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Merton Council

Children and Young People

Overview and Scrutiny

Panel



Date: 27 April 2021

Time: 7.15 pm

Venue: This will be a virtual meeting and therefore will not take place in a physical location, in accordance with s78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

AGENDA

Page Number

1	Apologies for absence	
2	Declarations of pecuniary interest	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 6
4	Covid-19 update - Presentation to follow	
5	Departmental update- Presentation to follow	
6	School Standards Annual Report	7 - 92
7	Corporate Parenting	93 - 96
8	Merton Safeguarding Children Board	97 - 112
9	Performance Monitoring	113 - 120
10	Topic Suggestions from the Panel	

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel membership

Councillors:

Brenda Fraser (Chair)
Hayley Ormrod (Vice-Chair)
Stan Anderson
Omar Bush
Nick Draper
Edward Foley
Joan Henry
James Holmes
Russell Makin
Dennis Pearce

Co-opted Representatives

Uzma Ahmad
Mansoor Ahmad, Parent Governor
Representative Secondary and Special
Sectors

Substitute Members:

Thomas Barlow
Andrew Howard
Carl Quilliam
Dickie Wilkinson

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

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Agenda Item 3

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 10 FEBRUARY 2021

(7.15 pm - 9.40 pm)

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

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

4 EXPANSION OF MERTON MEDICAL EDUCATION SERVICES INTO TO LAVENDER NURSERY SITE AND CLOSURE OF LAVENDER LONDON ROAD NURSERY (Agenda Item 4)

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help in Children, Schools and Families informed the panel members of the proposal for the Lavender Nursery site and closure of the Lavender Road Nursery which is still in consultation until 22nd February 2021. The proposal seeks to ensure fair and equal access to education for children of all ages regardless of their disability. Merton works in partnership with the voluntary, independent and private sector to ensure access to childcare and early years' education across the borough in a range of settings.

There are generally fewer free childcare schemes for eligible 2-year-olds. According to the GLA forecast Merton's under-fives has decreased in recent years which is likely to reduce the demand for childcare places however, the secondary school provision appears to be on the increase.

Currently Merton Medical Education Service provides service to children aged 5 to 16 either on-site, via home tuition or in the community depending on their needs. This service was previously located in the bungalow on the Canterbury campus however, this is no longer deemed sufficient as it could only accommodate 20 children but service requires space for 40 children. As such it was moved to Worsfold House in September 2020 for a short term. Lack of a sufficient site means children are having to have home tuition rather than learn with their peers in a social setting / environment.

The option to extend the Canterbury campus was considered but was not taken forward for a number of reasons to include the need for medical students to feel safe and secure. The expansion was also not taken forward due to the cost of expansion outweighing the adaptation of the Lavender site that could have the potential to accommodate 40 to 60 students. A site search looking at other council buildings were looked into but none were vacant or sufficient in size.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help in Children, Schools and Families assured the panel that assistance to relocate current pupils at the Lavender site would be available for up to 80 part-time places for two year olds eligible for free nursery places to local provisions from September 2021. Provision for children with not an excess of part-time / term-time places currently in early years' sector to continue on the site for this group of vulnerable children. Support will be given to fee paying families to access alternative provisions across private, voluntary and independent sector from 2021.

Assurance to the panel to continue working with providers in the marketplace, supporting continuous improvement, access to training and working in partnership to ensure sufficiency of provision was also given.

A panel member also part of the Lavender Nursery Parents' Association who do not agree with the proposal to the Lavender site by the council as it felt that the site provides a vital service to around 100 children and currently has over 40 children on its waiting list. The closure of the site would affect early years development of local children and urge the council to reconsider.

5 COVID 19 IMPACT IN MERTON UPDATE - PRESENTATION TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Public Health provided an overview of the impact of Covid-19 in Merton date. Overall the infection rate in Merton and other London boroughs

continues to decline with the R value estimated to be below 1 and positive cases per 100,000 across London boroughs decreasing.

London boroughs were previously purple in colour during the peak of the pandemic. A majority of London boroughs including Merton are now orange with some boroughs green in colour where the case numbers have dropped even more.

Covid-19 continues to put pressure on the NHS but is more manageable although the bed occupancy is still high with the severity of cases continue declining

The Director of Public Health gave a brief local analyse outline with a focus on children and young people among SWL boroughs which shows declining numbers in positive / infection cases. In both the east and west of the borough the case numbers continue to fall with the east having higher numbers throughout the pandemic. Testing centres are available throughout Merton for all age groups and anyone symptomatic whether sever or mild should get tested. There have been far less outbreak in both schools and nurseries in January compared to December due to the Christmas holiday and lockdown but regardless they have not stopped opening especially schools for key workers and SEND schools. LFD testing for students and teachers are now available twice weekly in secondary and primary schools. The number of positive cases following the LFD testing appear to be very low.

ENHANCED COVIC-19 TESTING IN POLLARDS HILL

The Director of Public Health gave a brief overview on the enhanced testing programme also known as the South African variant as it emerged from South Africa and though not more serious it is more infectious and the vaccines may be less affective against it. The purpose of the enhanced testing is to track unknown variances of the covid-19 virus more specifically the South African variant and better understand how the virus mutates but also the behaviour of the new virus. The three key areas being looked at in the enhance testing programme are rate of transmission, whether it can make the disease worse and whether they can evade immunity. There is no outbreak of the new variant in Merton rather there was one case identified in January, isolated and recovered. The enhanced testing programme is aimed at understanding whether the variant is being transmitted in our community thus is now more of a tracking exercise instead of an acute outbreak control. The programme aims to offer around 10,000 track and trace kits to contain and control the variant. All those who live, work or have essential activities in the area will be offered a PCR test ranging from a mobile test, test at a centre and to a door to door home test.

Public Health urges all those worried or concerned to get tested and continue following government guidelines for Covid-19.

Over 5000 testing kits have been handed out to date with around 30-40% positive cases found during this testing. Results from the laboratory have yet to come back as they take more time and positive cases follow the same isolation procedure.

A panel member asked how the individual with the South African variant was identified, treated, what type of vicinity they live in and action taken to minimise spread of the virus.

Another panel member asked if different age groups are susceptible to different variants?

A panel member commented on the positive response from residents to the door knocking and thanked the volunteers and community.

In response to the above the Director of Public Health confirmed that we never expose individuals, the treatment of anyone with a variant is the same as those in receipt of treatment no matter the variant and isolation procedure was in place to ensure minimal spread to the community. No additional cleaning was required and those asymptomatic individuals exposed are invited to come forward for testing as the virus can be transmitted by those who are asymptomatic.

So far the levels of susceptibility have remained the same and may be subject to change in the future.

A panel member commented on media reports of the low vaccine take up from BAME communities and asked what can be done to reduce the reluctance in vaccine take up by these community groups. Could celebrities' / sports personalities be used to promote the vaccine thus increase take up within the BAME communities.

Another panel member asked for clarity over the confusing information on the inoculation of teachers.

A panel member went further to ask about the BAME vaccine figures, when the South African variant was identified in Merton and why the response to lockdown Pollards Hill took so long to come into force.

The Director of Public Health said that there are a range of barriers to vaccination and a lot is being done by the NHS / clinicians to improve vaccine take in all groups. A great deal of work to improve data fragmentation is underway. Data detailing vaccinations by ethnicity are available and the Director of Public Health informed all of the disparities around the number of deaths at the beginning of the pandemic but these are now on the decrease. In terms of our response to the South African variant in Pollards Hill we responded immediately by getting what was needed in place once informed by Public Health England.

The Director of Public Health also said that the JCVI priority vaccination groups are based on reducing mortality not business continuity. Only teachers in SEND schools who are very exposed and pose extreme risks to vulnerable kids are being offered vaccines as a priority.

There was great deal of gratitude shown by the panel for the information presented and community spirit, togetherness as well as the work of the NHS to date.

6 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE - REPORT TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 6)

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING - REPORT TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 7)

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was noted.

9 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2025 (Agenda Item 9)

Following on from the previous meeting the Director of Corporate Services updated on the third round of the Budget and Business Plan 2020-21 and settlement. The settlement was better than expected with an additional one off funding being available for use in both Children, Schools and Families and Adult Social Care. Between December 2020 and January 2021 there was a Covid and local tax support grant scheme resulting in the reduction in the amount collected by Council Tax due to more people claiming support. It is anticipated that further council tax support in April 2021 when furlough comes to an end is likely unless extended

Additional savings target have been put forward on page 26 and Children's, Schools and Families have put forward additional proposals set out on page 47 with the draft of the Equality Assessment on page 69. Attempts to balance the budget for 2021/22 have been made but still have a shortfall / gap of five-six million for 2022/23 and council reserves have been used to balance the books.

Note there is only one saving for this panel due to the level of underspend in this financial year to be moved to next year.

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MERTON SCHOOLS
2019 -2020*

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	2
Summary of Performance Information	5
Summary of Priorities for 2020/21	7
2. Context for schools 2019/20	9
Covid Pandemic	9
Cross Phase Priorities for 2020/21 in response to Covid	11
Local Authority Statutory Functions	12
The National Context for Schools 2019/20	13
The Principles of School Improvement in Merton	16
School Improvement in Merton in Practice	17
3. Ofsted Outcomes and School Improvement	21
2019/20 School Improvement priorities, impact, and key actions taken	23
School Improvement Priorities for 2020/21	25
4. Achievement of Merton Pupils	26
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile: performance information and analysis	26
2019/20 Early Years priorities, impact, and key actions taken	26
Early Years Priorities for 2020/21	27
Year 1/2 Phonics Screening Check: performance information and analysis	28
End of KS1 and KS2: performance information and analysis	31
2019/20 Primary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken	31
Primary Phase Priorities for 2020/21	35
Key Stage 4: performance information and analysis	36
16 -18: performance information and analysis	40
Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)	42
Raising the Participation Age (RPA)	43
Apprenticeship Participation	44
September Guarantee	44
2019/20 Secondary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken	46
Secondary Phase Priorities for 2020/21	47
5. Achievement of Pupils in the Virtual School	48
Actions undertaken by the Virtual School to secure improved outcomes during the summer term	54
6. Inclusion	56
Attendance performance information and analysis	56
2019/20 Attendance priorities, impact and key actions taken	64
Attendance Priorities for 2020/2021	65
Exclusion performance information and analysis	66
2019/20 Exclusion and behaviour priorities, impact and key actions taken	71
Exclusion and Behaviour Priorities for 2020/21	72
Elective Home Education (EHE)	73
Children Missing Education (CME)	79
Appendices	83
Appendix A: Ofsted outcomes by school as of September 2020	83
Appendix B: Glossary of Acronyms	84

1. Executive Summary

1. This report provides information about the education standards, and achievement of children and young people in Merton over the academic year 2019 - 2020. It clarifies the national and local context for schools in Merton and identifies how the Local Authority (LA) has worked with schools to secure and maintain improvement.
2. Extraordinarily, and differently from previous years, this report identifies the work undertaken with schools to support them during the Coronavirus pandemic, until the end of the summer term 2020, as this was obviously a significant factor in the activity of schools for over a third of the academic year. Please see pages 9-11 for more information.
3. The pandemic resulted in a significant shift in priorities and actions for schools; nevertheless much of the work undertaken with schools against the more 'normal' priorities still took place, and after the beginning of the first lockdown, it was possible for some of this activity to move to virtual forums.
4. 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 2020. 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. Routine inspection ceased at the time of the first lockdown. For more information please see page 21.
5. 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 took place a term later (autumn term 2020), 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 Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). There were LA averages produced for KS4 and KS5, but these were not published in performance tables. Therefore the sections on pupil outcomes are much reduced in comparison with this report in previous years. It should also be noted that a result of the use CAGs rather than the outcomes of exams to calculate grades last year, performance rose in all indicators nationally, locally and in Merton.
6. The summary performance information (on page 5) identifies how, where there is data available for this year, performance at all key stages and in most indicators (where available) continues to be better than national averages. This is with the exception of permanent exclusions at all key stages, fixed term exclusions in special schools (please see italicised note immediately below), and persistent absence in special schools. National rankings, where available, show that Merton performance has continued to be broadly similar to comparative academic data year on year; national rankings for attendance are better than last year for attendance in most indicators. The quartile performance in relation to the Borough's statistical neighbours and to other Outer London boroughs in the academic indicators identifies that although there have been some improvements, there have also been some relative drops

in performance in comparison, identifying where further improvements could still be secured. *For exclusions the comparative data is worse than for the previous year, but it should be noted that these comparisons are from 2018/19, as there is always a lag in the publication of this nationally. Comparative performance for 2019/20 will be stronger, following the impact of strategies undertaken by schools with the support of the Local Authority.*

7. 84% of pupils reached the expected standard for phonics decoding in Merton, an increase of one percentage point in comparison for the Year 1 cohort the previous year. This is above the national average, and in line with the local averages, for 2019; the 2020 results will not be published until autumn 2021. For more information please see page 28.
8. Performance in Merton secondary schools at KS4 remains strong. In the Attainment 8 indicator, Merton's average (53.1) is above the national and in line with 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 in line with local averages. For more information please see page 36.
9. At Key Stage 5 (KS5), when considering APS per entry for all Level 3 qualifications together, the performance of students in Merton is above the national and the London averages this year, (with the exception of Academic students where performance is in line with the national average). The proportions of students achieving the higher grades at A level improved this year, as might be expected with the CAGs, but our performance continues to be lower than the national and local averages. For more information please see page 40.
10. The performance of pupil groups varied across the key stages where there is data available. Disadvantaged pupils narrowed the gaps with their peers in some key indicators at KS4; but in the Phonics Screening Check the gap widened: CAGs seemed to benefit this pupil group, but more test-like assessments seemed to demonstrate how the pandemic impacted on them particularly negatively. The difference between boys' and girls' performance also varied, with a narrowing in some indicators at KS4, but again a widening in the Phonics Screening Check. Pupils in receipt of SEND support improved their outcomes in the Phonics Screening Check and at KS4; those with EHCPs also improved their outcomes in the Phonics Screening Check, but dropped slightly at KS4. 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.
11. The proportions of young people who are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET), or whose status is not known, have again fallen and are significantly better than national averages. Performance in all three indicators continues to place Merton in the top quintile of performance nationally. Merton NEET and not known combined score is the 8th lowest of all authorities nationally. The not known figure has continued to fall. 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 page 42.

12. Pupil attendance was affected by the pandemic and the change in attendance rules about who could attend schools. The data shared for 2019/20 is for the autumn term only (the only full term for which 'normal' attendance data locally and nationally is available). This section outlines the actions taken in the first lockdown and the opening up to maintain attendance for the most vulnerable. Schools worked hard to make sure that they were aware of all children, with many contacting homes or carrying out socially distanced home visits to check families were well and engaging. For more information please see page 56.
13. During the significant disruption of the pandemic, exclusion from school decreased significantly but there is no benchmark data to compare this year with. Gaps between pupil groups which have historically been seen, have reduced this year for boys, those in receipt of free school meals, and Black Caribbean pupils. There was no permanent exclusion from primary or special and a reduction in secondary; anecdotally this is not the universal picture in London, but there is no published comparative data. For more information please see page 66.
14. The full year volume of children being electively home educated is flat at the same high level as the previous year, however this masks the rise in referrals post march when schools gradually went back after June 2020. During the lockdown there were no new referrals, while post lockdown referrals increased significantly. This was affected by parents in primary schools not wanting their children to return due to Covid fears and other children leaving private schools due to financial difficulties. For more information please see page 73.
15. 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. With schools closed timeliness of closing cases to the panel decreased, but the numbers of children closed to the panel and back in school increased across the year both in terms of CME off roll and CME vulnerable. There were no young offenders off roll and the numbers of children in care who were vulnerable improved. The numbers of children with EHCPs off roll awaiting placement grew whilst the numbers on roll at risk of becoming CME fell for the first time in three years. Fewer children went off roll of schools by July 2020 than in the previous year. However we know from September data that in fact more have gone off roll but as schools were not fully returned for all children, they did not come off roll until September. For more information, please see page 79.

Summary of Performance Information

	Compared to 2019	3 year trend	Compared to National 2020*	2020 Outer London neighbours (quartile)*	2020 Statistical neighbours (quartile)*	2019 National Standing*	2020 National Standing*
KS1							
Year 1/2 phonics	+1	-1	**	**	**	45 th	**
KS4							
Attainment 8 Score	+2	+3.4	2.9↑	↓	↓	16 th	26 th
Grades 9-4 in English and maths	+6	+5	4↑			33 rd	31 st
English Baccalaureate	+5	+7	11↑	↑	↑	15 th	19 th
KS5							
Average points per entry (level 3)	+5.61	+5.12	0.17↑			52 nd	47 th

Exclusions

Please note: comparison with national and local performance is from 2018/19 data, the most recent where this is available: comparative performance will be better for 2019/2020 if/when this is published.

Permanent Exclusions - primary	=	-0.01	0.02↓			36 th	1 st
Permanent Exclusions – secondary	-0.17	-0.02	0.13↓			21 st	93 rd
Permanent Exclusions – special	-0.27	=	0.06↓			15 th	141 st
Fixed Term Exclusions - primary	-0.33	-0.41	0.83↓			47 th	44 th
Fixed Term Exclusions – secondary	-2.47	-2.41	3.44↓			25 th	17 th
Fixed Term Exclusions – special	-3.2	-2.27	2.15↑			15 th	118 th

Attendance

Attendance- primary	-0.1	+0.1	0.4↑			30 th	20 th
Attendance – secondary	=	=	1↑			10 th	15 th
Attendance – special	+0.3	-0.5	0.5↑			91 st	67 th
Persistent Absence - primary	+2	+1.9	1.9↓			42 nd	19 th
Persistent Absence – secondary	+0.6	+0.9	4.1↓			10 th	7 th
Persistent Absence – special	-4.1	-0.2	1.3↑			134 th	98 th





- The summary performance information identifies how, where there is data available for this year, performance at all key stages and in most indicators (where available) continues to be better than national averages. This is with the exception of permanent exclusions at all key stages, fixed term exclusions in special schools (please see italicised note immediately below), and persistent absence in special schools.
- National rankings, where available, show that Merton performance has continued to be broadly similar to comparative academic data year on year; national rankings for attendance are better than last year for attendance in most indicators.
- The quartile performance in relation to the Borough's statistical neighbours and to other Outer London boroughs in the academic indicators identifies that although there have been some improvements, there have also been some relative drops in performance in comparison, identifying where further improvements could still be secured.
- For exclusions the comparative data is worse than for the previous year, but it should be noted that these comparisons are from 2018/19, as there is always a lag in the publication of this nationally. Comparative performance for 2019/20 will be stronger, following the impact of strategies undertaken by schools with the support of the Local Authority.*

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 2018 or national data, downward arrows indicate positive performance.

*2020 national rankings, and quartile performance are for 2020 for all indicators except for exclusions, which are for 2019 (the most recent London and national data available). Similarly 2019 national rankings are for 2019 for all indicators except exclusions, which are for 2018.

**This data is not yet available.

Quartile Ranking

	First quartile
	Second quartile
	Third quartile
	Fourth quartile

Summary of Priorities for 2020/21

School Improvement

- a) To continue to support all Merton schools to navigate the changing national and local landscape as the pandemic continues to impact us all.
- b) To adapt the MEP programme of support and support from advisers, to fit with Covid restrictions, whilst maximising impact.
- c) 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.
- d) As the inspection framework is expected to change again, support all schools, but particularly those with longstanding outstanding judgements, to prepare for inspection.
- e) To ensure ATTAIN continues to provide strong local collaborative leadership, addressing local priorities effectively.
- f) To work closely, both strategically and operationally, with the local Teaching School Hubs to maximise their impact across the school system.
- g) To support leaders with their own mental health and wellbeing, and in turn enable them to support their staff.
- h) 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.
- i) 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.

Cross Phase priorities in response to Covid

- a) To support schools to plan for the return of pupils following lockdowns, and shorter spells of absence including as a result of the need to self-isolate; to support schools to identify what learning needs to be identified as 'key' before pupils can move on to their next year group/phase of education.
- b) To further support schools to develop their remote learning offer, and consider how schools' learning during this time can impact positively in the future.
- c) To support schools to maximise the number of devices and access to Wi-Fi for their most disadvantaged pupils.
- d) To support schools to use catch up funding, to maximise its impact, and to report it appropriately and in line with government guidance.
- e) To advise schools with regards to assessment, again fitting in with national guidance (particularly with regards to Teacher Assessed Grades in the secondary phase), and providing local guidance where the national guidance is thin or lacking.

Early Years

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

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

Primary Phase

- a) To work closely with the local English, maths and Early Years hubs to maximise impact and raise standards across the school system.
- b) To continue to support the development of curriculum leads in the context of Ofsted's wider focus on the broad curriculum.
- c) 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.
- d) To further develop the consistency of the teaching of reading, and in particular to read for fluency.
- e) To further support schools to embed the mastery approach to teaching mathematics.

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) To ensure all Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding.
- c) 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.
- d) To narrow the gaps for key groups at KS4: disadvantaged pupils, boys, pupils in receipt of SEN support, White British and Black Caribbean pupils.

Inclusion

- a) 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.
- b) To track children off rolled or moved abroad during the pandemic.
- c) To work with the schools in the mental health trailblazers to improve support for low to medium mental health needs in schools and to expand the offer to more children.
- d) To work with the Merton Medical Education Service to expand services for children out of school with medical needs.
- e) To set up provision for Primary SEMH Pupils as part of Melrose School.
- f) To maintain support for children with SEMH through Covid regulations
- g) To embed and develop the mental health Trailblazer projects in Merton schools and support school mental health leads.
- h) To establish the new Early Help service and consult on the model

2. Context for schools 2019/20

Covid Pandemic

- 2.1.1 The biggest contextual factor facing schools during the academic year 2019/20 across the country was obviously the Covid pandemic.
- 2.1.2 The first cases in Merton schools appeared at the very beginning of March 2020, when one school was affected. Thereafter, cases began to affect more schools, and were rising until the implementation of the first lockdown.
- 2.1.3 Support for schools from the local Public Health team and from Council officers began well before the first cases emerged, with support for individual schools affected and early, universal, communication about Covid from the Local Authority with schools taking place in early February. Government guidance for schools began to be issued in the latter part of February, and the launch of the DfE Coronavirus help line on 2nd March. This period also saw the provision of the first of many template letters and resources produced by the Council to support schools in dealing with what was an unprecedented situation at the time.
- 2.1.4 By the middle of March schools were preparing for closure to the majority of pupils, which of course was announced on 19th March, to take effect from Monday 23rd March.
- 2.1.5 From Monday 23rd March schools were only open to the children of critical/key workers (the definition of which was updated frequently as the pandemic unfurled), and children with a social worker. During this initial period, and certainly until the beginning of the summer term in late April, many things were uncertain for schools, and headteachers had to make many 'common sense' decisions in the absence of clear government advice, and the Council sought to support them in whatever way that was possible.
- 2.1.6 At this point schools began to put in place the measures that have become so familiar: bubbles of pupils and staff working in isolation for those attending on site; regular washing/sanitising of hands; more regular cleaning of surfaces; the restriction of activities, particularly in relation to sport and music; the restriction of the use of shared resources; and the provision of remote education to all pupils not attending on site education.
- 2.1.7 Even after the beginning of the summer term, schools and their leaders were dealing with incredibly complex challenges and working very long hours in order to make things work. Guidance from the Government often came out very late, with the expectation that it should be in place within hours. Schools were having to make plans to keep all pupils and staff still on site as safe as possible, developing skills that would not have automatically been included within the job description of headteachers.
- 2.1.8 Covid cases affected school communities in many ways: where staff themselves tested positive or had to self-isolate because of contact with a positive case, staffing levels to support pupils in school or learning remotely was affected; whole bubbles had to self-isolate; families were affected personally through the devastating loss of loved ones.

2.1.9 Support from the Local Authority during the summer term took many forms:

- Regular communication with individual headteachers to provide support: in the first instance this was daily and then dropped to lower frequencies as required.
- Weekly meetings with secondary headteachers and primary headteacher cluster representatives, again to support and to problem solve together.
- Regular meetings with special school headteachers. Weekly multi agency meetings with leaders at Perseid to help risk assess the most vulnerable pupils.
- Daily emails to headteachers from 25th March, to streamline communication with them from Council officers, and to summarise Government guidance.
- The provision of risk assessment proformas, based on Government guidance about measures to be put in place to minimise and mitigate risk.
- Regular health updates, including flow charts to clarify actions to be taken in the event of a positive Covid case.
- Advice from Public Health Consultants for individual schools as needed.
- Risk assessment proformas for individual pupils with EHCPs (at the beginning of the pandemic pupils with EHCPs had to have a risk assessment in place to attend school).
- Updates to the LA model safeguarding policy.
- Sharing of Children’s Social Care and Family Wellbeing Service arrangements to support vulnerable children during lockdown.
- HR advice to enable leaders to support their staff; and managing agency staff
- Signposting to the services provided by other agencies and organisations, including to support families in hardship

2.1.10 It also took the form of original guidance, or guidance to compliment and flesh out that provided by the Government. This included guidance on:

- Supporting and recording attendance.
- Provision of Free School Meals and vouchers
- Teaching resources to support mixed age face to face teaching
- Provision of remote education
- ‘Hubbing’ arrangements
- Format of provision during the Easter holidays and the summer half term
- Managing assessments in the absence of statutory assessment (primary) and the Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs – secondary)
- Managing the NQT process/support for ITT students
- Clubs and before and after school care
- Supporting staff and families with bereavement
- Supporting pupils who might find remote learning difficult (eg SEND,EAL)
- Working from home
- Educational visits
- Holding governors’ meetings, and the role of governors during this time.
- School Streets, and travel arrangements for children and families.

2.1.11 All Merton schools remained open to pupils allowed to attend during this period (two schools took the opportunity to provide ‘hubbed’ resources).

- 2.1.12 Officers in the Education Division continued their work with schools where possible. In the vast majority of cases this involved remote working, and the use of online platforms (such as MS Teams and Zoom) to meet virtually with school staff, pupils and families. EHCP assessments continued, though with exemptions to the law recognising the difficulty to complete assessments within timescales. Some training was initially cancelled but the majority moved quickly online.
- 2.1.13 Primary schools opened more widely to all pupils in the EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 on 1st June; and secondary schools to Years 10 and 12 on 15th June. Attendance was not mandatory but strongly encouraged. More detail about attendance during Covid in Merton schools can be found on page 59.
- 2.1.14 Ofsted carried out a focused visit looking at the local response to the pandemic, and said the following in their report about schools' responses:
- Children's services staff, schools and partner agencies have worked together very effectively to enable the most vulnerable children and children in care to continue to attend school.
 - Significant efforts by staff in schools provided oversight of these vulnerable children throughout the lockdown period. Through frequent welfare calls to children and their families and visits to their homes, school staff identified some new vulnerabilities, such as economic hardship. They mitigated these issues through, for example, providing food vouchers and food to families.
- 2.1.15 This section has hopefully provided a flavour of what was happening for Merton schools during the last weeks of the spring term and the whole of the summer term of this academic year. The legacy of Covid obviously continues, and priorities for the Local Authority to continue to support schools in this context are outlined below.

