published data: in some cases these gaps were slightly wider, and in others slightly narrower than national and local comparator data. Pupils in receipt of SEND support and those with EHCPs performed better than, or were in line with, the same groups nationally. The groups requiring focused attention across the key stages remain those eligible for Free School Meals or the Pupil Premium grant, and black pupil groups (Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Black Caribbean and Black African). For more information please see commentary in each phase with regard to achievement.
10. The proportions of young people who are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET), or whose status is not known, have risen slightly but are again significantly better than national and London averages. Performance continues to place Merton in the top quintile of performance nationally. The Merton NEET and not known combined score is the 6th lowest of all authorities nationally. This was achieved through significant tracking and partnership working across schools, colleges and CSF teams. It is now predicted that the figure may have reached an equilibrium where the NEET will be maintained consistently at the same very low level, as has been the case for the last three years. *For more information please see section 4.6.*
11. Pupil attendance was affected by the pandemic and the change in attendance rules about who could attend schools. Final published autumn 2020 and spring 2021 term attendance data in all Merton schools remained stronger than national and London averages. However, for children with EHCPs and/or social workers it can be seen where the impact of Covid and lockdowns reduced time in school. In addition to the final published attendance data, it has been possible to analyse the attendance data that schools submitted daily to the DfE during the pandemic. This data set is not as robust as the final published figures, but gives a picture of attendance levels over time. Again, we can see the impact of the lockdown and Covid isolation on time in schools. Special school attendance has fallen very significantly and is an area of concern. Attendance for all children is lower than would be expected and this needs to be a focus into 2021-22. *For more information see section 6.*
12. Fixed term exclusions from primary and secondary school have continued to decrease and are better than national and London averages for all pupils, and for most pupil groups. We have seen a clear pattern over time in the fall in exclusions for pupils in receipt of SEN support and Black African pupils.

Whilst lower than national and London averages for the same pupil group, the number of exclusions for Black Caribbean pupils has fluctuated over three years. The number of permanent exclusions has remained at zero in primary and risen slightly in secondary, but the three year trajectory is in line with the national picture; Merton numbers are small which leads to larger statistical variation. *For more information see section 6.4.*

13. The number of children being electively home educated (EHE) has risen sharply by 45% as parents choose EHE as a response to the Pandemic. This has risen more than the national figure of 34%. This was particularly marked in primary schools. There were no increases in safeguarding concerns and a lower increase in children with EHCPs being electively home educated. *For more information see section 6.6.*
14. Merton tracks all children who are off roll and missing education (CME) through a multi-agency missing education panel. Additionally, Merton tracks children who are still on roll but have very poor attendance or are at risk of becoming CME. This process ran in addition to the Covid CME process that tracked the attendance of all children with a social worker during lockdown periods. Timeliness of closing cases to the panel improved, as did the volume of children out of school. There was a significant drop in the number of children off roll with EHCPs after three years of rising numbers. *For more information see section 6.7.*
15. The number of children off rolled by schools and needing to be tracked increased significantly by 30%, but the successful tracking of these cases has been maintained at 99%. *For more information see paragraph 6.7.8.*

Summary of Performance Information 2020/21

	Compared to 2020	3 year trend	Compared to National 2021*	2021 Outer London neighbours (quartile)*	2021 Statistical neighbours (quartile)*	2020 National Standing*	2021 National Standing*
KS1							
Year 1/2 phonics	-1	=	**	**	**	**	**
KS4							
Attainment 8 Score	+0.1	+2.1	2.3↑	**	**	**	**
Grades 9-4 in English and maths	-2	+4	1↑	**	**	**	**
English Baccalaureate	-4	+1	7↑	**	**	**	**
KS5							
Average points per entry (A levels)	+3.42	+10.14	1.54↑	**	**	**	**
Exclusions							

Please note: comparison with national and local performance is from 2019/20 data, the most recent where this is available.

Permanent Exclusions - primary	=	=	0.02↓			1 st	1 st
Permanent Exclusions – secondary	+0.08	-0.09	=	↑	↑	93 rd	18 th
Permanent Exclusions – special	=	-0.27	0.04↓	↑	↑	141 st	1 st
Fixed Term Exclusions - primary	-0.15	-0.48	0.57↓			44 th	36 th
Fixed Term Exclusions – secondary	-0.44	-2.91	4.24↓		↓	17 th	11 th
Fixed Term Exclusions – special	+1.82	-1.38	7.53↑	↑		118 th	138 th

Attendance							
Attendance- primary	+0.8	+0.7	0.2↑		↑	20 th	58 th
Attendance – secondary	+0.4	+0.4	+0.4↑	↓	↓	15 th	47 th
Attendance – special	-19.1	-18.8	11.9↓	↓	↓	67 st	146 th
Persistent Absence - primary	-1.8	+0.2	0.6↓			19 th	60 th
Persistent Absence – secondary	-0.3	+0.3	1.7↓	↓	↓	7 th	52 nd
Persistent Absence – special	+42.3	+42.3	21.1↑	↓	↓	98 th	142 nd

- The summary performance information identifies how, where there is data available for this year, performance at all key stages and in most indicators continues to be better than **national averages**. This is with the exception of attendance, persistent absence and fixed term exclusions in special schools.
- National rankings and quartile performance**, where available, show that Merton performance has dropped in comparison with last year with regards to attendance. This was obviously in the context of the pandemic. However, attendance in special schools in particular will be a focus for 2021/22.

Arrows/plus or minus signs indicate performance relative to the previous year's performance (the 'Compared to 2019' column); in comparison with national performance (in the 'Compared to National 2020' column); or compared to previous quartile performance. Please note that in the majority of cases upward arrows are positive, but in the case of exclusions and persistent absence relative to 2020 or national data, downward arrows indicate positive performance.

*National rankings, and quartile performance are for 2021 for all indicators except for exclusions, which are for 2020 (the most recent London and national data available).

**This data is not available.

Quartile Ranking

	First quartile
	Second quartile
	Third quartile
	Fourth quartile

Priorities for 2021/22

Strategic School Improvement

- a) Following the resumption of Ofsted inspections in September 2021, to continue to ensure all schools are judged to be at least good when inspected by Ofsted, through:
 - supporting schools to refocus energy on the school improvement agenda;
 - the effective use of the Merton School Improvement Strategy, including Support and Challenge groups, and the effective deployment of resources including MEP and adviser time;
 - evaluating the use and impact of the Recovery and Pupil Premiums on pupils' achievement, particularly those pupils deemed to be disadvantaged;
 - support from local strong schools and leaders (including those recently trained as coaches);
 - and the use of funding from the Schools Causing Concern budget.
- b) To maintain the ambition that as many schools as are able should be judged outstanding by Ofsted, including by supporting schools currently judged as outstanding, and particularly those that have not been inspected for many years, to prepare for inspection.
- c) In line with Merton's SEND Strategy, and underpinned by the Safety Valve plan, enable schools to support pupils with SEND to achieve the best outcomes in the least restrictive environment.
- d) In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, to focus on the wellbeing of pupils, staff and leaders.
- e) Equalities:
 - To maintain the momentum in relation to race equality in Merton schools.
 - To support schools in developing their strategies to promote diversity, particularly listening to pupils and acting on the outcomes and developing monitoring systems.
 - To maintain the momentum addressing race equality in schools, and to promote all aspects of equality in line with the Equality Duty
- f) In preparation for the education White Paper in 2022, to ensure that partnership working through Attain, and with the new teaching School Hub, the Merton Special Training Alliance and Teach Wimbledon, provides strong strategic direction for schools in Merton.

Early Years

- a) To continue to support schools in the development of the new EYFS requirements, maintaining a focus on early language development post pandemic.
- b) To support schools with the EYFS statutory assessment requirements, including the use of exemplification material once this is produced by the DFE.
- c) To continue to work with both FS leaders and subject leaders in KS1 and KS2 to improve the subject knowledge required in the early years of education so that pupils move to KS1 with the prerequisite skills needed to make progress in the primary phase

Primary Phase

- a) To support schools to improve outcomes in mathematics and English at the end of KS1 and KS2 so they are at least in-line with pre-pandemic (2019) national standards.
- b) To support schools to implement strategies that help pupils on SEN Support make continued progress from their starting points.
- c) To further support schools to embed and refine the mastery approach to teaching mathematics and to the teaching of early reading.

Secondary Phase

- a) To reduce the proportion of NEET within the following groups: those with SEND; care experienced young people and those who are open to the youth offending service or previously known to that team.

- b) Post pandemic and with the reintroduction of public examinations at KS4 and post 16, to support schools to maximise outcomes for pupils, and particularly for those in vulnerable groups.
- c) To support schools to implement strategies that help pupils on SEN Support make continued progress from their starting points.

Inclusion

- a) To support a return to expected levels of attendance across the school system.
- b) To support an improvement in attendance for children in special schools in particular.
- c) To manage the growth in off rolling and maintain high levels of tracking.
- d) To further strengthen our work on mental health by developing another partnership so that all schools in Merton are supported.
- e) To build a new primary Melrose base and expand Melrose offer to more children.
- f) To maintain support for children with SEMH through Covid regulations.

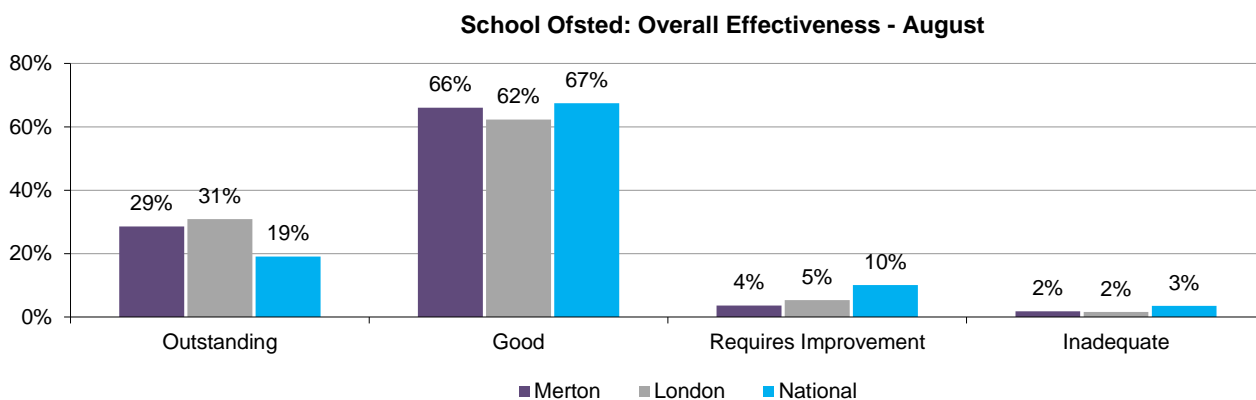
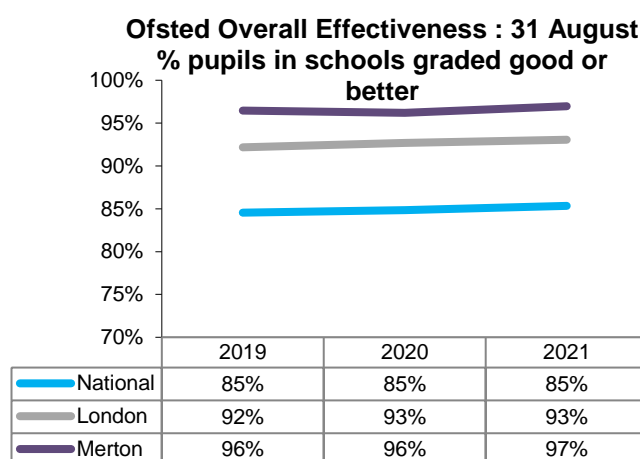
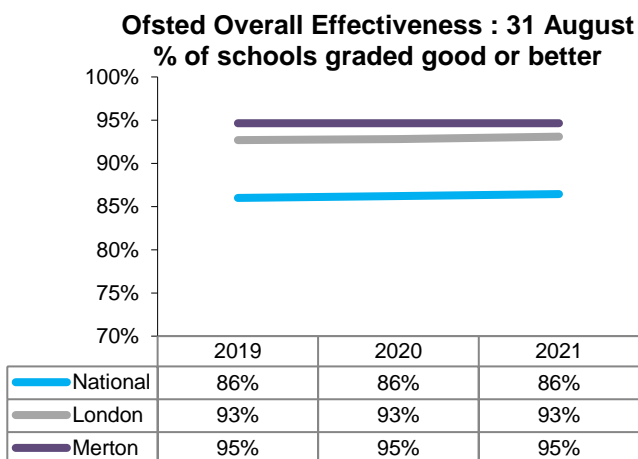
2. The Covid-19 Pandemic

- 2.1 2020/21 was a year when the Covid-19 Pandemic continued to affect all, and of course, schools were no different. The LA continued to support schools intensively throughout the year, to respond to, and ensure they were compliant with, Government guidance and legal requirements. This was a time of continued significant challenge for those working in schools, and amongst leaders in particular, as they strove to keep their children, staff and communities safe, whilst maintaining the best educational provision, be that face to face, remotely, or as a bended offer. Levels of outbreaks were high at various points in the year for different schools meaning that additional measures were needed to be implemented to minimise infections, in addition to those which all schools were required to implement.
- 2.2 The LA continued to meet weekly with secondary headteachers, and with primary headteacher cluster representatives, as well as regularly with special school headteachers. In these meetings the current Covid situation was outlined; the relevant guidance/requirements discussed; and school issues were raised and addressed. In addition, during term time, the LA sent a daily email to support understanding of the changing Covid restrictions and to ensure that communication channels with headteachers were streamlined.
- 2.3 Local Authority officers adapted the way they worked with schools, again in accordance with national Covid restrictions. Where these restrictions allowed, they visited schools to provide support and challenge as appropriate: in particular, those schools which were perceived to be vulnerable were more intensively supported. Support and Challenge groups were maintained throughout the year for those schools where there was a risk that they would be judged as less than good at their next inspection. The capacity of leaders to focus on general school improvement was much restricted during the year. Support to ensure that this focus was resumed at more 'normal' levels is a key priority for 2021/22.
- 2.4 The support from LA officers was focused in particular on:
- The wellbeing and safety of pupils, teachers and leaders.
 - The quality of remote education, including live lessons.
 - Access to remote education through devices/WiFi
 - The use of national funding (including the catch up and recovery premiums)
 - The revised assessment processes for GCSEs, BTecs and A levels
- 2.5 The wellbeing of pupils and staff was a priority for leaders throughout the year. This was the case throughout lockdowns but in particular, for example, following the lockdown of January – March 2021, when schools focused on this through a curriculum refocused to have greater emphasis on Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons. Officers ensured that schools were provided with resources to share with staff, and were mindful of their wellbeing and safety throughout all interactions. Schools undertook a variety of actions to support their staff both virtually (eg virtual social events) and in person (where this was possible).
- 2.6 The wellbeing of leaders was also a focus for Governing Boards and for the LA. Governors were provided with briefings to ensure they understood the pressures on schools, and with resources to enable them to provide appropriate support. Towards the end of the year the Merton Schools' Partnership, 'Attain' established a headteacher wellbeing course which is now running; Attain also funded a programme to train headteachers to become coaches in order to provide their peers with support.

- 2.7 The quality of remote education provided by schools during the lockdown in the early part of 2021 was much improved in comparison with the previous year, as teachers and leaders became more confident with the technology and pedagogies required. The Government provided schools with an audit to use to monitor the quality of provision, and Merton officers used those audits to work with schools to identify any gaps in this quality. In particular, more schools became more confident to deliver live lessons to classes, and to provide more effective and interactive feedback for pupils when working remotely.
- 2.8 Merton officers provided professional development for teachers and leaders to improve the quality of provision. In addition we brokered borough wide support for schools from the national 'EDTech Demonstrators' programme. This was established nationally as a programme of support for single schools provided by those which were identified by the Government as more advanced in their knowledge and skills: through our brokering, the LA ensured that this was systematised to include all Merton schools that wished to take part.
- 2.9 Although the quality of remote education improved, it did not entirely replace the breadth and depth of face to face provision. This picture was found across the country, as evidenced in various thematic reports produced, including by Ofsted and the Education Endowment Foundation. Using some resources produced nationally, and some made locally and for the circumstances of individual schools, officers supported teachers to develop an understanding of key learning that was missed during the times of heavier restrictions, and a plan to focus on those key aspects of learning following a return to face to face education.
- 2.10 Access to remote learning online was a priority locally as it was nationally. Schools benefited from the national scheme providing devices and access to WiFi for their most disadvantaged pupils. Schools were also supported locally through the Dons' Local Action Group, 'Keep Kids Connected' and by other local organisations and supported.
- 2.11 Schools focused on the support for children with SEND throughout the Covid restrictions during 2020/21. They reported that the majority of pupils with an EHCP attended school during the lockdown period, and in most cases pupils enjoyed the smaller group context for learning. Staff reported that during this time they were able to get to know their pupils with high needs SEN well. Schools were also able to identify pupils that they felt may be vulnerable and invite these pupils in to school. In most cases this included pupils at SEN Support who may have been struggling with the online remote offer. Schools report these pupils also benefited from the smaller group context for learning.
- 2.12 Once all pupils returned to school, schools undertook a range of assessments to establish where pupils had gaps in their learning. Some pupils were very anxious about returning to school and found being with larger groups of pupils difficult.
- 2.13 Intervention and support to address gaps was approached in a number of ways. This included consolidation and revisiting learning from the lockdown period alongside targeted provision such as one to one tuition. The National Tuition Programme provided tutors , and some Merton schools used this route.

- 2.14 As part of the recovery process, post lockdown schools have focused on addressing Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH.) This area of SEN has grown in prevalence over the period of the pandemic for obvious reasons. Schools have drawn on existing resources to support these needs as well as using additional 'catch up' funding to provide specific programmes and support. Many schools report that addressing SEMH needs has been one of the more significant challenges during this recovery period.
- 2.15 For the youngest pupils a long period out of school has meant that identifying additional needs early on has been difficult.
- 2.16 Internal school assessments show that there has been a disproportionate impact of the pandemic on disadvantaged pupils which mirrors the findings of national research. Schools have been supported to address this through:-
- providing guidance and training about pupil premium and catch-up funding for school leaders and governors to share templates and examples of good practice;
 - providing guidance and training about strategies to support pupils with English as an additional language with an emphasis on improving English proficiency as well as general learning loss;
 - the equalities adviser working with individual schools to ensure their pupil premium strategy is based on a secure understanding of need, targeted appropriately and the impact is evaluated;
 - MEPs focusing how schools specifically addressed the needs of disadvantaged pupils, for example, access to devices so they could access remote education, encouraging attendance.
- 2.17 Ofsted will be monitoring how schools use the various different forms of catch up/recovery funding to support pupils academically (including the National Tutoring Programme, mentors in schools, and the school led tuition grant). Merton officers too are talking to schools about how this is being used to maximised impact, and to ensure that it is reported appropriately and in line with government requirements. Many schools are reporting that there has indeed been good impact, but in all cases the monitoring of pupil progress and attainment remains a priority for schools (as is always best practice) to enable any gaps in provision to be identified.
- 2.18 GCSE/BTec/A level outcomes in secondary schools were reported as Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) as, once again, there were no public examinations. Merton schools responded to this challenge with robust moderation to ensure that the grades awarded were fair to all students, reflecting their achievements in a time of pandemic.

3. Ofsted Outcomes and School Improvement



- 3.1 Nationally (as well as in Merton) Ofsted undertook minimal activity during 2020/21. Two of our special schools were visited in the autumn term, as part of Ofsted’s programme of assurance that pupils were being supported well mid pandemic, but these visits were not conducted under an inspection framework, and did not result in a judgement. They went well. One school (West Wimbledon) received a Section 8 monitoring visit in the summer term, having been identified to require improvement to be good in 2017. This monitoring visit resulted in the inspector identifying that ‘leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school’. It is expected that the school will receive a full inspection during 2021/22.
- 3.2 The proportion of schools judged to be good or better in Merton was maintained at 95% over the course of the academic year. This proportion continues to be above the London and national averages. The proportion of pupils attending good or outstanding schools rose slightly to 96% - this change has come about because the school population size has changed.
- 3.3 All of the Council’s secondary and special schools continue to be judged to be good or better, with the proportion of secondary schools judged as outstanding remaining at 63% (well above national and local averages). Two out of the three special schools are judged as outstanding; 38% of special schools nationally are judged outstanding. Three of the Borough’s 44 primary schools were not yet judged to be good or better as of August 2021. This means that 93% of primary schools were judged to be good or better at that point, which is above the national average of 88% for this educational phase. All of the LA

maintained schools not yet judged to be good are receiving intensive support and challenge from Merton officers.

2020/21 School Improvement priorities, impact, and key actions taken

3.4

Priority:

To continue to ensure all schools are judged to be at least good when inspected by Ofsted, through the effective use of the Merton School Improvement Strategy, including Support and Challenge groups, and the effective deployment of resources including MEP and adviser time, support from local strong schools and leaders, and the use of funding from the Schools Causing Concern budget.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Throughout the year, and lockdowns/restrictions notwithstanding, schools identified as being at risk of being judged less than good the next time they are inspected had a 'Support and Challenge group' in place. The group met to try to ensure that schools were able to maintain a focus on school improvement, as well as responding to the Covid emergency. Merton Education Partners and advisers worked with schools face to face where restrictions allowed, and, where this was not possible maintained contact remotely, including the delivery of professional development, and meeting with leaders.

However, as already noted the capacity of school leaders to maintain a focus on school improvement activity across the year was curtailed because of the Covid emergency, and therefore an intensive focus on this is now needed in 2021/22.

Impact:

West Wimbledon was the only school to be inspected during the year (and this was a 'short' inspection), having previously been judged to require improvement in 2017, and inspectors noted that leaders were taking effective action in order to ensure the school is good the next time it is fully inspected.

3.5

Priority:

As the inspection framework is expected to change again, support all schools, but particularly those with longstanding outstanding judgements, to prepare for inspection.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Schools with a current judgement of outstanding received a higher level of support from Merton Education Partners during the year to prepare them for the resumption of routine inspection. However, action in relation to this priority by both schools and the school improvement team was restricted in 2020/21 because of the Covid emergency, and is therefore a focus for 2021/22.

Impact:

It is Ofsted's stated intention that, as a result of changes in the inspection framework and the resumption of routine inspection for outstanding schools, there will be fewer schools judged to be outstanding in the future. Merton's ambition for as many of its schools to remain outstanding as possible remains; however, it is to be expected that the number will fall over the next years because of the changes in the framework.

3.6

Priority:

To ensure ATTAIN continues to provide strong local collaborative leadership, addressing local priorities effectively.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Despite the Covid pandemic, the schools' partnership Attain maintained its strategic focus on the development of the schools' system in Merton. Project activity focused on:

- The development of subject leadership in geography and history through workshops led by Roehampton University, including a focus on the accessibility of the curriculum for pupils with SEND.
- The improvement of reading fluency in primary schools through the 'Herts for Learning Fluency project'
- The training of experienced headteachers to become peer coaches for other Merton headteachers
- Training for our NQT+1 teachers (teachers in their second year of teaching) through Teach Wimbledon and the Merton Special Teaching Alliance.
- Work with School Business Managers to enable them to share best practice more effectively, including with regards to efficiency savings.

Impact:

- Subject leaders in history and geography, particularly in the primary phase, reported feeling more confident in their roles.
- Over the 8 week course of the Reading Fluency project, the average improvement in reading accuracy was 1 year 4 months.
- 14 headteachers were trained as peer coaches.
- As a result of the NQT+1 training, teachers (and their school mentors) reported increased confidence and the development of their ability to reflect on the improvements in their teaching practice.

3.7

Priority:

To work closely, both strategically and operationally, with the local Teaching School Hubs to maximise their impact across the school system.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Strong relationships were maintained by the Local Authority with the local Merton Special Teaching Alliance, and the local Teaching School Hub run by Chesterton Primary School in Wandsworth.

Impact:

- Local needs addressed through joint working, eg the NQT+1 programme, the delivery of professional development focusing on the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Close LA involvement with the development of the new Teaching School Hub model (which launched in September 2021).

3.8

Priority:

To work closely with schools to develop understanding of what works to support pupils in receipt of SEND support, and to avoid the need for them to have an EHCP.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Merton teams including the Educational Psychology Service, the Virtual Behaviour Support team, Speech and Language therapists and the Language and Learning teams supported schools individually and through central training to develop their skills to support pupils with SEND. In addition, the Merton Special Teaching Alliance maintained a programme of support for teachers, leaders and support staff to enable them to better support children with a range of needs.

Impact:

Support for schools was maintained in spite of the pandemic. However, there now needs to be a renewed focus on this priority, particularly in light of the Safety Valve actions with schools.

Priority:

To embed the new 'Black Lives Matter and Equalities Forum' and the new 'Equalities Leads Network Meetings' so that the Merton school system responds effectively to recent events, embeds and maintains changes to attitudes and practice, and improves outcomes for pupils from black and other minority ethnic groups.

Action taken to secure improvement:

The Black Livers Matter and Equalities Forum and the Equalities Leads Network met across the year, and, in conjunction with Attain, oversaw the following activities:

- The holding of a 'Race Equality in Education' conference to inspire and shape our practice locally.
- The development of the curriculum to reflect our diverse population through support from 'The Black Curriculum' who delivered professional development for teachers and leaders.
- The creation of the 'Race Identity and School leadership programme' which is designed to impact leadership policy and practice through race equality workshops, reflective enquiry sessions and 1:1 coaching.

Impact:

Leaders and teachers report a maintaining of the momentum to address race equality issues in particular. The conference was very well received, and is being followed up by a students' event in 2021/22.

4. Achievement of Merton Pupils

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: performance information and analysis

There were no assessments undertaken at the end of the EYFS in 2021.

2020/21 Early Years priorities, impact, and key actions taken

4.1.1

Priority:

To support schools that have adopted the new EYFS reforms early, and to prepare all schools for full implementation from September 2021.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Adviser support included:

- 1:1 teacher support for planning and delivery
- Early adopter cluster meetings held every half-termly
- Information sessions to improve understanding of the new reform expectations which included the teaching and learning requirements, assessments (including the new reception baseline) and safeguarding and welfare requirements
- Headteacher information session to improve understanding of the new reform teaching and learning requirements and assessments (including the new reception baseline)
- School governors' session on the new reform
- Support for end of year reception assessments in the absence of exemplification materials from the DfE (Early Adopter Schools)

Impact:

The positive impact of this work has been seen in the growing confidence of and knowledge of Foundation Stage Leaders. The depth of their knowledge has improved, and this is evidenced in the way they now talk about the requirements of the reform and the changes they have made within their provision. There is more emphasis on language development feeding into all other areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Reception baseline assessments were completed successfully.

Foundation stage Leaders and Headteachers report that curriculum leads have spent time in early years and staff training on the Early Years Foundation stage has been undertaken.

In school visits there is evidence of an emphasis on a language rich environment and promoting the love of reading in all areas of the provision. There is more emphasis on the depth of number knowledge required in the early years provision, and the need for a consistent approach when teaching number.

4.1.2

Priority:

To support schools to implement strategies to help pupils with early literacy, including promotion of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI).

Action taken to secure improvement:

- Training on language development including pre-phonics

- Promotion of the NELI programme through Foundation Stage leaders meetings and English subject leaders' network meeting. 20 schools signed up for training in 2020/2021.
- A NELI network meeting was facilitated by the English and EYFS advisers in May 2021, where they aimed to develop a shared understanding of how different schools are managing the provision of NELI sessions. This led to a local support network of 17 practitioners.
- Support and emphasis on communication friendly spaces during school visits and within courses.
- Early Reading resources and training provided by Teaching and Learning Adviser for Early Years and Teaching and Learning Adviser for Literacy.

Impact:

Teachers and practitioners report that they feel well supported and have found NELI to be working well for children. The impact will hopefully be seen in next year's EYFSP outcomes.

4.1.3

Priority:

To improve the understanding of subject leaders of what good looks like in their subject in the EYFS, to secure effective transition between the EYFS and Year 1, and to help them to prepare for Ofsted inspection.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- Teaching and Learning Adviser for Early Years attended English Subject Leader meetings, and Assessment and Curriculum leader meetings to talk about the EYFS reform and statutory reception baseline.
- As part of the Subject Knowledge Teaching for Mastery Workgroup there was a specific focus on early number sense and how this contributes to later success in mathematics and connections to later curriculum content. Participants included KS1 and EYFS teachers and subject leaders.

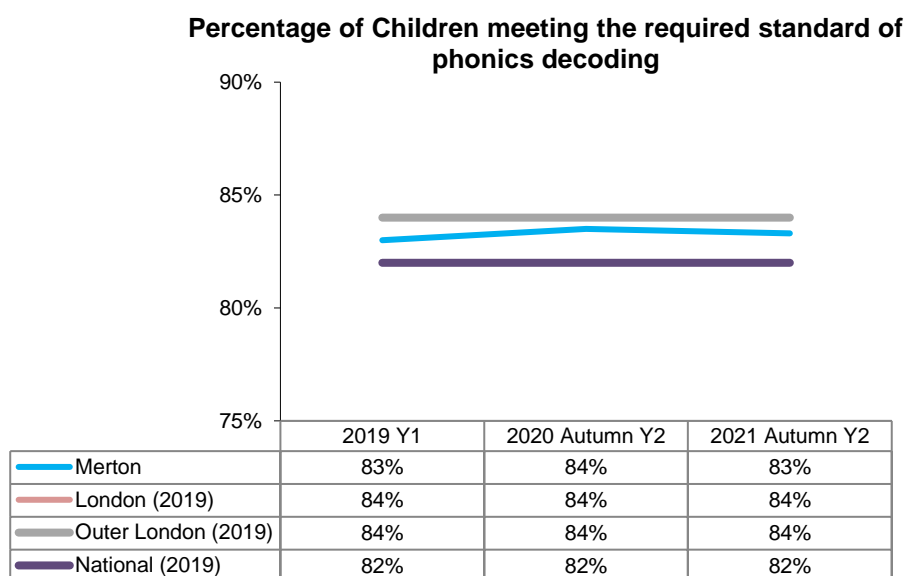
Impact:

Subject leaders are becoming more secure in their understanding of how the EYFS underpins understanding of the curriculum in KS1 and KS2, but this needs to be a continued focus for 2021/22.

Year 1/2 Phonics Screening Check: performance information and analysis

- 4.2.1 The Phonics Screening Check is a reading test based on pupils' ability to recognise words and sounds using phonic decoding strategies. Pupils' performance is reported on the basis of whether they have achieved the expected standard or not. There are no grades. All pupils in Year 1 are expected to be checked unless they have no phoneme/grapheme correspondence (i.e. they are unable to link letters on the page to the sound they make). The small numbers of pupils that do not achieve the expected standard in Year 1 are rechecked at the end of Year 2.
- 4.2.2 During the academic year 2020/21 the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check was delayed until the autumn term of 2021 (when the pupils were in Year 2) because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Although occurring in the next academic year, these results are reported here as they are relevant to the academic year 2020/21. These are the only academic outcomes in the primary phase which will be reported for this year.

Phonics - headline performance information and analysis



Provisional data for Merton available only.

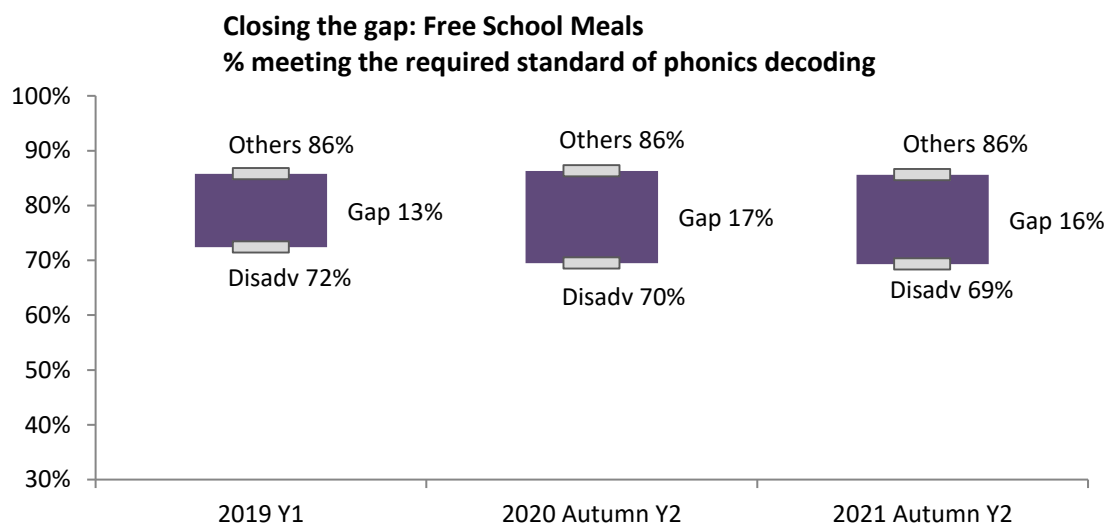
- 4.2.3 83% of pupils reached the expected standard for phonics decoding in Merton, a decrease of one percentage point in comparison for the Year 2 cohort the previous year. This is above the national average, and in line with the local averages, for 2019.

Year 1/2 Autumn Phonics main pupil groups and analysis

Contextual Groups	Number of Pupils	% meeting the required standard of phonics decoding		
		Merton	London (2019)	National (2019)
All Pupils	2256	83%	84%	82%
Gender				
Female	1045	86%	87%	85%
Male	1211	81%	81%	78%
Gap		5%	6%	7%
Disadvantaged				
Disadvantaged pupils	313	69%	76%	71%
Non disadvantaged	1943	86%	86%	84%
Gap		16%	10%	13%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)				
No Special Educational Needs	1920	89%	90%	88%
SEN Support	259	60%	58%	48%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	77	30%	27%	20%
Ethnic Group				
White British	676	83%		82%
White Other	396	85%		81%
Asian Other	247	85%		85%
Black African	127	84%		85%
Mixed Other	109	89%		84%
Asian Pakistani	106	87%		82%
Asian Indian	86	93%		90%
White and Black Caribbean	54	72%		79%

* London Disadvantaged is FSM

Provisional data for Merton available only.



- 4.2.4 The achievement gap between pupils eligible for the pupil premium has decreased by one percentage point to 16 percentage points. This gap is wider than that seen nationally and in London. It may be indicative of the impact of lockdown on disadvantaged pupils, and their access to remote learning (whether because of lack of devices, or because support for learning at home was more challenging for families). Whilst some of these pupils would have been permitted to attend school, as part of the government defined disadvantaged cohort (which also allowed schools to identify pupils who would benefit from attending school face to face), this will not have been the case for many.
- 4.2.5 The performance of girls dropped slightly by one percentage point, whilst that of boys remained steady, meaning that the achievement gap between them has diminished slightly, and it remains in line with the gaps seen locally and nationally.
- 4.2.6 The performance of pupils in receipt of SEND support rose this year, but dropped slightly for pupils with EHCPs. Both groups outperform the same groups locally and nationally.
- 4.2.7 The performance of the largest and priority ethnic groups represented in this year group in Merton exceeded or was in line with the averages for the same groups nationally, with the exception of White and Black Caribbean pupils. The gap for this group (in comparison with the performance of all pupils in Merton) has narrowed from 14 to 11 percentage points, but remains a focus for improvement.

End of KS1 and KS2: performance information and analysis

There were no tests or assessments carried out for Year 2 or year 6 pupils in 2021.

2020/21 Primary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken

4.3.1

Priority:
To work closely with the local English, maths and Early Years hubs to maximise impact and raise standards across the school system.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- We now have three early literacy specialists in the authority (Bishop Gilpin, St Matthew’s and Haslemere), who support schools in developing their practice in early reading. They are trained and deployed by the Wandle English Hub.
- The Merton Teaching and Learning Adviser for mathematics contributed to the work of the London South-West Maths Hub in promoting and training subject leaders in new materials, such as the DfE Teaching Mathematics in Primary Schools Guidance (RTPs) and curriculum prioritisation
- Continued to lead the Specialist Knowledge for the Teaching of Mathematics Programme (London South-West Maths Hub). 9 Merton schools (alongside schools from neighbouring LAs) attended a series of sessions on enhancing subject knowledge

Impact:
The work with the Maths and English Hubs continues to reach more widely year-on-year and has had an impact on:

- teachers’ subject knowledge across the primary age range;
- the pedagogy required to teach the content of the curriculum effectively;
- the teaching of early reading and phonics.

Those schools who have used the DfE Teaching for Mathematics Guidance and have planned to prioritise elements of the mathematics curriculum report that this has supported pupils in addressing their ‘learning loss’ after the pandemic. However, there will be no quantitative data to support this until the end of the academic year 2021-22 when statutory assessments resume.

4.3.2

Priority:
To continue to support the development of curriculum leads in the context of Ofsted’s wider focus on the broad curriculum.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- Work in schools has focused on supporting them to diversify their curricula to ensure that all pupils are represented. 20 schools have had their curriculum audited by ‘The Black Curriculum’
- This focus on diversity has been supported by a regular slot at Curriculum leaders’ and English subject leaders’ meetings, focussing on text choices, as well as wider representation in the wider curriculum, particularly in history and geography.
- Collaboration with the University of Roehampton resulted in delivery of a series of workshops to support subject leaders in history (24 participants) and geography (21 participants)

Impact:
Improved subject leadership of some foundation subjects, and greater diversity in primary school curricula.

4.3.3

Priority:

In response to the impact of the pandemic and lockdown, to develop support for schools to improve pupils' oral skills, to then impact on writing outcomes, including stamina to write at greater length.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- Advice has been given to schools, whether through school support or in work with subject leaders, to maximise opportunities for oral work with pupils across the curriculum, planning activities for pupils to explore their work orally in different situations and hear language used in different ways.
- Oracy has been a focus at English subject leaders' network meetings, with exploration of the findings of the APPG 'Speak for Change' and 'take away' staff training shared at the network meeting for them to deliver back in school. The take away staff meeting was a collaboration with colleagues from Wimbledon Chase, who have been developing their work on oracy for many years.

Impact:

Primary schools have focused more on oracy through their catch up support for pupils, as well as through the wider curriculum.

4.3.4

Priority:

To further develop the consistency of the teaching of reading, and in particular to read for fluency.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Merton's Early Reading package was written and published in early 2021, providing support and guidance for subject leaders and practitioners in developing a consistent approach to the teaching of early reading skills. This has been promoted in subject leaders' meetings as well as through school support sessions.

Impact:

Schools report that the Merton Early Reading package is supporting them in developing their practice and establishing a consistent approach to early reading. It is also used by MEPs when carrying out deep dives into Early Reading in schools.

Please also see reference to the Attain programme focusing on Reading Fluency in Year 5 (*page 15*).

4.3.5

Priority:

To further support schools to embed the mastery approach to teaching mathematics.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- **Adviser support for schools** reinforced the mastery approach to teaching mathematics through:
 - 1:1 teacher support for planning and delivery of content
 - Bespoke PD for staff teams to further develop their approach to teaching mathematics, particularly in implementing the DfE Teaching for Mathematics Guidance (RTPS) and Curriculum Prioritisation
 - Leadership planning to improve mathematics teaching and learning school-wide and to develop a consistently applied approach

- **Support for mathematics subject leaders** in further developing the mastery approach in their schools: There has been specific focus on the following areas:
 - Teaching mathematics remotely using the mastery approach– remote learning policy and what this means for their subject
 - Effective diagnostic assessment, e.g. using hinge questions
 - Aspects of subject knowledge: Multiplicative Reasoning
 - Rosenshines principles of instruction
 - Lesson design for coherence - continuing
 - Addressing the needs of those working below ARE and have a SEND - continuing
 - OFSTED Mathematics research review and auditing their subject
- Teachers from 9 Merton schools attended the **Specialist Knowledge for the Teaching of Mathematics Programme** (London South-West Maths Hub) to improve both subject knowledge and pedagogy
- 89% of Merton schools were engaged in a Teaching for Mastery Workgroup with a mastery specialist

Impact:

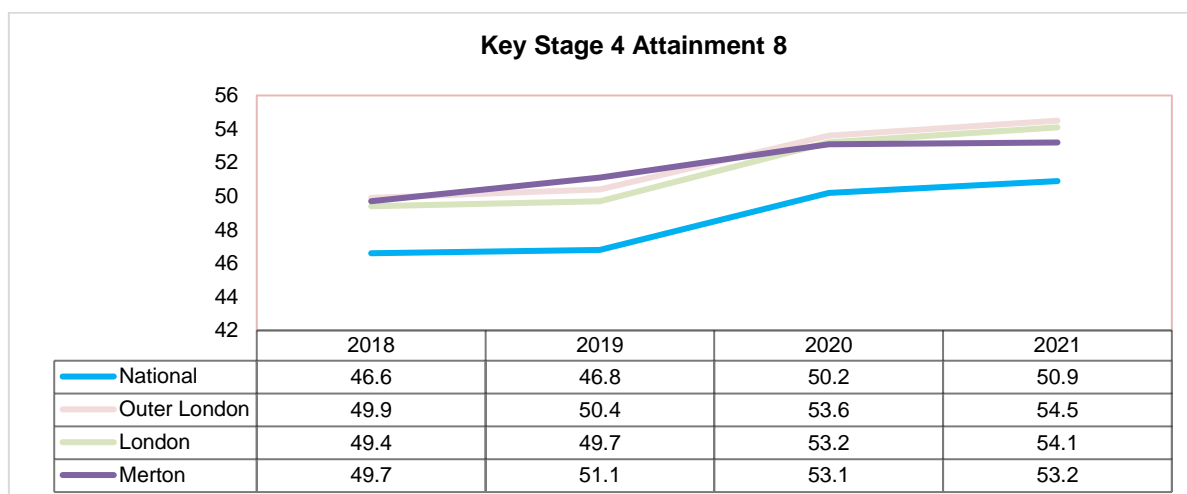
The positive impact of this work has been seen in the continuing development of expertise amongst both teachers and leaders of the subject. Many schools are now beginning to refine the provision for pupils by reviewing the curriculum framework they are using and the resources and experiences they design. During the pandemic, schools were required to translate the mastery approaches they used face-to-face to remote delivery. Many schools were very successful in making this swift change, while holding on to teaching strategies that they know make an impact.

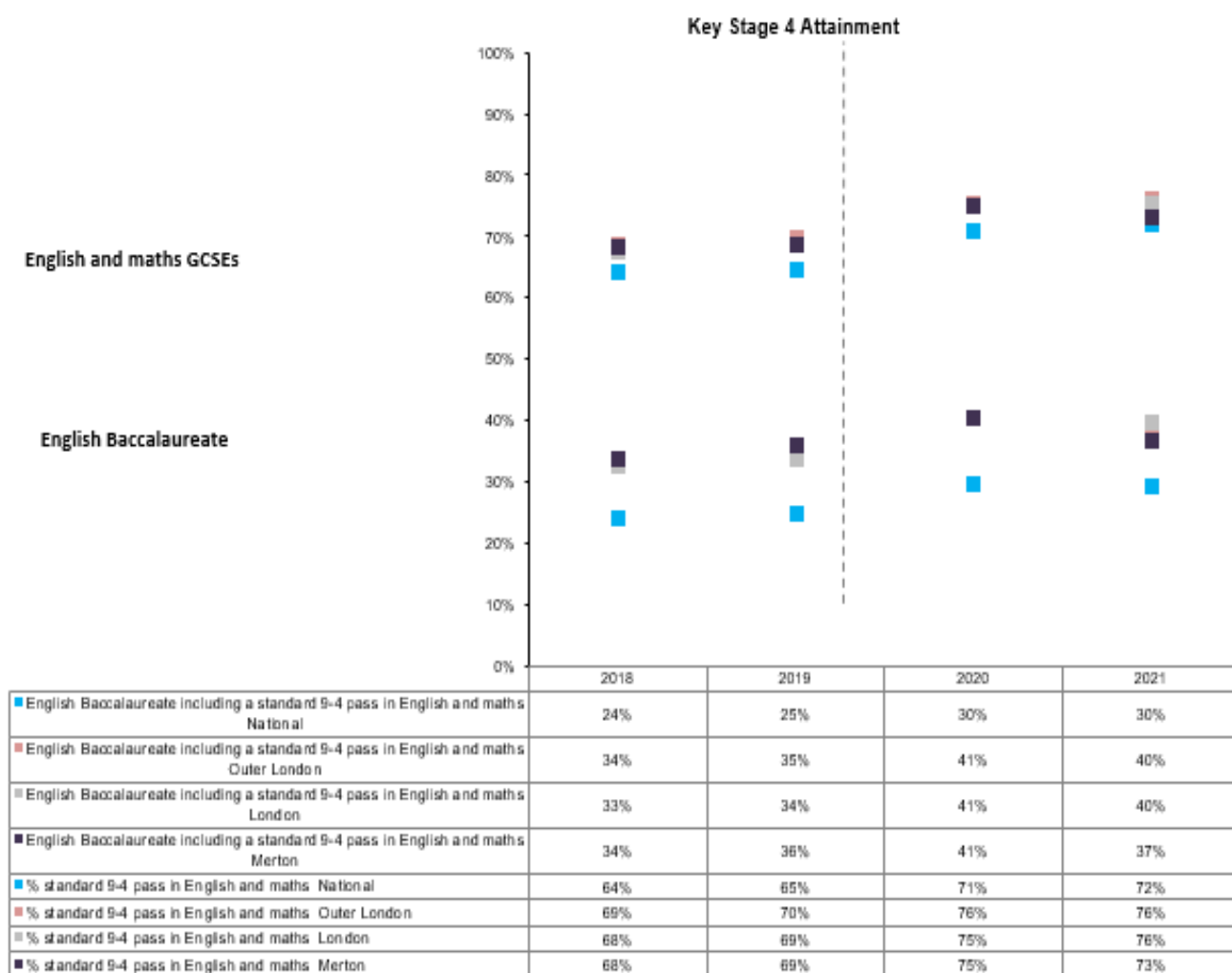
Many schools have also been successful in designing programmes of study that prioritise learning in their 'recovery' from the pandemic. Some schools have been very reflective in their approach to planning for this recovery, using assessment to determine priority areas for different cohorts of pupils.

Key Stage 4: performance information and analysis

- 4.4.1 The changes to the way GCSE grades have been awarded over the last two years with centre assessment grade (CAGs) in 2019/20 and teacher-assessed grades (TAGs) in 2020/21 replacing exams mean 2020/21 pupil attainment data should not be directly compared to pupil attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring year on year changes in pupil performance.
- 4.4.2 Merton secondary schools undertook rigorous moderation of the TAGs to ensure that pupils received grades that were fair and representative of their achievements in the time of Covid.
- 4.4.3 Attainment for Key Stage 4 (KS4) was published nationally, but Progress 8 (P8) has not been published using 2020/21 data because of the cancellation of GCSE exams. Calculating P8 has an element of modelling (estimating the average A8 for pupils in similar prior attainment groups using exam data), and with the lack of this data, measuring progress using P8 is not meaningful. There are no performance tables published, and therefore the performance of individual schools is not published either.