Cross Phase Priorities for 2020/21 in response to Covid

- a) To support schools to plan for the return of pupils following lockdowns, and shorter spells of absence including as a result of the need to self-isolate; to support schools to identify what learning needs to be identified as 'key' before pupils can move on to their next year group/phase of education.
 - b) To further support schools to develop their remote learning offer, and consider how schools' learning during this time can impact positively in the future.
 - c) To support schools to maximise the number of devices and access to Wi-Fi for their most disadvantaged pupils.
 - d) To support schools to use catch up funding, to maximise its impact, and to report it appropriately and in line with government guidance.
 - e) To advise schools with regards to assessment, again fitting in with national guidance (particularly with regards to Teacher Assessed Grades in the secondary phase), and providing local guidance where the national guidance is thin or lacking.
- 2.1.16 The next part of this context section of the report looks at some of the more 'business as usual' context for Merton schools during 2019/2020, much of which will be familiar. Merton Local Authority continues to secure the improvement of its schools within the national context for both schools and local authorities.

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.

The National Context for Schools 2019/20

Department for Education

2.3.1 **Trust Capacity Fund** - High-performing academy trusts were encouraged to grow and support more schools across England, supported by £17 million. The Trust Capacity Fund will be used by high performing academy trusts to build on the rising standards in many sponsored academy schools, by ensuring they can provide support to communities and schools that need it most.

2.3.2 **Healthy Schools Rating Scheme** - The DfE introduced the new healthy schools rating scheme, designed to recognise and encourage schools' contributions to pupils' health and wellbeing. It celebrates the positive actions that schools are delivering in terms of healthy eating and physical activity, and aims to help schools identify useful next steps in their provision. The scheme is part of a wider series of government actions to support pupils' health and wellbeing, and is a commitment from the government's Childhood Obesity Plan. This voluntary scheme is available for both primary and secondary schools. Schools will complete a self-assessment and then receive a rating based on their responses around food education, compliance with the school food standards, time spent on physical education and the promotion of active travel. Each participating school will receive a report based on their survey answers, and those achieving Gold, Silver or Bronze awards will receive a certificate.

2.3.3 **School Sport and Activity Action Plan** - This action plan is a statement of intent, setting out a joint commitment from the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), to ongoing collaboration at national level to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after-school activities, so that all children have the opportunity to take part in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

2.3.4 **Teacher Wellbeing Research Report** – The key findings from this report were as follows

- Teachers enjoy teaching and are positive about their workplace and colleagues, but they are disappointed by the profession
- Levels of satisfaction with life are higher among the general public than staff in schools and FES providers and overall levels of teachers' occupational well-being are low
- Workload is high, affecting work–life balance
- Staff perceive lack of resources as a problem that stops them from doing their job as well as they can
- Poor behaviour is a considerable source of low occupational well-being, and teachers do not always feel supported by senior leaders and parents with managing it
- Relationships with parents can be a negative factor and a source of stress

- Educators told us that they do not have enough influence over policy, which changes too quickly
- Educators also feel that Ofsted inspections are a source of stress
- Findings on overall support from senior leaders are mixed
- Staff need more support from their line managers

Recommendations for leaders included:

- Fully support teachers to implement behaviour policies consistently and ensure that the overall school culture helps to optimise pupils' behaviour.
- To reduce teachers' workload leaders should familiarise themselves with the DfE's guidance and toolkit to reduce workload in the areas of marking, administrative tasks and lesson planning.
- Senior leaders should ensure that parents are informed about the most appropriate ways of raising concerns and that they have appropriate mechanisms to respond to parents.
- Develop staff well-being by creating a positive and collegial working environment in which staff feel supported, valued and listened to and have an appropriate level of autonomy.
- Leaders should familiarise themselves and their staff with the new education inspection framework (EIF) to avoid unnecessary workload.

2.3.5 **SEND review** - The DfE announced a review into support for children with SEND, following the announcement an extra £700 million in funding for 2020/21 for pupils with SEND. The review aims to cover:

- the evidence on how the system can provide the highest quality support that enables children and young people with SEND to thrive and prepare for adulthood, including employment
- how to better help parents make decisions about what kind of support will be best for their child
- making sure support in different local areas is consistent, joined up across health, care and education services, and that high-quality health and education support is available across the country
- how to strike the right balance of state-funded provision across inclusive mainstream and specialist places
- aligning incentives and accountability for schools, colleges and local authorities to make sure they provide the best possible support for children and young people with SEND
- understanding what is behind the rise in demand for education, health and care (EHC) plans and the role of specific health conditions in driving demand; and
- ensuring that public money is spent in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner, placing a premium on securing high quality outcomes for those children and young people who need additional support the most.

2.3.6 **Early Years Foundation Stage reforms – early adopters invitation** - In January 2020 all primary and infant schools and academies were invited to voluntarily implement the forthcoming reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage a year early in the academic year 2020 to 2021. 14 Merton schools took up this offer, and are being supported by our Early Years Adviser.

2.3.7 **Free school meals/Pupil Premium** - The DfE increased the rates of the PPG. From April 2020 the new rates were:

- £1,345 per primary-aged pupil
- £955 per secondary-aged pupil

Ofsted

2.3.8 **New inspection framework** – inspection under the new framework started in September 2019. The key features of the new inspection process include the following:

- Good schools are subject to two days of Section 8 inspection, an increase from one day.
- Section 5 inspections are also two days. The size of the inspection team varies according to the size and nature of the school.
- Good schools will continue to be re-inspected approximately every four years, unless Ofsted’s desk top risk analysis indicates that there are concerns.

At the heart of the EIF is the new ‘Quality of Education’ judgement, the stated purpose of which is to put a single conversation about education at the centre of inspection. This conversation draws together curriculum, teaching, assessment and standards.

2.3.9 **Inspection of outstanding schools** - The Secretary of State for Education confirmed plans to allow Ofsted to re-visit all schools currently judged to be outstanding within the next five academic years under government proposals.

2.3.10 **Ofsted’s approach to three year KS4s** – In a blog Ofsted confirmed that there is no ‘preferred length’ for KS3 provision. Their final judgements is based on whether schools offer pupils an ambitious curriculum across their whole time in secondary education – whether it is rich, ambitious and well sequenced – rather than when each element is delivered. However it was noted that a three year KS4 could result in a narrowed curriculum, because pupils might be narrowing the subjects they study to the ones they will be examined in at the end of KS4.

2.3.11 **Making the cut: how schools respond when they are under financial pressure** - This Ofsted report summarises the findings from a qualitative research project carried out in 2018–19. This research was not designed to give an overview of the financial situation of schools in general, but to explore how schools make decisions when they are under financial pressure, and what impacts these decisions could have on quality of education. Key points/sections to the report include:

- ‘School funding is not historically low, but has decreased in recent years, and costs have risen’
- ‘Schools feel squeezed and see funding as a major issue’
- ‘SEND provision is being squeezed’
- ‘Curriculum breadth and quality of education may be coming under pressure’
- ‘How staffing cuts are affecting schools’
- ‘Rising workload may lead to retention problems’
- ‘Attainment is being maintained, however’
- ‘Although [Ofsted] found evidence of good financial decision-making, this was not always the case’

Next steps were identified as the following:

- ‘Schools are working in a challenging financial environment, and we found many examples of leaders being thoughtful and sometimes innovative in how they dealt with that. But, in the education system as a whole, there is room for improvement in how school leaders and governors make decisions on resources. This will affect the quality of education that our children and young people will receive, and that makes it a priority to us at Ofsted.
- For this reason, we will be carrying out research to see whether it is helpful for inspectors to go into schools with some financial indicators, and what conversations with leaders, governors and trustees may help inform our judgements on leadership and management and quality of education. We will then decide whether to include these elements in future school inspections.’

2.3.12 Ofsted thematic report on child sexual abuse - Ofsted published a thematic report, which draws together the findings of six local area inspections carried out between and September 2018 and May 2019, with the latest research on sexual abuse in the family environment. The report notes that this issue remains taboo in families, in communities and amongst frontline professionals working with children and families. This needs to change. Key findings from the report include: professionals require greater training on this issue to improve their confidence in both recognising and responding to sexual abuse in the home; preventative work is too focused on known offenders; we rely too heavily on children to verbally disclose abuse; practice is too police-led and not sufficiently child-centred; and, children and non-perpetrating family members are not supported well enough. The report concludes that a national strategy on sexual abuse in the family home is required as is better inter-agency information sharing with health, probation and school nursing staff often holding key information and insights.

Black Lives Matter and Race Equality

2.3.13 In May 2020 the death of George Floyd sent shockwaves around the world. In Merton, we set up a new 'Black Lives Matters and Equalities Forum' to consider and plan for how we should respond. The forum met twice in the summer term, considering local and national data and other information. Membership of the group comprises senior school leaders, support and teaching staff, and governors. The forum continues to meet, and there is now a strategy in place, and training and events for staff in a variety of roles and responsibilities. Supporting schools with this agenda is a priority for 2020/2021 (please see the summary of priorities on page 7).

The Principles of School Improvement in Merton

2.4.1 In this national context, 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 after March 2020.

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.

School Improvement in Merton in Practice

School Improvement Strategy

2.5.1 Merton refreshed its School Improvement Strategy for 2019 – 2020 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 A number of schools (19 at present) are engaged in a peer review process, guided by Merton inspectors.
- 2.5.10 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.
- 2.5.11 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

- 2.5.12 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.
- 2.5.13 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

- 2.5.14 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.
- 2.5.15 In 2018/2019, where schools were 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' was implemented.
- 2.5.16 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.
- 2.5.17 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.
- 2.5.18 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.
- 2.5.19 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

2.5.20 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.

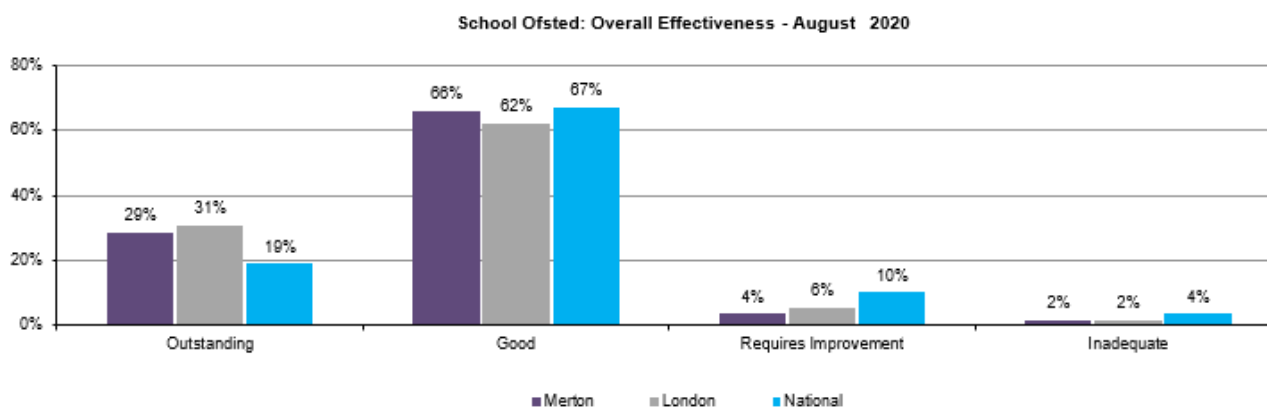
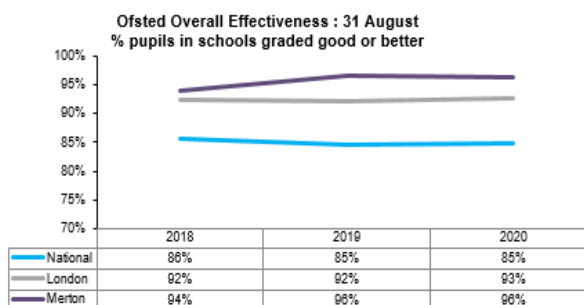
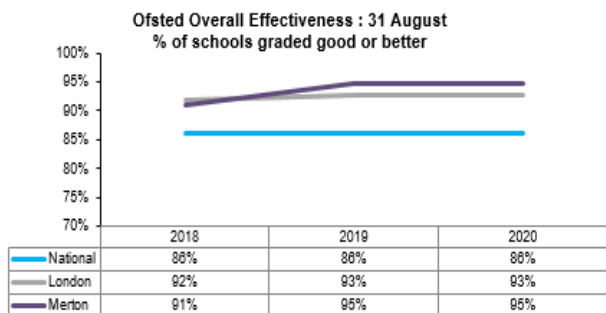
Universal offer for schools

2.5.21 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.

2.5.22 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.

3. Ofsted Outcomes and School Improvement



- 3.1 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. 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 2020. 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.
- 3.2 The proportion of *pupils* in schools judged to be good or better was also maintained at 96%, which is above both the national and London averages.
- 3.3 During 2019/2020, five LA maintained schools, academies and free schools in Merton were inspected – All Saints, Malmesbury, Aragon, SS Peter and Paul and Haslemere. All five retained their ‘good’ judgement, although during the inspection of SS Peter and Paul it was identified that standards may have declined and so their next inspection will be a full Section 5 inspection.
- 3.4 Strengths highlighted in the reports included the following. From these can be gathered what Ofsted inspectors are looking for under the current inspection framework:

- Leaders and governors share a clear vision for the school. Inclusion and high aspirations are at the root of everything they do. Leaders work hard to meet the needs of all pupils.
- [Pupils'] positive attitudes ensure that learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of learning across the school.
- Senior leaders have created a supportive climate. Staff appreciate the training and development they receive. They feel valued and enjoy their work.
- Governors and leaders ensure that their statutory duties are met and have put strong systems in place to keep children safe. Leaders work effectively with a range of professionals to ensure that pupils are protected. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and know what to do if they think a child may be at risk.
- Leaders, staff and governors have designed a curriculum which gives all pupils a well-rounded education. They want to give their pupils the best chance of a successful future. Pupils in all year groups learn a wide range of subjects and achieve well.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard in all lessons. Teachers help pupils learn best when they break things down into small, bite-sized pieces and explain things very clearly.
- Children in the early years develop phonics knowledge effectively. Teachers constantly check pupils' understanding. Reading books are carefully matched to the sounds that children know. Consequently, they are becoming successful, confident readers.

3.5 Areas for improvement identified included the following. Again these give an indication as to what Ofsted are looking for in inspection:

- Leaders have responded to the school's declining standards by looking closely at how subjects can be improved. Their development plans are well thought out. However, this work is in the early stages of improving what pupils learn and when.
 - Leaders have recently added depth to the plans for what pupils will learn. These plans show how pupils will progress as they move through the school. In science and design and technology, these plans are not yet embedded. Pupils do not have a deep enough understanding of subject content.
 - In history and geography, the planning and sequencing of lessons is not as effective as in other areas of the curriculum.
 - Governors need to have a more strategic role in the school. Currently, their role is more operational.
 - Senior leaders have not ensured that all leaders of subjects secure improvements to teaching. Senior leaders should make sure that subject leaders check the quality of teaching regularly in their area of responsibility and identify where further
- Inspection report: All Saints' CofE Primary School
25–26 September 2019 3 improvements are needed.

These judgements help to inform the school improvement offer for Merton schools.

2019/20 School Improvement priorities, impact, and key actions taken

3.6

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.

Action taken to secure improvement:

All maintained schools and three academies were supported during the year through the Merton School Improvement Strategy (details of which can be found on page 17). In particular during this year this included an introduction to, and support to prepare for, the new Ofsted inspection framework

Support and Challenge Groups were put in place for all schools judged by Ofsted in their last inspection to require improvement, and for good or outstanding schools where the Local Authority identified that there was a risk that they would be judged less than good when next inspected. These schools received significant and tailored support from members of Merton School Improvement and officers from other teams and services. Support and Challenge Groups ceased temporarily at the beginning of the summer term, but were started again (virtually) by the end of the term.

Impact:

All schools maintained their good judgements when inspected; though SS Peter and Paul will receive a full Section 5 inspection when they are next inspected on the basis that the evidence collected indicated that standards might have fallen.

Two of the three schools which had Support and Challenge groups in place and which were also inspected by Ofsted during the year received good judgements.

3.7

Priority:

To ensure all schools currently judged to be outstanding achieve outstanding outcomes in their next Ofsted inspections (in light of the proposal to remove their exemption from routine inspection).

Action taken to secure improvement:

In the autumn term 2019, Attain (the Merton schools' partnership) agreed that all schools that would be expecting an inspection from Ofsted under the new framework would be supported through school reviews funded by the partnership. This included all outstanding schools that haven't been inspected since 2015 at the beginning of the processes. This process was put on hold when the pandemic hit. MEPs continued to support outstanding schools through the MEP programme. There will be workshops targeted towards the leaders of outstanding primary and secondary schools (separately) in 2020/21 to help them prepare for the resumption of routine inspection. Attain will discuss again the merits of reviews to support schools.

Impact:

No outstanding schools were inspected during 2019/20.

Priority:

To support schools to prepare for inspection under the new Ofsted Framework for Inspection.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Following activity undertaken during the previous academic year (including a variety of briefings for leaders): further briefings were held for heads and senior leaders, as well as for governors; briefings were held for middle leaders across schools, supporting them to understand the expectations of them prior to and during inspection; and individual schools were supported through the MEP programme. Also, importantly, the experiences of schools that received an inspection under the new framework were shared with headteachers.

Impact:

Attendance at and feedback from the various briefings were good. Attendees reported feeling supported and prepared for inspection. All schools inspected during the year managed their inspection well.

Priority:

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

Action taken to secure improvement:

The Attain Partnership addressed key priorities for Merton schools during 2019/2020. Through subgroups (led by Merton headteachers) the following projects were undertaken (and funding identified to support:

- Co-ordinated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - this subgroup worked together to develop a more coordinated approach to CPD delivered by the LA, the Merton Special Teaching Alliance (MSTA), and Teach Wimbledon. In addition, NQT+1 programmes were devised and delivered for primary and secondary teachers, in their second full year of teaching to support them on their next steps as they emerge from their NQT year.
- Financial Stability – this subgroup started work with a small group of School Business Managers (SBMs) to identify what support they need to ensure budgets are well prepared and mutual support is provided for each other within the SBM community. The subgroup reported to the main Board in 2020/21 and actions are now being developed.
- Primary English – this subgroup set up a project to improve primary teachers’ understanding of the expected standards in each year group in writing. This group addressed priorities arising from ongoing relative underperformance in primary writing at the end of KS1 and KS2.
- Recruitment, retention and leadership development – this subgroup developed a number of projects including: support for foundation subject curriculum leaders; reviews for schools to help them prepare for Ofsted inspection; ensured good representation from Merton schools at local recruitment fairs, and the development of a ‘primary pool’ for NQTs interested in working in Merton schools. One headteacher, under the auspices of this subgroup and funded by the DfE, supported a school outside the Borough with recruitment and retention matters. Unfortunately, no Merton schools were eligible to access this DfE funded support.
- SEND/inclusion - this subgroup oversaw two projects, one for a working group of SENCOs to develop a toolkit to support the measurement of SEND pupils’ progress, and the other to develop an approach to supporting the wellbeing of SEND pupils (the ‘Thrive’ approach).

- Secondary – this group continued to focus on raising the attainment of more able pupils at A level.

Impact:

All of these projects proceeded, with the exception of the Ofsted review process, despite Covid. Merton schools identified that the impact of these projects was good. Evaluations of the NQT+1, Primary English and support for foundation subject curriculum leaders were particularly well evaluated. The further development of the partnership is an ongoing priority, to ensure that it continues to move from strength to strength.

School Improvement Priorities for 2020/21

- To adapt the MEP programme of support and support from advisers, to fit with Covid restrictions, whilst maximising impact.
- 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.
- As the inspection framework is expected to change again, support all schools, but particularly those with longstanding outstanding judgements, to prepare for inspection.
- To ensure ATTAIN continues to provide strong local collaborative leadership, addressing local priorities effectively.
- To work closely, both strategically and operationally, with the local Teaching School Hubs to maximise their impact across the school system.
- To support leaders with their own mental health and wellbeing, and in turn enable them to support their staff.
- 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.
- 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.

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 2020.

2019/20 Early Years priorities, impact, and key actions taken

4.1.1

Priority:

To continue to work with strong local providers (including the English hub) to support schools to improve early language development.

Action taken to secure improvement:

As of summer 2020, 22 Merton primary schools had engaged with the English Hub, either through showcases and further CPD or through audits and targeted support.

Due to Covid restrictions, contact from the Merton English Adviser and the Early Literacy Specialists from the hub with some schools became limited – some of the training and support was deferred to the new academic year.

Impact:

In individual schools where support has been targeted, impact has included improvements in the consistency of teaching, and in the embedding of systems in schools. Although the impact is not yet being seen consistently, phonics screening check outcomes for individual schools would suggest that it is beginning to emerge.

4.1.2

Priority:

To improve Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) outcomes so that they are more in line with London averages.

Action taken to secure improvement:

Outcomes from the 2019 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) were shared with EYFS leaders. This development session focused on the following;

- Identifying risk factors and signs of poor emotional wellbeing
- Understanding the importance of attachment and ensuring the key person system was in place
- Establishing positive relationships with parents
- Managing and understanding the behaviour of children consistently within the team
- Maintain routines so that children feel safe and secure
- Understanding that physical and mental health are closely related and how to promote both in the provision
- Managing transitions and support children through changes in their lives.

The main concern from schools concerned managing behaviour in the early years consistently. In response to FS leaders concerns Positive Behaviour Management Guidance was written and disseminated.

In the summer term 2020, resources to support young children and their families around Covid-19 were shared with schools.

The Merton booklet on managing transition into nursery was updated in light of Covid-19 and was sent out to all early years' providers by the early years' team. This supports children's emotional wellbeing and establishing positive relationships with parents.

New transition guidance was created for children transitioning from Nursery to Reception, and from Reception to Year 1 in light of Covid-19. This document emphasised the need to support PSED as well as having practical issues addressed.

Impact:

Schools report that they have felt supported and that children have been able to cope with changes.

4.1.3

Priority:

To improve outcomes for children eligible for Free School Meals; and for Black Caribbean and Asian Pakistani children.

Actions taken to secure impact:

The Equalities Adviser provided central training for Pupil Premium leads to enable them to plan their school's Pupil Premium strategy statement. A number of schools were supported in their review and evaluation of their previous Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) spend, and in their planning and delivering of their PP strategy.

School EAL/EMA & Inclusion leads were supported in their development of remote and home learning to take account of the particular circumstances of multilingual and disadvantaged families.

Following the Black Lives Matter issues arising in the UK, a BLM and Equalities forum was created. Senior leaders, governors and equalities leads in schools met together and produced a strategy. As a result, resources were collated and training provided for senior leaders and teaching staff across all schools.

Impact:

Individual schools were supported, and a strategic approach to developing understanding and practice with regards to race equality was developed.

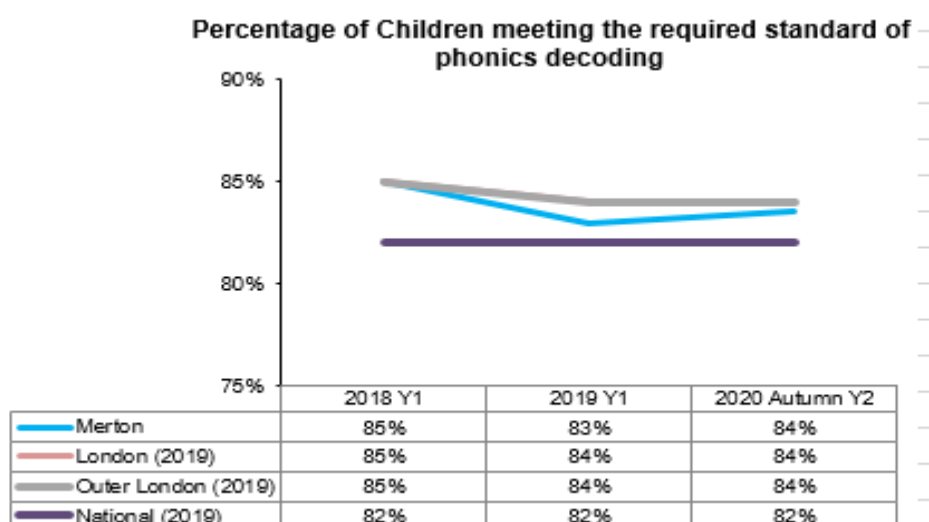
Early Years Priorities for 2020/21

- a) To support schools that have adopted the new EYFS reforms early, and to prepare all schools for full implementation from September 2021.
- b) To support schools to implement strategies to help pupils with early literacy, including promotion of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI).
- c) To improve the understanding of foundation 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.

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 2019/20 the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check was delayed until the autumn term of 2020 (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 2019/20. These are the only academic outcomes which will be reported for this year.

Phonics - headline performance information and analysis



Provisional data for Merton available only. National statistics will be published between Sept and October 2021

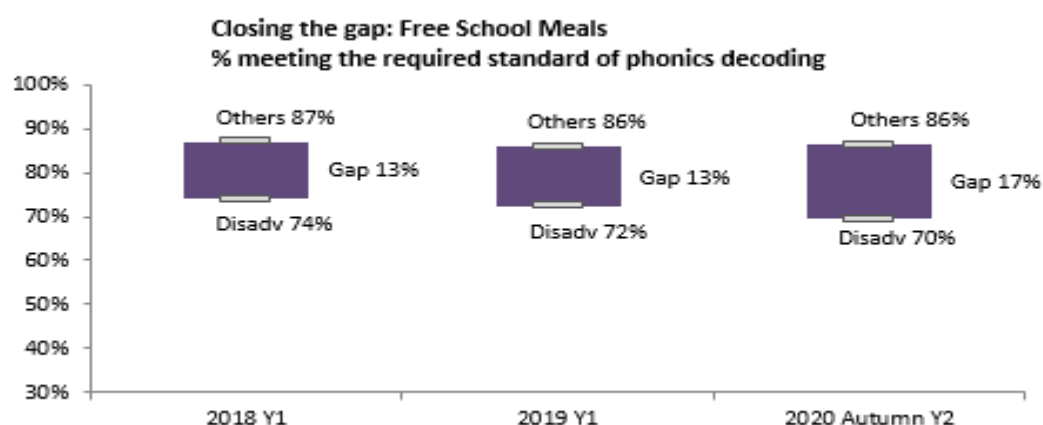
- 4.2.3 84% of pupils reached the expected standard for phonics decoding in Merton, an increase of one percentage point in comparison for the Year 1 cohort the previous year. This is above the national average, and in line with the local averages, for 2019; the 2020 results will not be published until autumn 2021.