KS4 - headline performance information and analysis





4.4.4 Performance in Merton secondary schools at KS4 remains strong.

4.4.5 In the Attainment 8 indicator, Merton’s average (53.2) is above the national, but slightly below the London average.

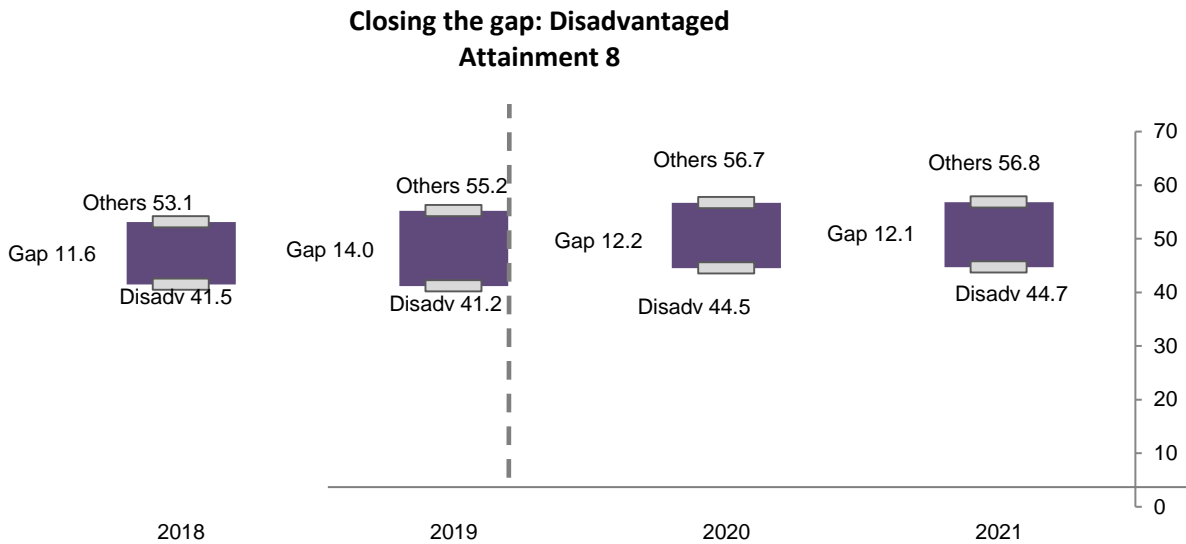
4.4.6 The proportions of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in the EBacc subjects, including English and maths, and those students achieving a standard 9-4 pass in English and mathematics, are also above national and below the local averages.

KS4 - main pupil groups and analysis

Key Stage 4 achievements by contextual groups:

Contextual Groups	Number of Pupils	Progress 8 score (2019)			Attainment 8 score			% achieving the English Baccalaureate (including a standard 9-4 pass in English and maths)			% achieving a standard 9-4 pass in English and maths GCSEs		
		Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
All Pupils	1555	0.55	0.22	-0.03	53.2	54.1	50.9	37%	40%	30%	73%	76%	72%
Gender													
Female	771	0.72	0.48	0.22	55.4	57.0	53.9	43%	46%	35%	76%	79%	75%
Male	784	0.38	-0.04	-0.27	51.0	51.3	48.1	32%	34%	24%	71%	73%	69%
Gap		0.34	0.52	0.49	4.4	5.7	5.8	11%	12%	11%	6%	6%	6%
Disadvantaged													
Disadvantaged	468	0.19	-0.07	-0.45	44.7	46.7	40.3	24%	29%	16%	59%	64%	53%
All other pupils	1087	0.71	0.39	0.13	56.8	57.8	54.7	43%	46%	34%	79%	81%	79%
Gap		0.52	0.46	0.58	12.1	11.1	14.4	19%	17%	18%	20%	17%	26%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)													
No Special Educational Needs	1235	0.70	0.34	0.08	57.2	57.8	54.5	43%	45%	34%	81%	82%	79%
SEN Support	244	0.06	-0.25	-0.43	43.3	40.3	36.7	16%	16%	9%	51%	49%	42%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	76	-0.51	-0.99	-1.17	20.2	18.4	15.7	3%	4%	2%	21%	19%	16%
Ethnic Group													
ASIAN	281	0.96	0.70	0.47	57.5	59.2	55.8	41%	48%	39%	84%	83%	78%
BLACK	302	0.26	0.18	0.13	49.3	50.5	50.0	25%	34%	31%	65%	72%	71%
CHINESE	4	1.14	0.85	0.86	72.8	70.8	69.2	75%	68%	59%	100%	94%	93%
MIXED	161	0.45	0.15	0.00	47.1	53.1	51.3	25%	38%	31%	64%	73%	72%
WHITE	728	0.53	0.04	-0.11	54.5	53.5	50.2	43%	39%	28%	75%	75%	72%

London Progress 8 scores by ethnicity are for Outer London only



4.4.7 The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed very slightly. In general this means that the gaps are narrower than those seen nationally but wider than those in London. This broadly speaking mirrors the comparisons with national and local averages last year. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils must remain a priority, particularly post pandemic and in the context of the concerns about their relative difficulties in accessing remote learning.

- 4.4.8 Girls continue to outperform boys in all indicators although the gaps are narrower or similar to those seen nationally and in London.
- 4.4.9 Pupils in receipt of SEND support have again improved their performance in all three attainment indicators and remain above national and local averages (except in the EBacc indicator, where their performance is in line with the London average). The performance of pupils with EHCPs rose slightly, but also remains above national and local averages (except in the EBacc indicator).
- 4.4.10 The performance of pupils from black and minority ethnic groups was again mixed this year, and must remain a priority for 2021/22.

16 -18: performance information and analysis

4.5.1 Performance measures in the 16-18 phase is split by the type of qualifications students are studying for into:

- Level 3 – including A level, NVQ level 3, GNVQ advanced and key skills level 3.
- A level – only A level outcomes.
- Academic - A levels and a range of other academic qualifications taken at level 3, including AS levels, the International Baccalaureate, Applied A levels, Pre-U, Free-standing mathematics qualifications and the extended project.
- Tech level - defined by the DfE as ‘rigorous level 3 qualifications for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry or occupation and that develop specialist knowledge and skills to enable entry to employment or progression to a related higher education course.’
- Applied general - defined by the DfE as ‘rigorous level 3 qualifications for post-16 students who wish to continue their education through applied learning and that equip students with transferable knowledge and skills.’

4.5.2 Attainment at Key Stage 5 (KS5) was calculated using Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs). These are based on schools’ own assessments and so comparison with previous years’ performance is not valid.

4.5.3 Attainment for KS5 was published nationally, but Value Added measures were not. There are no performance tables published, and therefore the performance of individual schools is not published either.

Post 16 - headline performance information

A level students	APS per entry, best 3	Percentage of students achieving 3 A*- A grades or better at A level	Percentage of students achieving grades AAB or better at A level	Percentage of students achieving grades AAB or better at A level, of which at least two are in facilitating subjects
Merton	44.52	33.5	49.1	36.2
London	41.23	27.2	39.7	28.5
National	40.17	25.0	37.3	25.4

State funded school students	Number of students	Average Point Score per entry			Average Point Score per entry as a grade		
		Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
A level students	551	42.94	41.06	40.40	B+	B	B
Academic students	551	42.96	41.09	40.44	B+	B	B
Tech level students	56	35.45	32.24	31.74	Dist	Dist-	Dist-
Applied General students	256	35.19	32.33	32.76	Dist	Dist-	Dist-

4.5.4 The performance of Merton students is above national and London averages in all indicators noted above.

Post 16 main pupil groups

Contextual Groups	Number of A level students	Average Point Score per A level entry		
		Merton	London	National
All Pupils	551	42.94	41.06	40.40
Gender				
Female	276	45.40	41.78	42.52
Male	275	40.50	40.15	40.48
Gap		4.90	1.63	2.05
Disadvantaged				
Disadvantaged	108	39.73	37.75	36.51
Non-Disadvantaged	437	43.59	42.15	41.03
Gap		-3.85	-4.40	-4.52

Note: National split by gender is for all students, not just state-funded students

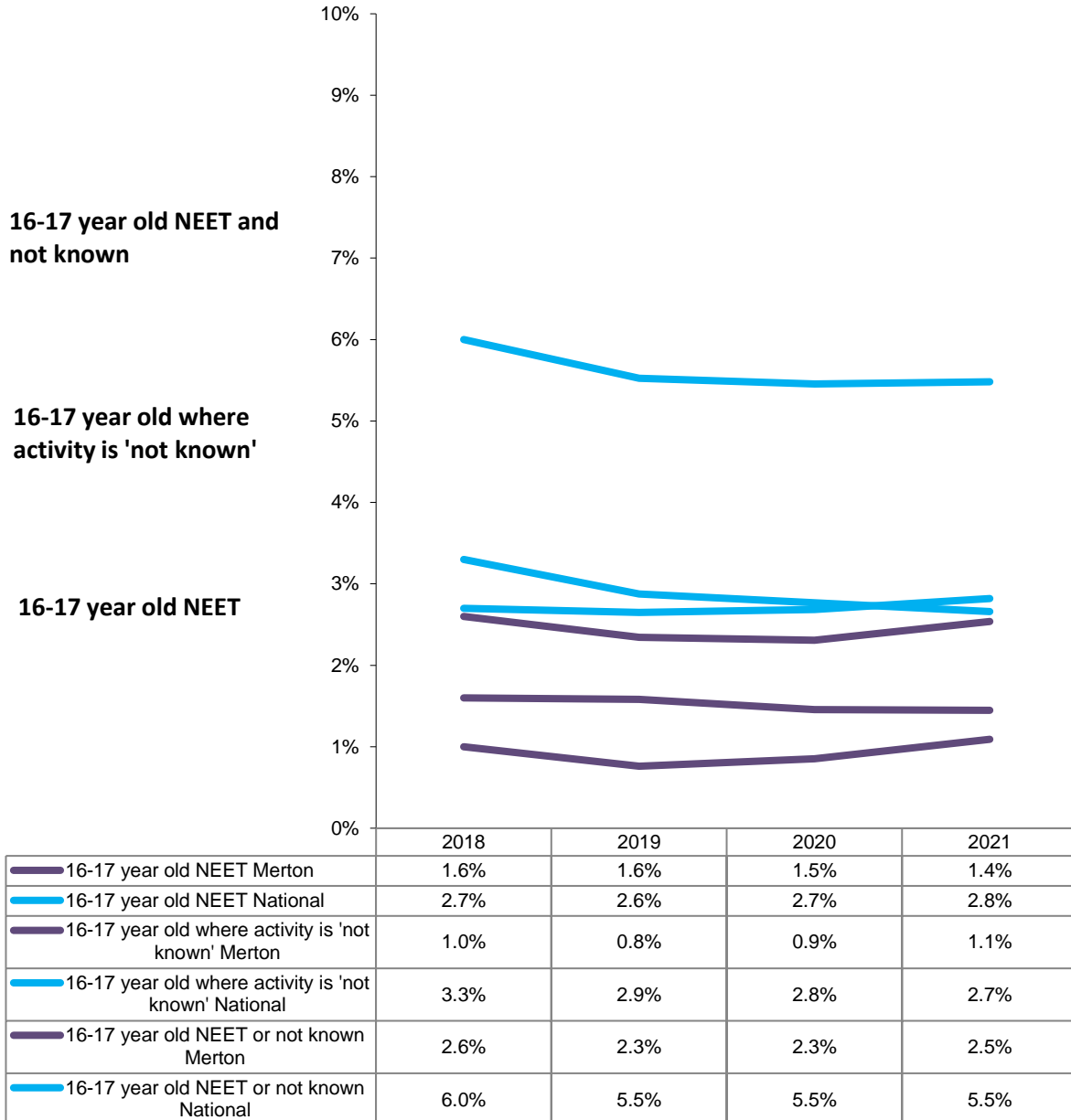
4.5.5 Girls continue to outperform boys, and the Merton gap for average point score per A level entry remains wider to those seen nationally and in London.

4.5.6 The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has widened in Merton, as it did in London and nationally.

Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)

4.6.1 The headline indicator for NEET is the combined figure for NEET and not known (therefore also including the young people whose current education, employment or training status is not known). The DfE only publish 16/17-year-old data to bring this in line with Raising Participation Age (RPA) duties. The LA continue to support young people post 17 through the My Futures team, our in-house employability scheme, and the Department for Work and Pensions. Young people with EHCPs or those that are care experienced are supported beyond 18.

16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)

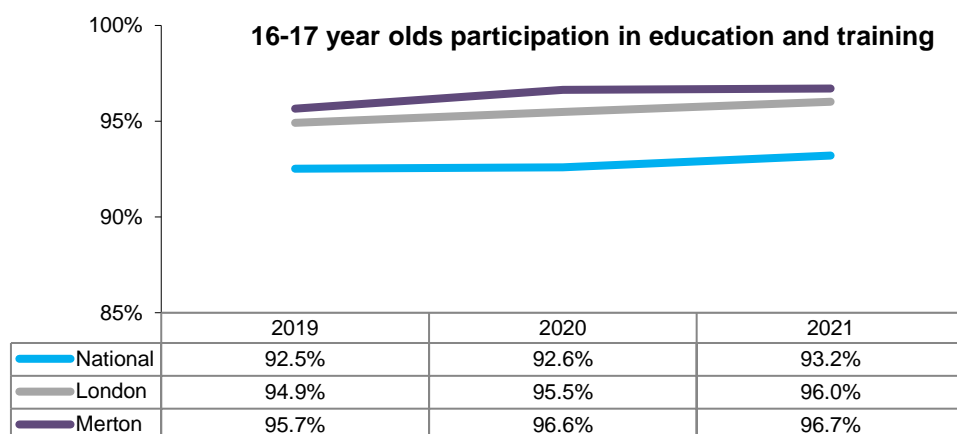


4.6.2 The proportions of young people who are NEET, or whose status is not known, have risen but are significantly better than national averages and London Averages. Performance in NEET and not known continues to place Merton in the top quintile of performance nationally. Merton NEET and not known combined score is the 6th lowest of all authorities nationally (an improvement from 8th in 2020 and 12th in 2019 – a 3 year improving picture). The not known figure has risen very slightly over three years, but NEET has fallen. This is achieved through significant tracking and partnership working across schools,

colleges and CSF teams. The rising not known figure includes young people who have moved away from Merton but for whom we have no definitive next address, and so they remain in our figures.

- 4.6.3 Our key focus for further reducing NEET is to reduce the proportion of NEET within the following groups: those with SEND; care experienced young people and those who are open to the youth offending service or previously known to that team.

Raising the Participation Age (RPA)



- 4.6.4 The proportion of 16 – 17 year olds meeting the participation duty has improved by 0.1 percentage points, is higher than the London and national averages, and represents a five-year upward trend. Merton’s performance is in the first quintile (best performance) in comparison with other Local Authorities in England. Merton is ranked 12th out of all English Authorities (February 2021), compared with 11th (2020) and 17th (2019).

Contextual Groups	2019			2020			2021		
	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
16-17 year olds participating in education and training	95.7%	94.9%	92.5%	96.6%	95.5%	92.6%	96.7%	96.0%	93.2%
- full time education	92.7%	91.1%	84.8%	92.9%	91.9%	85.4%	93.8%	93.4%	87.4%
- apprenticeships	1.9%	2.5%	5.5%	2.4%	2.2%	5.1%	1.3%	1.4%	3.8%
- other education and training	1.1%	1.3%	2.2%	1.3%	1.4%	2.2%	1.6%	1.2%	2.0%

- 4.6.5 The proportions of young people in apprenticeships as fallen. This is a national and London issue as the pandemic has meant that most employers struggled to offer the workplace element of apprenticeships. We have seen a three year rise in young people attending “other training or education” such as training providers. The proportion in an apprenticeship is lower in areas where education and training are higher.

Apprenticeship Participation

Figure under date refers to number of 16 and 17 year olds academic age	Apprenticeship Participation								
	2021	Rank	2020	Rank	2019	Rank	2018	Rank	% change in year 2020 to 2021
National	3.8%		5.1%		5.5%		6.4%		-1.2%
Merton	1.3%	6	2.4%	6	1.9%	6	3.2%	5	-1.1%
Barnet	0.9%	8	1.4%	11	1.2%	11	1.3%	11	-0.6%
Ealing	0.8%	9	1.2%	10	1.3%	10	2.3%	10	-0.4%
Enfield	1.5%	5	2.3%	8	1.6%	8	2.7%	8	-0.8%
Hillingdon	2.4%	3	2.6%	3	3.9%	3	8.0%	1	-0.2%
Hounslow	0.7%	11	1.8%	9	1.3%	9	2.4%	9	-1.2%
Kingston upon Thames	1.7%	4	2.6%	4	2.6%	4	3.0%	7	-0.9%
Reading	2.5%	2	3.8%	2	4.0%	2	4.1%	4	-1.4%
Redbridge	0.9%	7	1.6%	5	2.3%	5	5.3%	3	-0.8%
Sutton	2.6%	1	4.2%	1	4.1%	1	5.4%	2	-1.6%
Wandsworth	0.7%	10	1.3%	7	1.8%	7	3.0%	6	-0.5%

4.6.6 When comparing the apprenticeship participation rates of Merton to those in the previous year, Merton has seen a fall in 16-17 year olds participating in apprenticeships in line with the national fall.

4.6.7 2020 performance ranks Merton 6th in comparison to statistical neighbours – this is in line with 2019 performance.

4.6.8 In absolute terms, apprenticeships for Merton are low due to high education participation for 16/17-year-olds. Apprenticeships may be taken up post 17, notably as the follow on from our in house employability scheme: however we can see that apprenticeships have fallen in all areas.

September Guarantee

4.6.9 The September Guarantee is an offer, by the end of the month of September, of a "suitable" place in education or training for 16 and 17 year olds. For 16 year olds the cohort is the Merton school population. For the 17 year olds it is our resident population. There has been a strong and stable picture over three years of offers and progression to post 16 education and training. The use of TAGs, which resulted in more pupils achieving at higher levels, has assisted more young people to stay on in education and receive and offer in education. Nationally those with and offer has risen by 1.2%, and in London by 0.7%.

16 and 17 year olds	2019			2020			2021		
	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
Offer made	96.8%	95.5%	95.0%	96.7%	95.9%	94.3%	97.4%	96.6%	95.5%
Offer not appropriate	0.7%	0.3%	1.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%	0.2%	0.3%	1.1%
No offer	1.2%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.6%	1.1%	0.9%

4.6.10 In Merton the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds receiving an offer has risen by 0.7%. Performance remains stronger than the London and national averages.

2020/21 Secondary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken

4.7.1

Priority:

To reduce the proportion of NEET within the following groups: those with SEND; care experienced young people and those who are open to the youth offending service or previously known to that team.

Actions taken to secure impact:

A professionals' network was run monthly to reduce NEET amongst vulnerable groups. The employability team targeted vulnerable groups in their links with employers.

Impact:

NEET amongst young people known to the Youth Offending Team was maintained at 1st quartile performance. NEET amongst young carers was reduced but still requires greater focus. Young people with EHCPs engaged in higher numbers with FE colleges.

4.7.2

Priority:

To ensure all Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding.

Actions taken to secure impact:

In the LA, there are a number of forums that enable schools to share and develop good practice. This includes termly meetings for deputy heads and heads of sixth form. In 2020-21, a forum for careers leads in schools was also established. To support schools in remaining good or outstanding, standing items at these meetings are policy updates, including changes to the Ofsted framework. In addition, the school improvement team provide bespoke support to schools to help prepare for a successful Ofsted inspection. This ensures all schools fully understand the key judgements within the revised inspection framework.

Impact:

All Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding. The proportion deemed outstanding is likely to drop over the next years, in line with changes to the inspection framework.

4.7.3

Priority: To maintain a focus on improving outcomes for the most able pupils post 16 so that the proportions achieving the higher A level outcomes continue to improve.

Actions taken to secure impact:

There has been a focus in all schools on improving the proportions of pupils achieving higher outcomes at A level. The sharing of good practice took place at the heads of sixth form meetings. The LA continues to offer all schools an annual sixth form review, which supports schools in improving the quality of provision in sixth forms.

Impact:

The percentage of pupils achieving three A*-A grades or better at A level in Merton is now 9% above the national average and 7% above the London average.

4.7.4

Priority: To narrow the gaps for key groups at KS4: disadvantaged pupils, boys, pupils in receipt of SEN support, White British and Black Caribbean pupils

Actions taken to secure impact:

All schools received additional catch-up funding in 2020-21 (now called recovery funding). Building on the pupil premium, this funding helped schools to deliver evidence-based approaches for supporting disadvantaged pupils. All schools have to publish how this funding will be spent on their websites. Merton schools have been using this to support pupils in different ways e.g. one school provided accelerated reading programmes for KS3 pupils. In addition, schools with sixth forms have received additional funding to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, with a particular focus in providing support for pupils who did not achieve a level 4+ in GCSE English/maths.

As part of the support from the Merton Education Partner, a key focus in the autumn term visit was the analysis of achievement of pupils; this included the achievement of key pupil groups. There were regular meetings of the Black Lives Matter Forum, which is well attended by secondary schools. In addition, conferences and training for staff and governors on race equality have taken place to ensure this remains a key priority for schools. The equalities adviser has been supporting schools with training all staff on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including training on recognising and raising concerns about unconscious bias and its impact in school. Secondary schools have been reviewing their curriculum offer to ensure it promotes diversity, for example, reviewing the resources/topics pupils are studying in a range of subjects.

The secondary SENCO forum enables schools to share and discuss the provision for pupils in receipt of SEN support.

Impact:

The impact on the performance of these pupils groups has been mixed, and must remain a priority for 2021/22.

5. Achievement of Pupils in the Virtual School

Overview

- 5.1 The Virtual School's performance during the first lockdown (summer term 2020) was scrutinised during Ofsted's assurance visit in the autumn of 2020. Verbal feedback from the Ofsted inspector was very positive and the formal feedback made the following points, which link to the work of the Virtual School, as well as other service areas:
- "Matching decisions take good account of the need for children to remain in the same school and to have continuity of staff, friends and learning. Children living at a distance from the local authority have received the same high level of care and support."
 - "The virtual school team has maintained frequent oversight of children in care during the last six months. They have a good focus on the progress that children are making. All children in care, including those placed out of area, had an online personal education plan (PEP) meeting during the national lockdown, and this provided a good line of sight into the experiences of these children. Like all children, the attendance of children in care was impacted by lockdown, but foster carers spoke positively about the support with children's learning that was provided by the virtual school. As with other pupils, this group's engagement with online learning was variable during that period. Over time, school attendance has improved, and currently most children in care attend school well. Effective work to support Year 11/12 pupils into post-16 destinations has helped nearly all to secure a place."
- 5.2 When the next lockdown started in January 2021, building on the practice of the Virtual School during the first national Lockdown (noted by Ofsted above) and the need for detailed updates on all of our children and young people, a robust system of tracking, designed to capture all the relevant information about children and young people's attendance in school and/or engagement in online lessons at home, was put in place. Weekly meetings brought Advisory Teachers together with the Virtual School Headteacher to discuss updates of their cohorts, emerging issues and to assign actions for swift intervention.
- 5.3 As we emerged from the spring 2021 lockdown, the achievement of children aged from three to sixteen continued to be tracked very regularly through the statutory process of the development and termly review of their Personal Education Plans. In addition, for children of school age, the Virtual School collected an update on children's progress and attainment at the end of each term and received a copy of the child's annual report.
- 5.4 Where children were not making the progress that is expected of them, the Virtual School worked more closely with key stakeholders, providing support and challenge, where appropriate, to ensure that progress is secured. Where appropriate, consideration was given to provide additional funding for additional interventions or resources to ensure that child have the support they require. Children who were not making progress during the autumn and spring term were particularly closely monitored and tracked.
- 5.5 The cohort of Merton children in care supported by the Virtual School is small, and particularly so when individual year group cohorts are analysed. Therefore comparisons with national data need to be viewed with caution.
- 5.6 Of the pupils on roll of school age at the end of the summer term, 64% had some form of special educational need. This is higher than 55.7% (the national average for Children in Care). It is also higher

than the average for Outer London average (57.20%). 39% had an EHCP compared with 27.7% (national) and 30.6% (Outer London).

EYFSP, KS1 and KS2 Outcomes

5.7 No KS1 or KS2 assessments took place during the summer term 2021, due to lockdown.

KS4 Outcomes

5.8 During Lockdown 2021, all examinations were cancelled. Results of GCSEs were based on TAGs.

5.9 Table: Year 11 Results 2021

Year 11 Results 2021	Attained at least one GCSE pass	% of Year 11	Achievement in 5 Subjects or more 1 - 9	% of Year 11	5 GCSE 4 - 9 (any subject)	% of Year 11
Number of Students (15)	11	73.00%	7	46.66%	3	20%

5 GCSE 4 - 9 inc English and Maths	% of Year 11	English and Math Grade 1 - 9	% of Year 11	Maths 4 - 9	% of Year 11	English 4 - 9	% of Year 11
3	20%	10	66.66%	6	40%	6	40%

5.10 Three young people achieved at least 5 GCSE grade 9 – 4 including English and maths (20%) which is in line with the most recent national average available of 24.4% and Outer London at 22.9%. (Published DfE May 2020). Two young people exceeded expectations in one or more subjects. Four young people did not sit GCSEs for various individual reasons, for example because they were studying at entry level or working at P levels.

5.11 All year 11 students had a confirmed destination for the start of the autumn term 2021: eight in school; five in college and one in an apprenticeship.

Post 16 Outcomes

5.12 The Virtual School works in close partnership with colleagues in social care, schools and colleges to support children in care and Care Experienced young people to continue with education and training until the age of 25.

Level 3 Results 2020

5.13 Three young people achieved outcomes at Level 3 in 2020. This compares with five young people in 2020, and two in 2019.

Not in education, employment or training

	Number in Y12	Y12 NEET	Number in Y13	Y13 NEET
Autumn 2020	33	12% (18%)	37	32% (13%)
Spring 2021	35	14% (26%)	39	31% (18%)
Summer 2021	38	13% (34%)	39	26% (18%)

*2019/20 figures are in brackets

5.14 Young people who are NEET are supported by the network of social workers, personal advisors and the Virtual School's EET Keyworker. The proportions of NEET young people fluctuated across the year but were higher for Year 13 pupils. The proportion of all young people, across both year groups, who were in Education, Employment or Training was 80%, which is higher than the national average for children in care.

Year 14 and beyond

5.15 Extensive efforts are made by social workers and personal advisers to keep in touch with Care Leavers to support them to appropriate employment or education and training. The Virtual School provides both consultation to colleagues and the young people directly.

5.16 Seven care experienced young people graduated from university at the end of the academic year 2020/21.

Attendance

5.17 Table: Attendance primary / secondary for CIC and 903 Cohort 2020/2021

Attendance Cumulative Academic Year 2020/2021	% All CIC Autumn Term 2020	% 903 Cohort Autumn Term 2020	% All CIC Spring Term 2021	% 903 Cohort Spring Term 2021	% All CIC Summer Term 2021	% 903 Cohort Summer Term 2021
Primary	94.56	90.37	90.18	90.46	97.98	97.90
Secondary	93.53	97.03	62.45	62.08	91.15	94.20
Overall	94.55	95.40	71.68	71.18	93.50	95.52

5.18 Overall attendance in the autumn and summer terms were consistently above 90% and for the SSDA903 cohort was 95%. Attendance in the spring term was 90% for primary and 62.45% for secondary. This reflects the lockdown period from January 2021.

Exclusions

5.19 The Virtual School works with all schools, SEND teams, Merton's Educational Psychologists, and the Virtual Behaviour Service to reduce the need for fixed term and permanent exclusions for LAC. The Virtual School, in partnership with key stakeholders, seeks to minimise the negative impact such sanctions can have and ensure schools are supported to provide appropriate interventions.

5.20 The Virtual School's Advisory Teachers ensure schools, social workers and foster carers contact the Virtual School at the earliest opportunity if a child in care is at risk of exclusion. Exclusions are always followed

up by the Virtual School. The Virtual School challenges any reported incidents whereby carers have been requested to collect a child from school early or advised that a child is being sent home unofficially.

5.21 Table: Percentage of Children in Care who had at least one fixed period exclusions

Fixed Term Exclusions 2020/2021	Autumn term		Spring term		Summer term		Number of individual students 2020/2021		One or more FTE %
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Total
All CIC									
Number of first fixed term exclusion	1	2	0	0	0	4	1	6	7 of 87
Number of individuals with more than fixed term exclusion	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	8.00%

5.22 No child in care was permanently excluded during 2020-2021, continuing the trend of previous years. Fixed term exclusions applied to children in Key stages 2, 3 and 4 were for the following reasons:

- Physical assault
- Verbal abuse
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Threatening behaviour
- Shop lifting

5.23 Merton's figure for one or more fixed term exclusions at 8% is well below the national average of 11.38% and Outer London of 10.52%.

Quality of schools - Ofsted

5.24 The Virtual School has continued to strive to ensure that all children and young people attend good or outstanding schools. Where a looked after child has remained in a school judged to be less than good in its most recent inspection, very careful consideration has been given to the child's situation, and it a decision made that a move would not be in their best interest. Monitoring of the pupil's progress increased through the Virtual School Education Progress Monitoring Meetings and internal monitoring within the Virtual School progress tracking meetings.

5.25 As of 31st August 2021, 96.2% of statutory school aged looked after children attended schools, where a grade was known, that are good or outstanding. This is a small increase in comparison with the previous year.

Table: Quality of schools attended by Merton children in care as at end of summer 2021

School Ofsted Ratings	Within Merton Schools	% of total CIC	Primary	Secondary	Within Other London Borough Schools	% of total CIC	Primary	Secondary	In Schools Outside of London	% of total CIC	Primary	Secondary
Academy Converter	1	1%	1	0	4	5.13%	4	0	3	3.85%	3	0
Outstanding	11	14.10%	0	11	10	12.82%	3	7	3	3.85%	0	3
Good	17	21.79%	10	7	12	15.38%	2	10	14	17.95%	2	12
Requires Improvement	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0.00%	0	0	3	3.85%	0	3
Inadequate	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0.00%	0	0
Total of CIC	29	37%	11	19	26	33%	9	17	23	29%	5	18

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- 5.26 All looked after children must have a care plan, of which the Personal Education Plan (PEP) is an integral part. During the PEP process, the progress and achievement of looked after children is carefully tracked, and where they are falling behind, schools are challenged to identify how they might be supported to make accelerated progress, including how the Pupil Premium Grant for looked after children might be best used to secure improved outcomes.
- 5.27 The Virtual School works in partnership with social workers, designated teachers, and carers to coordinate meetings and record and administer PEPs.
- 5.28 Statutory guidance requires that an initial PEP should be carried out within 20 school days of a child coming into care, and that it should then be reviewed at least every 6 months. In practice, Merton Virtual School carries out a PEP once every term. The Virtual School has robust systems and processes to track, monitor and report on their timeliness and quality. Equal regard is paid to the education of children who are placed out of borough as to those who live in Merton, and the Virtual School ensures the challenges of distant placements are met, including attendance at Personal Education Planning Meetings (when pandemic restrictions allow).
- 5.29 Initial and Review PEPs were all completed within timescales each term throughout the academic year.

6. Inclusion

Attendance performance information and analysis

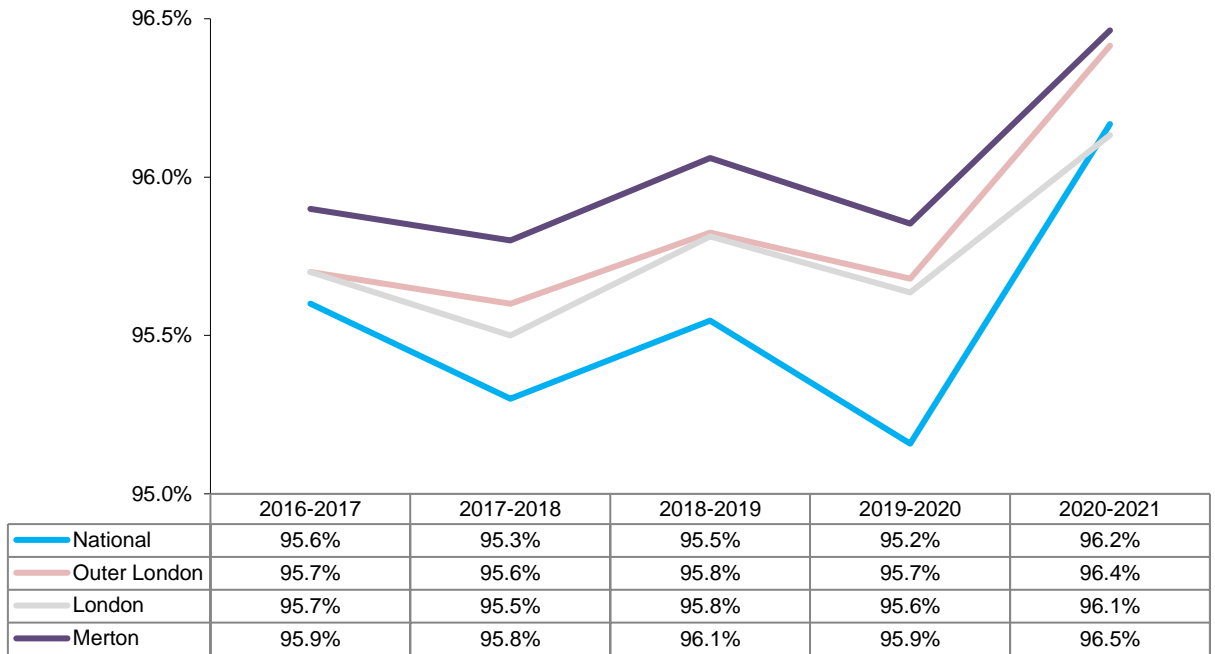
- 6.1.1 There are two attendance indicators:
- Persistent Absence (PA): Pupils have been identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.
 - Attendance: Attendance is measured by the DFE both after four half terms and after six (i.e. a whole school year.)
- 6.1.2 Final Merton, and national and London comparative data is published for the two terms of autumn 2020 and spring 2021, during which time attendance was measured differently because of the Covid pandemic. The Government closed schools in January 2021 to all pupils except the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children. Children were absent from school due to having Covid, being required to isolate as a contact of someone with Covid, and where their “bubble “was closed either because pupils or staff had Covid.

Attendance – two terms, autumn and spring 2020-21

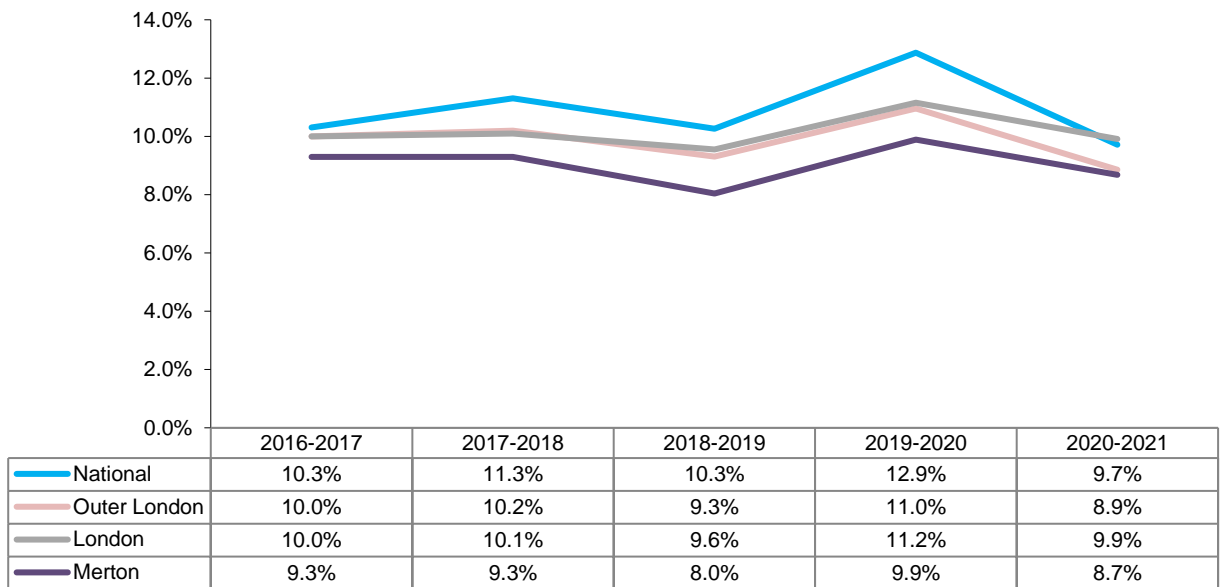
All Schools (primary and secondary)	Merton	London	Outer London	National
Attendance	96.5%	96.1%	96.4%	96.2%
Absence	3.5%	3.9%	3.6%	3.8%
Persistent Absence	8.7%	9.9%	8.9%	9.7%

- 6.1.3 Autumn and spring term attendance in Merton schools remained stronger than national and London averages. It is of note that London has a lower average than the national figures for the second year. This is highly unusual and may show impact of the pandemic on schools in London in particular.
- 6.1.4 Physical attendance in school in the spring term was lower as significant numbers of children were educated online in the spring term lockdown. We know from the daily attendance returns that significantly higher numbers of vulnerable and key worker children attended school physically in the lockdown in spring 2021 than spring 2020. This accounts for the higher attendance figure.

Attendance: Primary and Secondary Schools



Persistent Absence 10% Primary and Secondary Schools

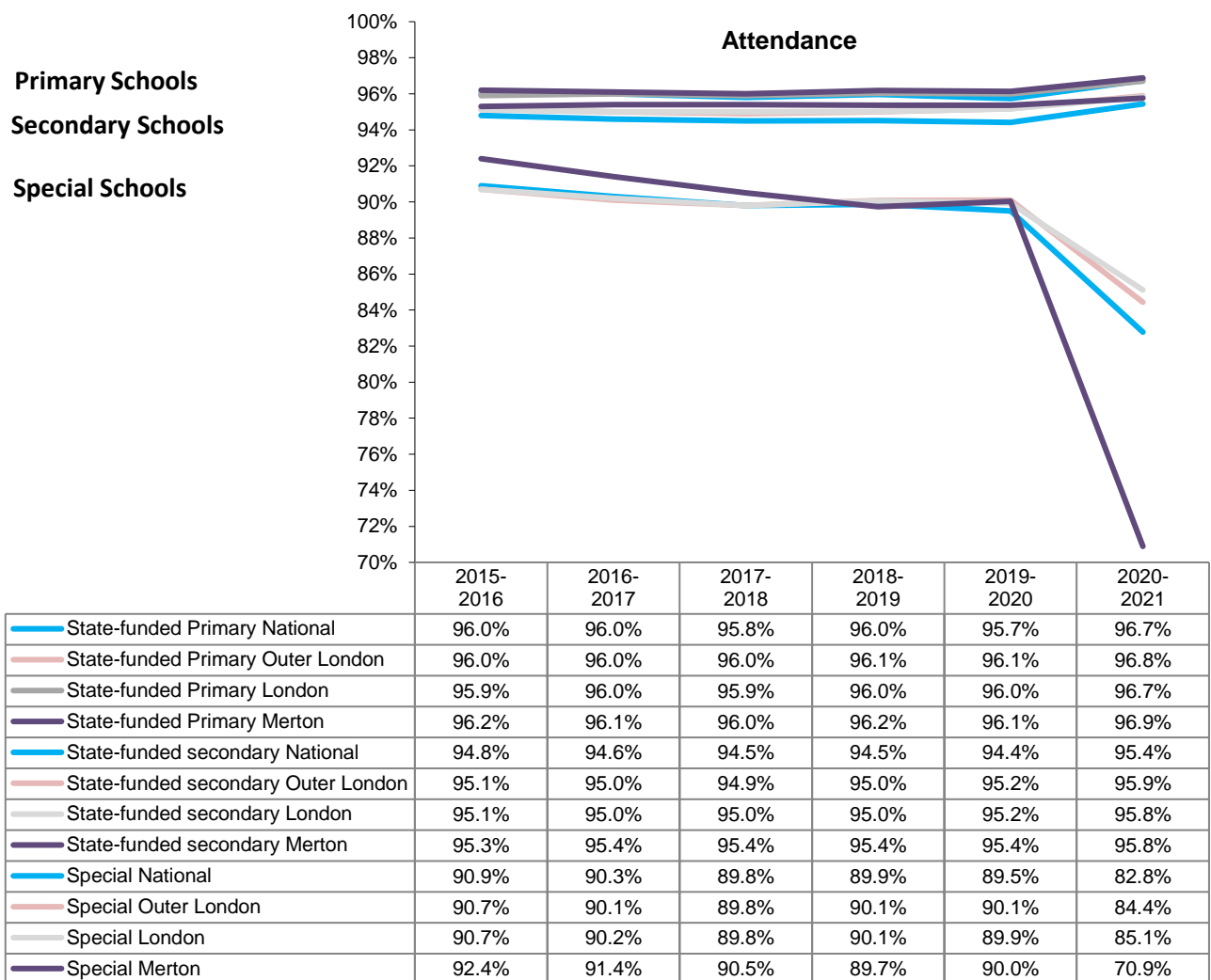


6.1.5 Primary school attendance (where not all the children were required to attend physically) rose nationally and Merton has better attendance than the national and London averages. PA is also significantly lower.

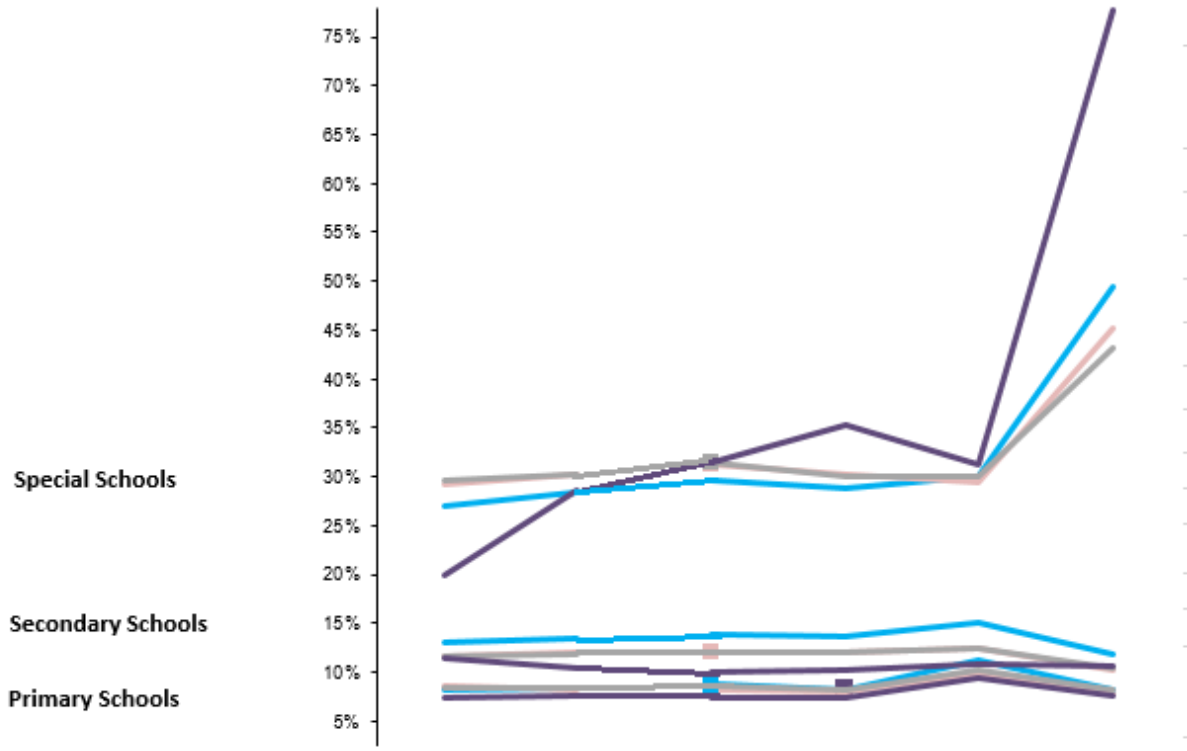
6.1.6 Secondary attendance is better than the national average, in line with London, but below the outer London average. PA is better than national but higher than London or Outer London.

6.1.7 Special school attendance (where all the children were eligible to attend in person) has dropped nationally. However, in Merton it has dropped significantly. The national fall in special school attendance has been 6.7% whereas in Merton we have seen a fall on 19.1%. PA has risen nationally for special schools by 19.4% however in Merton we have seen a rise by 46.4%.

6.1.8 Merton has a relatively small number of special schools (three), one of which is a school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (Perseid). These pupils were particularly affected by the pandemic as they were deemed variously clinically extremely vulnerable, and/or clinically vulnerable, and their attendance was therefore deemed a greater risk when there was an outbreak. Throughout the pandemic Perseid has been supported by weekly risk assessment meetings with Public Health to identify how pupils can be supported to stay in school safely.