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	2214	84%	84%	82%
Gender				
Female	1058	87%	87%	85%
Male	1156	81%	81%	78%
Gap		6%	6%	7%
Disadvantaged				
Disadvantaged pupils	371	70%	76%	71%
All other pupils	1843	86%	86%	84%
Gap		17%	10%	13%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)				
No Special Educational Needs	1913	89%	90%	88%
SEN Support	238	54%	58%	48%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	63	37%	27%	20%
Ethnic Group				
White British	697	87%		82%
White Other	416	86%		81%
Asian Other	185	88%		85%
Black African	153	84%		85%
Mixed Other	119	81%		84%
Asian Pakistani	129	80%		82%
Asian Indian	60	92%		90%
White and Black Caribbean	57	65%		79%

* London Disadvantaged is FSM

Provisional data for Merton available only. National statistics will be published between Sept and October 2021



- 4.2.4 The achievement gap between pupils eligible for the pupil premium has risen by four percentage points to 17 percentage points. This gap is wider than that seen nationally and locally in 2019. 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. As noted in the context section of this report, such a wider gap is likely to be seen nationally as well.

- 4.2.5 The performance of girls rose by three percentage points, whilst that of boys dropped by one percentage points, meaning that the achievement gap between them has widened (even though it remains in line with the gaps seen locally and nationally).
- 4.2.6 The performance of pupils both in receipt of SEND support and EHCPs rose this year. Pupils with EHCPs continue to outperform the same group nationally and locally, whilst those in receipt of SEND support perform better than the same group nationally, but below the same group locally. It should be noted that pupils with EHCPs were allowed to attend school during the first lockdown.
- 4.2.7 The performance of the largest and priority ethnic groups represented in this year group in Merton exceeded the averages for the same groups nationally, with the exception of Black African, Mixed Other, Asian Pakistani and White and Black Caribbean pupil groups. The last of these is of particular concern, where the gap is 14 percentage points. Action undertaken as part of the Black Lives Matter and Equalities Strategy aims to encourage schools to address this gap (as well as others identified in data from previous years).

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 2020.

2019/20 Primary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken

4.3.1

Priority:
Further embed and improve primary writing outcomes, especially for boys.

Actions taken to secure impact:
A range of central training delivered before lockdown addressed primary writing. These included:

- Training for Newly Qualified Teachers
- New to Year 2
- New to Year 6
- EYFS Exceeding Writers

In addition, a project funded by Attain, and for teachers in Years 3 and 4 was started during 2019/2020, but was put on hold when Covid intervened. The project builds on the success of a project for Year 5 and 6 teachers implemented during 2018/2019, and aims to develop both teacher subject knowledge of the requirements of the Year 3 and 4 writing curriculum and standardisation materials for use when making assessment judgements in these year groups. It is planned to restart this programme in the new academic year.

Impact:
The impact of this work is yet to be evaluated in terms of pupil outcomes, but once again teachers report early impact in their work in the classroom.

4.3.2

Priority:
Provide support for leaders to review the broader curriculum offer, and further develop the skills of middle leaders.

Actions taken to secure impact:
Middle leaders were supported to develop their ability to review the curriculum offer through:

- The development of key resources to help subject leaders to: review/audit their subject in the school; review/audit their own skills as leaders to identify strengths and areas for development; 'how to' guides to enable leaders to undertake key activities such as evaluating the quality of learning in books, and evaluating the quality of teaching in their subject; core handbooks for curriculum leaders.
- A series of briefings to help them prepare for Ofsted inspection, with its focus on the broader curriculum. These briefings allowed for best practice to be shared between schools as well as to share the key resources developed by the primary team mentioned above.
- The development of a series of workshops for Geography, History, Computing and Art subject leaders, using experts from the University of Roehampton, and funded by the schools' partnership, 'Attain'.

Impact:
The briefings and key resources were very well received by middle leaders, and by senior leaders as they sought to find ways to develop the roles of colleagues in their schools. The impact of the Attain workshop is yet to be fully evaluated as this project spilled over into the new academic year.

4.3.3

Priority:

Refine school target setting processes, injecting further aspiration so that second or first quartile performance is achieved in comparison with statistical and Outer London neighbours.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Expectations regarding targets were restated with schools, and these were collected through the MEP programme. MEPs provided challenge, particularly where the targets themselves and/or the difference between targets and performance in the previous year were awry. MEPs also discussed with schools the gap between current performance in the autumn and spring terms and targets, to identify what remedial actions schools needed to take to ensure pupils achieved at the standard expected. To support schools with the accuracy and consistency of their data, further work was undertaken to support moderation of assessments.

Impact:

The cycle was not completed because there were no KS1 or KS2 tests or assessments in the summer of 2020. However, schools' understanding of the Local Authority expectations with regards to targets and performance has improved.

4.3.4

Priority:

Support schools to continue to embed a mastery approach to the teaching of mathematics.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Merton Maths Adviser support for schools reinforced the mastery approach to teaching mathematics through:

- 1:1 teacher support for planning and delivery of content
- Bespoke professional development for staff teams to further develop their approach to teaching mathematics
- Support for teaching assistants to apply the principles and strategies in their role in supporting individuals and groups of pupils
- 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:

- Assessment of 'greater depth'
- Aspects of subject knowledge: Additive reasoning
- 'S' planning for coherence and progression
- Lesson design for coherence
- Addressing the needs of those working below ARE
- Planning for return to school in September 2020 after lockdown – adapting the 'missed' curriculum (specific response to COVID) – looking at key skills and knowledge

The Merton Maths Adviser led a cohort of schools on the Specialist Knowledge for the Teaching of Mathematics Programme (London South-West Maths Hub). 10 Merton schools (alongside schools from neighbouring LAs) attended a series of sessions on enhancing subject knowledge.

She also co-led (with Wandsworth) a programme on supporting pupils with SEND within the teaching for mastery approach (London South-West Maths Hub).

98% of Merton primary schools have accessed the London South-West Teaching for Mastery programme in some form (as of March 2021). This takes into account the last 4 years and includes 2019-20

Impact:

The positive impact of this work has been seen in the growing confidence and knowledge of maths subject leaders. The depth of their knowledge has improved and is evidenced in the way they reflect and discuss the journey their schools are making in developing the mastery approach.

In schools where this development has been a priority, through classroom visits, it is clear there has been progress in the quality of teaching and learning in individual teachers.

4.3.5

Priority:

Improve outcomes in the phonics screening check.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Phonics screening check data for was discussed at English subject leaders' meetings to identify strengths and areas for development.

The local English Hub (led by Chesterton Primary School) worked with identified schools, where results have been historically lower. Hub impact on phonics screening data - clearly there are other factors that should be considered but broadly:

Merton officers created an Early Reading Support package to offer support in:

- auditing school practice
- the delivery of phonics lessons
- use of decodable and banded books
- support for the lowest 20%
- preparation for an Ofsted deep dive in early reading

The package includes narrated PowerPoint presentations, teaching activities and guidance documents.

Impact:

Despite the restricted opening of schools during lockdown, outcomes for Merton pupils in the Phonics Screening Check undertaken in December 2020 demonstrated a small improvement in comparison with 2019 outcomes. Nevertheless, outcomes are still just short of Merton's all time highest result, achieved in 2018. This will need to remain an ongoing focus, in addition because the impact of lockdown on the early language skills of children has been significant.

Of the schools that worked with the local English hub:

- 5 of the 6 schools that engaged with showcases and further CPD with the Hub, maintained or improved their phonics outcomes in December 2020 despite lockdown. One of these is on a 3 year upward trend, with a 7% increase on 2019.
- 5 of the 7 schools who were audited by the Hub maintained or increased their phonics outcomes in December 2020 despite lockdowns.

4.3.6

Priority:

Improve outcomes for Black Caribbean and Black African pupils.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Windrush Day was celebrated during lockdown with support from Merton Heritage team. Information and activities were posted on line and sent to schools to spotlight the particular contribution made by the Caribbean community in Merton.

Following the Black Lives Matter issues arising in the UK, a BLM and Equalities forum was created. Data relating to possible underachievement of Black Caribbean and Black African pupils was scrutinised. Senior leaders, governors and equalities leads in schools met together and produced a strategy. Successful strategies to improve pupil outcomes are cited in the BLM and equalities strategy. As a result, resources were collated and training provided for senior leaders and teaching staff across all schools.

Impact:

Schools reported they felt supported with regards to this aspect of their work. A strategic approach to developing understanding and practice with regards to race equality was developed.

4.3.7

Priority:

Further support schools to strengthen their pupil premium strategies and narrow the gaps for disadvantaged pupils.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Pupil Premium training was provided for governors to enable them to challenge senior leaders regarding PPG spending and evaluations of successful strategies employed.

The Equalities Adviser provided central training for Pupil Premium leads to enable them to plan their school's Pupil Premium strategy statement. A number of schools were supported in their review and evaluation of their previous PPG spend, and in their planning and delivering of their PP strategy.

Impact:

Individual schools were supported to strengthen their pupil premium strategies, and central training allowed for a systems wide approach to improve practice.

4.3.8

Priority:

Continue to support schools to develop inclusive practice for pupils with SEND, and to improve outcomes.

Actions taken to secure impact:

- Heateacher workshops to explore inclusive practice in schools in light of SEND reforms and changes in the Ofsted framework.
- Attain funded project – Measuring Progress for Pupils at SEN Support. Participation of 20 schools and a range of Merton Council officers.
- Termly SENCo Forum attendance by nearly all Merton schools.
- Collaborative work with MSTA. For example, Reflective Supervision programme. Support targeted at support and challenge programme schools.
- SENCo Working Group – SENCo representatives from each of the Merton clusters. Consultation and feedback group helping to steer Merton Council support for schools and ensure understanding of challenges faced by schools.

Impact:

As a result of these various actions the following impact has been seen:

- Begun the process of a joint understanding of what inclusive leadership practice looks like and what helps to achieve it. To be developed further with the possible use of NASEN resources.
- A toolkit and guidance has been produced for 'measuring what matters' to ensure more accurate assessment of progress for pupils with SEND.
- Feedback from schools is that the SENCO forum has helped developed school practice and schools feel listened to.
- Collaborative work with the MSTA has resulted in strengthened practice of those participating through joint problem solving and coaching.
- The SENCO Working Group has facilitated timely feedback for new Council initiatives. For example, EHCP application process. Ensures termly forum agenda is relevant and responsive to school needs.

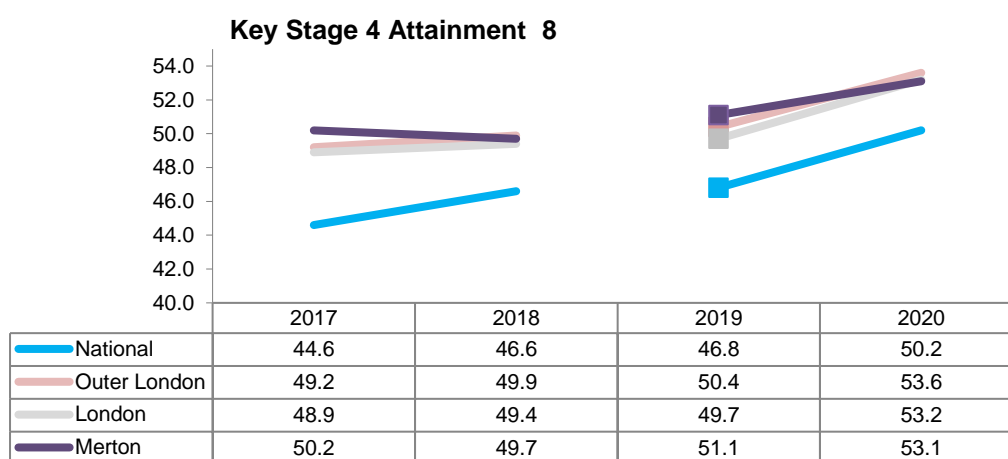
Primary Phase Priorities for 2020/21

- a) To work closely with the local English, maths and Early Years hubs to maximise impact and raise standards across the school system.
- b) To continue to support the development of curriculum leads in the context of Ofsted's wider focus on the broad curriculum.
- c) 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.
- d) To further develop the consistency of the teaching of reading, and in particular to read for fluency.
- e) To further support schools to embed the mastery approach to teaching mathematics.

Key Stage 4: performance information and analysis

- 4.4.1 Attainment at KS4 was calculated using Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). These are based on schools' own assessments and so comparison with previous years' performance is not valid.
- 4.4.2 Attainment for Key Stage 4 (KS4) was published nationally, but Progress 8 (P8) has not been published using 2019/20 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.
- 4.4.3 Following the introduction of reformed GCSEs in 2019, comparison is not possible either between 2019 and these outcomes.

KS4 - headline performance information and analysis

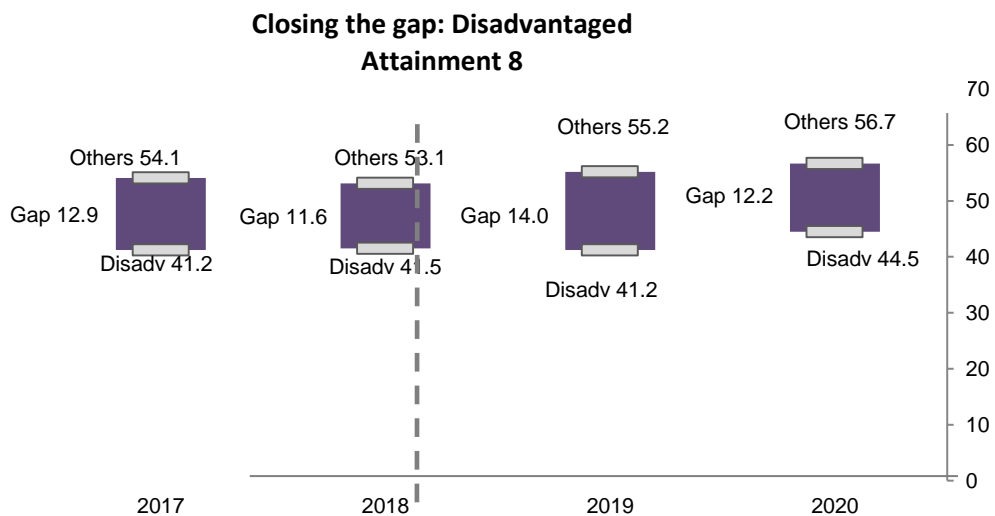




- 4.4.4 Performance in Merton secondary schools at KS4 remains strong.
- 4.4.5 In the Attainment 8 indicator, Merton’s average (53.1) is above the national and in line with the London averages.
- 4.4.6 The proportions of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in the EBacc subjects, including English and maths, and those students achieving a standard 9-4 pass in English and mathematics, are also above national and in line with 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	53.1	53.2	50.2	41%	41%	30%	75%	75%	71%
Gender													
Female	749	0.72	0.48	0.22	55.9	55.9	53.1	45%	46%	36%	79%	78%	75%
Male	806	0.38	-0.04	-0.27	50.5	50.5	47.4	37%	35%	24%	72%	72%	68%
Gap		0.34	0.52	0.49	5.4	5.4	5.7	8%	12%	12%	7%	6%	7%
Disadvantaged													
Disadvantaged	462	0.19	-0.07	-0.45	44.5	46.5	40.2	26%	30%	17%	60%	64%	53%
All other pupils	1093	0.71	0.39	0.13	56.7	56.5	53.7	47%	46%	35%	81%	80%	78%
Gap		0.52	0.46	0.58	12.2	10.0	13.5	21%	16%	18%	21%	16%	25%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)													
No Special Educational Needs	1268	0.70	0.34	0.08	57.3	56.7	53.7	47%	46%	34%	83%	82%	78%
SEN Support	204	0.06	-0.25	-0.43	41.0	40.0	36.4	15%	16%	9%	48%	47%	40%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	83	-0.51	-0.99	-1.17	18.6	17.5	15.2	4%	5%	2%	19%	17%	14%
Ethnic Group													
ASIAN	275	0.96	0.70	0.47	56.0	58.0	54.5	52%	49%	39%	83%	82%	77%
BLACK	276	0.26	0.18	0.13	47.4	49.4	48.9	25%	34%	31%	65%	70%	69%
CHINESE	7	1.14	0.85	0.86	66.3	69.1	67.6	71%	65%	58%	86%	93%	91%
MIXED	210	0.45	0.15	0.00	51.7	53.0	50.8	40%	40%	33%	71%	74%	71%
WHITE	728	0.53	0.04	-0.11	54.5	52.9	49.7	43%	39%	28%	77%	74%	71%



4.4.7 The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers varies. It has narrowed in the Attainment 8 and achieving a pass in English and maths indicators, but widened slightly in the EBacc indicator. 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 last year. There had been concerns nationally that disadvantaged pupils would be ill served by CAGs, but in fact the reverse seems to have happened, with these pupils benefitting from the lack of exams.

- 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. It should also be noted that it has reduced (by four percentage points) in the EBacc indicator as a result of boys performance improving more than that of girls.
- 4.4.9 Pupils in receipt of SEND support improved their performance in all three attainment indicators and remain above national and local averages (except in the EBacc indicator). The performance of pupils with EHCPs dropped slightly, but also remains above national and local averages (except in the EBacc indicator). This follows two years of rises in performance for pupils with EHCPs.
- 4.4.10 The performance of pupils from black and minority ethnic groups was much more mixed than in previous years, where, although there were gaps, Merton pupils tended to outperform the same groups nationally and locally. This remains the case this year in the English and maths indicator, but not so in the Attainment 8 or EBacc indicators, where black pupils in particular seem to be underperforming. This is a situation that requires careful scrutiny and consideration: there is national research that shows that black pupils are consistently under-assessed in comparison with their white peers when teacher assessment is used.

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 Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). 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

State funded school students	Number of students	Average Point Score per entry		
		Merton	London	National
Level 3 students	652	38.05	37.47	37.88
A level students	546	39.52	38.91	39.43
Academic students	553	39.54	38.89	39.54
Tech level students	33	35.00	31.49	29.75
Applied General students	246	33.44	31.12	31.14

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	39.71	19%	31%	22%
London	39.01	21%	32%	24%
National	38.8	22%	33%	24%

4.5.4 When considering APS per entry for all Level 3 qualifications together, the performance of students in Merton is above the national and the London averages this year, (with the exception of Academic students where performance is in line with the national average).

4.5.5 The proportions of students achieving the higher grades at A level improved this year, as might be expected with the CAGs, and although our performance continues to be lower than the national and local averages the gaps have narrowed.

Post 16 main pupil groups

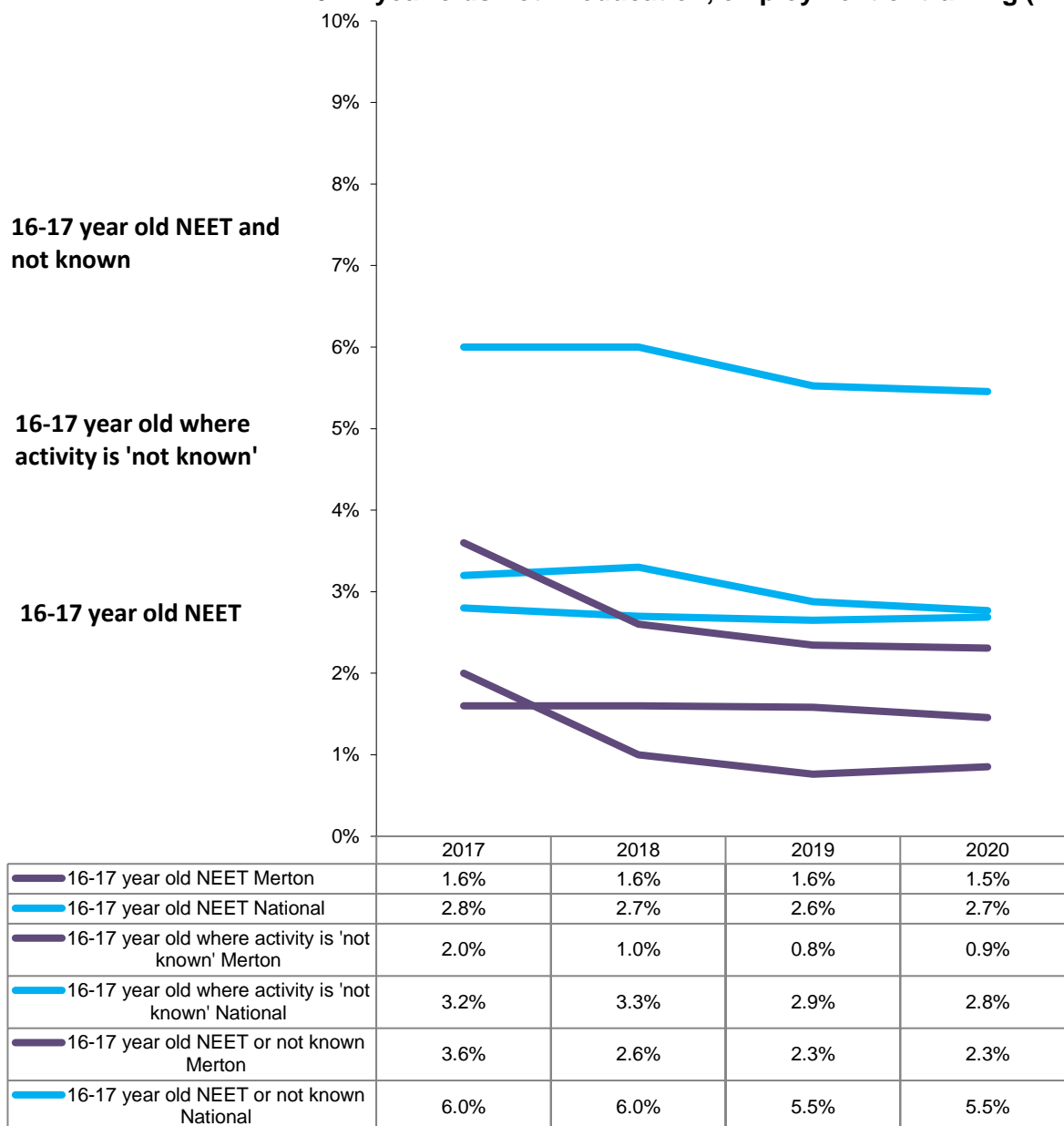
Contextual Groups	Number of A level students	Average Point Score per A level entry		
		Merton	London	National
All Pupils	546	39.52	38.91	39.43
Gender				
Female	293	40.31	39.60	40.22
Male	253	38.62	38.05	38.63
Gap		1.69	1.55	1.59
Disadvantaged (no of students at the end of 16-18 study who entered for at least one A level qualification)				
Disadvantaged		Not available		34.76
All other pupils				38.23
Gap				-3.47

4.5.6 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.

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)

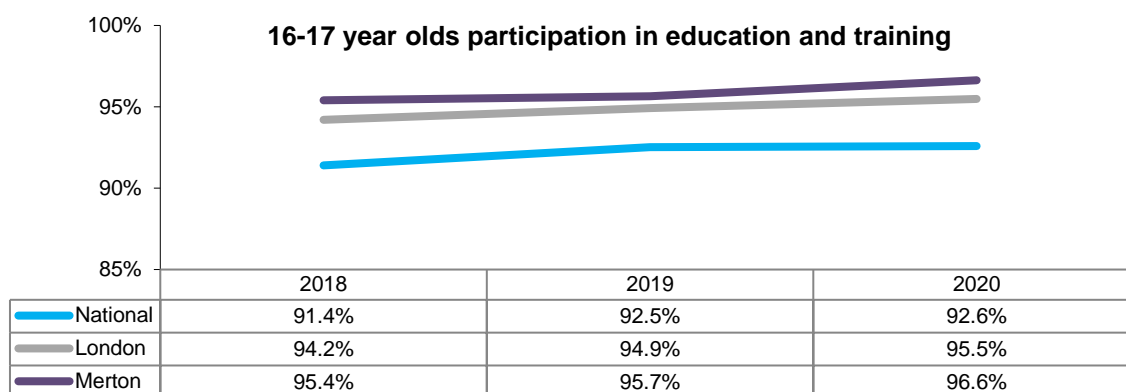


4.6.2 The proportions of young people who are NEET, or whose status is not known, have remained low and are significantly better than national averages. Performance in all three indicators continues to place Merton in the top quintile of performance nationally. Merton NEET and not known combined score is the 8th lowest of all authorities nationally (an improvement from 12th lowest in 18/19). The not known figure has risen very slightly but NEET has fallen. This is achieved through significant tracking and partnership working across schools, colleges and CSF teams. It was predicted last year that the figure

may have reached an equilibrium, where the NEET has been maintained consistently at the same very low level for 3 years: this is true for 19/20.

- 4.6.3 Our key focus for 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 In year performance of 16 – 17 year olds meeting the participation duty has improved by 0.9 percentage points, is higher than the London and national averages, and represents a five-year upward trend (against a fluctuating picture nationally) Merton’s performance is in the first quintile (best performance) in comparison with other Local Authorities in England. Merton is ranked 11th out of all English Authorities (January 2020, compared with 17th in January 2019).

Contextual Groups	2018			2019			2020		
	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
16-17 year olds participating in education and training	95.4%	94.2%	91.4%	95.7%	94.9%	92.5%	96.6%	95.5%	92.6%
- full time education	90.2%	88.7%	82.5%	92.7%	91.1%	84.8%	92.9%	91.9%	85.4%
- apprenticeships	3.2%	4.5%	6.7%	1.9%	2.5%	5.5%	2.4%	2.2%	5.1%
- other education and training	2.0%	1.1%	2.2%	1.1%	1.3%	2.2%	1.3%	1.4%	2.2%

- 4.6.5 The proportions of young people in apprenticeships, or other education and training has risen slightly this year as well. Apprenticeship percentages are 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								
	2020	Rank	2019	Rank	2018	Rank	2017	Rank	% change in year 2019 to 2020
National	5.1%		5.5%		6.4%		6.4%		-0.4%
Merton	2.4%	5	1.9%	6	3.2%	5	3.0%	5	0.5%
Barnet	1.4%	9	1.2%	11	1.3%	11	1.3%	11	0.2%
Ealing	1.2%	11	1.3%	10	2.3%	10	2.1%	10	-0.1%
Enfield	2.3%	6	1.6%	8	2.7%	8	2.5%	8	0.6%
Hillingdon	2.6%	4	3.9%	3	8.0%	1	8.3%	1	-1.2%
Hounslow	1.8%	7	1.3%	9	2.4%	9	2.4%	9	0.5%
Kingston upon Thames	2.6%	3	2.6%	4	3.0%	7	2.9%	7	0.1%
Reading	3.8%	2	4.0%	2	4.1%	4	4.0%	4	-0.2%
Redbridge	1.6%	8	2.3%	5	5.3%	3	5.1%	3	-0.7%
Sutton	4.2%	1	4.1%	1	5.4%	2	5.3%	2	0.0%
Wandsworth	1.3%	10	1.8%	7	3.0%	6	2.9%	6	-0.5%

4.6.6 When comparing the apprenticeship participation rates of Merton to those in the previous year, Merton has seen a rise in 16-17 year olds participating in apprenticeships. This is the second highest improvement against statistical neighbour LAs.

4.6.7 2020 performance ranks Merton 5th in comparison to statistical neighbours, and as the only improving borough in the top 5.

4.6.8 In absolute terms, apprenticeships for Merton are low due to high education participation in the academic age 16/17-year-old group. Apprenticeships may be taken up post 17, notably as the follow on from our in house employability scheme.

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 stable picture over 3 years of offers and progression to post 16 education and training.

16 and 17 year olds	2018			2019			2020		
	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National	Merton	London	National
Offer made	96.7%	95.1%	94.5%	96.8%	95.5%	95.0%	96.7%	95.9%	94.3%
Offer not appropriate	0.8%	0.4%	1.0%	0.7%	0.3%	1.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%
No offer	0.2%	1.2%	0.9%	1.2%	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%

4.6.10 The proportion of 16 and 17 year olds receiving an offer fell slightly (by 0.1%) against 2019. Performance remains stronger than the London and national averages. The 17 year old cohort requires significant tracking and in 2018-19 the LA identified that a lack of offers from South Thames College for one year students has impacted on our figures significantly, as 18% of Merton 17 year olds are educated

in one of the South Thames College sites. Young people with no offers are low in number and are tracked to prevent them becoming NEET post 16.

2019/20 Secondary phase priorities, impact and key actions taken

4.7.1

Priorities:

To ensure all Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding.

Actions taken to secure impact:

All secondary schools continued to be supported as appropriate through the Local Authority's Merton Education Partner programme. All schools were also supported through groups for senior leaders, heads of sixth form, curriculum leads and deputy headteachers. These are fora, which continued virtually after March 2020, and where schools are briefed on current issues and best practice. They also provide an opportunity for schools to share practice. The fora also facilitated networking across secondary schools in the borough and school-to-school support, as appropriate. Whole school and sixth form reviews were negotiated with headteachers through the Merton Education Partners in order to provide an external judgement on aspects of practice or an external validation of the school's own self-evaluation.

Impact:

During the last academic year no secondary schools were inspected and so all schools remained good or understanding.

4.7.2

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 improve.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Through the ATAIN partnership, schools have received support to improve outcomes at the higher grades at A level. This has included funding to encourage teachers to become examiners, training led by senior examiners for teachers, funding to enable all A level teachers to join professional associations, and professional development from the Prince's Trust.

Impact:

Outcomes at KS5 have shown some improvement, particularly at the higher levels for A levels, with gaps narrowing with national and local averages. These outcomes need to be viewed with some caution as these were based on CAGs, but it is to be hoped that these indications of more general improvements.

4.7.3

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:

Support for schools and central training for senior leaders responsible for the Pupil Premium Grant was offered throughout the year 2019-20 by Merton School Improvement. Termly Secondary EMA and EAL leads' network meetings continue to be supported by the LA, enabling key staff to develop support for student groups.

Impact:

The achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowed in key indicators at KS4 this year. Again, this will have been affected by the way pupils were assessed this year, but it is to be hoped that this direction of travel continues. However, gaps remain wide for pupils from some black and minority ethnic groups.

Secondary Phase Priorities for 2020/21

- 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) To ensure all Merton secondary schools remain good or outstanding.
- c) 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.
- d) To narrow the gaps for key groups at KS4: disadvantaged pupils, boys, pupils in receipt of SEN support, White British and Black Caribbean pupils.

5. Achievement of Pupils in the Virtual School

Overview

- 5.1.1 The achievement of children aged from three to sixteen was 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.
- 5.1.2 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 closely monitored and tracked through half-termly Virtual School Progress Monitoring Meetings attended by the Virtual School Headteacher, Head of SENDIS, Head of Service for Looked after children, Permanency and Placements and chaired by the Head of School Improvement. The impact of these processes ensures that, where possible, children’s progress comes back on track.
- 5.1.3 The DfE collects information on the educational outcomes of looked after children in Annexe A of the SSDA903 return. This information is collected annually for children who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months on 31st March. This definition is used because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible impact of being looked after on educational attainment.
- 5.1.4 Achievement of the ‘903 cohort’ is reported in the tables in this chapter, to allow for comparisons with national datasets. The achievement of all children on roll of the Virtual School (not just those on roll on 31st March) is also reported.

EYFSP, KS1 and KS2 Outcomes

- 5.1.5 No KS1 or KS2 assessments took place during the summer term 2020, due to lockdown.

KS4 Outcomes

- 5.1.6 During Lockdown 2020, all examinations were cancelled. Results of GCSEs were based on CAGs.

Table: End of KS4 Outcomes (GCSE) 2020

Year 11 cohort	Attained at least one GCSE (grades 9-4)		Achievement in 5 subjects or more (grades 9-1)		English & Maths (grades 9-1)		English & Maths (grades 9-4)		English & Maths Strong Pass (grades 9-5)	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Merton All CIC (Cohort size 2019 = 16 2020 =20)	7 (43.7%)	14 (70%)	3 (18.75%)	11 (55%)	4 (25%)	13 (65%)	1 (6.25%)	5 (25%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (10%)
Merton 903 (13) (Cohort size 2019 = 8 2020 =13)	7 (87.5%)	12 (93%)	3 (37.5%)	10 (77%)	4 (50%)	12 (92%)	1 (12.5%)	5 (38%)	1 (12.5%)	2 (15%)

- 5.1.7 When comparing 2019 and 2020 performance information, there have been improvement in the performance of both the Merton SSDA903 cohort, and all Merton pupils, in all indicators. The proportion achieving grades 9-4 in English and maths, at 38%, is above the most recent national average available (18%).
- 5.1.8 An improvement was to be expected as the proportions achieving in the key indicators improved as a result of the use of CAGs, for all pupils in Merton and nationally. It should also be noted that the gap nationally between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowed slightly in 2020 (also, it is surmised, because of the use of CAGs).
- 5.1.9 Although the improvements for Merton’s children in care should be viewed with caution, both because of cohort size and the national assessment situation, some of them are substantial. The stronger performance of some pupils reflects the positive impact of stable foster placements, together with no change of school through secondary school years, particularly in key stage 4. Other factors included coming into care prior to secondary school age; foster carers who were confident in supporting education and who had positive relationships with the school; consistency of social workers; no issues regarding attendance or exclusions and a Good school as judged by Ofsted, where staff knew the individual student well
- 5.1.10 Please see confidential appendix to this report for case studies A and B detailing the experiences and outcomes of two young people at this key stage.
- 5.1.11 The DfE has confirmed that no Key Stage 4 data will be being released at all relating to the results of 2020.

Destinations at the start of September 2020 (new Year 12 cohort)

- 5.1.12 19 out of 20 young people had a confirmed destination plan. The 19 young people were placed as follows:
- 1 special school
 - 1 school sixth form
 - 15 college
 - 1 secure training centre
 - 1 welfare secure accommodation
- 5.1.13 One young person did not yet have a confirmed destination plan, however went on to secure an apprenticeship after re-sitting maths GCSE in the autumn.

Post 16 Outcomes

- 5.1.14 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

- 5.1.15 Five young people achieved outcomes at Level 3 in 2020. This compares with two young people in 2019.

Pupil	Achievements	Destinations
1	A levels in Maths – B, Physics – B, Biology - C	Royal Holloway College BSc Maths and Physics

2	Triple BTEC in Media - Distinction*, Distinction*, Distinction*	University of Greenwich BA Advertising and Digital Marketing Communications
3	Triple BTEC in Applied Science – Merit, Merit, Distinction	Point Blank Music School BA Music Production and Sound Engineering
4	A levels in Art – A*, Psychology – A*, French - A	King’s College BSc Psychology
5	A level in Maths – A* and single BTEC in Applied Science Distinction	3 rd year of sixth form to study further Maths A level in one year

Not in education, employment or training

	Number in Y12 and Y13	Number in Y12	Y12 NEET	Number in Y13	Y13 NEET
Autumn 2019	75 (*14)	27	19%	48	13%
Spring 2020	80 (*7)	31	26%	49	18%
Summer 2020	85 (*4)	35	34%	50	18%

*Number of children new in care that term are in brackets

5.1.16 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. The proportions that were NEET by the summer term were higher for Year 12 young people in comparison with the same time the previous year, but lower for Year 13 young people.

Year 14 and beyond

5.1.17 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.

5.1.18 In the autumn of 2020, four young people started at university:

	University	Course
1	Royal Holloway College	BSc Maths and Physics
2	University of Greenwich	BA Advertising and Digital Marketing Communications
3	Point Blank Music School	BA Music Production and Sound Engineering
4	King’s College	BSc Psychology

5.1.19 One care experienced young person graduated from university at the end of the academic year 2019/20.

Actions undertaken by the Virtual School to secure improved outcomes during the autumn and spring terms

Quality of schools - Ofsted

5.2.1 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.

- 5.2.2 As of 31st August 2020, 92.3% of statutory school aged looked after children attended schools, where a grade was known, that are good or outstanding. This is in line with the proportion the previous year.
- 5.2.3 In the primary phase 89.7% of looked after children attended schools, where a grade was known, that are good or outstanding. This is in line with the proportion the previous year.
- 5.2.4 In the secondary phase 93.9% of looked after children attended schools, where a grade was known, that are good or outstanding. This is a small improvement in comparison with the previous year.

Table: Quality of schools attended by Merton children in care as at end of summer 2020 (academic year 2019/2020)

	EY	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	Total
Academy Converter	0	3	1	1	0	5
Outstanding	0	2	4	18	9	33
Good	4	9	16	14	21	64
Requires Improvement	1	0	0	3	1	5
Inadequate	1	0	2	0	0	3
Total	6	14	23	36	31	110

- 5.2.5 Ofsted inspections ceased during the Lockdown period from March 2020 and have to date not yet resumed.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

- 5.2.6 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.
- 5.2.7 The Virtual School works in partnership with social workers, designated teachers, and carers to coordinate meetings and record and administer PEPs.
- 5.2.8 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).

Table: Initial PEPs – Completion rates

	Autumn 19	Spring 20	Summer 20
Number who became CIC	13	7	6
Ceased being CIC before Initial PEP	1	0	0
Number of PEPs completed within 20 days (in time)	8	5	6
% completed within time scale	67%	71.4%	100%

5.2.9 Initial PEP completion rates improved across the year, following a readdressing of the systems to ensure prompt notification of a child coming into care, and are significantly better than in 2018/19.

Table: Review PEPs – Completion rates

	Autumn 19	Spring 20	Summer 20
Number of PEPS to be reviewed	102	107	100
Number completed within 6 months of previous PEP (in time)	99	107	100
% reviewed within time scale	97%	100%	100%

5.2.10 Completion rate of review PEPs is strong.

Pupil Premium Plus

5.2.11 Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) for Children in Care must be managed by the Virtual Headteacher.

5.2.12 For each child in care, in 2019-20 the government allocated the Pupil Premium Plus of £2300. In Merton, during the academic year 2019/20, £600 per child was allocated to the relevant school each term.

5.2.13 The Virtual School monitored the use of pupil premium funded interventions on pupils' academic progress via the Pupil's Education Plan. The grant was used for arrange of interventions, including:

- Academic intervention programmes
- Behavioural, emotional, mental health Interventions
- Additional 1:1 support
- Learning Resources
- Out of school learning including educational visits
- Technology – hardware/software
- Specialist tuition/equipment e.g. music lessons
- Subject tuition
- Clubs and activities

5.2.14 In some cases, the impact of this support resulted in early and readily measurable outcomes. In others, the impact of interventions was less immediate and more difficult to quantify. In these cases impact

will be seen in longer term, and further reaching and enduring changes to self-esteem, aspiration, confidence and attitude to learning.

- 5.2.15 The Virtual School retained around 5% of pupil premium to commission services for the equivalent of one day each week from the Education Psychology Service to enable expeditious access for children in care, when required. Welfare Call E-PEP and data tracking and reporting services were commissioned from April 2020 using PPG.
- 5.2.16 There were no participation or extra-curricular activities available to children during the Lockdown of summer 202, due to the Pandemic.

Pupil Voice

- 5.2.17 The views of children and young people continued to be captured as part of the PEP process throughout the academic year. During lockdown, there were occasions when a young person joined the online meeting and participated fully, sharing their views, having never before attended a PEP face to face meeting.
- 5.2.18 An additional request for foster carer and child's views was distributed during lockdown, outside of the PEP process, in order that everyone had the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings; to highlight concerns; requests additional support and provide positive feedback as appropriate.
- 5.2.19 The returns were low in number, however, those completed were acknowledged and actioned by Advisory Teachers accordingly.
- 5.2.20 Most children welcome the opportunity to meet with a trusted member of staff in school to have a discussion about their education, prior to the PEP meeting. Not all attend the PEP meetings. However it is their choice and should they should decide not to attend, they know that their views will be represented by that member of staff. Throughout the age range, children are mostly comfortable talking about what they like about school; any issues they might have; what they feel they need more support with and who they can turn to if they have a problem or concern.
- 5.2.21 The issue of friendships, positive and negative is most common. Children also talk freely about the subjects that they enjoy most and will cite a subject they find more challenging. Children and young people are often clear about what they think would help them in a particular situation or with a particular part of their learning.
- 5.2.22 Children are also very clear about who they go to if they have a problem in school.
- 5.2.23 Comments are usually reflective, e.g. "I like seeing my friends."; "I really like PE."; "I need to improve by not calling out in lessons."; "I should listen more."; "Maybe a Tutor for Maths would help me at home to improve in school."

Development & Training of the Workforce

- 5.2.24 The Virtual School continued to contribute to the development and training of education workers, including school governors, social care, youth justice workers and foster carers, though this was put on hold during the lockdown period.
- 5.2.25 The Virtual School gave a presentation on the role of the Virtual School for newly qualified teachers and for newly appointed Headteachers as part of their induction.

To ensure that all schools (whether they currently have looked after children on roll or not) were prepared to support LAC, the Virtual School supported the designated teachers for looked after children in all Merton schools, academies, independent schools and alternative providers through termly network meetings.

5.2.26 Future training plans include online programmes for delivery to:

- School Governors
- Social Workers through 'Drop-in Surgeries'
- Foster Carers through 'Bite-Size' sessions
- Designated Teachers for Looked after Children
- Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

Actions undertaken by the Virtual School to secure improved outcomes during the summer term

Monitoring of school age children and young people

5.2.27 Within the first week of Lockdown, schools closed at different times and to different degrees.

5.2.28 The Virtual School acted swiftly to put in place a system by which Advisory Teachers could capture information relating to whether or not a child was attending school; reasons if not and the school offer of on-line learning, as appropriate.

5.2.29 It quickly became apparent that the picture was mixed, as some schools closed completely, others remained open all week and others put specific plans in place to accommodate particular cohorts of children at different times.

5.2.30 All children and young people in care were entitled to go to school and Advisory Teachers reminded foster carers and social workers in their ongoing discussions.

5.2.31 Advisory Teachers contacted schools, foster carers and social workers to confirm plans were in place for each child/young person and to check what provision was in place and to ascertain levels of engagement. The situation changed as time went on and Advisory Teachers kept up to date with the individual child's circumstances at each stage.

5.2.32 From the start of the summer term, Welfare Call (newly contracted) tracked attendance in school. PEPs took place for every child during the summer term and all were completed in time. Where an Interim PEP took place, foster carers for primary and secondary were invited to feed back as to how the child was managing throughout Lockdown and what, if anything the VS could do to support. A number of foster carers responded. Some children did also.

5.2.33 After half term, where specific year groups were expected to attend school wherever possible (EYS, R, 1, 6 & 10) Advisory Teachers made weekly calls as a minimum and checked in with carers, schools and social workers. Where there were concerns they followed up appropriately. Reasons for children not attending school were generally concerning the risk to the children or carer/vulnerable adults in the household, e.g. travelling in taxis or by public transport or specific health issues for the child or carer. At times, schools had staffing issues that meant their offer had to be reduced and this was often overcome once staff were back at work.

5.2.34 Interim PEPs for Year 11 reflected conversations by telephone with carers and emails/meetings with school staff to update and check in regarding how well young people were engaging in online learning. Mostly, young people were more concerned about their plans for September. The Advisory Teacher ensured that those plans were still in place and in the case of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, held full

PEP meetings as young people involved in ESOL courses were fully engaged and attending school. There were also some Transition PEPs involving colleges in order to confirm plans for the autumn entry. One young person in Year 11 completed work set by his new college, due to start in September.

5.2.35 The start to the autumn term was very positive with overall attendance at 95.6% as at 2/10/20 (903 cohort 96.5%). The Virtual School checked that new starters to university had what they needed to begin their studies and all of the relevant professionals were made aware of the Advisory Teacher's contact details should any young people need more support with their studies.

Post 16 in care/Care Experienced young people.

Target group: young people between 16 and 25 years, regardless of care status.

5.2.36 Virtual School Advisory Teacher activity:

- Regular meetings with colleges and training providers were maintained – held as virtual
- Focus of March/April/May meetings and follow up discussions was the lockdown offer from the college/training provider and individual student feedback.
- Individual student and college feedback was passed on to social workers and Personal Advisors
- Individual network meetings arranged as necessary.
- Any particular concerns were discussed with social worker/ PA and actions agreed.
- Examples of concerns were around internet access, laptop access and engagement. Prior to the DfE digital devices roll-out, the 14+ team purchased laptops for some individuals and top up phone data to enable online access without wifi.
- Virtual School and social care liaised with carers and providers to help understanding of online offer.
- Most colleges were offering work through an online portal e.g Moodle and some started online teaching through Zoom/Teams.
- Virtual School funded online access to Flash Academy – an online language learning tool to support ESOL learners.
- EET section of all year 12 and 13 Pathway Plans reviewed to confirm inclusion of education and training information.

5.2.37 Virtual School EET Keyworker activity:

- Supported 23 Post 16 NEET young people and 5 statutory school age children to plan for Post 16 engagement in education, employment during the Summer Term 2020.
- Working directly with young people in addition to social workers; key workers; foster carers; parents and wider partners.

5.2.38 Outcomes as at September 2020:

- eight had secured places in colleges
- two were in training
- five were in employment
- five were on hold due to issues such as: mental health issues; custody; hospital; moving placement, etc
- eight were still exploring different opportunities.

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 The Government closed schools in March 2020 and re-opened them immediately for the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children. There was then a wider opening of schools in June 2020 for pupils from certain year groups. Attendance after March wasn't compulsory but was encouraged. There is therefore only one term of data published – for autumn 2019.

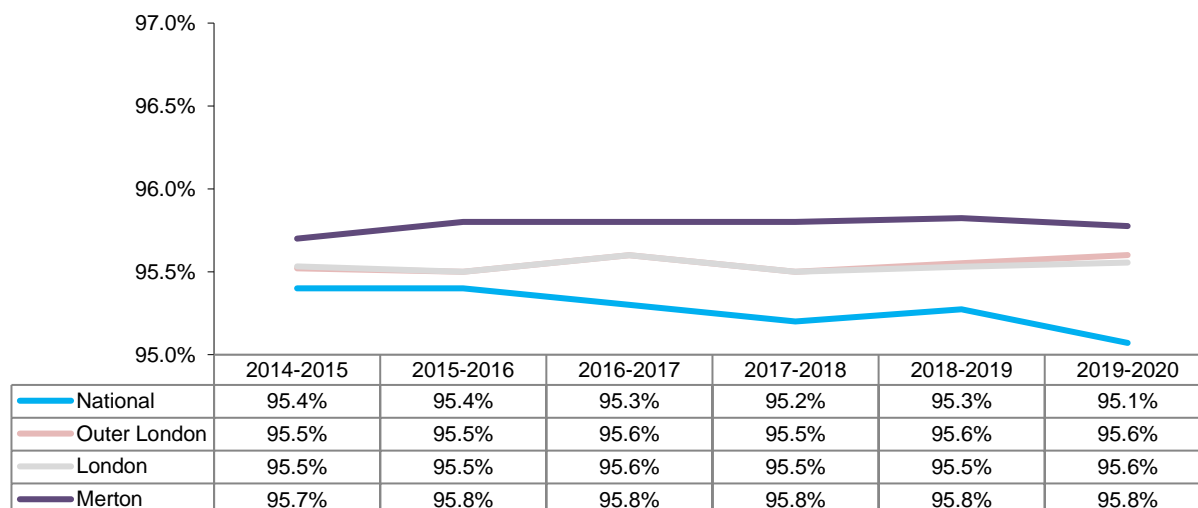
Attendance - autumn term 2019

All Schools (primary and secondary)	Merton	London	Outer London	National
Attendance	95.9%	95.6%	95.7%	95.2%
Absence	4.1%	4.4%	4.3%	4.8%
Persistent Absence	9.9%	11.2%	11.0%	12.9%

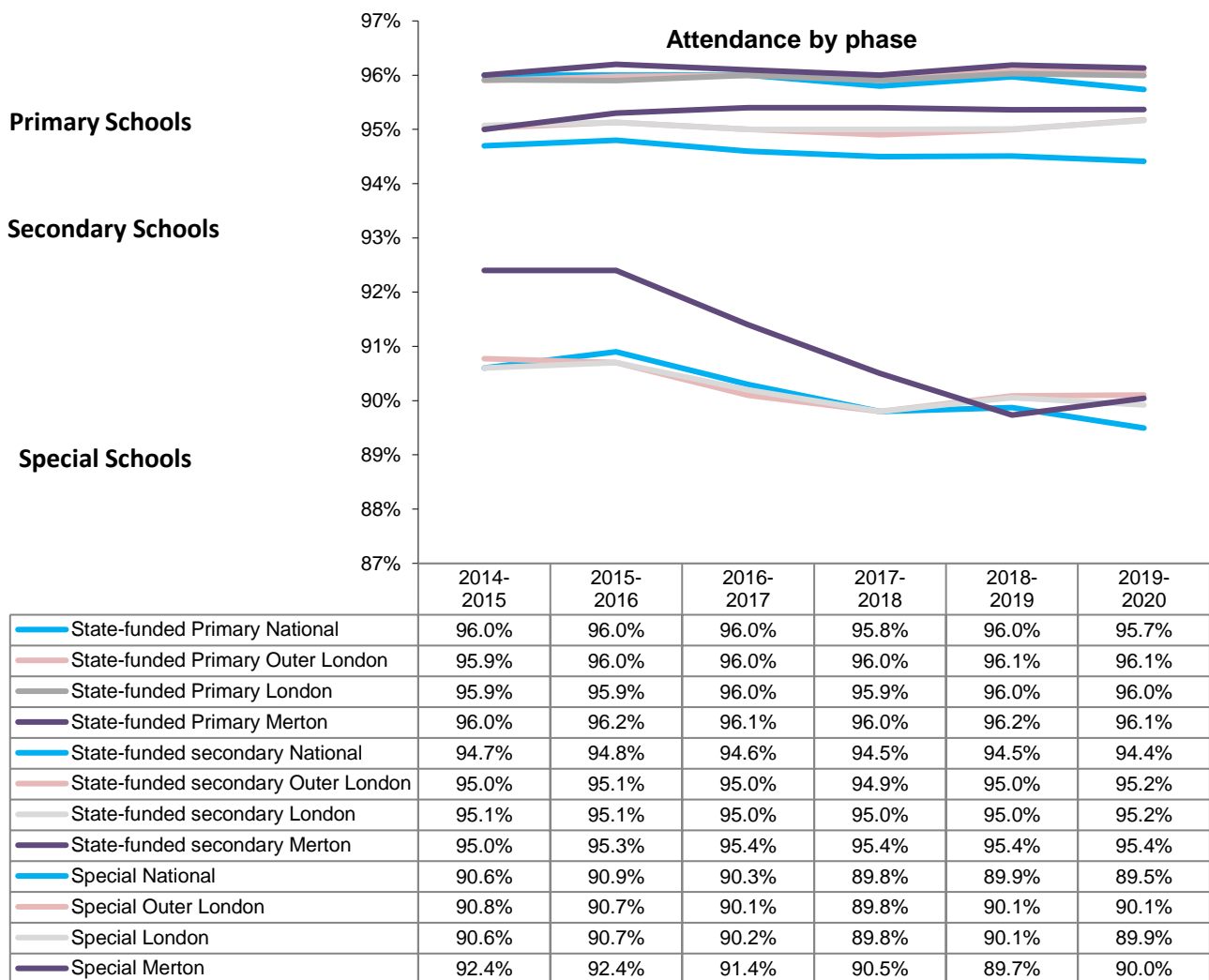
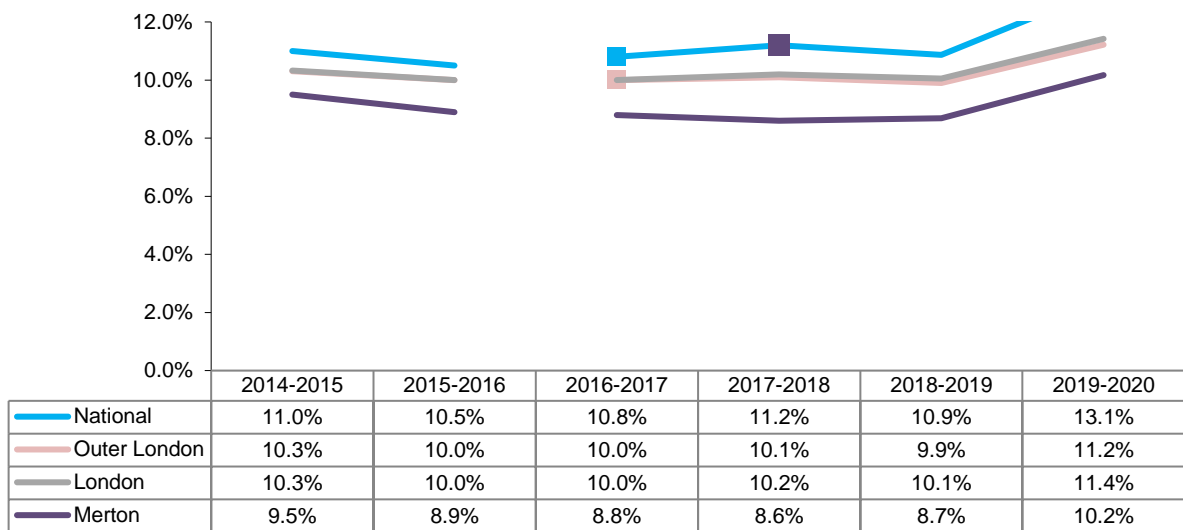
6.1.3 Autumn term attendance was maintained at a high level and persistence absence was low.

6.1.4 The one term published data is compared in the tables immediately below with 3 terms in the previous years (or 2 ½ terms, where this is the data available). Please note that while year on year comparisons are therefore limited in value, Merton's performance in comparison with national and local averages for the same time period continue to be strong.