Persistent Absence 10%

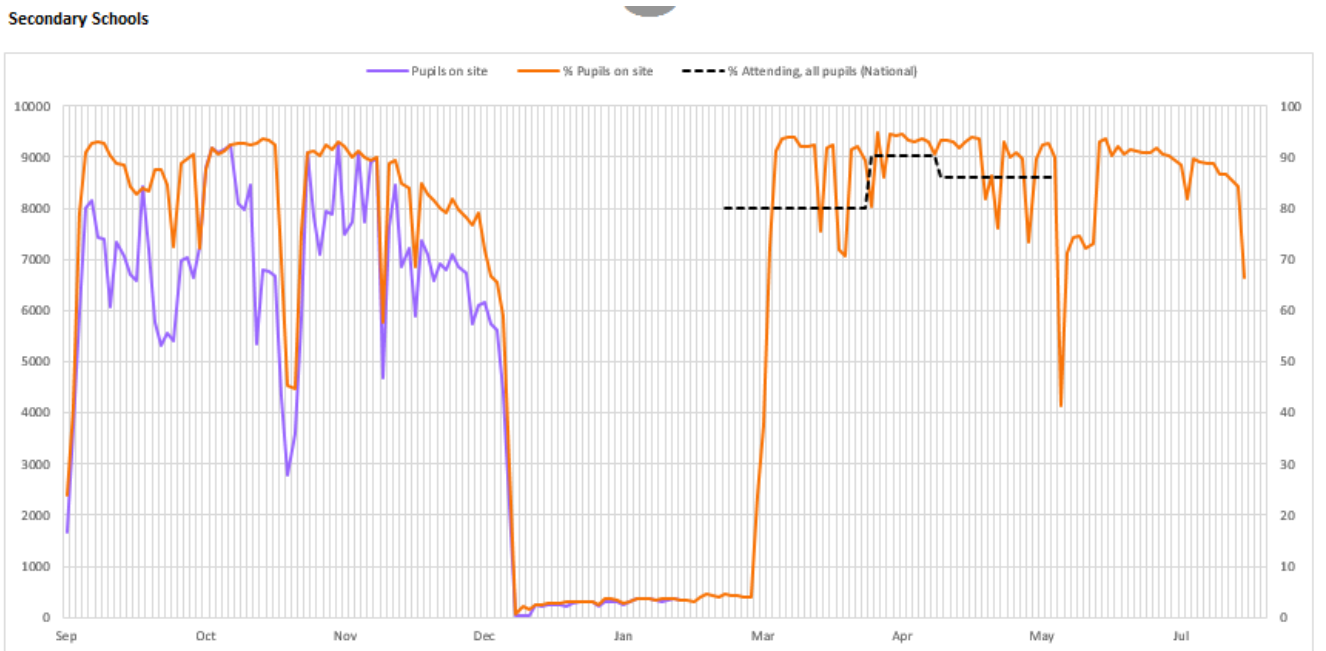
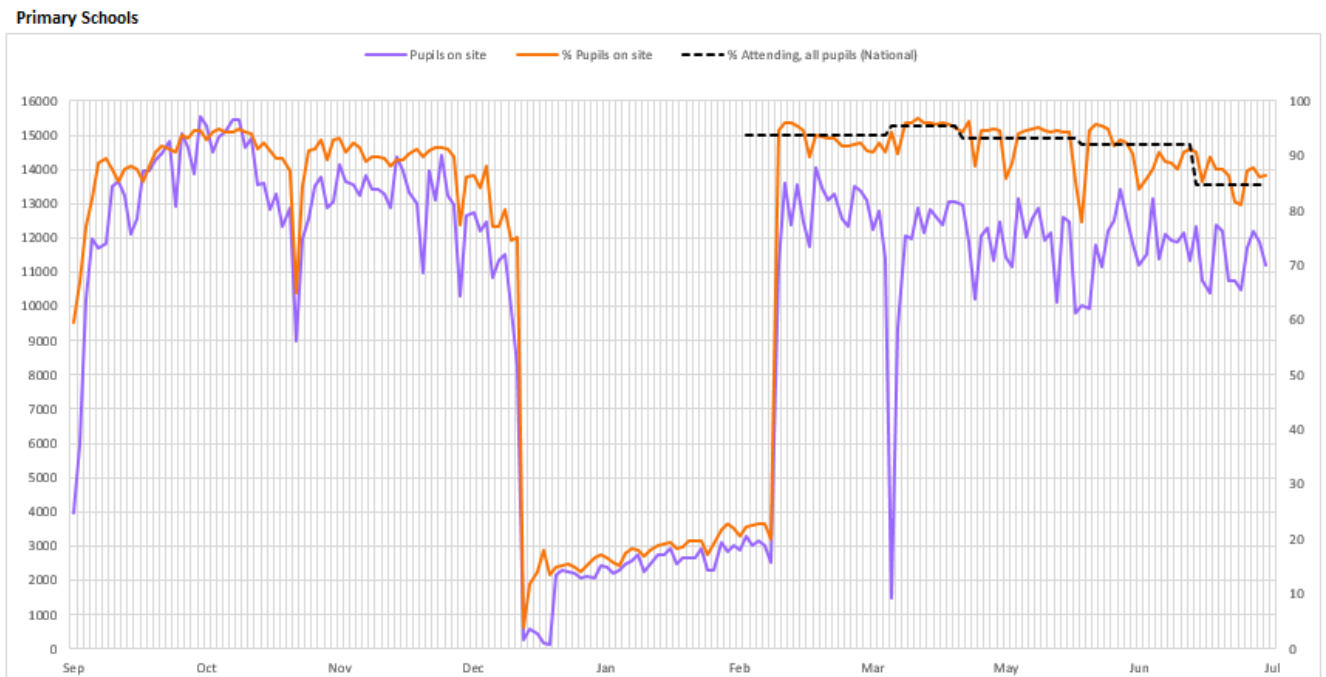


	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
State-funded Primary National	8.2%	8.3%	8.7%	8.2%	11.2%	8.1%
State-funded Primary Outer London	8.6%	8.2%	8.2%	7.9%	9.8%	7.8%
State-funded Primary London	8.4%	8.3%	8.5%	8.2%	10.1%	8.2%
State-funded Primary Merton	7.4%	7.5%	7.4%	7.3%	9.3%	7.5%
State-funded secondary National	13.1%	13.5%	13.9%	13.7%	15.0%	11.7%
State-funded secondary Outer London	11.7%	12.0%	12.0%	12.0%	12.4%	10.2%
State-funded secondary London	11.7%	11.9%	12.0%	12.0%	12.5%	10.4%
State-funded secondary Merton	11.5%	10.5%	10.0%	10.3%	10.9%	10.6%
Special National	26.9%	28.5%	29.6%	28.8%	30.0%	49.4%
Special Outer London	29.2%	30.2%	31.2%	30.2%	29.5%	45.3%
Special London	29.5%	30.3%	31.5%	30.1%	30.1%	43.1%
Special Merton	20.0%	28.6%	31.5%	35.4%	31.3%	77.7%

School Attendance during the Pandemic.

6.2.1 Throughout 2020/21 all schools nationally were asked to report daily attendance to the DfE. This data was useful for live, daily monitoring in Merton, and schools with lower attendance were contacted to understand their challenges and offered support. Merton schools generally had a higher rate of reporting this data to the DfE than schools nationally, but nevertheless this data is not as robust as final data as published by the DfE (as above). It gives a window into patterns of daily attendance in schools.

6.2.2 Note: national attendance data split by phase is available from March 2021 only. Secondary data is further limited beyond May because of the impact of the reporting of study leave.



6.2.3 As can be seen from the graphs above, attendance varied significantly as Covid infection levels rose and fell. Schools worked closely with infection control leads from Public Health to try to keep children in

schools and minimise disruption to learning. The proportions of pupils physically attending were well below normally expected levels of attendance and illustrate the impact of Covid on lost learning.

- 6.2.4** Attendance for all pupils fell from November as Covid infection levels rose in London. Only limited numbers of children were allowed to attend school in person following lockdown and others were taught online. Once schools reopened to all pupils in March attendance rose to at or above national average levels for primary schools, and to well above national average levels in secondary schools. From mid May there is a decline in attendance nationally that is mirrored in Merton.

Children Missing Education (CME) during Covid

- 6.2.5** During lock down the multi-agency CME panel was run in the background as children did not have to attend school in person. Children off roll were tracked and put on roll to ensure that children were not lost from the system during this time and to enable access to family support and free school meal vouchers.
- 6.2.6** In addition, from January 2021, we repeated the Covid CME panels we had run so successfully in 2020. In response to schools being open only for children of keyworkers and children with social workers and/or an EHCP, a Social Care Only CME/ Covid CME was developed to track the attendance at school of children with a social worker. This panel was chaired by the Head of Education Inclusion with panel members: Education Welfare Manager, Head of SENDIS, Manager of the Safeguarding Team. A new tracker was produced whereby each Social Care safeguarding team reviewed the attendance of children in their teams. This tracker recorded if the child was in school, what were the barriers to being in school and whether the social worker considered that the child should be in school if they were not attending. Team managers for each team presented their tracker to the panel and every child's attendance was discussed. Five panels were run in January and February and 500 children were reviewed.
- 6.2.7** Key questions considered by the panel with managers in the panel included:
- If the child was at home were they safe?
 - If the child was at home were they engaging in online learning set by the school and was any additional support needed?
 - What were the barriers to attending school?
- 6.2.8** Key themes to emerge as barriers to attendance:
- Parental fear of their children attending school and contracting the virus particularly where children live in extended families with grandparents
 - self-isolation due to symptoms of child and parent
 - Below statutory school age
 - Vulnerable adults in the home/shielding
 - Moved out of the area or gone abroad
 - Child issues: Peers not in school and happy to access online lessons successfully
 - Parental views "not sending my children in until all children are in"
 - Not enough accessing of online lessons/ long term history of poor attendance in school.
- 6.2.9** Over the five panels we saw:
- Evidence of engagement of social workers with families where children were and were not in school.
 - Greater attendance in school

- Increased dialogue about specific children with EHCPs
- Increased reassurance that children were engaged in online education when not in school.

6.2.10 Attendance increased from January to February but started at a much higher level than in the 1st Lockdown (April 2020 26% attendance).

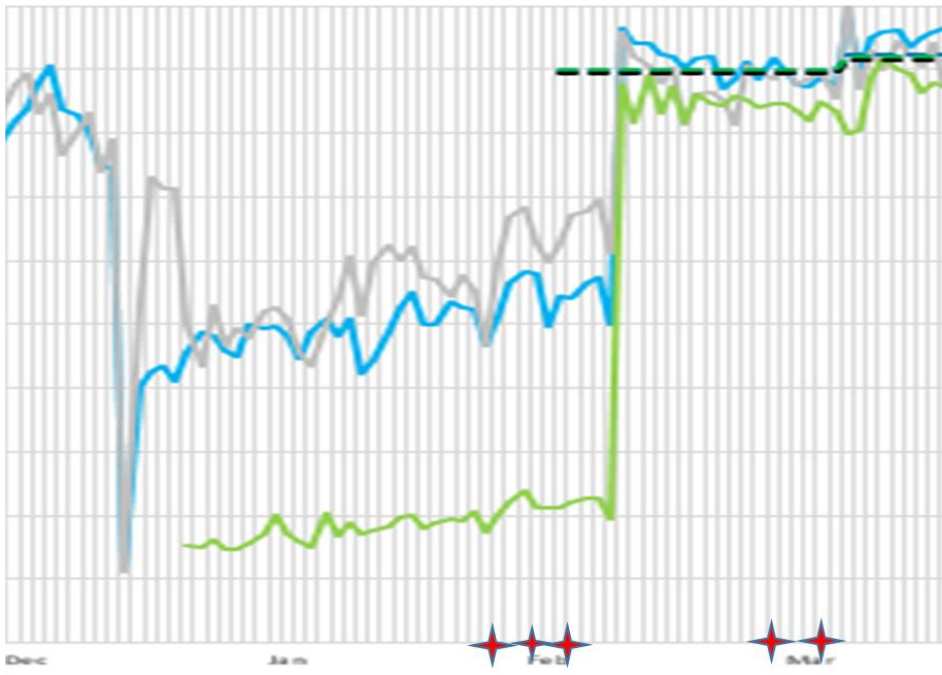
- January/ February panels 279 children eligible to attend discussed – 60% attending
- March panels 284 children eligible to attend discussed – 67% attending

The panels also looked at post 16 to identify if support could be offered but they are not included in these figures.

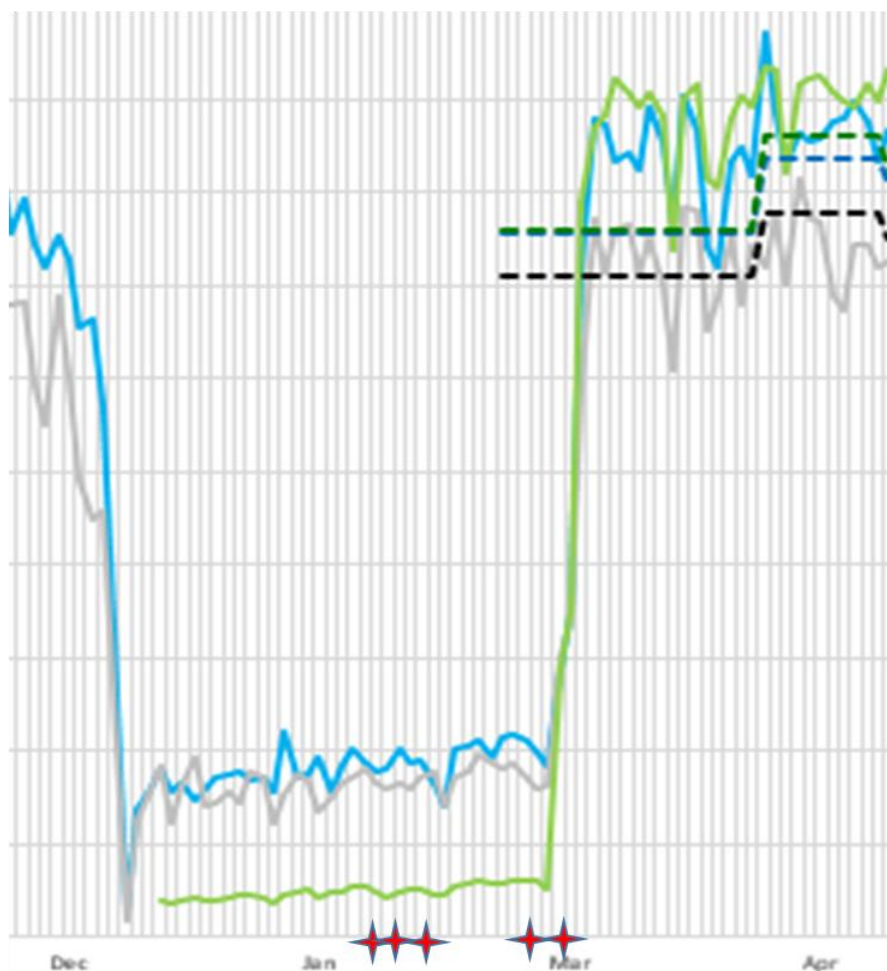
- Children with a CIN plan improved attendance by 8.5%
- Children with a CP plan improved attendance by 13%
- CWD - where children were in special schools there were more examples of where children had to self-isolate due to Covid infection close contacts in staff and pupils.

6.2.11 From the DFE tracking data (graphs below) the gradual impact of the CME Covid meetings on improving the attendance of vulnerable children in school can be seen. The timings of the meetings are noted by the red stars.

CovidCME Primary 2021



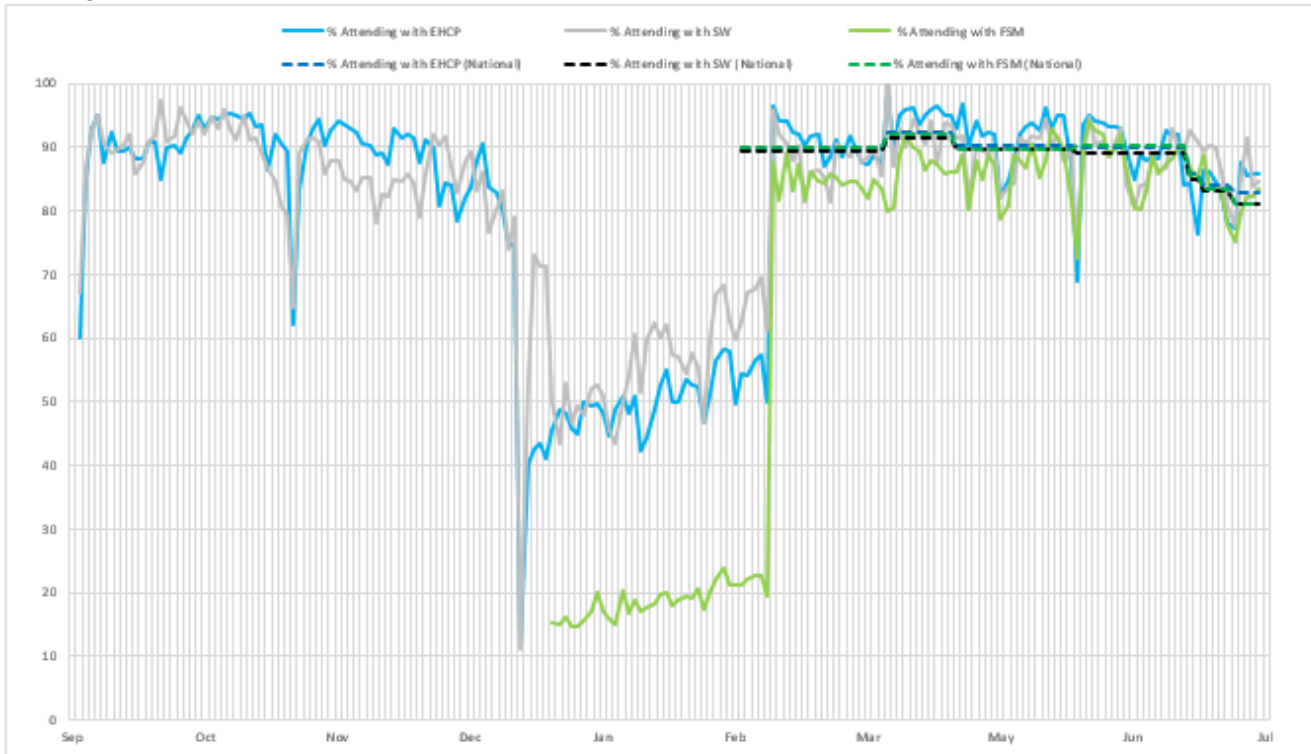
Secondary Covid CME 2021



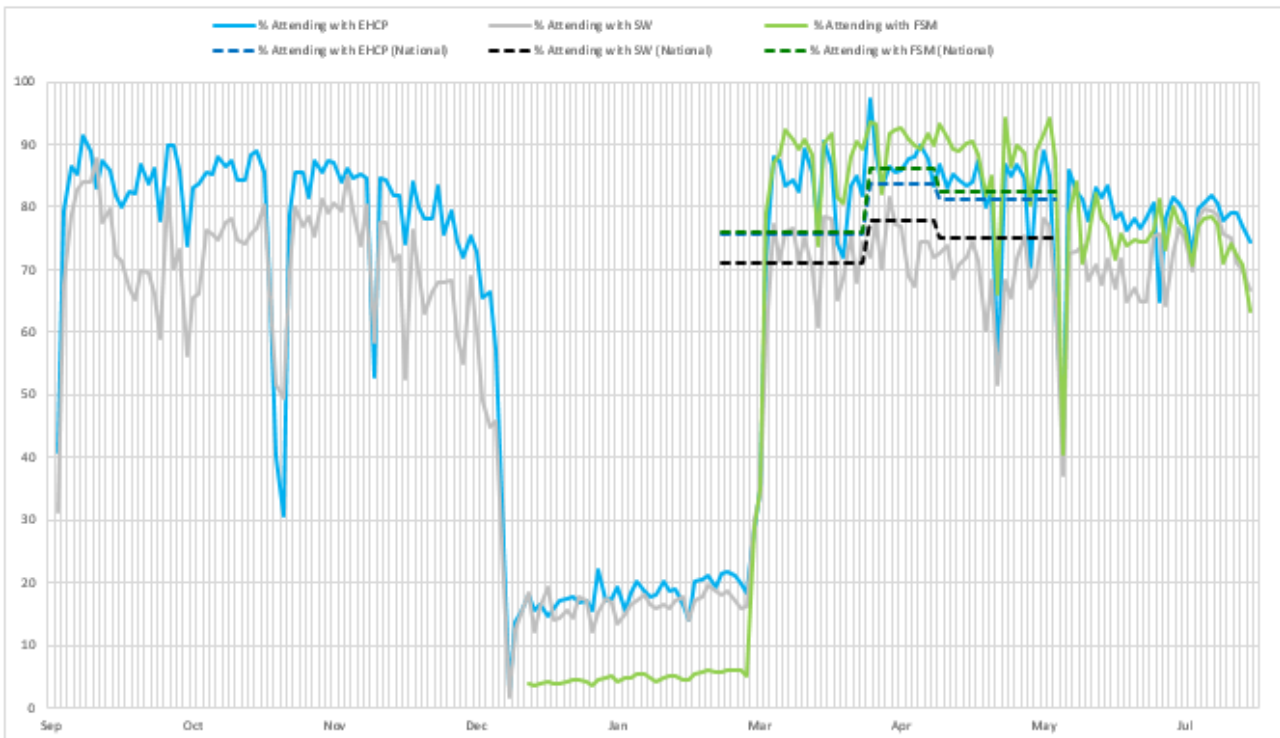
6.2.12 The primary school and secondary school tables below show the attendance of pupils in receipt of free school meals, those with EHCPs and those with a social worker. This is matched to a national average where available. For primary schools, attendance was consistently at or above the national average for the summer except for those in receipt of free school meals which was initially below but rose to be in line. For secondary schools, attendance for young people with EHCPs or in receipt of free school meals was above national averages but declined in line with the decline in school attendance. Secondary school attendance by those with social workers fluctuated significantly.

6.2.13 Note: The DfE did not begin collecting FSM eligibility within the attendance data from schools until January 2021. These graphs should be viewed with caution as they only provide comparisons with national data for one term and largely show us the varying impact of Covid on attendance.

Primary Schools

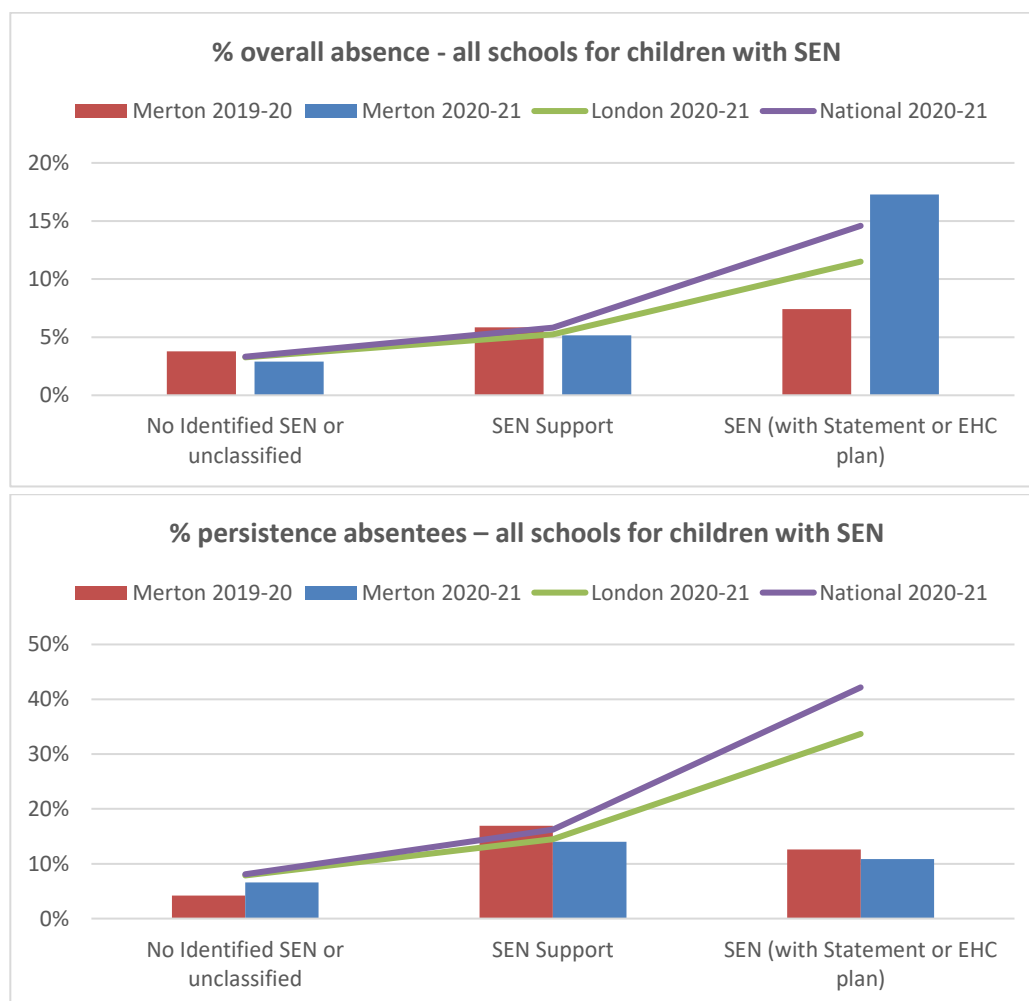


Secondary Schools



Autumn term attendance for pupil groups

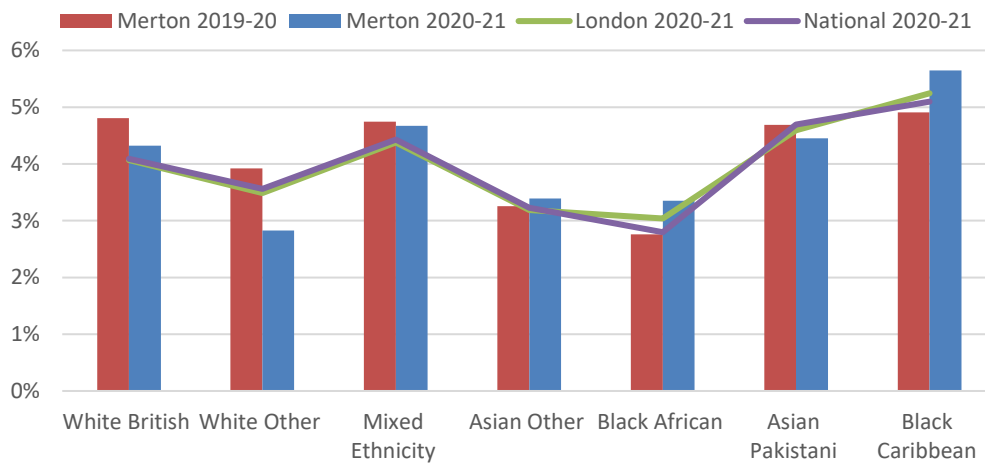
6.2.14 The nationally published data for pupil absence is available for pupil groups for the autumn term of 2020.