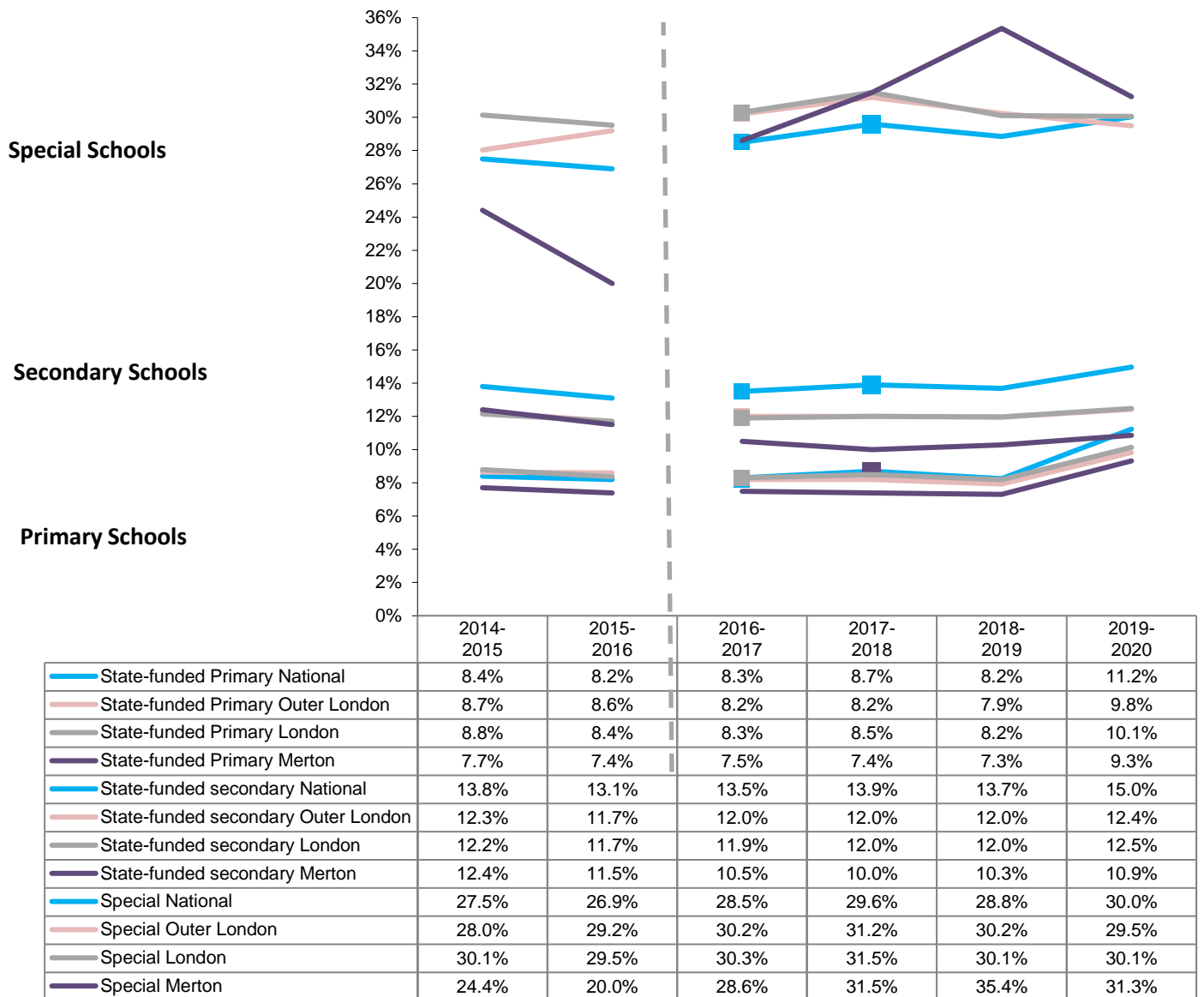
Attendance: All Schools



Persistent Absence: All schools - at 15% (2014-2015) or 10% (2016 onwards, when definition changed)

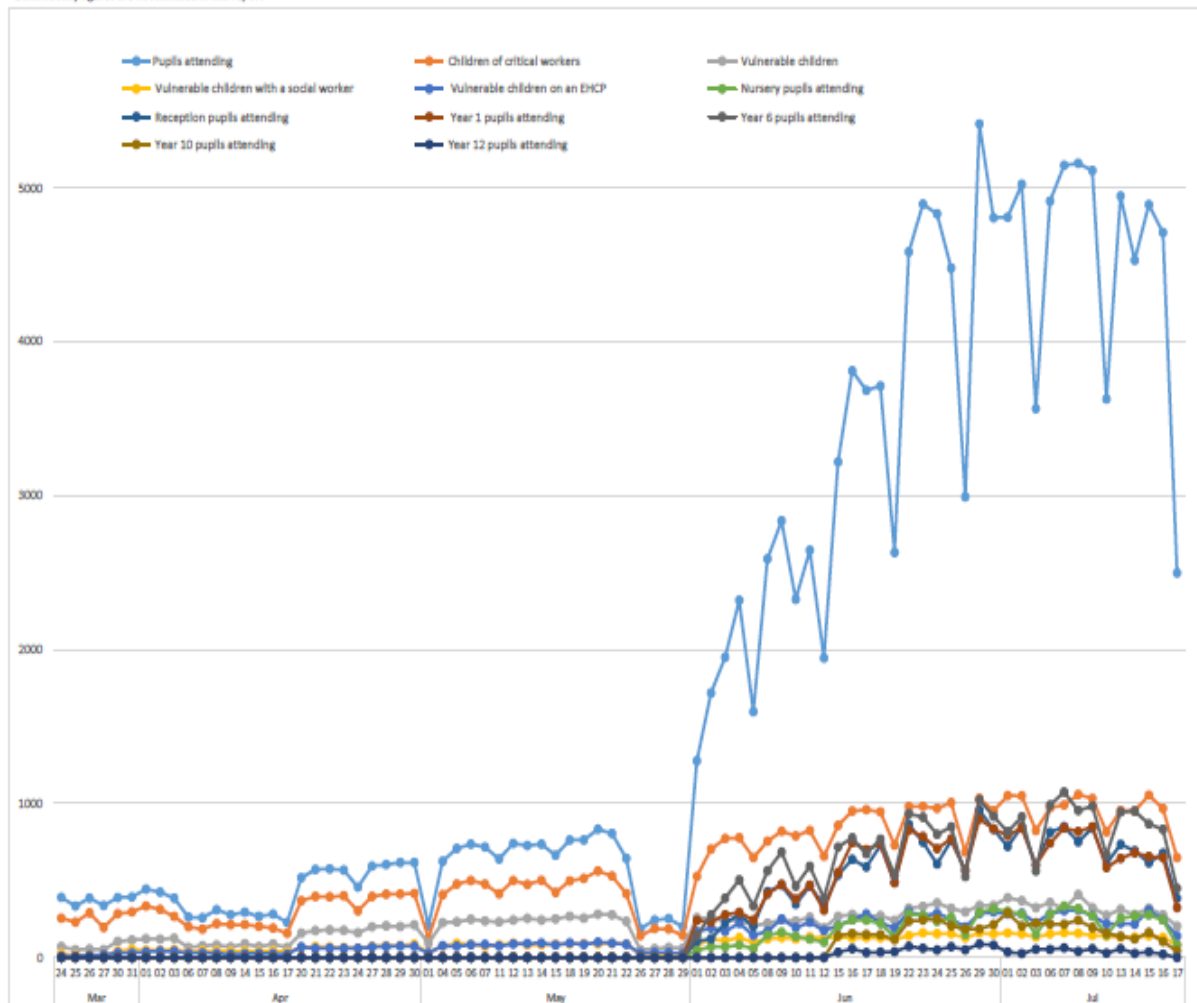


Persistent Absence at 15% (2014-2015) or 10% (2016 onwards, when definition changed)



Attendance at Schools from 24th March to 17th July 2020

Note: From the 24th to 27th March inclusive, the DfE suppressed school totals under 5. Figures for this period are therefore underestimated.
 On 1st May DfE Sign-in was offline for a significant period of the day, preventing many schools from entering their daily data.
 Bank holiday figures are not included in this report



6.1.5

As can be seen from the graph above, attendance varied significantly over the weeks of lockdown, as the pupils invited to return changed; across each week; and as families' confidence in sending their children back to schools increased.

6.1.6

Children Missing Education (CME) during Covid -The multi-agency CME panel was run in the background as children did not have to attend school. 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.

6.1.7

COVID CME Panel - In addition, from April 2020, in response to schools being open only for children of keyworkers and children with social workers 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. In the April panel all children in CP plans were discussed; in May there were three panels to discuss all of the children on CIN plans. In June the panel looked again at CP and CIN cases and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

6.1.8 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 work set by school and was any additional support needed?
- What were the barriers to attending school?
- If the child had an EHCP, had a risk assessment been undertaken?

6.1.9 Key themes to emerge as barriers to attendance:

- Parental fear of their children attending school and contracting the virus
- Vulnerable adults in the home/ pregnancy/ shielding
- Distance to travel to school – multiple buses, moved out of area
- Self-isolation due to symptoms
- Non-engagement (these cases were escalated).
- Out of borough school closed (EWS and SEND contacted schools)
- Child issues: Peers not in school, siblings not attending.
- Parental views “not sending my children in until all children are in”

6.1.10 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 effective use of EHCP risk assessments.
- Increased reassurance that children were engaged in education when not in school.

6.1.11 Attendance increased across the three groups over time.

- April Panel 61 cases discussed attendance rate 26%
- May panels 242 cases discussed attendance rate 32%
- June panels 226 cases discussed attendance rate 52%

6.1.12 From the DFE tracking data (table below) the gradual impact of the CME Covid meetings on increasing the attendance of vulnerable children in school can be seen. The timings of the meetings are noted by the red dots.

Schools Attendance Exceptions Reports
(Based on data received from the Department for Education)

Attendance at Schools from 24th March to 7th July 2020

Notes: From the 26th to 27th March inclusive, the DfE reported school totals under 5. Figures for this period are therefore underestimated.
On 3rd May DfE Agis was offline for a significant period of the day, preventing many schools from entering their daily data.
Some testable figures are not included in this report.



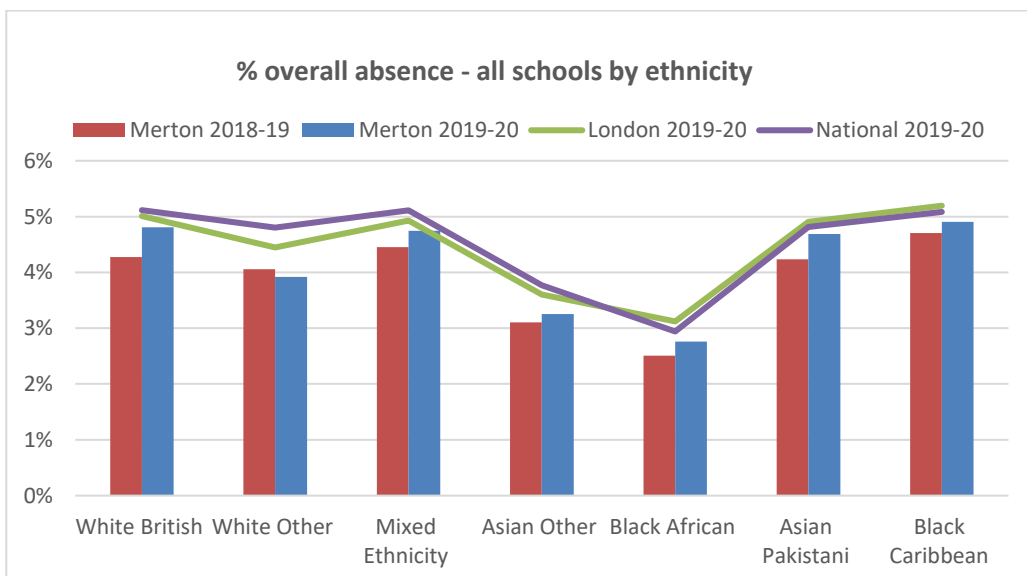
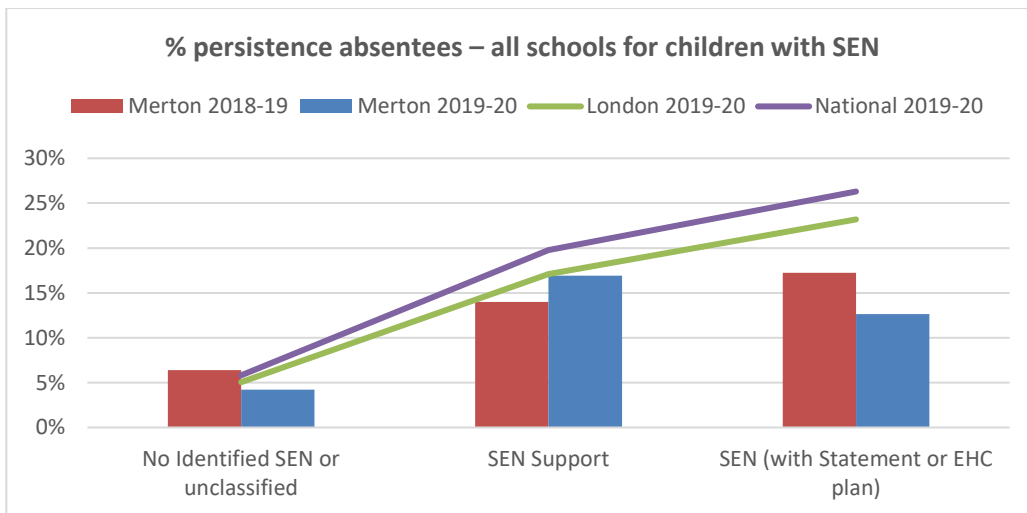
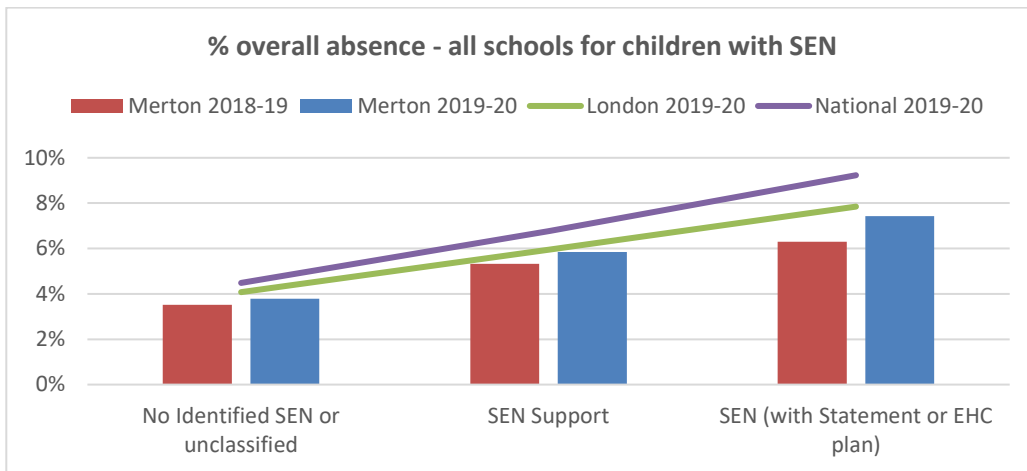
6.1.13 **Shielding** - A shielded children team was set up by Early Years officers. Adult Social Care received the referrals for all shielded cases and then identified children which were then passed to CSF. These were then triaged to see if they were open to CSC or had an EHCP and would then be passed to these teams. All other cases were passed to the Shielded Children team who contacted all families to see if they needed any extra support with food, medication or isolation issues. The voluntary sector hub was contacted to support families with food and could support with IT resources to access education. 51 children were supported by the children shielding process. When shielding was paused all shielded children's families were contacted again by the school nursing service to discuss any issues with return to school in September.

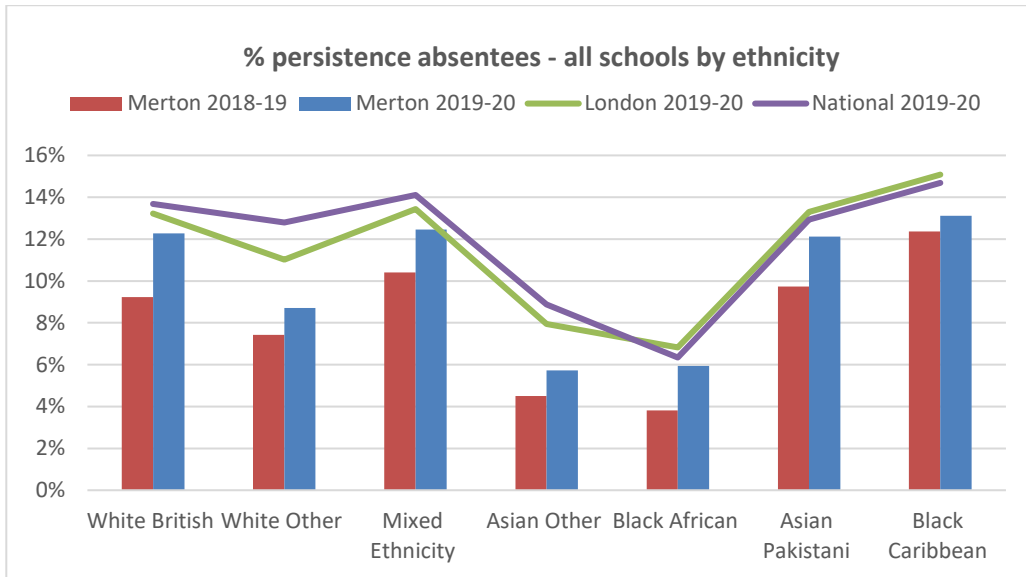
6.1.14 **Support for SEND** Children with EHCPs were deemed vulnerable, under DfE guidance, and eligible for attendance in school. The SEND team supported schools to undertake EHCP risk assessments. In complex cases this included health staff to determine if the child could be best supported in school or remain at home. From the DfE daily attendance tracker a gradual increase in children with EHCPs attending from the half term onwards can be seen.

Equalities and autumn term attendance.

6.1.15 The graphs above should be viewed with caution (as they continue to compare one term's worth of data for autumn term 2019, with three terms worth in the previous year). However, they show a continued positive picture of attendance for some of our most vulnerable groups as being better than

national and London, even though the one term in most cases is poorer attendance than the previous whole year. (In one term you need less absence to trigger PA)





2019/20 Attendance priorities, impact and key actions taken

6.1.16

Priority: To support and challenge pupils and their parents who have poor attendance to maintain good attendance in line with national and outer London averages.

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 process supported the most vulnerable to return to school.

Impact:

Improved attendance. Ofsted commented on the robust CME Covid process.

6.1.17

Priority: To investigate the issues behind the drop in CME off roll timeliness and the increase in SEND referrals. And **Priority** To improve attendance and persistent absence rates for pupils in special schools.

Action taken to secure impact:

These two priorities were impacted by the pandemic. This was looked at in the autumn term 2019, but suspension of the SEND legislation during lockdown and other pandemic effects led to an unusual year to be able to compare data on SEND off rolling. Special school attendance was tracked, and weekly risk assessment meetings set up to support the best environment for each child.

Impact:

This task was not completed. Special school attendance rose throughout the pandemic and the following term.

6.1.18

Priority: To work with the schools in the mental health trailblazers to improve support for low to medium mental health needs in schools

Action taken to secure impact:

Three Mental Health Trailblazer networks have been established in Merton – mainstream schools, SEND (with Sutton) and Further Education. the first cluster had a team delivering in 19/20, the others were setting up clusters and training staff.

Impact:

The whole school model will be evaluated by the CCG, but schools are seeing the benefit in support for children, families, and staff.

6.1.19

Priority: To work with the Merton Medical Education Service (MMES) to plan and expansion of 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:

The proposals will be taken forward in 2021/2022

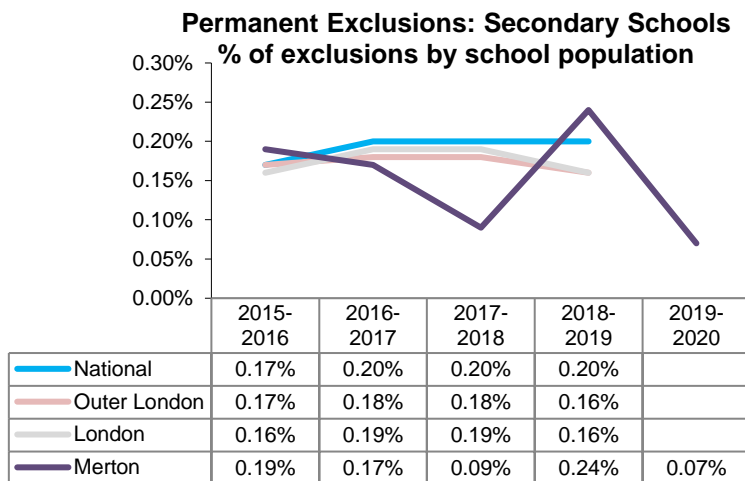
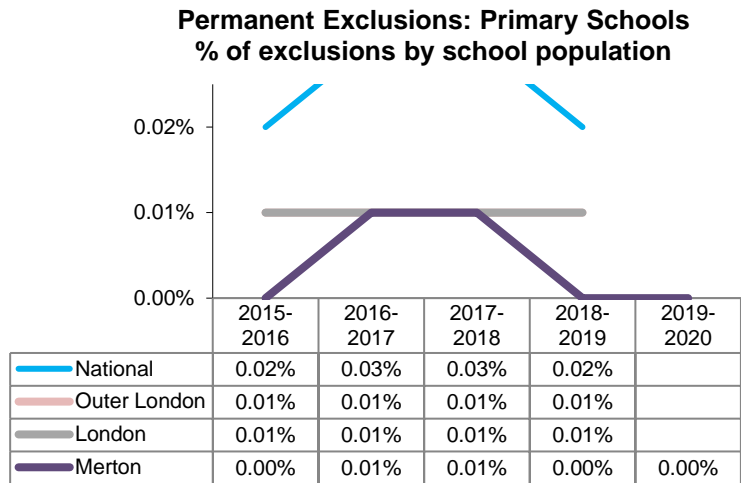
Attendance Priorities for 2020/2021

- a) 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.
- b) To track children off rolled or moved abroad during the pandemic.
- c) To work with the schools in the mental health trailblazers to improve support for low to medium mental health needs in schools and to expand the offer to more children.
- d) To work with the Merton Medical Education Service to expand services for children out of school with medical needs.

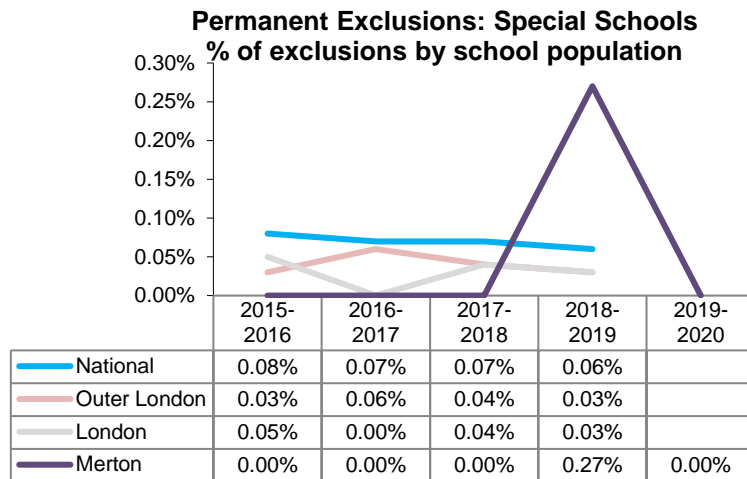
Exclusion performance information and analysis

Headline data and analysis

6.2.1 Merton data is available for 2019-2020 for an interrupted year, but the most recent data, available for the national and London averages, is from 2017-2018 and is for a full year. Therefore, comparisons should be made with caution.



Note: The DfE data underreports the level of exclusions by 2

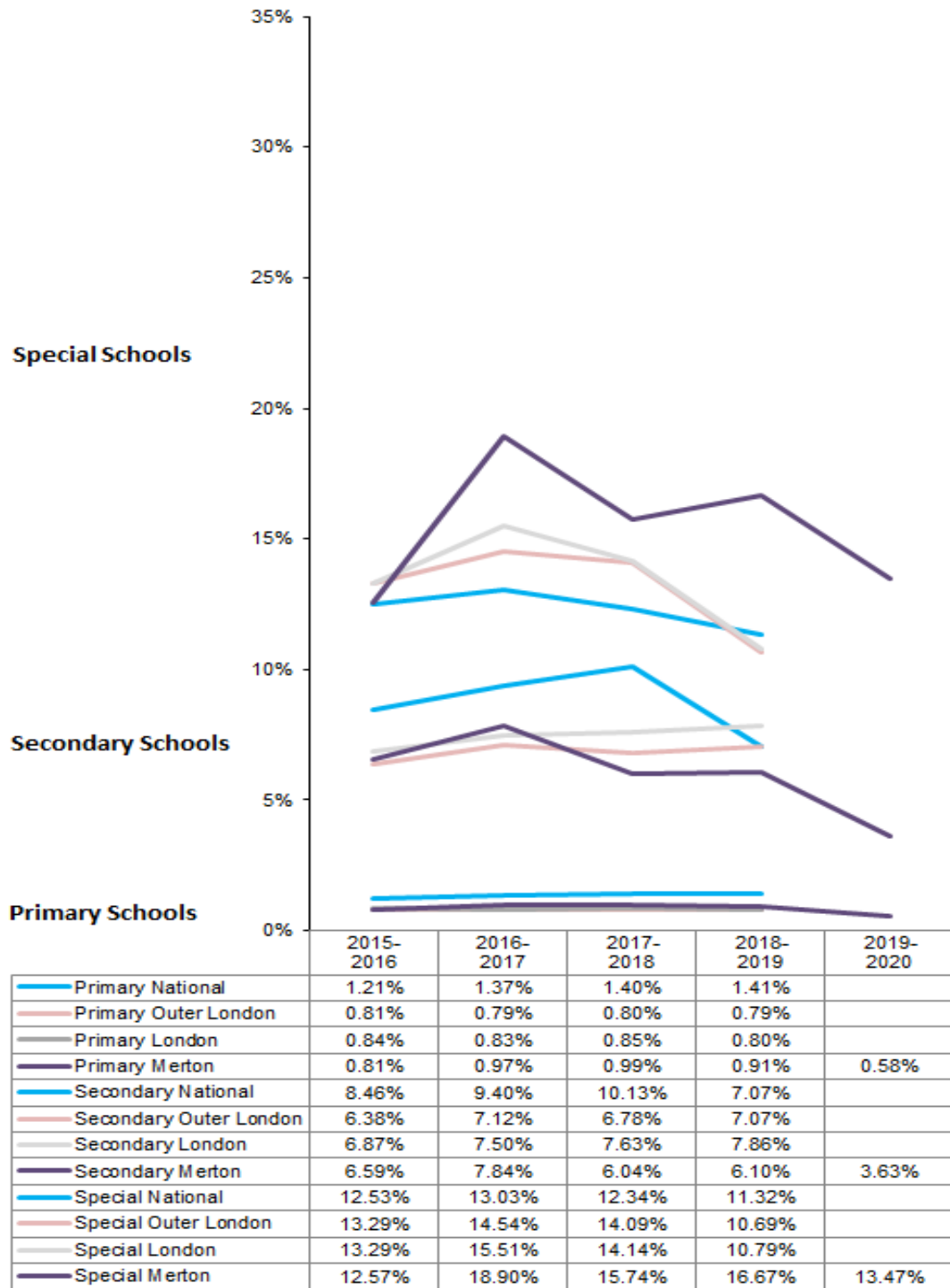


6.2.2 Merton had no primary permanent exclusions in 2019-2020. This was achieved through significant and complex inclusion work carried out by primary schools and the LA’s Virtual Behaviour Service (VBS), this work continued during partial school closure. There were no permanent exclusions from a special school.