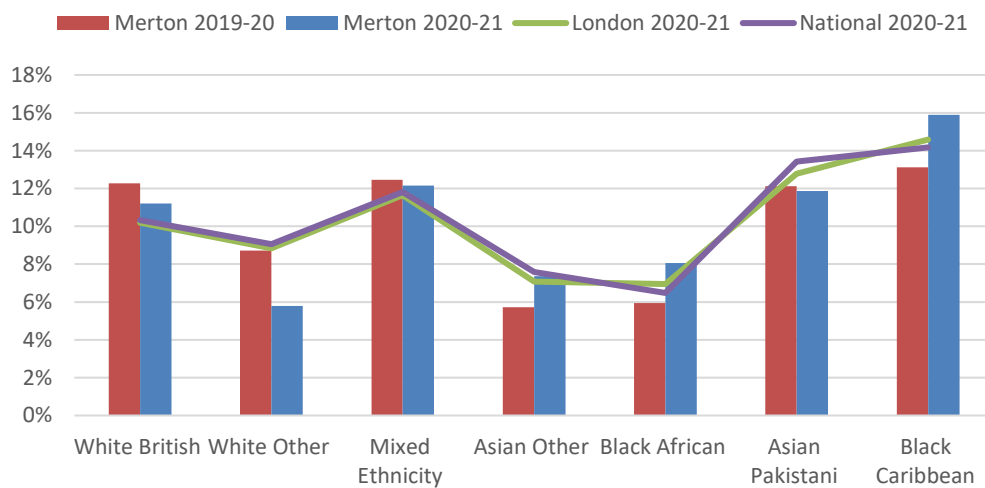
6.2.15 For children with SEND who do not have an EHCP overall absence was lower than the previous autumn term and fewer pupils counted as persistent absentees. However, in line with the much lower levels of attendance in Merton special schools, absence for children with EHCPs was double the previous autumn. Interestingly this is a national picture, however Merton's levels of absence are higher than London or national. This absence did not transfer into higher numbers of children as persistent absentees. This occurs when lots of children have a small amount of absence.

6.2.16 If we compare absence by ethnic group (graphs below), we see lower levels of attendance and higher levels of persistent absence for children from black African and black Caribbean backgrounds. We know from national studies that the pandemic has affected groups disproportionately and this data further supports that evidence.

% overall absence - all schools by ethnicity



% persistence absentees - all schools by ethnicity



2020/21 Attendance priorities, impact and key actions taken

6.3.1

Priority: To support and challenge pupils and their parents who have poor attendance to maintain good attendance above national and outer London averages / to maintain attendance during lockdown rules.

Actions taken to secure improvement:

Merton Education Welfare Service (EWS) has continued to work with schools to challenge poor attendance in the autumn term. The Covid CME lockdown prevented any legal action. Processes to support the most vulnerable to return to school were undertaken by schools and a range of agencies.

Impact:

Attendance was strong in primary and secondary but very low in special schools

6.3.2

Priority: To track children off rolled or moved abroad during the pandemic.

Action taken to secure impact:

Significant numbers of children needed to be tracked with a rise in children going abroad with their families.

Impact:

This left more children whom we could not find an address abroad for however the clear up rate was maintained at 99%.

6.3.3

Priority: To work with the Merton Medical Education Service to expand services for children out of school with medical needs.

Action taken to secure impact:

Plans were developed to secure an alternative site to be able to expand the MMES to meet increasing demand.

Impact:

An alternative site was agreed. The increased numbers of children referred required additional space prior to the new premises being available so the MME services expanded at Worsfold House.

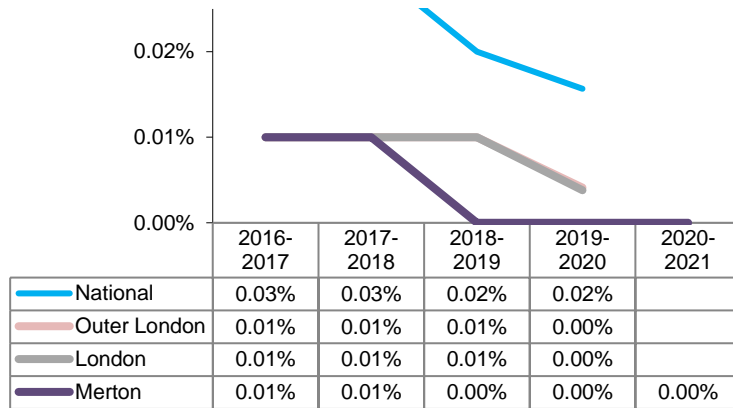
Exclusion performance information and analysis

Headline data and analysis

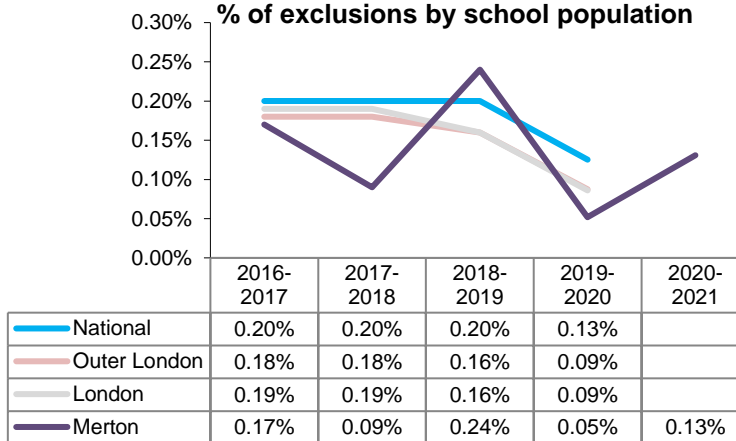
6.4.1 Merton data is available for 2020-21 for an interrupted year, and the most recent data, available for comparison with the national and London averages, is from 2019-2020 which was also an interrupted year. Therefore, comparisons should be made with caution although trends over 3 years should be clearer.

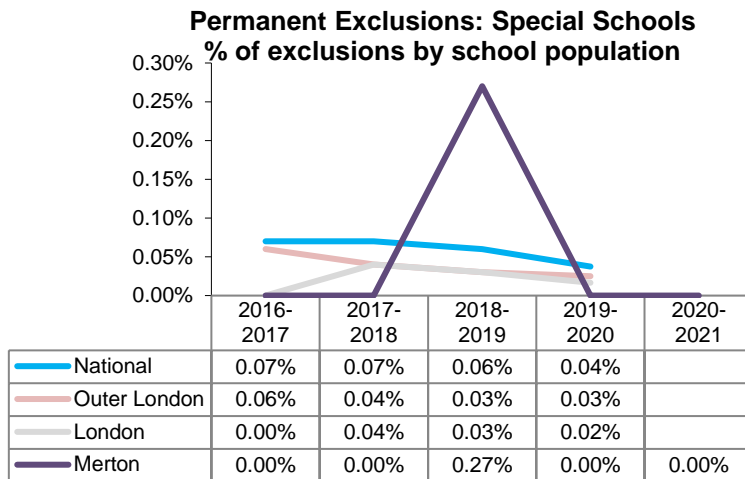
Permanent Exclusions

Permanent Exclusions: Primary Schools
% of exclusions by school population



Permanent Exclusions: Secondary Schools
% of exclusions by school population





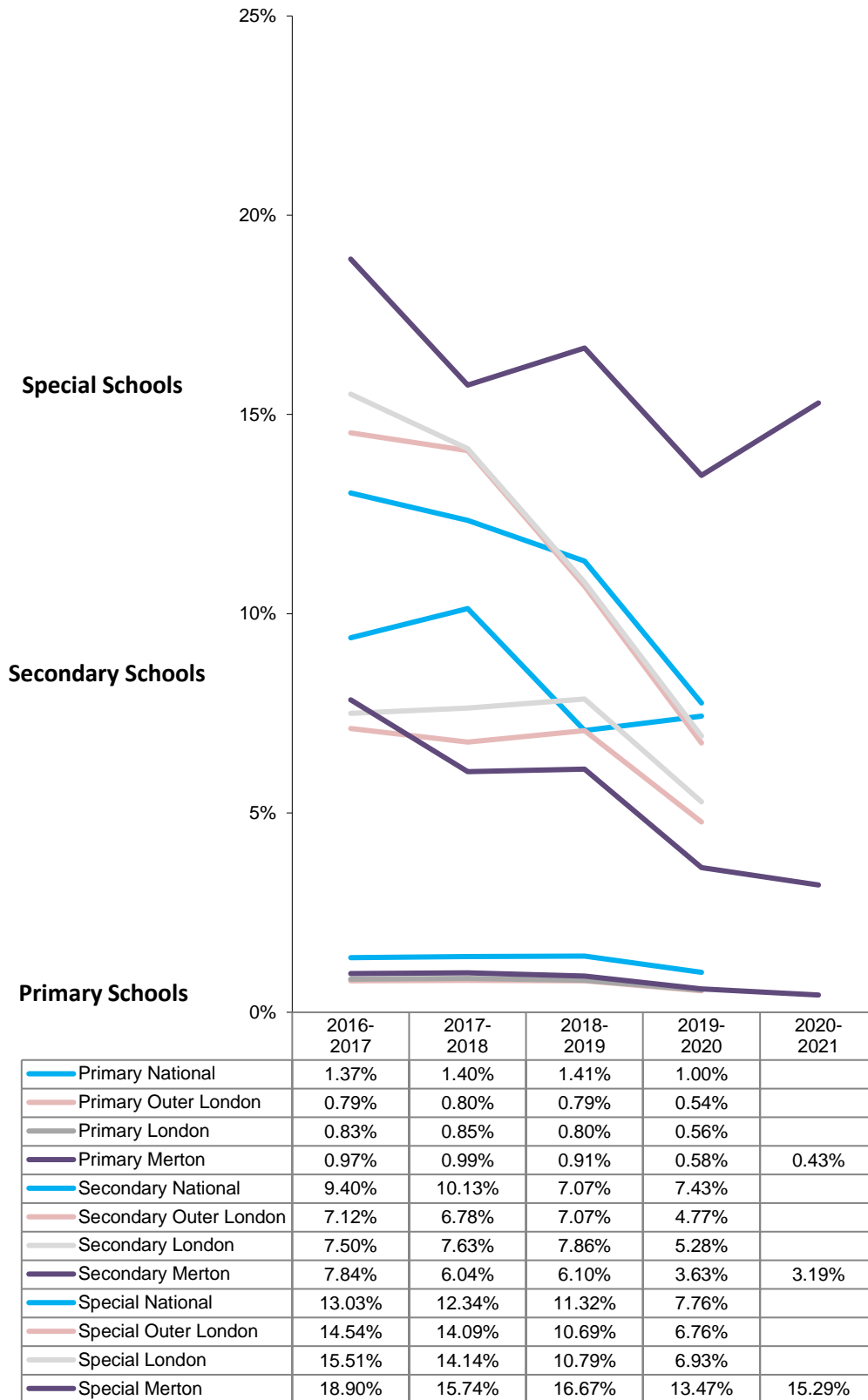
6.4.2 Merton had no primary phase permanent exclusions in 2020-2021. This was achieved through significant and complex inclusion work carried out by primary schools and the LA’s Virtual Behaviour Service (VBS); this work continued during partial school closure. There were also no permanent exclusions from a special school.

6.4.3 The number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools rose to be in line with national but below London averages. Numbers are low so percentages can vary in significance. Since 2016/17, in three out of the four years the percentages have been below national averages.

6.4.4 There were 12 additional potential permanent exclusions that were prevented in secondary schools as a result of partnership work with families, work with the VBS, between schools, and between schools and Melbury College. This compares with 12 in 19/20 and 26 in 2018/19.

Fixed term Exclusions

Fixed Term Exclusions
% of exclusions by school population



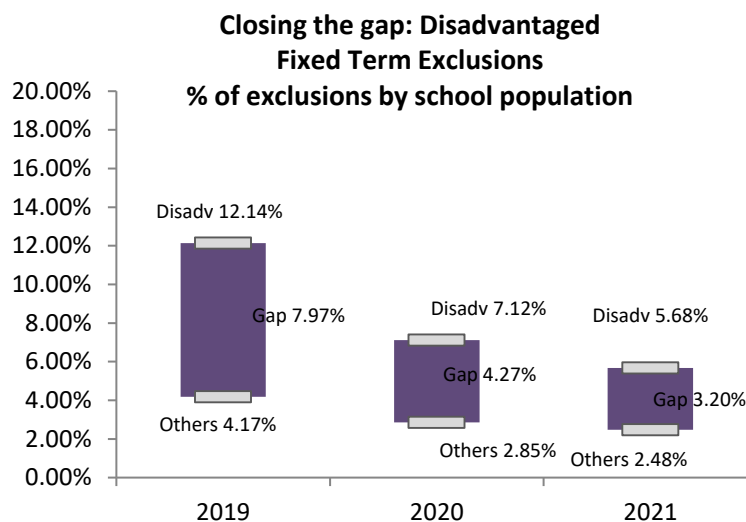
6.4.5 The percentage of fixed term exclusions fell in primary and secondary schools. Merton performance is better in both phases than national, London and Outer London averages.

6.4.6 Fixed term exclusions in special schools have risen. We continue to be above the national average. This is due in part to the small numbers in Merton special schools, with the result that small numbers of exclusions result in higher percentages.

Main pupil groups (fixed term exclusions, secondary phase)

Contextual Groups	Number of Pupils	Fixed Term Exclusions: Secondary % of exclusions by school population		
		Merton 2020-21	London 2019-20	National 2019-20
All Pupils	9923	3.19%	5.28%	7.43%
Gender				
Female	4769	1.97%	3.21%	4.72%
Male	5154	4.33%	7.37%	10.12%
Gap		2.36%	4.16%	5.40%
Disadvantaged				
Disadvantaged	2219	5.68%	10.67%	19.42%
All other pupils	7704	2.48%	4.02%	5.16%
Gap		3.20%	6.65%	14.27%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)				
No Special Educational Needs	8116	2.16%	3.91%	5.41%
SEN Support	1497	6.68%	15.58%	22.74%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	310	13.55%	14.55%	20.83%
Ethnic Group (White British and six largest or priority ethnic minority groups)				
White British	2796	3.97%	5.88%	8.24%
White Other	1849	2.54%	4.90%	4.97%
Asian Other	1207	1.16%	3.79%	4.73%
Black African	1011	2.67%	6.38%	5.82%
Asian Pakistani	601	1.16%	2.60%	4.52%
Mixed Other	1168	4.11%	6.53%	6.87%
Black Caribbean	449	8.24%	12.00%	11.79%

FSM was used in calculating the disadvantaged table



- 6.4.7 The gap between exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and all pupils excluded has significantly narrowed again, and is narrower than that seen nationally and in London. It might therefore be concluded that the pandemic did not exacerbate previous disadvantage with regards to exclusions. However disadvantaged pupils were still more likely to be excluded than their peers in Merton, even though this figure is lower than the national and local averages.
- 6.4.8 Fixed term exclusions for pupils in receipt of SEN Support have fallen significantly (from 18.91% to 15.11% and now again to 6.68%) and are well below national and London averages for the same group. Fixed term exclusions for children with EHCPs are higher than those for SEN support, but have reduced over four years (29.1%, 25.62%, 19.83% 13.55%) and are better than the national and London averages. This is a very positive direction of travel even on part year data. However, even though the percentage of pupils with EHCP excluded is lower than national and London, the gap between pupils without SEND and those with EHCPs is wider in Merton, thus bringing us to conclude that bringing down fixed term exclusions has not been as successful for children with EHCPs.
- 6.4.9 The gaps between genders is smaller than national or London averages. The same is true in terms of ethnicity where the gap between White British and Black Caribbean is smaller this year than nationally or in London. We have had a key focus on disproportionality of outcomes by ethnicity this year. The proportion of Black African pupils receiving a fixed term exclusion has fallen over 3 years (18-19 8.7%; 19-20 4.64%; 20-21 2.67%) this is a significant improvement in outcomes. However, the picture is less clear for pupil from a black Caribbean background (18-19 12.04%; 19-20 7.57%; 20-21 8.24%)

2020/21 Exclusion and behaviour priorities, impact and key actions taken

6.5.1

Priority: To set up provision for Primary SEMH Pupils as part of Melrose School.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Provision has been set up in Worsfold House and a building programme for a new Primary Building on Melrose site has been agreed.

Impact:

There are greater opportunities to place primary SEMH pupils in borough through the permanent Melrose offer. Children have begun to be placed in borough reducing their travelling time and helping them to build social relationships locally. This will also contribute to lowering spend on Independent Special schools.

6.5.2

Priority: To maintain support for children with SEMH through Covid regulations

Actions taken to secure impact:

One to one support was maintained for individual children by the VBS, within Covid restrictions of only visiting one school per day. Training moved on line. An on line transition mentoring project was developed to support children at risk of poor outcomes at transition.

Impact:

First year of online mentoring was a success and will be developed as model. Vulnerable children maintained attendance in school and rates of permanent exclusions did not increase.

6.5.3

Priority: To embed and develop the mental health Trailblazer projects in Merton schools and support school mental health leads.

Actions taken to secure impact:

A bid was submitted to the DFE to fund a further Mitcham partnership. This was unsuccessful so CCG has commissioned Off the Record to provide the partnership support. This partnership is led by Hillcross School. The other three partnerships developed whole school plans, provided mental health support to children and online support to parents. Mental health leads forum went online and linked schools up with sharing good practise and targeted services such as emergency crisis line. Significant DFE training was rolled out to all schools on the mental health curriculum and support for staff. Action was put in place to support the SEND cluster, following the resignation of the lead headteacher (from a Sutton school).

Impact:

CCG will be evaluating but there has been a positive response from schools, families, and children so far. There has been much higher engagement levels with online parenting support. By Easter 2022 all Merton schools will have received an offer to join a cluster (in comparison with 15% nationally).

6.5.4

Priority To establish the new Early Help service and consult on the model

Actions taken to secure impact:

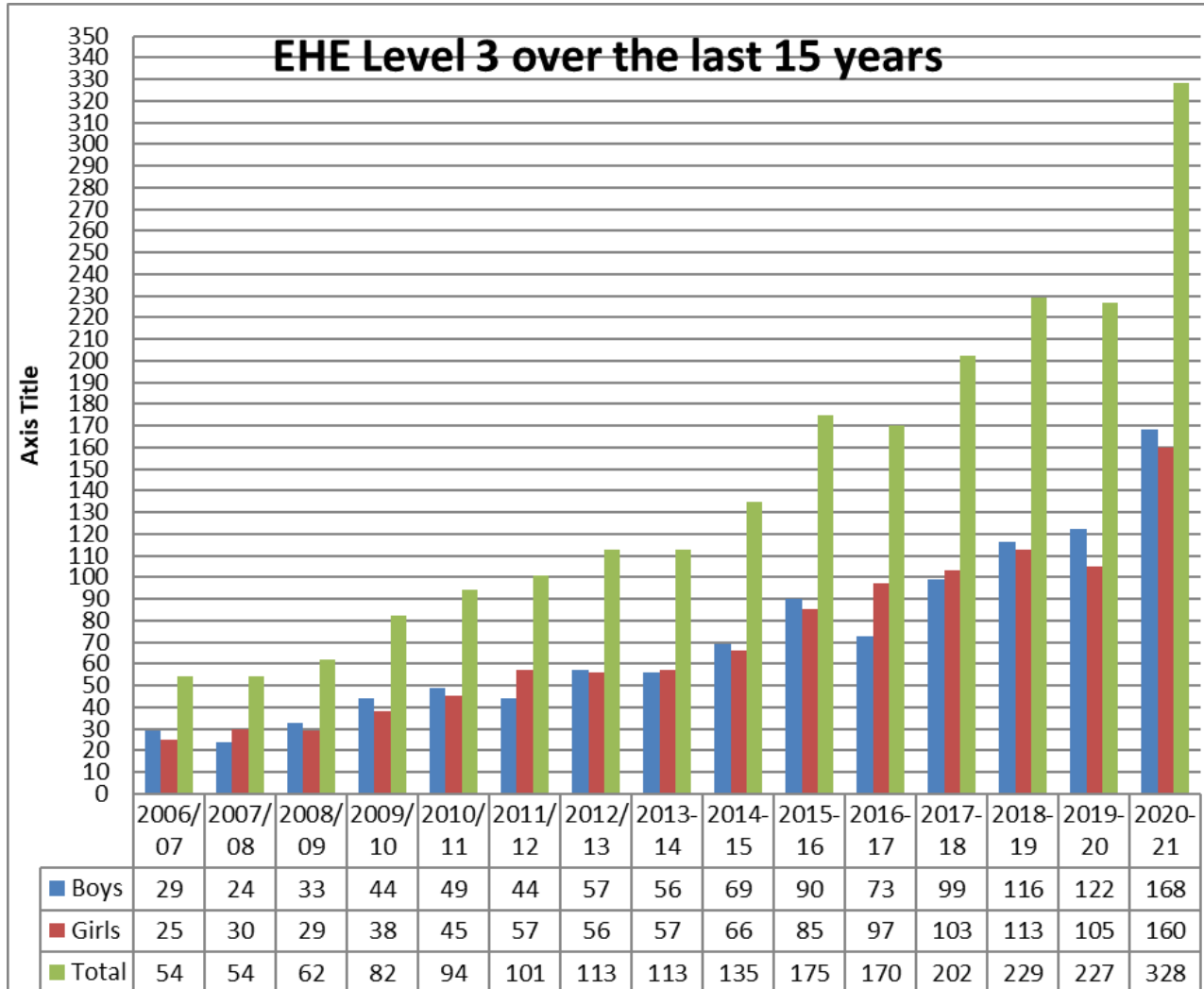
Early Help model widely consulted on and model developed including proposals for a new Children and Families Hub process to take all referrals.

Impact:

Briefing rolled out to so wide awareness of new Early Help system model.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

6.6.1 Parents have the right to electively home educate their children. The Education Welfare Service and Merton School Improvement track these cases and ensure that education is being provided appropriately.



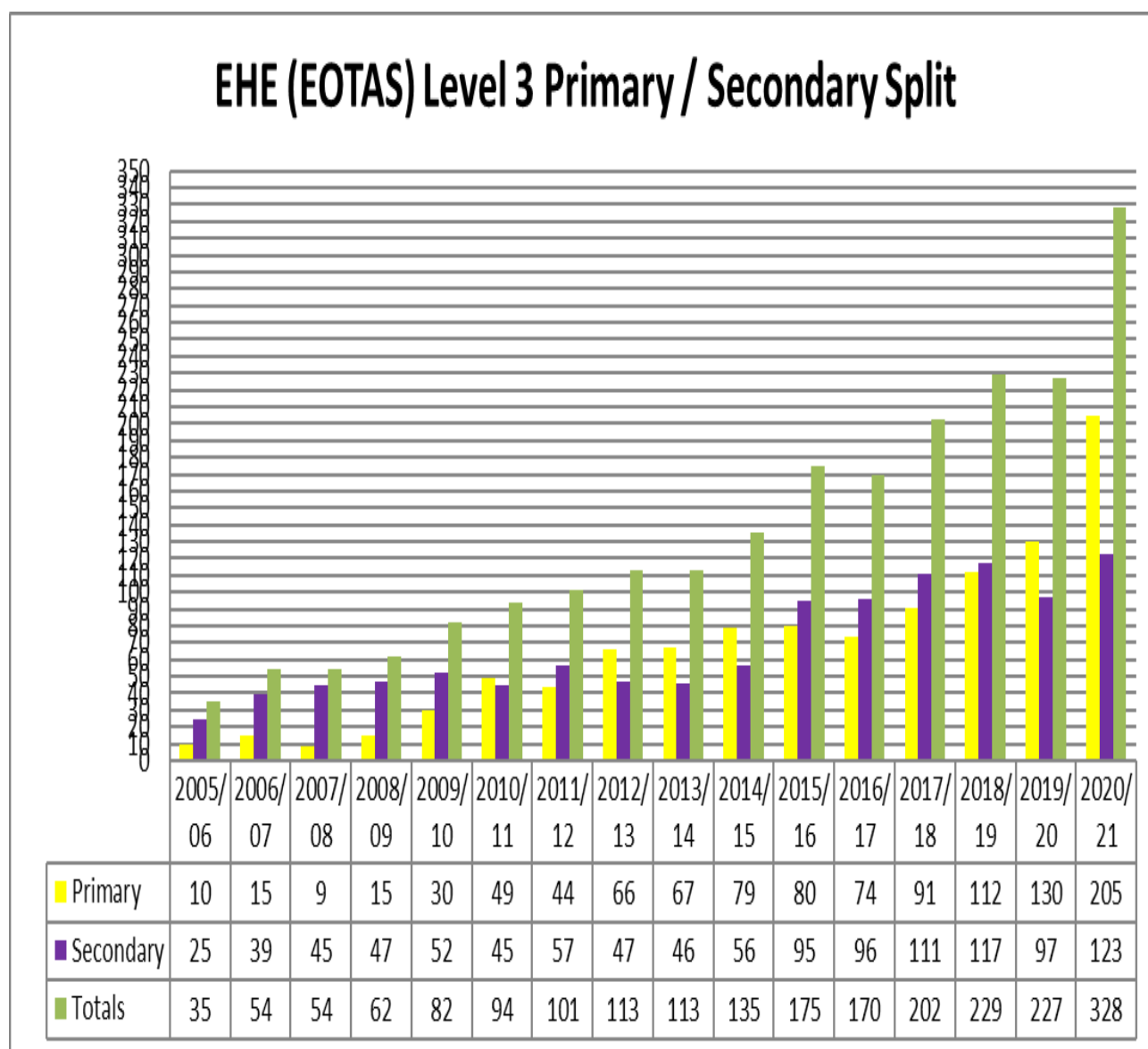
Volume of Electively Home Educated children in Merton

6.6.2 The numbers of families commencing elective home education continued to rise, to 328, children during the academic year 2020-21. This came as a result of a 45% rise in EHE applications (nationally this is estimated to be 34%, according to a recent ADCS survey), and an increase in those choosing to remaining electively home educated. At the end of the academic year there were 196 open cases, in comparison with 132 the previous year. In line with the national picture, Merton has seen an annual rise every year since 2008, representing in total a 429% increase. This has risen at a much faster rate than the general child population rise.

6.6.3 This increase has challenged the capacity of the EHE system to register, review and follow up families. On line reviews (as a result of Covid restrictions) have made the process more efficient and improved

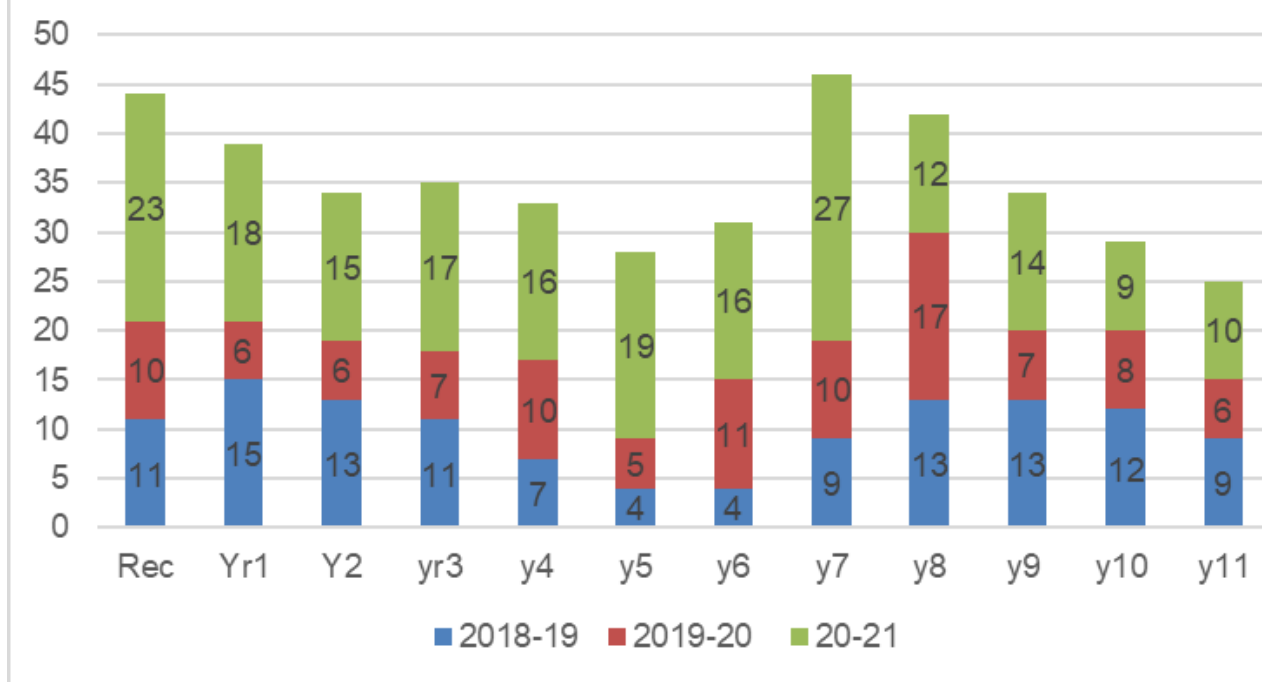
engagement with some families, but extra resources were requested from the Local Authority’s Covid funding. The rise in EHE numbers is monitored through the Education Dashboard by the CSF Divisonal Management Team.

6.6.4 The increase in the number of families choosing to remain electively home educated seems to have in part arisen from the desire of parents to maintain EHE until the risk posed by Covid 19 is reduced. Many families adapted to be able to educate their children at home more successfully as a result of the increased number of resources now available online. Some families decided there would be less disruption if they home schooled while ‘lock downs’ remain a possibility.



6.6.5 In the period 2015 to 2018 there was a higher proportion of children commencing EHE from secondary schools than primary, but since 2019 to 2020 we have seen that trend change and have a higher percentage commencing from primary schools. There has been a 58% increase for primary age pupils in comparison with 2019/20.

EHE by year group 2019 to 21



6.6.6 There has been an increase in the number of families electing to commence home education in Reception year. This may have been due to some uncertainty for families affected by Brexit, and also choosing to delay entry because of Covid concerns. The rise in numbers has been particularly seen in years 5, 6 & 7, at key points of transition from primary to secondary.

Appropriateness of Education

6.6.7 Families are contacted in line with the Merton EHE policy and offered an assessment of the appropriateness of the education provided and advice on improvements if required. This work is carried out by two experienced education professionals.

6.6.8 10 families in the academic year 2020/21 advised that they were unable to continue to provide home education and their children then became “children missing education” after withdrawing to electively home educate, and required placing back into education. This is a similar figure to the previous year (9). However, 5 of these children were in one family so in real terms the number of families fell considerably on the previous year. One child became “CME” because they had had 2 consecutive “not appropriate” reviews – the same number as last year.

6.6.9 Eight reviews of elective home education were deemed “not appropriate” during 2020-21 which is a decrease from the previous year where we had 16.

6.6.10 All families who choose to home educate their children are asked to provide an opportunity for the Local Authority to review the education by means of a home visit/video or telephone call or by providing a report. If the information provided indicates the education is “not appropriate”, a further review is carried out within 3 months, and if this is also deemed “not appropriate” then we will work with the family to return the child to school, or EWS will commence with the School Attendance Order (SAO) process.

6.6.11 EHE children are not monitored on Children Missing from Education (CME) panel unless it is advised or it is suspected that no education is being provided and legal action is being considered; they are monitored within EWS.

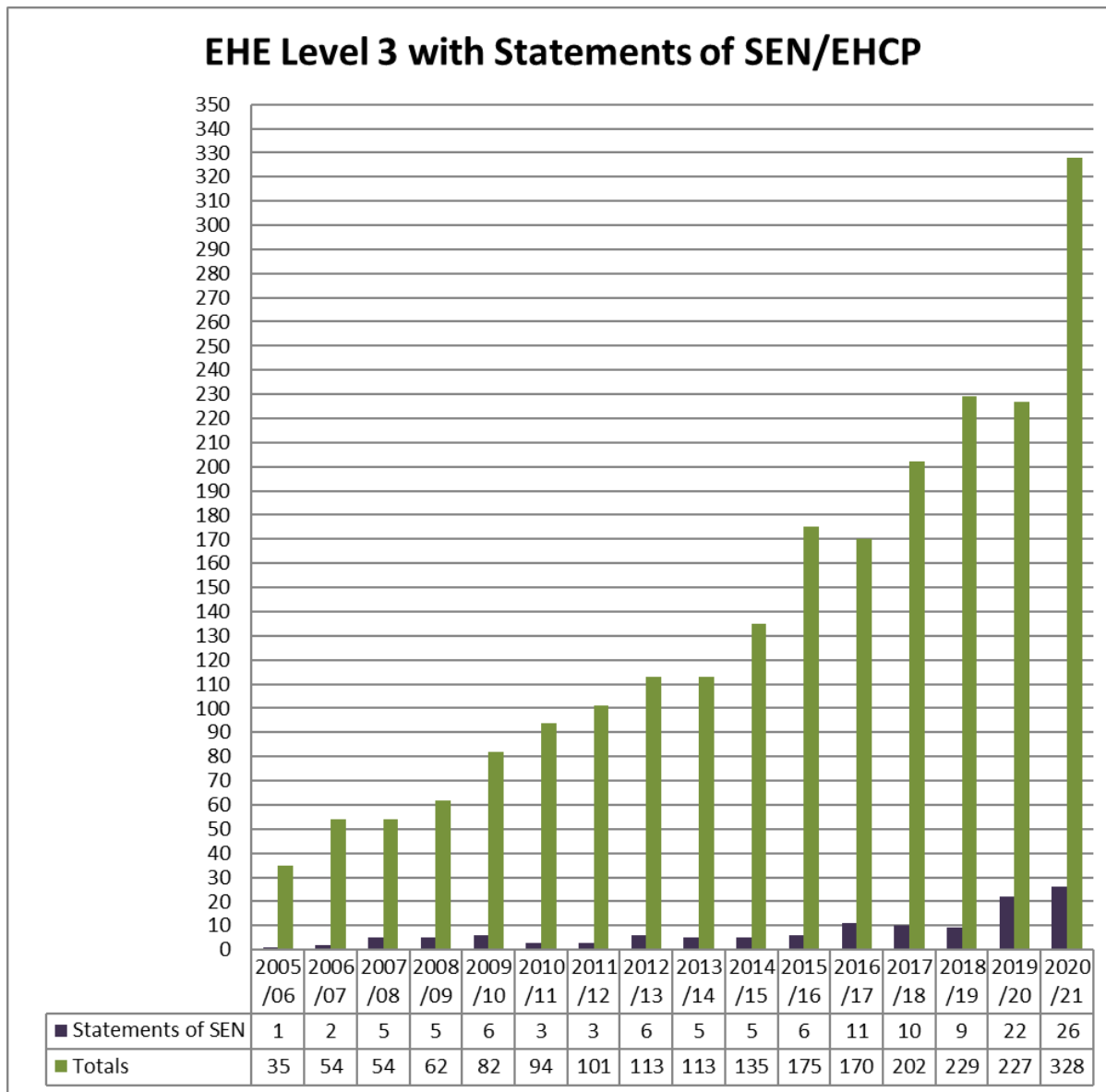
6.6.12 In the absence of any information being provided by a family/carer we will assume no education is occurring and proceed accordingly. In 2020 to 2021 we did not commence any SAO processes, and no SAOs were issued.

6.6.13 All families are normally offered a visit or the opportunity to provide a report, which is reviewed by School Improvement and the Education Welfare Service (EWS). In 2020-21, we began to offer video/telephone reviews instead of home visits, to accommodate social distancing requirements. We found that some families, who had previously chosen to just provide reports, were willing to have a video review instead, thus increasing contact with those families.

6.6.14 We made 265 reviews of elective home education in total. 64 children had two or three reviews during the academic year. The table below shows the breakdown of the latest 201 reviews for each child and how they were carried out. In 79% of the reviews the child was seen. Last year 37% of families provided reports, but this year only 18.5% chose this method.

Review method	Numbers	Percentage
Report, child seen	35	17.41
Home visit, child seen	1	0.5
Home visit, child not seen	2	1
Facetime, child seen	5	2.49
Telephone Call, child not seen	19	9.45
Telephone call & report, child not seen	2	1
Whats App, child seen	15	7.46
Whats App, child not seen	4	1.99
Zoom, child seen	103	51.24
Zoom, child not seen	13	6.47
Zoom, child not seen & no video	2	1

SEND and Elective Home Education



6.6.15 There was an 18% increase in the number of EHE children with an EHCP this year, (26 compared to 22 last year). However, this increase is not proportionate to the increase in EHE overall (45%). Children with EHCPs were prioritised to attend in lockdowns which may have been a factor. Families of children with an EHCP seem to choose home education because they feel it will be easier to meet the special educational needs of their child or they cannot continue in their current school while awaiting a new placement. EWS work closely with Special Education Needs Disabilities Integrated Services (SENDIS) to ensure that the families are supported to meet the needs of their children. All reviews are overseen by the Head of SENDIS.

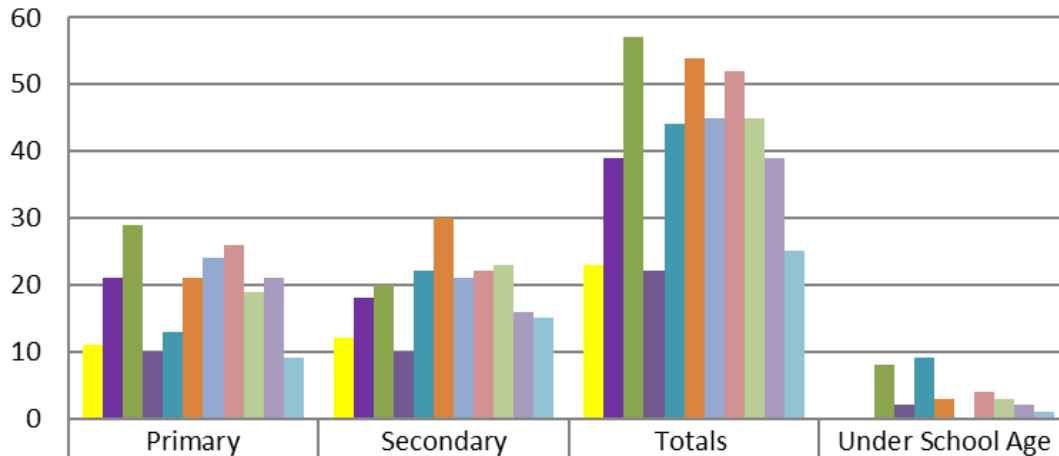
6.6.16 If the parent of a child with special educational needs who was previously attending a specialist provision advises they are going to home educate their child, SENDIS is advised and the placement will be held open for the family until appropriate home education is in place. We liaise with SENDIS who will finalise the review of the education in these cases.

Safeguarding Children who are Electively Home Educated

- 6.6.17 Safeguarding concerns are rare in the overall case load of children who are electively home educated. However there is national concern that children who have been home educated appear too often in Safeguarding Partnership Learning Reviews or Serious Case Reviews. On registering a child as being home educated, checks are made so we are aware if there are any safeguarding concerns. If this is the case the lead professional is informed of this change in education provision and we liaise with them during the process, for example where there is a Child Protection Plan. There were fewer children on a CIN plan during 2020 to 21 (one child), and no children on a CP plan. 11.2% of children who were home educated in 2020-21 were known to wider children services, a considerable decrease in comparison with the year before (22%). This may reflect that a different cohort of children were home educated in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.
- 6.6.18 EWS operate a BRAG risk rating system for all open cases, to reflect the levels of concern. If any safeguarding concerns are encountered a referral will be made to the Children and Families Hub if appropriate. During 2020-21 three referrals were made for a total of 10 children. Two of these prompted CIN plans to commence to ensure ongoing support.
- 6.6.19 In 2020/21 there were 118 referrals received as a result of off rolling notifications for children who left their education provision in Merton to electively home educate; of these, 34 had commenced and their home borough was not in Merton. Some of these had moved a long way from Merton or abroad and planned to commence EHE, but the majority resided in neighbouring boroughs (eg Lambeth, Wandsworth, Sutton, Croydon or Kingston). These notifications were passed to the resident borough to ensure that the children continue in education.

Pre EHE processes

EHE Level 2 enquiries not proceeded with or below reception age



	Primary	Secondary	Totals	Under School Age
2010/11	11	12	23	
2011/12	21	18	39	
2012/13	29	20	57	8
2013-14	10	10	22	2
2014/15	13	22	44	9
2015/16	21	30	54	3
2016/17	24	21	45	0
2017/18	26	22	52	4
2018/19	19	23	45	3
2019/20	21	16	39	2
2020/21	9	15	25	1

6.6.20 EWS continue to try to ensure families are aware of the commitment involved when electing to home educate, by providing a “clarification sheet”. Head Teachers in Merton schools have agreed that this will continue to be provided to families where possible prior to them withdrawing their children to home educate. This sheet summarises information, ensuring that families are more aware of the commitment and the requirements when withdrawing their child to electively home educate. We include in the secondary school clarification sheet that if a family apply for a new school, information will be shared from the last school if requested, to discourage families commencing EHE to avoid exclusions, and to be open and honest with families who may not be aware of this. EWS continue to offer advice to parents pre EHE. However, in line with the rise in EHE there has been a drop in cases contacting deciding not to proceed to EHE.

6.6.21 In addition, there are likely to be many families electively home educating in our borough that we are not aware of. Services (including nursing, and A and E) continue to refer to the EWS and these cases have been added to our register to allow monitoring of their education.

Support to families

- 6.6.22 There have been a number of families who have chosen home education because they believe it is a better environment to meet their child's mental or physical health needs. Where appropriate, information has been shared with them about services available to support their child eg. Off the Record
- 6.6.23 We have liaised with the nursing service so that they can provide us with information relating to vaccinations due. This year we have passed on the contact details (where we have had consent from families) to the School Nursing team so they can make direct contact.
- 6.6.24 As the situation around Covid 19 caused considerable disruption with pupils expecting to sit exams in the summer term of 2020, we have provided information to all the appropriate year groups who are electively home educated and advisers have given support to families where they were concerned about this.

Challenge

- 6.6.25 During the last year the LA has been challenged by several parents on points of law related to EHE. EHE is also an area where regular Freedom of Information requests are made as there is significant public interest. 10 FOIs were received in 2020/21.

Unregistered/Illegal Schools and Tuition Centres




- 6.6.26 The LA continues to provide information to OFSTED relating to potential illegal or unregistered schools. This led to the successful prosecution of one establishment in the past year. The LA continues to make families aware if a provision is unregistered.


Children Missing Education (CME)



- 6.7.1 All partners within the Merton Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (MSCP) have a duty to identify children who are missing education. The Local Authority runs a multi-agency Children Missing Education (CME) panel monthly to track all CME children of school age. This is the third year of using a more accurate tracking dashboard which is intended to improve data quality and track across academic years.
- 6.7.2 The panel tracks two types of cases - children who are already off roll (CME Off Roll), and those who are still on the roll of a school but where that education placement is at risk (CME Vulnerable). We have a statutory duty to track off roll pupils. On roll pupils is a preventative process where the child’s access to education is very low. In 2020/21 we ran the multi-agency panel all year, but during the January Lockdown we also ran the Covid CME process (as noted in the section on attendance above). The members of the panel gave monthly updates and cases were tracked.
- 6.7.3 The Home Office placed asylum seekers in the Colliers Wood Hotel and Merton championed that these children should be given school places. Other families moved in during the pandemic, experiencing domestic violence for example.

CME Panel Analysis: cases discussed at CME Panel 2020/21

- 6.7.4 The reopening of schools in September 2020, and then a further lockdown continued to have an impact on the number children out of school and the ability to get them into school in the spring term. However the impact of the panel on the timeliness of returning children to school was significantly improved: the percentage going back into schools doubled over the course of two panel meetings (one month). There was a fall in the number of young people referred to CME as off roll, and the number of children vulnerable to CME remained steady. This was unexpected as it had been predicted that the increasing levels of anxiety experienced by children and parents as a result of Covid would result in an increase. We also saw an improvement in the timeliness of case closure of children vulnerable to CME. This shows that effective multiagency work was again possible to return them to school.
- 6.7.5 There has been a significant improvement in the number of children with SEND out of school. After three years of rises in the number of CME off roll pending placements, this has fallen sharply from 31 (in 2019/20) to eight. We also now have a three year trend of improvement in the number of children with EHCPs who are vulnerable to CME: down from 80 in 18 – 19 to 39 in 20-21.
- 6.7.6 The numbers of children in care out of school remained low and there were no children on CP plans out of school. The numbers of young people open to the Youth Justice service on CME remained low, although it had been zero in the previous year.