6.2.3 The number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools fell significantly to below the national and London averages. There is no published national or London data for 2019/20. However, a pan-London benchmarking discussion has variously highlighted significant falls and significant rises in permanent exclusions in different parts of London in 2019/20.

6.2.4 There were 11 additional potential permanent exclusions that were prevented in secondary schools as a result of partnership work with families, and work with the VBS, between schools, and between schools and Melbury College. This compares with 26 in 2018/19 and is in line with the figure of 12 in 2017/18.

**Fixed Term Exclusions
% of exclusions by school population**



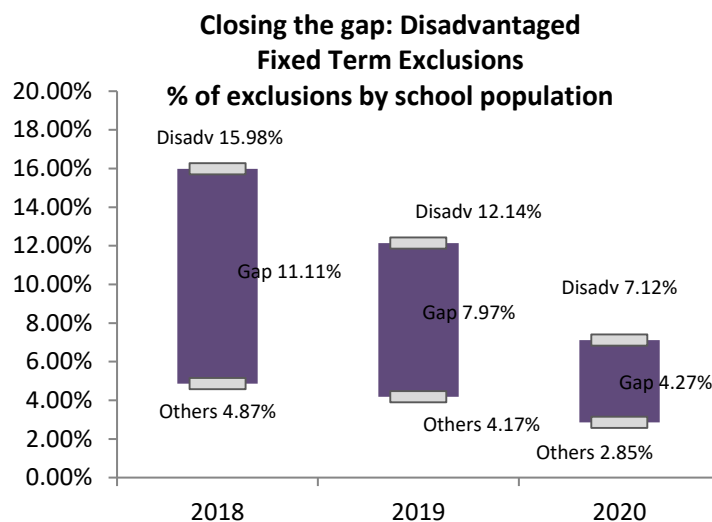
6.2.5 Fixed term exclusions are for an interrupted year. The percentage excluded has fallen in primary, secondary and special. Due to the small numbers in special, and that each exclusion counts as a separate child, this over inflates the special school figure.

6.2.6 **Main pupil groups (fixed term exclusions, secondary phase)**

Contextual Groups	Number of Pupils	Fixed Term Exclusions: Secondary % of exclusions by school population		
		Merton 2019-20	London 2018-19	National 2018-19
All Pupils	9647	3.63%	7.86%	10.75%
Gender				
Female	4703	2.45%	4.74%	6.85%
Male	4944	4.75%	10.99%	14.62%
Gap		2.31%	6.25%	7.77%
Disadvantaged				
Disadvantaged	1756	7.12%	15.95%	28.90%
All other pupils	7891	2.85%	6.16%	7.77%
Gap		4.27%	9.79%	21.13%
Special Educational Needs (SEN)				
No Special Educational Needs	8042	2.40%	6.00%	8.00%
SEN Support	1339	8.89%	20.75%	29.95%
SEN (with Statement or EHC plan)	266	14.29%	21.14%	30.89%
Ethnic Group (White British and six largest or priority ethnic minority groups)				
White British	2786	4.70%	8.45%	11.78%
White Other	1623	2.65%	5.56%	6.06%
Asian Other	726	0.96%	2.67%	3.30%
Black African	991	4.64%	9.08%	8.25%
Asian Pakistani	603	1.00%	4.39%	6.96%
Mixed Other	496	3.43%	9.63%	10.30%
Black Caribbean	449	7.57%	17.73%	17.50%

FSM was used in calculating the disadvantaged table

6.2.7 Main pupil group data is hard to compare as rates are lower this year. However the gap between genders and disadvantaged is smaller than national or London for previous whole year data. So in this area the pandemic did not exacerbate previous disadvantage. The same is true in terms of ethnicity where the gap between White British and Black Caribbean is smaller this year than national or London.



6.2.8 The gap between exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and all pupils excluded has significantly narrowed. 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. Even though this is a part year the gap could have widened.

6.2.9 Fixed term exclusions of pupils in receipt of SEN Support have fallen significantly (from 18.91% to 15.11%) 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 three years (29.1%, 25.62%, 19.83%) and better than the national average and in line with London. This is a very positive direction of travel even on part year data.

6.2.10 Fixed term exclusion for Black Caribbean pupils are still disproportionate but less so than in previous years (13.01% to 12.04%).

2019/20 Exclusion and behaviour priorities, impact and key actions taken

6.3.1

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

Actions taken to secure impact:

A model has been agreed, capital secured, and architectural plans agreed. An interim solution was set up for September 2020. Pupils started in September 2020

Impact:

There are greater opportunities to place primary SEMH pupils in borough through the permanent David Nicholas offer, and a respite model to enhance VBS support.

6.3.2

Priority: To carry out a deep dive into the rise in permanent exclusions in secondary schools and review the findings with secondary head teachers.

Actions taken to secure impact:

A deep dive was carried out and a discussion paper taken to secondary heads to discuss. In addition, a relevant out of London serious case review was also discussed. Conclusions were similar to the RSAs pinball kids' report focusing on early intervention, relationships with pupils and relationships with parents. Key themes that came through in the report:

- Building successful relationships with families who struggle to build relationships with schools.
- Multiple secondary school settings – in part a response to behaviour i.e. failed moves to other schools as attempts to prevent permanent exclusions.
- Children had done well at primary - but SEND issues were identified at secondary.
- Inability to build peer relationships.
- One off serious incidents.

Impact:

Heads took learning back to their schools. Impact is hard to judge against a very interrupted year in school. However, secondary exclusions dropped significantly in 2019/20.

6.3.3

Priority: To embed the mental health Trailblazer projects in Merton schools.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Three partnerships proceeded. Mainstream embedded practice and supported children and families. Send and FE trained staff and set up their whole school models. 'Kooth' was rolled out for all children in southwest London.

Impact:

CCG will be evaluating but positive response from schools, families and children so far.

6.3.4

Priority: To work with the Early Help service, primary schools and SENDIS/ Inclusion to further improve the support processes for children in primary schools.

Actions taken to secure impact:

Some case work was undertaken however many services moved online which affected their impact. This work was more limited than expected and will need to develop in 2020/21

Impact:

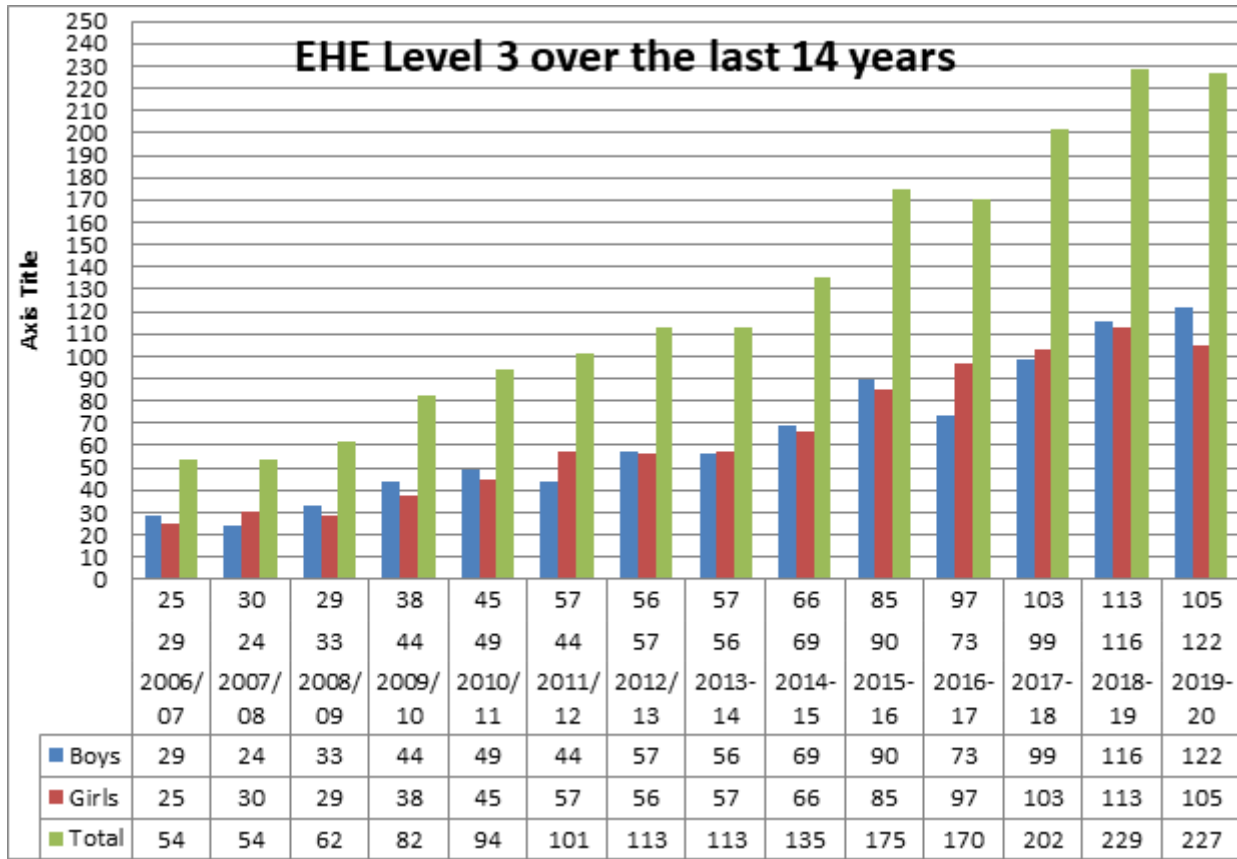
Limited impact. The move online worked well for key activities such as transition data sharing which will remain online.

Exclusion and Behaviour Priorities for 2020/21

- a) To set up provision for Primary SEMH Pupils as part of Melrose School.
- b) To maintain support for children with SEMHH through Covid regulations
- c) To embed and develop the mental health Trailblazer projects in Merton schools and support school mental health leads.
- d) To establish the new Early Help service and consult on the model

Elective Home Education (EHE)

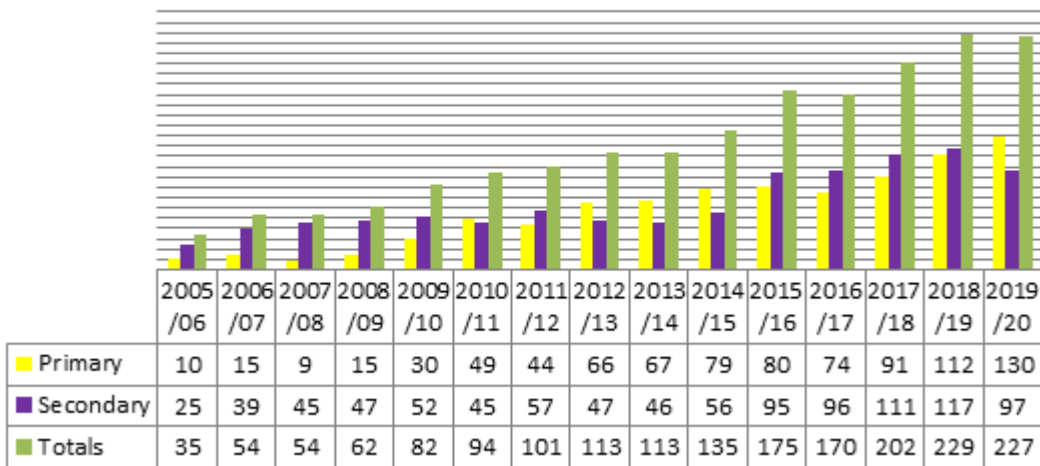
6.4.1 Parents have the right to electively home educate their children. The Education Welfare Service and Merton School Improvement track these cases and ensure that education is being provided.



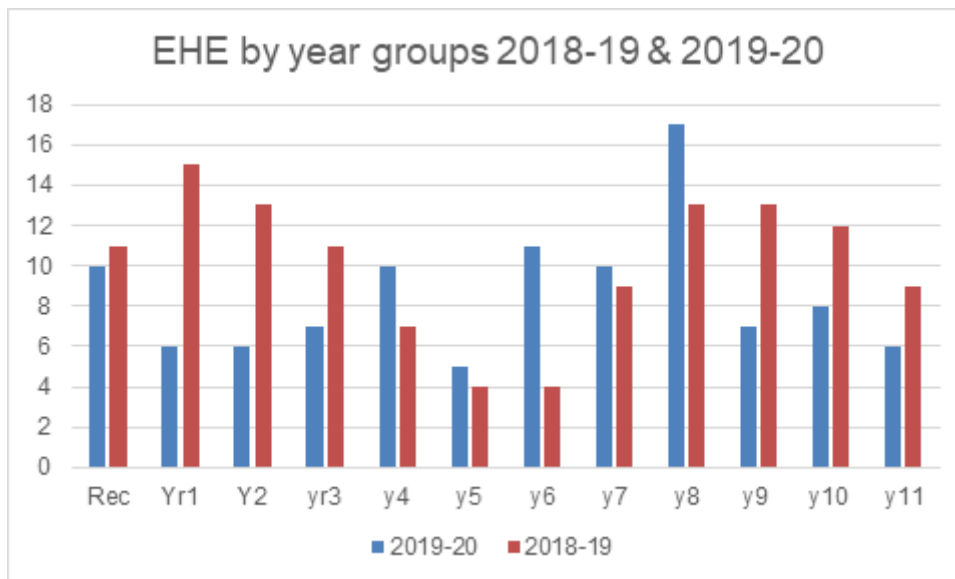
Volume of Electively Home Educated children in Merton

6.4.2 This Academic year 2019-20 was a year of two halves, September to March (pre Covid) and March to July (Covid period). In the first half of this academic year, the trend of a slight increase was continuing in EHE. In the second half of the year, the numbers remained steady as the country commenced the first lock down because of the Covid 19 pandemic and children were not required to attend school. This may have reduced the need to register with the LA for EHE. There was then a significant rise in referrals to the LA as lockdown eased and children could return to school. This rise was in primary and early secondary. A higher proportion than normal were exiting private education to EHE. It was hypothesised that this may have been due to job loss. Resources to support EHE have improved under the pandemic and some parents have tried teaching from home and have enjoyed it. Although across the year there was a flattening of the rise in EHE seen in previous years, the rise in the second half of the year was steeper than in 2018/19 and national figures are showing a rise across the country post lockdown.

EHE Level 3 Primary / Secondary Split

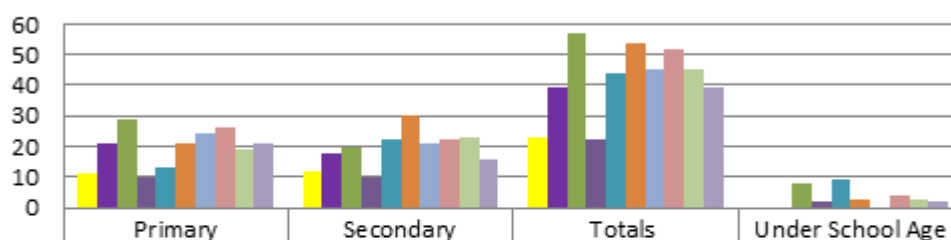


6.4.3 There has been an increase in the number of families electing to commence home education in Years 4,5,6,7 & 8 and a large reduction in Years 1, 2, 3, 9, 10 & 11. The chart below shows the numbers for 2018-19 compared to the number in 2019-20.



6.4.4 The LA continues 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 in bullet points, ensuring that families are more aware of the commitment and the requirements when withdrawing their child to electively home educate. The secondary school clarification sheet emphasises 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.

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

6.4.5 Between 2010 and August 2020 420 enquiries were recorded (classed as level 2) from parents where the LA has provided them with information about EHE and the majority of these have decided not to proceed. The number of enquiries received is slightly lower this year compared to last year, with 39 enquiries. It takes a considerable amount of EWS time to follow up on the children to ensure they do not become Children Missing from Education (CME) and to support families to make an informed decision when they are considering withdrawing their children to home educate.

6.4.6 The LA continues to provide Parents/Carers of nursery age children who make level 2 enquiries with information so they can make an informed choice.

Appropriateness of Education

6.4.7 LAs have a duty to decide if the education is appropriate but parents have no obligation to send the LA any information and the LA does not have a right of access to families. All families are offered a visit to review the education, or the opportunity to provide a report, which is reviewed by MSI and EWS. In 2019-20, video/telephone reviews were offered instead of home visits from March 2020 (to accommodate social distancing due to Covid 19), and it was found that some families who had previously chosen to provide reports were willing to have a video review instead, thus increasing contact with those families. 107 reviews of elective home education were made, and of those, 63% of families chose to have a home visit or a video/telephone meeting for a review of the education provision with more than half still having a home visit when this was permitted. 37% of families provided evidence in the form of reports or information to allow reviews. The home educated child was present at 93% of the home visits/video or telephone meetings – similar to last year.

6.4.8 If there are concerns EWS and MSI will agree actions. Education teams continue to work in partnership with other teams in CSF to agree common procedures and develop flow charts to improve our efficiency and clarify responsibilities. Monthly/half termly meetings are held with EHE Advisors to ensure that

reviews of the home education are being completed in a timely manner and to enable discussion of cases.

- 6.4.9 Sixteen reviews of elective home education were deemed “not appropriate” during 2019-20 which is an increase from the previous year (eleven). This increase is partially explained by the fact that there were two families with a total of five children whose education provision under EHE was deemed “not appropriate” but in the next review the provision was found to be appropriate.
- 6.4.10 Nine families in the academic year 2019/2020 advised that they were unable to continue to provide home education and their children then became “children missing education” after withdrawing from EHE. They then required placing back into education – a 50% decrease compared to last year. Two children became “CME” because they had had 2 consecutive “not appropriate” reviews. This is a decrease of 1/3rd on last year.

Reasons for Choosing EHE

6.4.11 This year from March 2020 onwards, families have chosen to EHE because of Covid 19 either due to the child’s vulnerability or a family member’s, or because during lockdown they have enjoyed home schooling and wish to continue with it. In addition, there have always been a wide range of families who are home educating with many different reasons for choosing elective home education, for example:

- Families who are travelling from place to place or from one county to another for work because their children are actors or taking part in sporting activities and have chosen to home educate.
- A small number of families choose to home educate for a short period because they have not obtained a place at their preferred school.
- A few families choose to home educate because they have their own philosophy on education.
- There are a number of children from Traveller backgrounds who are being home educated. These families sometimes require extra support. The EWS work with the Traveller Service to ensure the appropriate support is provided. Traveller families often leave our borough and return so have to be tracked carefully.
- A few families withdraw their children to home educate because they were unable to resolve issues at the school their child was attending and decided this was a better option, while seeking another school place. Of these a number have expressed the view that this is a quicker way to move schools. If alerted to this mistaken belief, the full consequences of withdrawing a child from the roll of a school are explained to them, and that in some cases a better plan of action would be to make a transfer request. A great deal of support has been provided to families who wish to return their child to mainstream education or apply for college; liaising closely with School Admissions to ensure families receive accurate information and understand the options available to them.
- Some families have had to EHE for social reason e.g. having to leave their home for safeguarding reasons and move location; these cases need a great deal of support and involve close work across departments and boroughs to provide the information and outcomes required.
- A number of families 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 is shared about other services available e.g. ‘Off the Record’.

6.4.12 Previously all families who were home educating were provided with information about an “Out of School” Nursing service, and, with the families’ consent any child who has need of their support would

be referred, but this post has remained vacant. The LA has liaised with the nursing service so that they can provide information relating to vaccinations due in school years recently, to be forwarded to our families.

6.4.13 As the situation around Covid 19 progressed during the last half of the academic year 2019-20, support was made available for our EHE pupils. Information on COVID and Government education announcements were circulated. All EHE pupils were made aware of the CCG funded online counselling service KOOTH. Year 11s who are electively home educated sometimes take exams in open exam centres. As no exams were taken at GCSE level in 2019/20 these children may not have had estimated grades.

SEND and Elective Home Education

6.4.14 There has been a significant increase in the number of EHE children with an EHCP this year, with 22 compared to nine children last year (previous 3 years: 11, 10, 9, so flat against rising EHCP numbers). Families 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. The closure of some Independent Special schools impacted through delays in placement during the lockdown. More parents with children with ECHPs home taught during lockdown that also led to some choosing to continue. 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. Additionally, if a family indicates or it is suspected that a child may have special educational needs which have not been assessed, referral information is provide to the family to help them obtain an assessment and any support that may be needed.

6.4.15 If the parent of a child with SEND, 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. The SEND Head of Services signs off all reports on the appropriateness of education to oversee that it is appropriate for the identified special needs of the child.

Safeguarding Children who are Electively Home Educated

6.4.16 The vast majority of children EHE are well supported by their families, however children who have been EHE appear disproportionately in Serious Case Reviews,

6.4.17 All families who choose to home educate their children are asked to provide an opportunity for the LA 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 three months, and if this is also deemed “not appropriate” then work will be carried out with the family to return the child to school, or EWS will commence with the School Attendance Order process. EHE children are not monitored on Children Missing from Education (CME) panel unless advised or it is suspected no education is being provided and legal action is being considered, they are monitored within EWS.

6.4.18 In the absence of any information being provided by a family/carer it will be assumed that no education is occurring, and actions will proceed accordingly. In 2019 to 2020 one School Attendance Order (SAO) was initiated but no SAO were issued. This a fall from previous years.

- 6.4.19 On registering a child as being home educated, checks are made if there are any safeguarding concerns. If this is the case the lead professional is informed of this change in education provision and the EWS liaise with them during the process, for example where there is a Child Protection Plan. There were fewer children on a CIN plan during 2019 to 20 with just two. However, 22% of children who were home educated in 2019-20 were previously known to wider children services, a decrease on the year before. During 2019-20 one referral was made to the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for a child who was being electively home educated. This low level was challenged in the Ofsted visit due to only seeing children on camera and not in person.
- 6.4.20 A very small number of families choose to home educate their children without advising the LA, or consulting with the LA prior to removing them from the school roll and later discover that it is not a route they should have chosen, for example because they assume the LA provides financial support and guidance on curriculum, or their child is close to a permanent exclusion, and they wish to avoid this and assume they can change schools easily.
- 6.4.21 The LA ensures that whenever a family indicates they may be considering home education that they are provided with information quickly, preferably before they remove the child from the school roll, so that they can make an informed choice.
- 6.4.22 In 2019/2020 there were 108 referrals received under “CME Off Rolling Notifications” (required since September 2016) for children who have left their education provision in our borough to EHE, and of these 42 had commenced and their home borough was not in Merton. Some of these had moved a long way 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.

Unregistered/Illegal Schools and Tuition Centres

- 6.4.23 The LA continues to provide information to OFSTED relating to potential illegal or unregistered schools and this led to a successful prosecution for one establishment in the recent past. The LA continues to make families aware if a provision is unregistered: under the EHE regulations the LA can only find the provision “not appropriate” on the basis of the broad definition of this phrase within the regulations.

Challenge














- 6.4.24 During the last year the LA has been challenged by several parents on points of law on the basis of which information about EHE has been requested. EHE is also an area where regular Freedom of Information requests are made as there is significant public interest.

Children Missing Education (CME)

6.5.1 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 second year of using a more accurate tracking dashboard which is intended to improve data quality and track across academic years. 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 2019/20 We ran the multi-agency panel for one term and then the process continued "in the background" as we focused on CME Covid to encourage the attendance of vulnerable children in the lockdown and in the opening up. The members of the panel gave monthly updates and cases were tracked. However, many independent special schools initially closed and taking in new admissions was unclear at the start of the lockdown. Merton LA discussed with schools that children new to Merton should be put on roll and given access to support and safeguarded. 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 during 2018-19 Academic Year

- 6.5.2 We can see from the table below that, due to school closures and then the voluntary nature of school attendance, children who were vulnerable to CME were not referred to the panel as they did not have to go to school. This accounts for the drop in referrals for CME vulnerable. CME off roll numbers were almost the same as the previous year. There was a drop in school applications, but as they took longer to get into school (as schools were closed to most pupils) it meant that more came to panel. However, schools did take the children in, and a higher percentage were resolved in year than the previous year. In addition, a higher percentage of vulnerable children's cases were resolved. Due to the response to the pandemic, however, these cases all took longer to resolve.
- 6.5.3 We have continued to see a rise in children with ECHPs identified as off roll pending placement. The total of 31 children 2019/2020 compares with 27 Children in 2018-19, 16 in 2017-18, and seven in 2016-17. This is the third year in a row where there has been a rise in children waiting and needing to be tracked on panel. This is caused by a lack of specialist placements available in Merton, across London and Southern England. Pleasingly we have seen a fall in the number of children with EHCPs on roll who became vulnerable to CME, from 80 in 2018-19, to 52 in 2019-20. Whilst still a high number this a significant fall.
- 6.5.4 There was a significant fall in the number children in care who were vulnerable to CME. There were no young offenders off roll in the year which is a significant achievement and only five young offenders vulnerable to CME. This is the lowest this figure has been.