CME Panel 2020-21	CME (Off Roll)	YoY	Vulnerable to CME (On Roll)	YoY
Number of cases discussed	96 CME (Off Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2020-21 AY (17 cases open & 79 cases closed during AY). This is a 14% decrease on cases discussed from the previous AY. In comparison for 2019-20, 112 cases discussed at CME Panel (14 Open and 98 Closed).		120 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2020-21 AY (46 cases open & 74 cases closed during AY). This is a 2% increase on cases discussed from the previous AY. In comparison for 2019-20, 118 cases discussed at CME Panel (31 Open and 87 Closed).	
Panel timeliness	63% of CME (Off Roll) cases actioned and closed by CME Panel during 2020-21 Academic Year within 34 days of case start date, compared		51% of Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases actioned and closed by CME Panel during 2020-21 Academic Year within 91 days of case start date,	

	to 2019/20, when 32% were completed in 34 days		compared to 2019/20, when 33% were completed in 34 days	
Age	Children in Year 7(16%) and Year 9 (17%) during 2020-21 were over-represented in CME (Off Roll) cases compared to the Merton School Population (Jan 2021). In comparison for 2019-20 AY,Year 11 (20%) and Year 10 (17%).		Children in Year 9 (17%) and Year 10 (32%) during 2020-21 were over-represented in Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases compared to the Merton School Population (Jan 2021). In comparison for 2019-20 AY,Year 11 (31%) and Year 9 (19%).	
Gender	Male's over-represented 49% (47) of the 2020-21 CME (Off Roll) cases compared to 52% of the School Population (Jan 2021). In comparison for 2019-20, 51% of the CME (Off Roll) cases were Male, which is a reduction of 2%		Male's over-represented 57% (68) of the 2020-21 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases compared to 52% of the School Population (Jan 2021). In comparison for 2019-20, 58% of the Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases were Male, which is a reduction of 1%	
Ethnicity	33% of CME (Off Roll) cases had no ethnicity data specified at case start date compared to 45% for 2019-20. 16% are recorded as Any Other White compared to 3% in 2019-20		5% of Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases had no ethnicity data specified at case start date compared to 16% for 2019-20. 38% are recorded as White - British compared to 42% in 2019-20	
Special Educational Needs	8 CME (Off Roll) cases in the 2020-21 AY were children with an EHC Plan in comparison with 31 in 2019-20 and 27 in 2018-19		39 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases in the 2020-21 AY were children with an EHC Plan in comparison with 52 in 2019-20 and 80 in 2018-19	
Free School Meals Eligibility	86% of children are unknown when it came to their FSM eligibility for CME (Off Roll) cases. 6% are eligible for FSM and 7% not eligible for FSM		28% of children are unknown when it came to their FSM eligibility for Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases. 38% are eligible for FSM and 34% not eligible for FSM	
Missing Children episodes	Of the CME (Off Roll) cases, 0 children had two missing episodes and 0 children had 3 or more missing episodes during the 2020-21 AY. In 2019-20, 1 child had 2 missing episodes and 3 children had 3 or more missing episodes.		Of the Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases, 1 child had two missing episodes and 4 children had 3 or more missing episodes during the 2020-21 AY. In 2019-20, 2 children had 2 missing episodes and 1 child had 3 or more missing episodes.	
CSE risk	Of the CME (Off Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2020-21 there were 0 with a CSE referral. In comparison there was 1 case discussed in 2019-20 AY..		Of the Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2020-21 there were 2 with a CSE referral. In comparison there were 4 cases discussed in 2019-20 AY.	
Looked After Children	In 2020-21 there were 2 CME (Off Roll) cases in care (0 Merton). In comparison there were 4 Merton children in care in the 2019-20 cohort.		In 2020-21 there were 7 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases in care (5 Merton). In comparison there were 7 Merton children in care in the 2019-20 cohort.	
CP Plan	0 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan. This was a decrease of 1 compared to 2019-20		8 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan. This was a decrease of 3 compared to 11 2019-20	

Known to Youth Offending Team	1 child was known to the Youth Offending Team		6 children were known to the Youth Offending Team. In comparison 5 children were known to YOT in 2019-20	
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Removing pupils from school rolls

6.7.8 Since September 2016 the LA has had a statutory duty to be notified of all students being added to or taken off a school’s roll. This duty has related to private/independent schools as well as maintained schools and academies. All schools in Merton were briefed about these requirements. Schools have been encouraged to refer in a timely way. All schools are followed up if they do not return off rolls.

Academic Year	Total	School Resolved	EWS cases	EWS resolved	Unresolved	EWS Working on
September 17 – July 18	2317	1785	532	523	9	0
September 18 – July 19	2652	2082	570	543	27	0
September 19 - July 20	2227	1740	487	469	18	0
September 20 - July 21	2908	2303	605	575	28	2

6.7.9 The number of pupils taken off roll has risen by 30% in 2020/21 in comparison with 2019/20, which was down 16% from 2018/19. Families were unable to move house in 2019-20 and so there was higher pupil movement in 2020-21 once restrictions were lifted. This is a significant churn for all schools in Merton as people resettle in new life arrangements post pandemic. Tracking continued to be strong with a 24% rise in EWS caseloads, and a clear up rate was maintained at 99%. Cases deemed ‘unresolved’ are those where a child has moved abroad, and a home address or a school address has not been achieved, but we have confirmed that the child is no longer in the UK. However, we know from the autumn return that large numbers of children went off roll at the end the school year as they did not return from abroad, have moved back to another European country or moved out of the area once house moves were possible.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ofsted outcomes by school as of September 2021

Outstanding	Good	Requiring improvement	Inadequate
<p>Primary Bishop Gilpin Dundonald Holy Trinity Merton Park Singlegate St Mary's Wimbledon Chase Wimbledon Park</p> <p>Secondary Ricards Lodge Rutlish Ursuline</p> <p>Special Perseid Cricket Green</p> <p>Academies Harris Merton Harris Morden Harris Primary Merton</p>	<p>Primary Abbotsbury All Saints Bond Cranmer Garfield Gorrington Park Haslemere Hatfeild Hillcross Hollymount Joseph Hood Liberty Links Lonesome Malmesbury Merton Abbey Morden Pelham Poplar Sacred Heart SS Peter & Paul St John Fisher St Mark's St Matthews St Teresa's St Thomas of Canterbury The Priory The Sherwood William Morris</p> <p>Secondary Raynes Park Wimbledon College</p> <p>Special Melrose</p> <p>PRU Smart Centre</p> <p>Academies & Free Schools Beecholme Park Community St Mark's Academy</p>	<p>Primary West Wimbledon</p> <p>Academies Stanford</p>	<p>Primary Academies Benedict</p>
<p>Not yet inspected: Harris Wimbledon</p>			

Appendix B: School Improvement in Merton

The Principles

- 2.4.1 Merton continues to carry out its school improvement functions in the same way that it has done so for the past few years. There were some amendments to physical ways of working during the pandemic, but the principles remained the same. Above all, the strong history of partnership working within Merton was critical to providing the basis of supportive and supported models of operation during the Covid pandemic.
- 2.4.2 There is no expectation from national government that school improvement functions are carried out in the way outlined in the next few pages, and funding to do so from central government is limited. However, the Council and the Schools' Forum have made the decision to maintain funding for this school improvement offer in order to support the maintenance of the high standards currently achieved by Merton schools. There is a commitment from continued partnership working to continue to support schools in this way.
- 2.4.3 The following principles are used for school improvement in Merton:
- All children and young people in Merton deserve to receive education that is at least good, and which they enjoy. The aspiration is for as many as possible to be in provision that is judged to be outstanding.
 - Much of the expertise which ensures schools are good or better is located in schools already. This expertise needs to be maximised and shared, building strong working relationships with education leaders in the area. This is particularly important as the government's vision of a schools' led system becomes embedded and the model of school improvement needs to change as national funding arrangements change.
 - Partnership working should explicitly ensure that all education professionals working in Merton, both in schools and the LA, work together for the benefit of all children and young people.
 - Support and challenge for all Merton schools is provided on the basis of the rich information gathered from schools themselves, and using the resources available to the Local Authority, including the work of Merton Education Partners and Advisors, and of other LA officers, with Merton Schools.
 - Support and challenge is provided to schools in inverse proportion to success. Where concerns are identified, both the support and challenge increase responsively.

Merton's School Improvement Strategy

- 2.5.1 Merton refreshed its School Improvement Strategy for 2020 – 2021 in light of the current local and national contexts. This set out the LA's principles, aims, priorities and mechanisms to ensure that all Merton schools are supported and challenged to continue to improve and to provide the best possible education for the children and young people in their care.

The Strategy outlined:

- the principles and aims of School Improvement in Merton;
- priorities for improvement in Merton;
- partnership working in Merton between schools, the Local Authority and other partners;

- the Local Authority's role in monitoring, providing challenge and support, and intervention in Merton schools;
- school categorisation and levels of support.

Partnership working

2.5.2 Collaboration between Merton schools is strong, and Merton recognises that building on this strength is of paramount importance in seeking to secure the best outcomes for Merton's children and young people. The following are key existing mechanisms for collaboration and partnership working within Merton.

2.5.3 The majority of Merton schools are members of local school clusters. These are organised as follows:

- East Mitcham
- Mitcham Town
- Morden
- West Wimbledon
- Wimbledon

In addition, there is a cluster of Catholic schools, and a secondary phase cluster. Many schools will use not just the cluster relationships, but links with other schools both within Merton and beyond to share and gather best practice.

2.5.4 The schools' partnership, ATAIN, is made up of members from primary, secondary and special schools across the Borough, as well as members of the Education Department of the Local Authority. It aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching through collaborative expertise; to share best practice in order to secure high quality provision in a cost effective way; and to develop Merton schools' collective ability to inspire, and support and challenge each other to enrich Merton schools and Merton communities.

2.5.5 Merton Leaders in Education (MLEs) provide school level support for leadership. This is a local programme, based on the local leaders in education programme. Working within a local programme, MLEs are able to bring a local knowledge of systems and of high expectations for Merton children and young people.

2.5.6 Primary Expert Teachers (PETs) come from Merton's pool of excellent teachers, and provide hands on support for primary teachers in the classroom, focusing in particular on English and mathematics.

2.5.7 The Merton Special Teaching Alliance (MSTA) provides support for schools including coaching and leadership development programmes. This offer complements and enhances the local offer of support for Merton schools. The MSTA also offers a Schools' Direct programme to maximise the new to teaching recruitment opportunities for Merton Schools.

2.5.8 Teach Wimbledon is an alliance of local schools which, in partnership with the Local Authority, runs another Schools Direct new teacher training programme, again strengthening recruitment options for Merton schools.

- 2.5.9 Merton also seeks to develop collaborative relationships beyond its boundaries. The South West London School Effectiveness Partnership (SWLSEP) takes partnership working for the LA and Merton schools beyond the Borough border. Best practice and expertise is shared through joint programmes of professional development, focusing in particular on leadership, governance and curriculum development.
- 2.5.10 Where expertise is not yet available locally, Merton looks to draw on the expertise of education professionals further afield. These include National Leaders in Education (NLEs), National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) and Teaching School Alliances located outside Merton.

Merton School Improvement (MSI) Team

- 2.5.11 Merton continues to:
- Support and challenge schools to remain good or outstanding;
 - Support and challenge schools to improve from an Ofsted 'requires improvement' judgement as soon as possible;
 - Support schools in responding to national policy changes and government initiatives.
- 2.5.12 The Merton School Improvement team comprises inspectors (known as Merton Education Partners, MEPs) and advisors who work with schools, providing both in school support and challenge, and universal, central support, (mostly through continuing professional development opportunities).

Targeted support and challenge

- 2.5.13 All maintained schools continue to be linked to a MEP, and receive at least two visits a year. During these visits, leaders and governors are challenged and supported, particularly with reference to the areas covered by the Ofsted framework, including safeguarding. Where schools are evaluating themselves to be less than good, or where there were concerns about performance, support from the MEP increases. Advisors offer targeted support for identified schools, focusing on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching with regard to English, mathematics, equalities (including for those pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium), assessment, the curriculum and Early Years.
- 2.5.14 Where schools are identified as facing particular challenges (for example, they had an Ofsted judgement that judged them to require improvement, or a range of data indicated that there was a risk of a drop from a good or outstanding judgement), a 'Support and Challenge Group' is implemented.
- 2.5.15 A Support and Challenge Group may be provided to schools causing concern in any area of the Ofsted framework for the inspection of schools related to achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management. The LA uses the most robust intelligence available to determine whether a school might be causing concern.
- 2.5.16 Support and Challenge Groups are set up in partnership with the school, through first approaching the Headteacher, with the expectation that each school will engage in the process in the context of the LA duty to promote high standards.
- 2.5.17 The purpose of Support and Challenge Groups is to:

- challenge and hold the school to account for improvements required in line with the school's action plan/development plan;
- monitor and evaluate progress towards those improvements;
- provide the leadership of the school with an opportunity to rehearse key messages about the progress the school is making;
- ensure support for the school is effectively co-ordinated, and broker additional support where needed;
- provide advice and guidance to the school from a range of school improvement experts; and
- enable the LA to get a better understanding of the school.

2.5.18 Recognising that a range of factors underpin the effectiveness of schools, the MSI team works closely with a range of other LA teams and services which contribute to the wider school improvement agenda in Merton. These include:

- Virtual School for Looked after Children
- Schools' Management and Information Service Support Team (Schools' IT support)
- Governor Services
- Equalities and Diversity Team
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS)
- Virtual Behaviour Service
- Language and Learning Support Team
- Vulnerable Children's Team
- Supporting Families Team
- Education Welfare Service
- Traveller Education Service
- Continuing Professional Development Team
- Early Years' Service

2.5.19 Drawing on the range of information available, including pupil achievement data and schools' most recent Ofsted inspection outcome, support for schools is targeted towards those that require it most. Following an initial in-depth analysis of the information and deployment of resources at the beginning of the school year, support continues to be adapted throughout the year as situations change.

Universal offer for schools

2.5.20 The universal offer for all schools, including central training, is also devised based on the knowledge of local school needs and in the context of the national education agenda. The MEP programme provides a framework for school self-evaluation, and a quality assurance function, giving external verification to self-evaluation for all schools. In general, the MSI team has supported schools with the following this year:

- updates on national changes and developments;
- a quality assurance and accreditation programme for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs);
- guidance on assessment, and the collection, presentation and analysis of pupil achievement data;
- identification and sharing of local and national good practice;
- guidance in identifying, analysing, planning for and monitoring required improvements;
- preparation for Ofsted;

- advice and guidance to ensure any priorities identified in inspection are addressed;
- training, coaching and advice on the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and teaching and learning; and
- general support for leadership.

2.5.21 Many of the services listed in the section above ('Targeted support and challenge') also offer a buy back service through service level agreements for all Merton schools.

Local Authority Statutory Functions

2.2.1 Local authorities continue to have key statutory functions in relation to the education of its children and young people, and hence to securing the improvement of its schools. These include ensuring that 'education functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and learning, and promote the fulfilment of learning potential'.

2.2.2 In order to promote high standards, the DfE has identified that local authorities have considerable freedom as to how they deliver their statutory responsibilities. Most importantly they should:

- Understand the performance of maintained schools in their area, using data as a starting point to identify any that are underperforming, while working with them to explore ways to support progress;
- Work closely with the relevant Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and other local partners to ensure schools receive the support they need to improve;
- Where underperformance has been recognised in a maintained school, proactively work with the relevant RSC, combining local and regional expertise to ensure the right approach, including sending warning notices and using intervention powers where this will improve leadership and standards; and
- Encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement; support other schools; and enable other schools to access the support they need to improve.

2.2.3 In addition, when delivering their school improvement function, local authorities must have regard to the 'Schools Causing Concern' (SCC) statutory guidance. This was updated and reissued in September 2020.

2.2.4 In particular, the guidance identifies the role of Regional School Commissioners (RSC) in SCC, exercising powers on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. The guidance clarifies that the RSCs should work with local authorities to build 'a supportive schools culture' to 'work with school leaders to drive school improvement'.

2.2.5 The guidance identifies the processes local authorities can take with RSCs may take in SCC that are eligible for intervention

2.2.6 Local authorities and RSCs may give warning notices to maintained schools where they have concerns about unacceptable educational performance (including results below the floor standards), a breakdown in leadership and governance, or where the safety of pupils or staff may be being

threatened. Where a maintained school does not comply with a warning notice, it will become eligible for formal intervention.

2.2.7 Formal intervention by LAs is defined as the power to:

- require the governing body to enter into arrangements;
- appoint additional governors;
- appoint an interim executive board (IEB);
- suspend the delegated budget.

2.2.8 The RSC also has the power to:

- direct closure of a school;
- take over responsibility for an IEB;
- make an academy order.

2.2.9 In schools that have been judged inadequate by Ofsted, an academy order will be issued by the RSC, requiring them to become sponsored academies.

Appendix C: Glossary of Acronyms

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children’s Services
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CME	Children Missing Education
CSC	Children’s Social Care
CSF	Children, Schools and Families
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
EHE	Elective Home Education
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EIF	Education Inspection Framework
ELG	Early Learning Goal
EBacc	English Baccalaureate
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ETE	Education Training and Employment
EWS	Education Welfare Service
EXS	Working at the expected standard
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDS	Working at greater depth within the expected standard
GLD	Good Level of Development
GPS	Grammar Punctuation and Spelling
HMI	Her Majesty’s Inspector
K	In receipt of SEN Support
KS1/2/4	Key Stage 1/2/4
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi Academy Trust
MEP	Merton Education Partner
MLE	Merton Leader in Education
MSI	Merton School Improvement
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NELI	Nuffield Early Language Intervention
NLE	National Leader in Education
NLG	National Leader in Governance
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
Ofsted	Office for standards in Education
PA	Persistent Absence
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PET	Primary Expert Teacher
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
RPA	Raising the Participation Age
RSE	Relationships and Sex Education
SAO	School Attendance Order
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEND	Special Educational Needs or Disabilities
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENDIS	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service
SENI	Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund
SWLSEP	South West London School Effectiveness Partnership
TA	Teaching Assistant
TAMHS	Targeted Mental Health in Schools
VBS	Virtual Behaviour Service
YOT	Youth Offending Team

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 15 March 2022

Wards: All

Subject: Departmental Update

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer Joint Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education.

Contact officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

Recommendations:

- A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department, since the panel's last meeting and not covered elsewhere on the agenda. It focusses on those aspects of particular relevance to the department.

2 DETAILS

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

- 2.1. At the time of writing this update, we are just coming to the end of our inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). The early help and children's social care inspection focuses on the impact we have on the lives of children and young people, including the effectiveness of leaders and managers, and the quality of our professional practice. Under the ILACS framework, local authorities previously judged 'Good' receive a short inspection, which takes two weeks. During the first week the inspectors are off-site and evaluate a significant amount of data and evidence which we are asked to submit in the first few days. During week two, which took place for us from Monday 28th February to Friday 4th March, the inspectors are on-site and focus on direct practice by holding discussions with practitioners across our system and reviewing children's case files. They also attended our Children in Care Council, Our Voice; met with two of our Young Inspectors; and they had 1:1 meetings with several other care experienced young people.
- 2.2. I am really proud of our Directorate, who have worked tirelessly during this period to showcase the great practice we have in Merton. It has been a challenging two years, operating in a time of significant uncertainty, and our practitioners were able to demonstrate how we have risen to the challenges

to ensure that children, young people and families continue to receive the support they need. The inspectors will now write up their findings over the coming weeks. However, their provisional, verbal feedback to us was positive. They spoke to us about seeing great examples of child-centred, direct practice, by passionate and committed workers. They highlighted effective collaboration, well-coordinated support for children and families, and strong multi-agency working. We are confident that the Directorate, along with our partners, have evidenced to inspectors strong practice here in Merton, and we are looking forward to receiving their report.

- 2.3. The next steps are that the inspectors will draft their report and share it with us on Friday 18th March for us to review for factual accuracy. The report and will remain under embargo until publication.

Supporting Vulnerable Children

Supporting vulnerable Children and with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

- 2.4. The statutory SEN2 data return was completed and uploaded on the 3rd March 2021. As of this date, Merton maintained 2467 Education Health and Care Plans.
- 2.5. The total number of referrals received in the 2021 Calendar Year was 361 of which the LA agreed to undertake an Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) on 309 cases and did not agree to issue 18 following of these plans following the EHCNA.
- 2.6. In 2021, the LA issued a total of 334 new EHCPs, some of which were referred during 2020.
- 2.7. The year to date timeliness (20 weeks for EHCNA) has significantly improved over the year and has shown an increase of 32.4% since the 2020 SEN2 resulting in the total number of EHCPs excluding exception cases issued within 20 weeks as 72%.
- 2.8. As members will be aware from previous updates, Merton was invited to participate in the second round of the DfE's 'safety valve' intervention programme with the aim of agreeing a package of reform to the high needs system that will bring the DSG deficit under control. The initial part of the process has now concluded, and negotiations have been successful. The department continues to be in discussions about the finer detail regarding the programme. Inclusion in the programme will mean that the DfE contributes to the clearing of our historical DSG debt, on condition of the successful delivery of an ambitious plan to address the factors underlying the deficit.
- 2.9. Additional provision: Construction works to expand Melrose school to provide for primary age pupils have now successfully completed, and we are out to tender for works to open the Whatley Avenue provision in September as planned. Merton Medical Education Services are now using part of Lavender Nursery, who will fully move into their new home in Steers

Mead at the end of the Easter holiday period once these works are completed.

- 2.10. SEND travel assistance – following the report to this committee in February, a report is going to Cabinet on 21 March 2022.

Supporting Schools

School Admissions:

- 2.11. 1st March was secondary school admissions' offer day. Although there was a small decrease in the number of resident applications, there were substantially more first preferences for Merton secondary schools, reflecting a high and increasing confidence in the borough's secondary schools. This contributed to us being able to offer nearly 70% of school children a place at their first preference secondary school – an increase of more than 5% on previous years.

School Attendance

- 2.12. School Attendance is improving in Merton as we emerge from the pandemic. However, attendance rates remain below pre pandemic levels. Schools and services have been working hard with families to support children to return to full education. Public Health have continued to give excellent infection control advice for schools.
- 2.13. Schools have been averaging about 1% above national averages on the daily attendance. Attendance of vulnerable children has also risen, and in particular of children with EHCPs in mainstream schools. Their attendance is better than that for the wider population of children.
- 2.14. We continue to carefully monitor the attendance of children with a social worker, which has been below the national averages, particularly in secondary schools. We have run additional Children Missing Education panels to review all children with a social worker and receiving support from the Family Well Being service – reviewing all children known to us with an attendance rate of below 90%. Our Education Welfare Service will continue to work with schools to drive up attendance in schools.

Covid – Impact of and response from Merton Schools

- 2.15. Numbers of Covid infections are declining in Merton in line with the national figures, with the highest cases currently being seen in the 16-29 age group. There has been a marked reduction in case numbers in the 5-10 and 11-16 age groups. As of 4th March, there are six active Covid-19 outbreaks in education settings, four of which are in Merton maintained schools: one primary, two secondary and one SEN. There are a further three outbreaks under investigation. Cases are in significantly smaller numbers than we were seeing before half term and in each of these schools are below 30.

- 2.16. Headteachers have been updated with regard to the removal of restrictions in line with government plans and our Public Health team have drafted a letter to parents and carers which is likely to be circulated in the week ending 11th March. The Government has removed the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test; however the public health advice is that adults and children are advised to stay at home and limit contact with others, for at least five full days, when they test positive. Headteachers may advise parents and staff to follow this guidance.
- 2.17. Since the last meeting of this Committee, one further school has been inspected by Ofsted: William Morris Primary School. In addition the reports following inspection were published for Ursuline High School (which was judged as good, with outstanding sub-judgements for Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and the Sixth Form) and Joseph Hood Primary School (which was judged as good).