CME Panel 2019-20	CME (Off Roll)	YoY	Vulnerable to CME (On Roll)	YoY
Number of cases discussed	112 CME (Off Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2019-20 AY (14 cases open & 98 cases closed during AY). This is a 1% decrease on cases discussed from the previous AY. In comparison for 2018-19, 113 cases discussed at CME Panel (41 Open and 72 Closed). There has been a significant increase in cases closed in year from 64% or 88%.		118 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2019-20 AY (31 cases open at end of AY; 87 cases closed). This is a 42% decrease in the previous AY 2018-19 which was 205. There has been a 58% decrease in the number of Open cases (74), and 34% decrease in the number	
Panel timeliness	32% CME (Off Roll) cases actioned and closed by CME Panel during 2019-20 Academic Year within 34 days of case start date (compared to 2018-19, when 43% were completed in 34 days)		33% Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases actioned and closed by CME Panel during 2018-19 Academic Year within 91 days of case start date. In comparison 40% were resolved within 91 days in 2018-19.	
Age	Children in Year 10 (17%) and Year 11 (20%) during 2019-20 were over-represented in CME cohort which is in line with the Merton School Population (Jan 2020). In comparison for 2018-19, Year 10 (22%) and Year 11 (17%).	 	Children in Year 9 (12%) and Year 11 (24%) were over-represented in the 2019-20 Vulnerable to CME cohort compared to the Merton School Population (6%). In comparison for 2018-19, Year 9 (13%), Year 10 (24%) and Year 11 (26%).	
Gender	Males over-represented 51% (57) of the 2019-20 CME cohort compared to 51% of the School Population (Jan 2020). In comparison for 2018-19, 52% of the CME cohort were Male, which is a reduction of 1%.		Males over-represented 58% (69) of the Vulnerable to CME cohort compared to the Merton School Population which is 51%. In comparison there is a decrease from 2018-19 of 10% (68%).	
Ethnicity	45% of CME (Off Roll) cases had no ethnicity data specified at case start date compared to 35% for 2018-19 and this is followed by 18% White British compared to 25% in 2018-19.		16% of cases represented were either not obtained or refused ethnicity data compared to 8% in 2018-19 but the highest percentage was 42% for 'White British' children in the 2019-20 cohort compared to the Merton School Population which was (30%). In comparison for 2018-19, 43% cases were White British.	
Special Educational Needs	31 Children with a EHC Plan were in the 2019-20 CME cohort In comparison with 27 in the 2018-19, CME cohort and 16 in 2017 –18. We can see over 3 years that this number has been increasing.		52 Children with a EHC Plan in the 2019-20 cohort were Vulnerable to CME in comparison with 80 in 2018-19	
Free School Meals Eligibility	73% of children are unknown when it came to their FSM eligibility for CME (Off Roll) cases. 13% are eligible for FSM and 13% not eligible for FSM		28% of children are unknown when it came to their FSM eligibility for Vulnerable to CME (on Roll) cases during 2019-20. 25% are eligible for FSM and 47% not eligible for FSM	

CME Panel 2019-20	CME (Off Roll)	YoY		
		Vulnerable to CME (On Roll)		
Missing Children episodes	One child had two missing episodes and three children had 3 or more missing episodes in the CME (off roll) cohort during 2019/20 AY. In 2018/19, three children had 2 missing episodes and one child had 3 or more missing episodes.	=	Three children had one missing episode, two children had 2 missing episodes and one child had 3 or more missing episodes in the Vulnerable (on roll) cohort during 2019/20 AY. In 2018/19 eight children had 1 missing episode, five children had two missing episodes and two children had 3 or more missing episodes	↓
CSE risk	There was one CME (Off Roll) case discussed at CME Panel during 2019-20 with a CSE referral. In comparison there were two discussed in 2018-19 AY.	↓	4 Vulnerable to CME (On Roll) cases discussed at CME Panel during 2019-20 with a CSE referral, which in comparison to 3 in 2018-19 AY.	↑
Looked After Children	5 CME (Off Roll) open cases were in care (4 Merton). In comparison there was one Merton child in care in the 2018-19 cohort.	↑	8 (On Roll) open cases were in care (7 Merton). In comparison there were 20 Merton children in care in 2018-19	↓
CP Plan	1 child was subject to a Child Protection Plan. This was a decrease of 3 compared to 2018-19 AY.	↓	11 Children were subject to a CP Plan; in comparison there were 17 in 2018-19 AY.	↓
Known to Youth Offending Team	No children were known to the Youth Offending Team	↓	5 children were known to the Youth Offending Team. In comparison 10 children were known to YOT in 2018-19	↓

Removing pupils from school rolls

6.5.5 Since September 2016 the LA has had a new 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.

Academic Year	Total	School Resolved	EWS cases	EWS resolved	Unresolved	EWS Working on
September 18 – July 19	2652	2082	570	543	27	0
September 19 – July 20	2227	1740	487	469	18	0

6.5.6 Cases deemed 'unresolved' are those where a child has moved abroad, and a home address or a school address hasn't been achieved, but we have confirmed that the child is no longer in the UK. The figure for 2019/20 is lower than 2018/19. 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. The actual level of children coming off roll post the first lockdown is higher than in previous years.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ofsted outcomes by school as of September 2020

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: Glossary of Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
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

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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 27th April 2021

Subject: Corporate Parenting – Annual Report 2019-20

Lead officer: Hannah Doody (Director of Children’s Schools and Families)

Lead Member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Lead Officers: David Michael, Head of Children in Care and Resources; John Walsh, Head of Service Adolescent and Family Service, 14 plus, Care Leavers and Youth Offending service; Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

Recommendations:

A. To note the content of Corporate Parenting Annual Report (2019-2020)

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report (2019-2020) provides an overview of services delivered to Merton’s children in care and care experienced young people. It covers the performance and comparative data for the 2019/20 reporting year.
- 1.2 This report contributes towards the Corporate Parenting Board’s duty to ensure and monitor how well services are delivered and how children and young people experience these services.
- 1.3 Merton’s corporate parenting board is held 4 times a year and is comprised of care experienced young people, elected members, senior managers from across the council, the NHS, and the CCG. It is chaired by the council’s Chief Executive, Ged Curran, which contributes to a strong corporate parenting ethos across the Council and the wider children’s partnership.
- 1.4 This report was considered and signed off by the Corporate Parenting Board meeting in January.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Annual Report contains a large amount of information about the demographics of children in care and care experienced young people, service performance as well as outcome information.
- 2.2 The 2019/20 annual report confirms that:
 - The number and rate of children in care has remained relatively stable for the last 5 years, and remains below London and national averages.

- The proportion of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in our care has increased from 13% in 2016 to 19% in 2020. This suggests that the number of Merton children in care has decreased in the same time period.
- Children in our care from black/Black British and mixed ethnic backgrounds are over-represented when compared to Merton's wider children's population
- Merton issued court proceedings for 48 children which was a significant decrease from the previous reporting year. Positively, all but 11 of these children remained in either their immediate or extended family networks.
- Regionalisation of adoption was progressed with the transferring of most of Merton's adoption functions to Adopt London South. 6 children were adopted in the reporting year.
- Performance regarding the recruitment of foster carers was low in comparison to previous years which was mainly attributable to a drop in budget. A digital campaign is now being trailed.
- Merton's first fostering conference was held in February 2020 which was well attended and hailed as a big success.
- We strengthened the planning and support for young people within our care and those transitioning into adulthood with a focus on the quality of pathway plans

3. NEXT STEPS

2.3 The annual report will be published shortly.

2.4 Corporate Parenting Board continues to monitor performance information as well as the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

3 FOR DECISION

There are no items for decision.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- No specific implications for this report

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- None for this report

6 TIMETABLE

- Not applicable for this report

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- None

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- None

- 9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- None
- 10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- None
- 11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- None
- 12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- Corporate Parenting Board – Annual Report 2019/20
- 12.1 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- None

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Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 27th April 2021

Subject: MSCP Annual Report 2019-20

Lead officer: Hannah Doody (Director of Children's Schools and Families)

Lead Member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Lead Officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships

Recommendations:

- A. To note the content of Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) Annual Report 2019-2020.
-

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The MSCP is required to produce and publish a report on actions taken by statutory partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area to safeguard children and promote their welfare and outline how effective those arrangements have been in practice.
- 1.2 This year, the Executive Group requested a shorter report with a clearer outline of deliverables against the priority areas articulated in the business plan.
- 1.3 The report has had input from all statutory partners as well as local agencies. It was discussed at the February Executive, as well as the Full Partnership Meeting (attended by over 40 practitioners and managers) and received formal sign off by the Executive Group in March. The MSCP's Independent Scrutineer has had the opportunity to review and comment.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The business year 2019/20 was a year of transition for the MSCP, as it implemented the changes ushered in by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. As part of these transitions, the partnership's longstanding chair Keith Makin left his post, and we introduced the positions of 'Independent Scrutineer' and 'Young Scrutineer' with a view to strengthen local scrutiny arrangements.
- 2.2 During 2019/20, Early Help remained a priority for the MSCP. Partners conducted a baseline audit the findings of which have informed the development of the Early Help Strategy (due for publication shortly). In addition, the partnership continued to focus on multi-agency work to identify and address exploitation in all its forms.

2.3 During the business year 2019/20, the partnership notified the DfE about three significant incidents involving Merton children. Two of these notifications resulted in the commissioning of independent 'Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews' (formally 'Safeguarding Children Reviews') and one in a local practice review.

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 The MSCP's Business Unit is in the process of publishing the annual report on the MSCP's website. The slight delay in publication is due to g, the annual report will be uploaded onto the MSCP's website.



MERTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report 2019-2020

Foreword by Executive Partners

2019-2020 has been a time of considerable change for Merton's safeguarding arrangements. In May 2019 we formally ratified the new partnership agreements which signaled the beginning of a programme of work to implement the changes ushered in by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together 2018. Under the new local arrangements, there are the three statutory partners: the Local Authority (London Borough of Merton), the Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS South West London CCG), and the Police (South Area BCU, Metropolitan Police). These partners meet regularly and form the Executive Group.

In Merton, we are fortunate that the work of the Executive Group is supported by the active involvement from many other agencies who have a role in safeguarding children. We are immensely grateful to all members who serve on the Full Partnership Board, chair subgroups, serve on task & finish groups, participating in audits, deep dive reviews and practice reviews, and committing to assuring that agencies and services in Merton are effective in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

In February 2020, we said goodbye to our long-standing Chair Keith Makin. We welcomed Guy Collings as new Chair and Sarah Lawrence as Independent Scrutineer in February 2020. However, Guy Collings who took up this role in February 2020 withdrew his position in August 2020 for personal reasons and the Partnership has functioned without a permanent Independent Chair since.

During the period of this report, we have made Early Help a priority. We started this work by conducting a baseline audit the findings of which will inform the development of our Early Help strategy due in 2020/21. In addition, the MSCP has continued its strong leadership in relation to the embedding of a contextual safeguarding approach into local practice to better safeguard older children from extra-familial factors that relate to all forms of exploitation and risks of extremism and radicalisation.

The MSCP last published a serious case review in 2017. We published the serious case review into the death of Child D in February 2020 following the conclusion of the judicial process. Child D died in November 2017. Sadly, in the reporting period a further two incidents met the criteria for a local

safeguarding practice review. These are now underway and will report in 20/21. In addition, the partnership undertook a local practice review concerning an adolescent.

We recognise that these tragic circumstances need to be reviewed and are vital to strengthen practice where needed and prevent future serious child safeguarding incidents. The MSCP's two-yearly S.11 audit was due in 19/20 but has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. This will be resumed as soon as practical.

And so we ended 2019-20 in an unprecedented fashion, amid a devastating, global pandemic, and here in the UK, in lockdown. The LSCP has continued with business as usual as much as possible, with the board and subgroup meetings taking place virtually. The partnership has come together at these exceptionally challenging times and worked together with partners across South-West London to ensure agency responses to the pandemic were co-ordinated and focused on ensuring the safety of children and young people. It is evident that the legacy of Covid will be with us for a long time, and we will look to adapt our working arrangements accordingly.



Julie Hesketh
Director of Quality
Merton & Wandsworth CCG



Det Supt Owain Richards
Head of Safeguarding (SW
London)
Metropolitan Police



Hannah Doody
Director of Children's
Services
London Borough of Merton

WORKING TOGETHER STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

What is a local safeguarding partnership?

The Children's Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The purpose of these local arrangements is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and also to work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area. The legislation shares the responsibility for these arrangements between the Local Authority, the Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group across an agreed geographical area [Merton].

Other 'relevant' agencies also have a duty to safeguard children and young people under the Children's Act 2004. A list of relevant agencies in Merton can be found at the end of this report.

The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership '**MSCP**') are responsible for Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, formally known as Serious Case Reviews. This includes arrangements to identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area, and for those cases to be reviewed under the supervision of the safeguarding partners. To read more about learning from case reviews and actions taken as a consequence to strengthen safeguarding arrangements and practice click [here](#).

The MSCP as a multi-agency partnership work to keep all children and young people safe in their homes and communities, and to fulfil their potential. The Partnership coordinates the work of all

agencies and ensures that this work is effective in achieving the best outcomes for Merton's children and young people.

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership published new arrangements in accordance with statutory requirement in June 2019. The full arrangements can be read [here](#).

The Annual Report

At least once in every 12 month period, the safeguarding partners must prepare and publish a report on what the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies for the local authority area have done as a result of the local safeguarding arrangements, and outline how effective those arrangements have been in practice.

This report will provide an update against the partnership's key priority areas outlined in the partnership's business plan¹. These are:

1. **Early Help**
2. **Think family: Domestic Abuse and Neglect**
3. **Contextual Safeguarding**

In addition, this report will provide an update on the Board's statutory functions in relation to **the provision of multi-agency safeguarding training**, and **learning from serious incidents**. T

Finally, the report also looks at the ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

¹ <https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MSCB-Annual-Report-2018-2019.pdf>

Priority 1: Early Help

Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

Page 102

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.

The MSCP's priority is to ensure that there is clear coordination and quality assurance of early help with effective integration between the Early Help, the MASH and First Response services with a shared focus on the journey and experience of the child and family.

In 2019-2020 the Partnership worked to develop a shared understanding of Early Help which focuses on targeted support

for vulnerable children and their families and this is aligned to the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model.

The CCG undertook a multi-agency audit on behalf of the partnership. Key findings include:

- Information sharing between agencies
- Better alignment in planning and delivery of interventions with children and their families
- The need to consider the role of the third sector

Early help in Merton is currently provided through a number of services from schools, community and faith groups, health services and those delivered directly by the councils Children, Schools and Family department.

The Local Authority has reshaped existing services and introduced its Family Wellbeing Service with a view to provide targeted support for children and families.

The priority for 2020-2021 will be to act on the findings identified by the audit. There will be a particular focus on embedding shared referral routes and pathways by re-modelling the front door, as well as revising and embedding the Merton Wellbeing model (threshold document).

Priority 2a : Think Family – Neglect

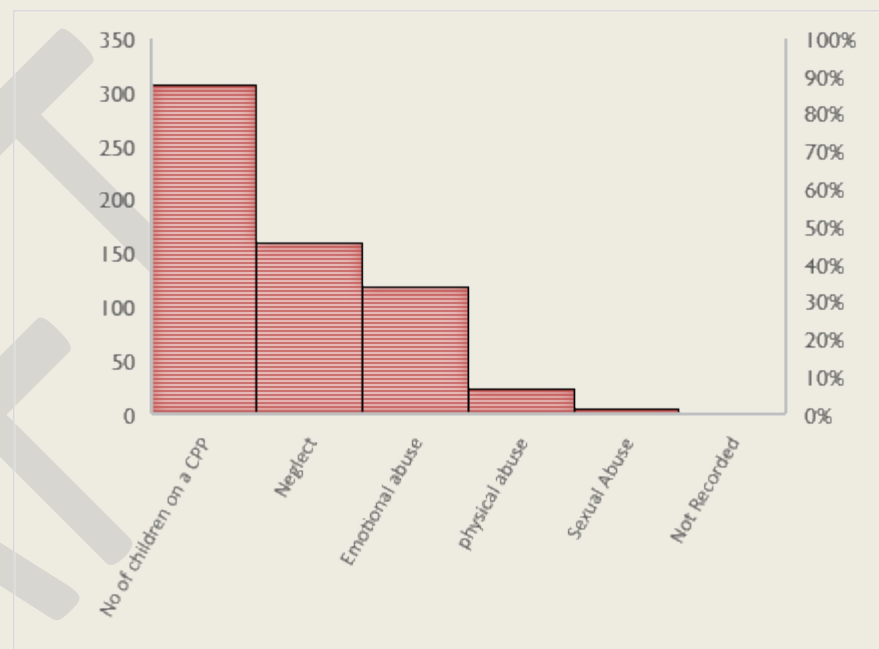
'Think Family' represents the MSCP's joined up approach to working with families, both children and adults, so that families' needs are assessed holistically and there is a coordinated response to assessed needs.

The MSCP's work in relation to Think Family covers a broad range of issues that impact on family life with a priority focus on protecting children who are at risk of domestic abuse by working effectively with families, including victims and perpetrators of abuse to create and sustain a safe parenting environment.

In 2019-20 the Merton Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub received 6227 contacts from professionals and the public concerned about children and young people. 1724 of these contacts were referred for further investigation. Of these referrals 439 met the threshold for a statutory safeguarding enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 2004. Of these children 307 were placed on a 'child protection plan'

In Merton the most prevalent type of primary abuse is neglect, with 52% of Child Protection Plans being for this type of abuse. The number of children under five years old on a child protection plan where neglect was a factor is comparatively low at 5%.

Figure 1: Children Subject to Child Protection Plan by type of abuse 2019-2020



During 2019/20, the partnership considered a revised Neglect strategy and toolkit. A number of agencies are already using the toolkit to identify and evidence neglect. This improves the quality of multi-agency working.

Further work is required to align the neglect toolkit with existing practice models in social care and health.

Police

Throughout the year, the South West Business Command Unit [SW BCU] supports front line officers to identify and report concerns around children who are at risk of neglect via 'Merlins'. Attention is paid to the quality of Merlins in order that concerns relating to a child's environment and presentation are clearly explained and described within the report

Central London Community Health

CLCH complies with its legal duty under the Children Act 2004 by having in place Named Nurses for Safeguarding Children (NNSC) in all boroughs. NNSC have statutory responsibilities, as identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and the SAAF (2019) to support staff in recognising and championing the needs of children, including responding to possible abuse or neglect.

As senior practitioners, the NNSC are experts in child development, child maltreatment and managing safeguarding concerns in a multiagency forum.

Epsom and St. Helier Hospitals:

The Safeguarding Children team are key contributors to many Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership subgroups to ensure children in the boroughs are kept safe from neglect, abuse and all forms of exploitation.

Priority 2b: Think Family and Domestic Abuse

The MSCP works to support co-ordinated approaches to children who are at risk of domestic abuse with the aim of creating and sustaining a safe parenting environment.

Merton's MARAC (multiagency risk assessment committee) is a panel that coordinates the partnership's response to the most complex/high risk domestic abuse cases using a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies.

In 2019–2020 the MARAC considered 410 high risk and complex cases involving domestic abuse, 376 children were identified as part of these discussions.

There has been an increase in the number of cases discussed at MARAC between 2018-19 to 2019-20. There was a slight rise in repeat cases being seen by MARAC across the two reporting years. Although more children were identified as in the household for 2018-19 than 2019-20, the percentage of children open to children's social care was less than 2019-20.

Table 1: MARAC cases 2019/20 – Overview

Year	Number of Cases Discussed	Number of Repeat cases	% repeat cases	Number of children in the household
2018-19	369	133	36%	437
2019-20	410	162	39%	376

Partners have delivered a strong response to domestic violence over the period, initiatives have included:

Independent Domestic Violence Advocates [IDVA's]

LBM Merton has introduced a case worker within the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] along with four community IDVA's who support victims of domestic abuse.

There is a dedicated IDVA worker for Sutton and Merton based in St. Helier Hospital, whose role includes sourcing safe/emergency accommodation, referrals to Safeguarding and/or MARAC, accompanying service users to court, information provision around criminal justice system, signposting for legal advice including clients with no recourse to public funds, and emotional support.

It is recognised that the IDVA role plays a pivotal role in St. Helier Hospital in supporting and managing domestic violence issues, not only in dealing with concerns re: patients but also with staff.

The number referrals to IDVA demonstrates a significant increase of 174% (these are referrals and contacts for advice). The majority are referrals made into IDVA. There were 188 cases where children are in the family, 135 MARAC referrals, and 183 identified as high-risk cases. The referrals involving children are significantly high.

Design Council Domestic Abuse project

LBM Merton has been working with the design council to discuss new ideas around how as a partnership we can design processes and structures to address domestic abuse, and in particular keep children and families safe. This project has generated a range of new suggested new processes which are now being considered and implemented.

The Building Better Relationships Programme

Provides victim support by female safety officers and works with perpetrators to reduce repeat offending. However, there is currently a gap in service provision for perpetrator programmes where the case has not been taken through the criminal justice system. This is being monitored by the newly formed Think Family and Domestic Abuse subgroup.

Operation Compass

Has been implemented successfully at a large number of schools in Merton and informs school settings of incidents of domestic abuse involving children on roll in order that Designated Safeguarding Leads and key staff are aware of this context when supporting and working with their children.

South West London Mental Health Services have introduced a [domestic abuse In-site](#) page to provide staff with resources and links to support practice in safeguarding.

Staff from the Rose ward led Trust's first domestic abuse conference in December 2019, over a hundred staff attended to hear from a range

of speakers and benefit from the opportunity to hear about resources and approaches.

Central London Community Health have systems in place to support CLCH staff in responding to cases of domestic violence and abuse to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of children who witness abuse and also the victim/survivor. CLCH safeguarding team

In October 2019 CLCH held the fourth annual safeguarding conference, which was attended by 250 delegates from within CLCH and also from external partner agencies. There were presentations from national and local speakers including rethinking the model of managing domestic abuse and learning disability.

Epsom and St. Helier Hospitals:

There has been a significant increase in Safeguarding referrals to Merton Local Authority, 46%. This has been a result of greater intervention, and emphasis on the 'hidden' children during Safeguarding Children training across the Trust. These are children whose parents present with domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health crises. Moreover, the promotion of the Think Family principles in training, which recognises and promotes the importance of a whole-family approach, and awareness raising of Domestic Abuse, has further compounded the increase in referrals.

Priority 3: Contextual Safeguarding

The Partnership is committed to work with all agencies to ensure that there is a highly coordinated multi-agency and whole-council approach to a range of adolescent risks that occur in contexts beyond the family home (e.g. neighbourhood, schools, local shopping centres, youth venues etc.). These risks include child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, peer on peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and other overlapping forms of harm.

There was a spike in Serious Youth Violence incidents at the start of 2019/20 with a consistent decline throughout the year. Merton has a history of experiencing spikes in incidents and joint assessment and planning (with specialist workers and police) has contributed to the identification of those involved followed by engagement and reduction.

On average Merton receives more referrals for child sexual exploitation than child criminal exploitation. Types of exploitation are primarily online, boyfriend/girlfriend relationship and lone adult for CSE, for CCE exploitation predominately involves drug dealing and peers.

The council's Adolescent and Family Service has specialist workers that deliver exploitation and gangs interventions. The council-funded **Risk and Resilience Service**, delivered by Catch22, provides a holistic response to exploitation, missing and substance misuse. The tendering and award process involved the engagement of young advisors and the new contract commenced in March 2020.

In 2019-20 Merton delivered the Early Intervention Youth Fund project with a 'Responsive Community Engagement Team' (ReCET). This was a collaborative project across Adolescent and Family Service, Safer Merton and Education Inclusion / Participation Team. The **ReCET team** enhanced the offer of detached youth work, alongside Catch22 and local sports activities.

Figure 2: Child Sexual Exploitation – Referrals by Type (2019/20)

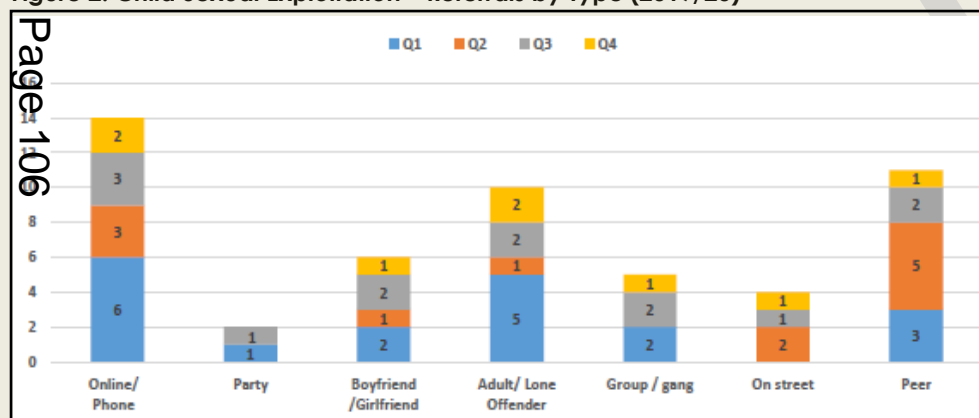


Figure 3: Child Criminal Exploitation – Referrals by Type (2019/20)



A Contextual Engagement manager was funded alongside ReCET engaging two locations in assessments and stakeholder planning meetings and the engagement of three schools in school assessments. The assessments and planning included the engagement and voice of young people alongside the voice of communities and school staff.

The SW BCU introduced an **Adolescent Risk Team (ART)** in 2019. The ART manages and supports a cohort of children and young people regarding county lines, criminal exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. An investigating officer is allocated, and engages with the young person attends strategy meetings, shares information and addresses new information, intelligence or incidents of concern.

The **MARVE** [Multagency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation panel for child sexual [CSE] and criminal exploitation [CCE] provides robust multi-agency oversight. At monthly meetings, it considers referrals for young people at risk of all forms of exploitation. The panel is chaired by the South West Business Command Unit [SWBCU] often those young people referred to the MARVE are open to police and are at risk of contextual harm.

In 2019/20, the MARVE Terms of Reference were updated to ensure that all contexts of harm receive partnership oversight.

At strategic level, the MSCP's **Promote and Protect sub-group** has oversight of this priority. Over the year a performance dashboard has been developed and used to help professionals understand what risk outside of the home looks like for young people and adolescents in Merton.

The focus for 2020-21 is the development of the Contextual Safeguarding Strategy and a toolkit of assessment and planning tools with guidance for social workers.

Children who go missing SW BCU reviewed its response to missing children as a result of a child death from early 2020. Changes to the process have been implemented which has resulted in a significant improvement in the response to missing episodes and SW BCU has been found to be the top performing BCU in the MPS by HMIC and Dedicated Inspection team. Children open to the MARVE who are reported missing are immediately allocated to the Missing persons Unit. We complete operational debriefs around specific missing cases to learn from and reflect on our actions and decisions and seek to continuously improve in this crucial area of business.

Children in Particular Circumstances

Child Protection

In January 2019 Ofsted considered the local authority's arrangements for children who need help and protection. Specifically, inspectors looked at the 'front door' arrangements for the service that considers contacts and referrals, including decision-making within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). They also considered transfers to and from early help services, the effectiveness of child protection enquiries, the quality of assessments and the plans to meet children's needs.

Work within the MASH remains a 'strong area of practice, as it was when the local authority was last inspected in 2017. It is well established, with effective multiagency engagement, and partners' contributions lead to timely and proportionate responses to the risks identified at the time of referral. Assessments are comprehensive and analytical, and lead to clear plans that help to improve children's and families' circumstances.'

Whilst this inspection was focussed on Local Authority responses, there were a number of findings relevant to the wider partnership, including:

- Thresholds of need are clearly understood by staff and partners and they are applied consistently.
- When the threshold for statutory services is not met, children and families have the benefit of a highly effective offer of early help.
- Most strategy discussions involve relevant partner agencies and demonstrate good use of family history and multiagency information. Child protection enquiries are timely, with comprehensive and analytical assessments informing decisions.

- Assessments of children's needs are generally of a good quality, are timely, comprehensive, and are informed by history and research.
- Good engagement and participation from wider professional networks lead to effective multi-agency plans.

On 31st March 2020, 91 children had a child protection plan. This translates into a rate of 19.2 which is significantly lower than the England average (42.8) or compared to statistical neighbours (36.25).

Looked After Children and Care Leavers

When a child comes into care, the council becomes their 'Corporate Parent', the term means the collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children in our care.

Children in Merton are less likely to be in care when compared to other boroughs. In 2019/20, 33 out of every 10,000 children in Merton are in care, compared to 44 in Merton's statistical neighbouring authorities and 65 nationally.

More boys are in care than girls (55% vs 45%). We also know that proportionally more Merton children enter care at a later age when compared to London and national averages.

Black children are over-represented in our care population compared to Merton's general population. However, the number of children in care recorded as black or black British has decreased from 2018-19 to 2019-20 from 26.4% (n 42) 22.7% (n45).

The total number of children who started to be looked after during year ending 31 March 2020 is slightly lower than 2018-19 from 159 to 154 children. The number of children in care who are

unaccompanied asylum seekers is also slightly lower from 21% (n34) to 19% (n29) children in care.

There are many reasons why a child may become looked after, in Merton for 2019/20 the principle reason was due to abuse or neglect increasing from 43.3% (n69) to 46.7% (n72). This has remained fairly consistent over the past five years.

Absent parenting is the second biggest reason why a child became looked after in 2019/20 affecting 22% (n34) of all children becoming looked after, a small reduction from 2018/19 at 23.8% (n38) respectively.

Health services for Looked after Children in Merton are provided by Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust (ESHHT) and Central London Community Health Care Trust (CLCH). The Looked after Children's health team has demonstrated a strong performance rating in regard to the delivery of initial and review health assessments.

- 79 initial health assessments (IHA) were completed in 2019-2020 of which 81% were completed within statutory timescales
- 118 review health assessments (RHAs) were completed in 2019-20
- 95.7% of one year statutory review health assessments were completed above the national figure achieved of 82%.

Where children are placed in foster care, there is a trend of more children being placed in foster care outside of the borough than in Merton the past five years. However, the number of children placed outside of borough has decreased in 2019-20, 42.1% (n 67) to 39.6% (n61).

[Merton's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-22](#) offers an overview of strategic multi-agency priorities.

Learning from case reviews

During 19/20, the partnership oversaw one Serious Case Review². Child D died in November 2017. D lived with her mother, father and older brother. At the time of her death D she was 7 years of age. D's father pleaded guilty to her murder in April 2018.

The MSCP commissioned a review of the case by an independent author who found that 'at the time of D's murder there was no information available to suggest that D or her family were at risk. Her death could not have been predicted.' The report was published in January 2020. The full report is available on the MSCP's website.

What we did in response to the review

The MSCP took a range of actions in response to the review including:

- We developed a training pack and briefing notes on good practice working with interpreters, coercive control and disguised compliance. These were delivered by agencies across Merton to their workforces.
- Enhanced training was put in place by St Georges NHS Mental Health Trust on mental health assessments following attempted suicide, increased awareness raising on protective factors and risks.
- The multi-agency mental health protocol was reviewed.

Recent Learning from Practice

The LSCP last published a serious case review in 2017. In the reporting period a further three incidents met the criteria for a local child safeguarding practice review. We outline these below.

Table 2: Practice Reviews 2019/20 – Overview

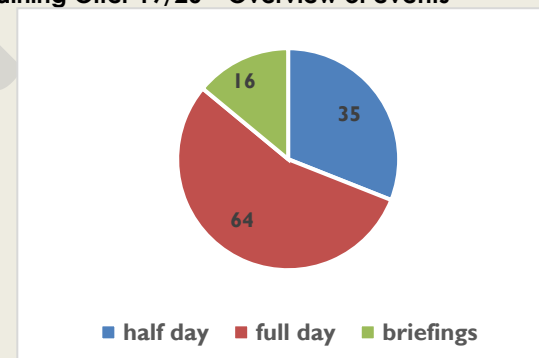
Case Ref	Date of incident	Type of incident	Partnership Response
Child E	07/05/2019	Serious self-harm	Local Partnership Review
Child F	19/04/2019	Serious Injury	LSCPR
Child G	02/09/2017 ³	Child Death	LSCPR

These reviews are now underway and will report in 20/21.

MSCP Training

The MSCP's training offer is extensive. From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 we offered 32 separate events and a total of 115 occurrences (just over 9 separate training events per month) offering a total of 2,496 places. The majority of events (64) were full day events.

Figure 4: MSCP Training Offer 19/20 – Overview of events



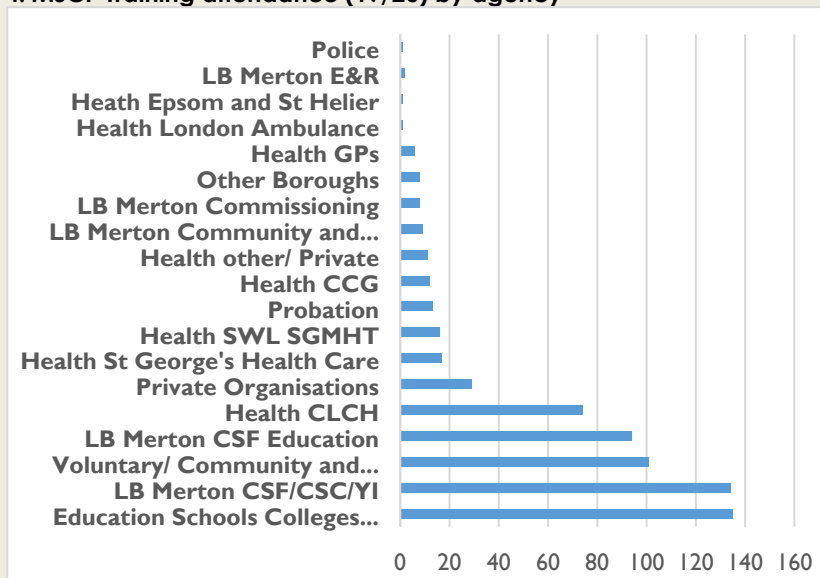
We recorded 973 bookings with 676 staff attending (69%). We had 216 cancellations (22%) and 297 DNAs (31%) 31% of events were half day, 55% full days and 14% briefings.

The services with the highest number of attendees at MSCP training events were London Borough of Merton Children Schools and Families and Children's Social Services, Education and the Voluntary Community and Faith group sector.

² This review was undertaken under Working Together 2014 given the date of Child D's death.

³ Commissioning of LSCPR delayed due to ongoing judicial processes.

Figure 4: MSCP Training attendance (19/20) by agency



The most popular courses were Introduction to Child Protection. The Child Protection Process and Refresher, Trauma Informed Practice, Local Authority Designated Officer training, and Tools for the Jewels.

Page 110

Figure 3: MSCP Training attendance (19/20) by event



The extensive multi-agency training offered is supplemented by single-agency training.

The MSCP's Policy and Training sub-group provided strategic oversight of this areas of the board's work.

Changes to the Merton Children Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements since April 2019

In May 2019, the MSCP formally adopted changes ushered in by the Social Work Act 2017. These are outlined in the MSCP's Partnership Agreement. The Partnership agreement can be found

here: <https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Merton-Safeguarding-Children-Partnership-Agreement-Final-June-2019.pdf>

As part of the introduction of new partnership arrangements, the Partnership introduced three new posts with the aim of supporting the core duty to promote the welfare of children and monitor the strength of partnership working. These are:

- An Independent Person – to act as chair
- An independent scrutineer
- A young scrutineer

Following an extensive recruitment campaign, the Partnership appointed a chair and independent scrutineer who took up post in February 2020. The recruitment of a young scrutineer did not progress as well, and this will be a priority for 20/21.

Annex 1: MSCP Budget and Spend 2019/20

MSCP Budget 2019/20 – contribution by agency

LB Merton	£147,680
Merton CCG	£55,000
	£8,000*
Metropolitan Police	£5,000
Cafcass	£550
LFB	£500
Total:	216,730

*CCG contribution to case review costs.

MSCP Spend 19/20

Page 112

Staffing	97,954
LBM Salaries	90,613
Independent Chair	7,341
Training	38,934
Training Officer	34,704
External Training	2,302
Room Hire	1,928
Case Reviews	1,950
Supplies and Services	11,284
Total	150,122
Budget Variance	35,288

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 27th April 2021

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Hannah Doody, Director of Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer

Contact officer: Karl Mittelstadt, Head of Performance, Policy 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. This report summarises the performance information for 2020/21. It includes monthly data up to 31st March 2021 and, where possible, quarterly information up to 31st March 2021.
- 1.2. Performance information is set out in the accompanying document, the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2020/21.

2 DETAILS

Exception Report

- 2.1. The following indicators are marked as amber or red.

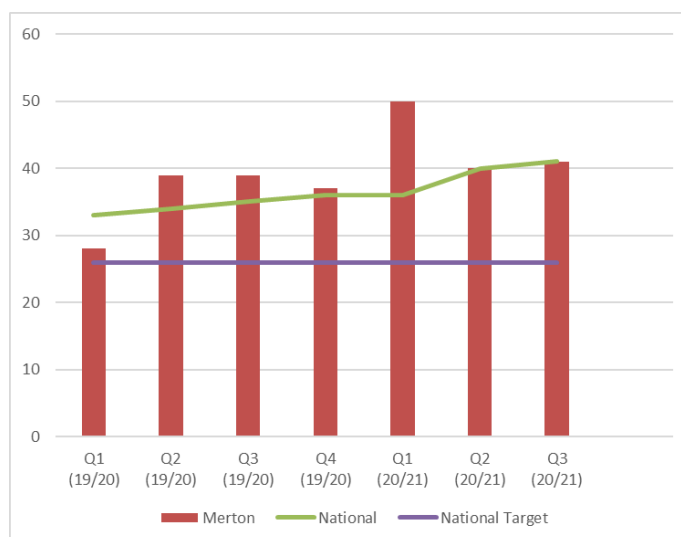
No	Indicator	Rating	Service Commentary
3	% of Education, Health and Care plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale	R	Whilst showing an increase in March 2021, there continues to be a delay in meeting the 20-week timescale during COVID. This has been for a number of reasons exacerbated by the pandemic including: staffing issues within partner agencies, late professional advice delaying planning meetings and in a small number of cases parents not engaging with assessments and/or planning meetings.
16	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care	R	See below.

	proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks.		
22	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	R	The recruitment of foster carers has been impacted detrimentally by Covid-19. We continue to promote foster caring using online communication channels.

Care proceedings

- 2.2. Nationally, the duration of care proceedings has increased. This is a result of court closures during the pandemic.
- 2.3. Whilst above the nationally set target of 26 weeks, Merton's performance is in line with national performance. This is outlined in the table below.

Care proceeding timeliness 2019-2021 (Merton vs National)

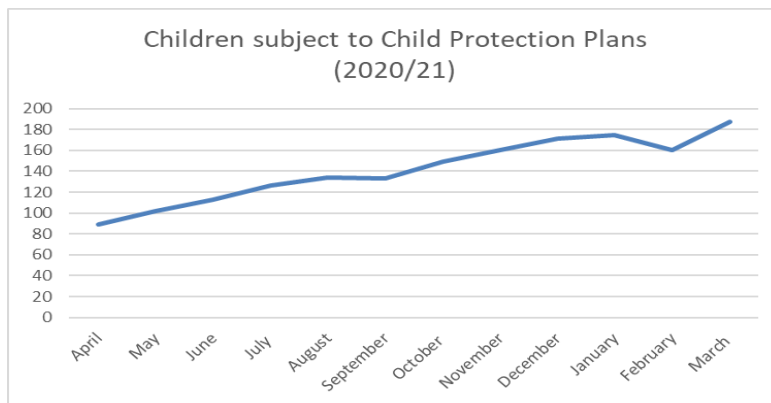


Source: Cafcass published data

- 2.4. In addition, the following indicators, whilst not target indicators, will be of particular note to the scrutiny panel.

Number of children subject of a child protection plan (indicator 5)

- 2.5. The number of children subject of a child protection plan has doubled between April 2020 and March 2021 and stood at 187 on 31st March 2021.



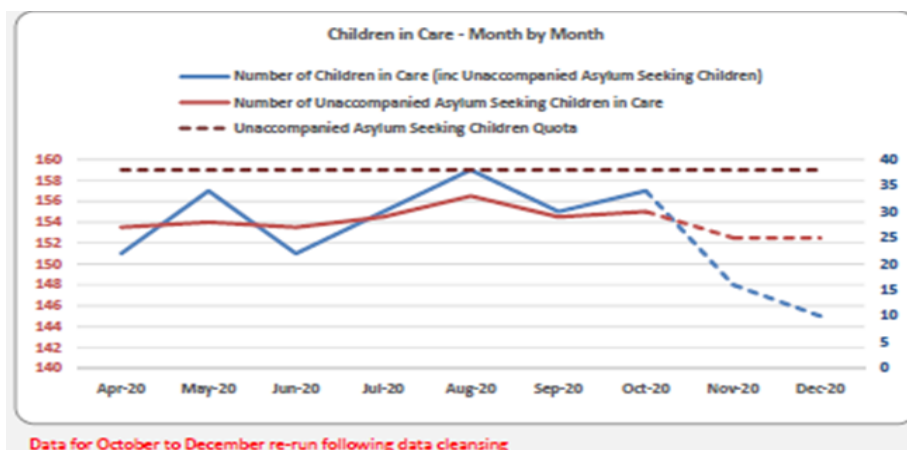
Source: case management system

- 2.6. The rise in the number of child protection plans is a result of increased demand for services together with an increase in the duration of child protection plans. Both factors are linked to the covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.7. In order to better understand the underlying causes of this demand, CSF is in the process of undertaking a detailed review of these figures. We expect to be able to report the results in the summer.

Number of looked after children (indicator 13)

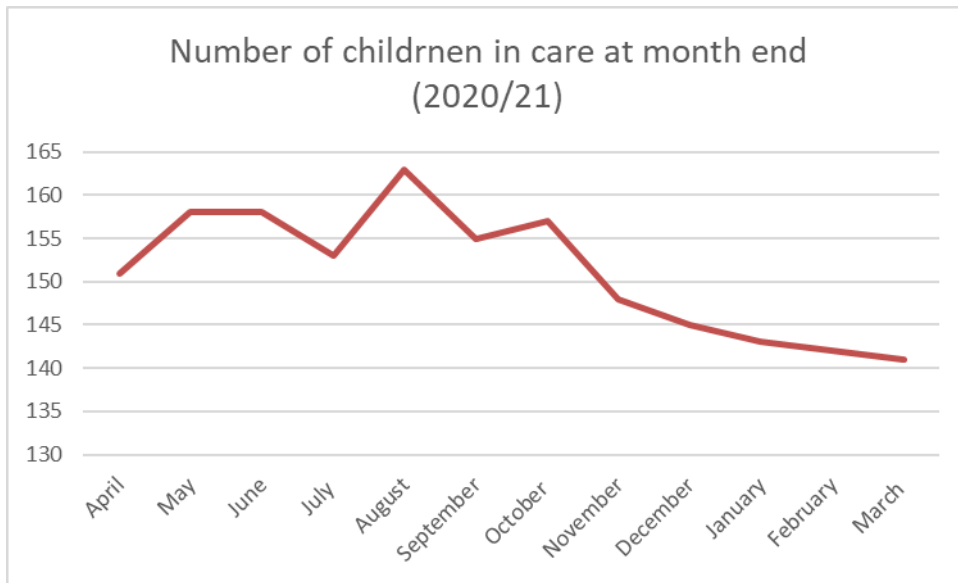
- 2.8. The number of children in care has been stable for the last three years. This is against a backdrop of an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the care of Merton council, as well as a national rise in the overall number of children in care.
- 2.9. In November, we witnessed a further decline in the number of children in our care. This decline is a result of a number of children turning 18 at the same time.

Children in Care (April 20 – Dec 20)



Source: case management system

2.10. This decline has continued until March 2021 and the number of children in our care stands at 141 on 31st March 2021 (compared to 151 in April 2020).

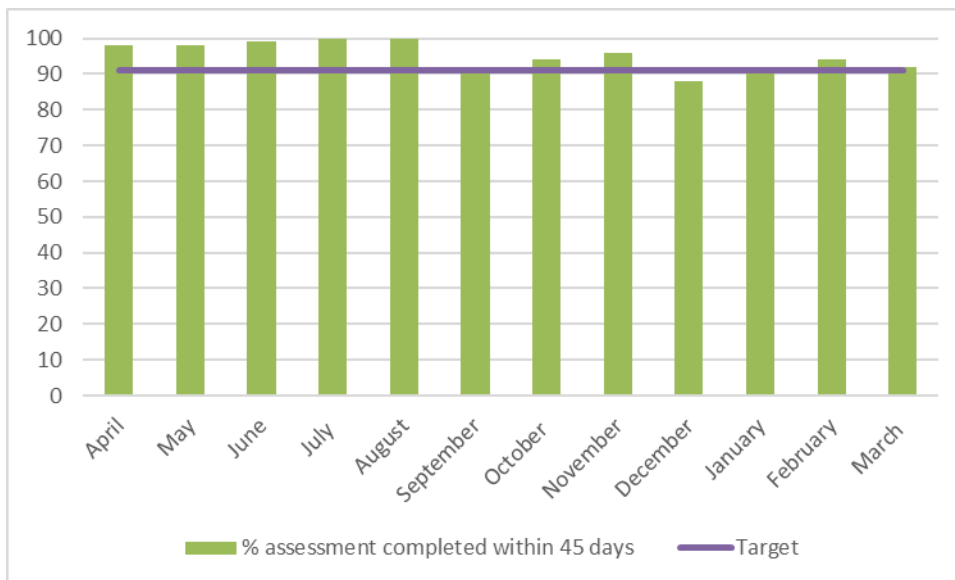


Source: case management system

Assessment Timeliness

2.11. Members of the panel may wish to note that assessment timeliness (indicator 2) is reported green (this was below target in February). This is a result of additional resources made available to address demand increases in November and December.

% assessment completed within 45 days



Source: case management system

Amendments, Corrections and Data Caveats

- 2.12. Current system configuration and data recording issues in our social care reporting system Mosaic have an impact on our ability to report performance against some of the indicators effectively. This does not mean that the department is unable to monitor performance.
- 2.13. We are currently not able to report accurately against the following indicators:

Indicator Number	Descriptor	Commentary
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Data reporting is currently unreliable. The way in which Mosaic is currently configured does not allow an easy analysis of quoracy.
26	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	This indicator cannot currently be reported against due to suspension of inspections and grading during the national Covid response.

3 FOR DECISION

There are no items for decision.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. No specific implications for this report

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. None for this report

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. Not applicable for this report

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. None

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. None

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Performance Index 2020/21

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1. None

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Performance Index 2020/21



Please note that Year to date performance - unless otherwise stated indicates April - March

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2020/21	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2020/21 performance											
				Merton 2019/20	Merton 2018/19	England	London		Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Assessments																				
1	Number of Common and Shared Assessments undertaken (CASAs)	Quarterly	Not a target measure	68 completed	n/a	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure			4 Completed 0 ongoing due to covid			0 Completed due to Covid 16 ongoing			Not yet available		Not yet available	
2	% of Single Assessments authorised within the statutory 45 days	Monthly	91%	94%	84%	83.1% (DfE 2018/19)	83% (DfE 2018/19)	Green	98%	98%	99%	100%	100%	90%	94%	96%	88%	92%	94%	92%
3	% of Education, Health and Care plans issued within statutory 20 week timescale	Monthly	55%	53%	56.3% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2019 for the 2018	58% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2019 for the 2018 calendar	54.6% (DfE: SEN2 Jan 2019 for the 2018 calendar	Red	50%	33%	34%	34%	N/A	N/A	33%	32%	41%	18%	21%	33%
Child protection																				
4	Child Protection Plans rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure	19.5	38.9	43.7 (DfE 2018/19)	36.7(DfE 2018/19)	Not a target measure	18.8	21.6	23.9	26.7	28.4	28.1	31.5	33.9	36.2	36.9	33.7	39.4
5	Number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan	Monthly	Not a target measure	92	184	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	89	102	113	126	134	133	149	160	171	175	160	187
8	% of quorate attendance at child protection conferences	Quarterly	95%	N/A		No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available				N/A			N/A			N/A			N/A
9	% of reviews completed within timescale for Children with Child Protection Plans	Monthly		99%	90.4% (DfE 2018/19)	91.8% (DfE 2018/19)	95.7% (DfE 2018/19)	Green	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
10	% of Children subject of a CP Plan who had a CP visit within timescales in the month	Monthly	Not a target measure	84%	77%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure	96%	97%	88%	93%	95%	93%	N/A	N/A	86%	81%	94%	94%
11	% of Children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	Monthly	range 12-20%	19%	17.2% (DfE 2018/19)	20.8% (DfE 2018/19)	17.5% (DfE 2018/19)	Green	20%	21%	18%	15%	16%	16%	15%	16%	14%	18%	21%	19%
Looked After Children																				
12	Looked After Children rate per 10,000	Monthly	Not a target measure	33.0	33	65 (DfE 2018/19)	50 (DfE 2018/19)	Not a target measure	31.9	33.4	33.4	32.4	34.5	32.8	33.2	31.3	30.7	30.3	30.0	29.7
13	Number of Looked After Children	Monthly	Not a target measure	154	157	78,150 (DfE 2018/19)	10,030 (DfE 2018/19)	Not a target measure	151	158	158	153	163	155	157	148	145	143	142	141
14	Number of UASC children and young people	Monthly	Not a target measure	29	32	No benchmarking available	No benchmarking available	Not a target measure	27	28	27	29	33	29	30	25	25	25	25	23
16	Average number of weeks taken to complete Care proceedings against a national target of 26 weeks	Quarterly	26 weeks	37	33	31 (CAFCASS 2018/19)	No relevant benchmarking available	Red						40			41			Not yet available
17	% of Looked After Children cases which were reviewed within required timescales	Monthly	96%	96%	88%	Not published	Not published		97%	99%	99%	100%	95%	99%	97%	96%	97%	97%	96%	96%
18	% of Looked After Children participating in their reviews in month (year to date) (excludes children aged 0 - 4)	Monthly	Not a target measure	90%	95%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure		89%	91%	84%	84%	88%	88%	91%	87%	100%	95%	93%
19	Stability of placements of Looked After Children - number of moves (3 moves or more in the year)	Quarterly	11%	7%	8% (DfE 2018/19)	10% (DfE 2018/19)	11% (DfE 2018/19)	Green			5%			6%			11%			11%
20	Stability of placements of Looked After Children (aged 16+) - length of placement (in care 2.5years, placement 2 years)	Quarterly	65%	75%	73% (DfE 2018/19)	69% (DfE 2018/19)	67% (DfE 2018/19)	n/a			N/A			62%			48%			54%
21	% of Looked After Children in foster placements who are placed with in-house foster carers	Quarterly	60%	N/A	n/a	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			55%			53%			54%			49%
22	Number of in-house foster carers recruited	Quarterly	20	12	13	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Red			4			4			4			4
23	Number of Looked After Children who were adopted (YTD)	Monthly	Not a target measure	data not yet available	4 (6% of those leaving care), DfE	3570 (12% of those leaving care, DfE 2019)	300 (6% of those leaving care), DfE 2019)	Not a target measure	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	2	5	0	0	0
23a	Number of Looked After Children for whom agency Special Guardianship Orders were granted (YTD)	Quarterly	Not a target measure	10 (11%)	9 (13% of those leaving care 2019, DfE data)	3840 (13% of those leaving care, DfE 2019)	480 (9% of those leaving care, DfE 2019)	Not a target measure			2			2			5			0

No.	Performance Indicators	Frequency	Target 2020/21	Benchmarking and trend				BRAG rating	Merton 2020/21 performance												
				Merton 2019/20	Merton 2018/19	England	London		Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	
Childrens Centres and Schools																					
25	% of total 0-5 year estimated Census 2011 population from areas of deprivation (IDACI 30%) whose families have accessed children's centre services	Quarterly	Not a target measure		56%	89% (31/08/2017)	94% (31/08/2017)	Not a target measure				10%			20%			27%			43%
26	% outcome of School Ofsted inspections good or outstanding (overall effectiveness)	Quarterly	91%	95%	95% (A Y year-end 31/08/2019)	86% (31/08/2019)	93% (31/08/2019)	N/A - C19			N/A - C19			N/A - C19			N/A - C19				N/A - C19 latest results 91% (48/53)
27	Number of Primary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	Academic year measure	<5	1210 (DfE AY 2017/18)	69 (DfE AY 2017/18)	Not a target measure	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Number of Secondary* permanent exclusions (Number YTD Academic year)	Monthly	Not a target measure	Academic year measure	21	6612 (DfE AY 2017/18)	960 (DfE AY 2017/18)	Not a target measure	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	N/A - C19	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
29	Secondary *** persistent absenteeism (10% or more sessions missed)	Annual	Not a target measure	Academic year measure	10.3% (DfE AY 2018/19)	13.7% (DfE AY 2018/19)	12% (DfE AY 2018/19)	Not a target measure													
30	% of Reception year surplus places***	Annual	Range 5 - 10%	TBC	13.3% (AY2017/18)	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green							10.5%						
31	% of Secondary school (Year 7) surplus places ***	Annual	Range 5 - 10%	TBC	11.7% (AY2017/18)	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green							5.5%						
Young People and Services																					
32	Youth service participation rate	Annual		1859	2395	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green													
33	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Monthly	Not a target measure	Awaiting confirmed annual rate	1.6%	2.6% (DfE 2018/19 based on Dec - Feb average)	1.7% (DfE 2018/19 based on Dec - Feb average)	Not a target measure	1.3%	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%	3.0%	N/A	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	1.4%	1.3%		Not yet available
34	% of CYP (16 - 17 year olds) education, employment or training status 'not known'	Monthly	Not a target measure	Awaiting confirmed annual rate	0.6% Q4 (0.8% DfE benchmark data)	2.9% (DfE 2018/19 based on Dec - Feb average)	3% (DfE 2018/19 based on Dec - Feb average)	Not a target measure	1.2%	1.5%	5.0%	2.1%	3.3%	N/A	4.6%	2.2%	1.6%	1.0%	0.7%		Not yet available
35	Number of First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	Monthly	50	38	33 (published rate per 10k)	224 (rate per 10,000, 2019)	260 (rate per 10,000, 2019)	Green	2	9	11	14	15	19	23	31	33	33	37	39	
36	Rate of proven re-offending by young people in the youth justice system	Quarterly	Not a target measure	TBC	0.68	1.55% (2017/18 YJB pub 2020)	1.47% (2017/18 YJB pub 2020)	Not a target measure			46%			46%			46%				45%
37	TF: Number of Families engaged for Expanded Programme	Quarterly	Not a target measure	254	320	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Not a target measure			75			75			75				75
38	% of commissioned services for which quarterly monitoring was completed	Quarterly	100%	100%	100%	No relevant benchmarking available	No relevant benchmarking available	Green			100%			100%			100%				Not yet available
39**	% agency social workers (HR data)	Quarterly	New	18.2% Year End (FTE)	38.1% Year End (FTE)	No direct comparable benchmark (DfE Census Sept 2019, 15.8%)	No direct comparable benchmark (DfE Census Sept 2019, 23.8%)	New						18%							
40**	Average total caseload for social workers (working with looked after children and/or children subject of child protection plans) (total caseload including non LAC and CPP cases as at end of month) Combines and replaces previous indicators 7 and 15	Monthly	New	16 (Year-End) 14 (Annual average)	NEW (DfE Census Sept 2018** 17.7)	No direct comparable benchmark (DfE Census Sept 2018, 17.4)	No direct comparable benchmark (DfE Census Sept 2018 15.8)	New	15	14	11	13	13	13	14	15	15	14	13	13	

Indicators 27 & 28 : * all pupils educated in Merton Schools (including special schools)

Indicators 29, 30 & 31: *** all pupils educated in Merton Schools (excluding special Schools)

Indicators 39 & 40** Quarterly and monthly data reported from live date reported by Human Resource or Mosaic respectively. There is no direct comparable benchmarkable data as the DfE uses a different definition of a 'social worker' for the purpose of who is included in the annual Children's Social Workforce Census.