

## **Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 29th September 2022**

Wards: All

### **Subject: Departmental Update**

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

Lead member(s): Cllr Brenda Fraser, Cabinet Member Children's Services, and Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Maisie Davies - Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships

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### **Recommendations:**

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

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

## **2 DETAILS**

### **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES**

- 2.1 It has been a busy period for Children, Schools and Families; like other parts of the Council, the Department has been supporting the Council's emergency response following the gas explosion in Galpin's Road. The gas explosion tragically took the life of a four-year-old girl and left three others injured. To ensure the safety of residents, more than 500 people have been evacuated and many of these have now started to be able to return home.
- 2.2 CSF has played a key role in supporting families affected by the gas explosion, including those who have been displaced. We are supporting the bereaved family, as well as working jointly with schools to identify children and families who require emotional or mental health support in the wake of this tragic event. In the return to school period, we have also supported families with school transport requirements. We are immensely proud of our staff, many of whom have volunteered significant amounts of time to the emergency response and continue to do so.

## **3 EDUCATION**

## Summary of recent developments in national policy

### ***SEND Inspection Consultation***

- 3.1 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are [seeking views](#) on proposed changes to the way they jointly inspect area SEND arrangements from 2023. The changes are intended to enable SEND inspections to focus more on the impact that a local area partnership's SEND arrangements has on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The arrangements will look to strengthen accountability and drive continuous improvement by introducing inspection cycles and annual engagement meetings; three inspection outcomes; and an expectation that all areas produce and publish a strategic plan for SEND, to be updated following inspection. The inspection process will also gather more evidence directly from children, young people and their families; look more closely at arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision; and include social care inspectors in SEND inspection teams to enable a more holistic view.
- 3.2 Children, Schools and Families submitted a response to the consultation welcoming the increased focus on impact for children and young people. We will incorporate any changes to the framework into our inspection readiness planning.

### **Supporting Vulnerable Children**

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

- 3.3 An Education Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) is a legal document which describes a child or young person's special educational needs (SEN), the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve for pupils aged 0-25 years. An EHC plan can also describe health needs which relate to the pupil's SEN and any health care provision reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN. In addition, the EHC plan can describe social care needs which relate to a pupils SEN or to a disability and any social care provision required from social services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and/or reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the child or young person having SEN. The special educational provision described in an EHC plan must be provided by the child or young person's local authority or the clinical commissioning group (now integrated care system).
- 3.4 An EHC plan can only be issued after a child or young person has gone through the process of an Education, Health and Care needs assessment (EHCNA). An Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment is a detailed assessment where the LA seeks professional advice from education, health and social care to determine what a child's special educational needs are and what provision should be put in place. Following the EHCNA the LA will decide whether they will issue an EHCP.

- 3.5 Since January 2022 the service has received 234 requests for an EHCNA. In this calendar year the LA has agreed to undertake 202 EHCNA's and agreed to issue 116 EHCPs.
- 3.6 At August 2022 Merton currently maintains 2,481 EHCPs. This is a decrease of 99 plans since January 2022. The Service has actively been following up pupils who are not returning to education or training and we have ceased their plans following the legal process.
- 3.7 The EHCNA process should be completed within 20 weeks. As of August the year to date timeliness for completing an EHCNA is at 71% in the total number of EHCPs being issued within 20 weeks
- 3.8 The recruitment of 8 additional Education Health and Care Co-ordinators has been successful. We are currently inducting the new staff members. In September the new SEN Structure of Assessment Team/Early Year – Primary Team, Secondary Team and the Post 16 Team will go live. The focus of the Primary, Secondary and Post 16 Team will be to ensure that statutory timescales of the EHCP Review process are met and to improve the quality of EHCPs.

### **Expansion of SEND provision**

- 3.9 In line with our safety valve proposals, two new provisions opened as planned for the start of term in September, and two provisions were expanded. Whatley Campus, for children with Autism and Communication needs, and part of Melrose School, opened to 40 children, with an eventual official capacity of 80, and Cranmer School opened its Additional Resourced Provision. Provisions at West Wimbledon and Hatfield Primary Schools were both expanded, with the second phase of expansion for West Wimbledon following next summer.

### **Pupils with English as an Additional Language**

- 3.10 In May 2022 (school census data), 44.9% of Merton's primary school cohort, 30.5% of the secondary school cohort and 32.8% of pupils in Merton's special schools (LA maintained and academy schools) are registered as speaking English as an additional language.
- 3.11 LA primary schools with the highest proportion of EAL pupils include Bond, Links, St Thomas of Canterbury and Gorringe primary schools and, of the secondary schools, St Mark's Academy and Rutlish.
- 3.12 By the end of Key Stage (KS) 2, EAL pupils in Merton's primary maintained LA and academy schools attain outcomes that are broadly the same as the whole cohort, whilst the progress they have made from KS 1 to KS 2 is better: 61% of Merton's EAL pupils achieved the Expected Standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of KS 2 in 2022, which is in line with the performance of EAL pupils nationally that year and with the outcome for All pupils in Merton. The progress that Merton's EAL pupils made from KS 1 to KS 2 was significantly above average in each of the three core subjects and in maths was +2.79 compared with +1.62 for

the whole KS 2 cohort (please note this is according to provisional data for 2022).

- 3.13 2022 GCSE data for the EAL cohort is not yet available.
- 3.14 Merton School Improvement Service funds an Equalities Adviser whose role includes EAL and who offers a borough-wide training programme which includes 'Welcoming new Arrivals' and training for Early Careers Teachers on supporting EAL pupils' learning across the curriculum. Resources to support class teachers include an Early Reading pack translated into a range of community languages. The EAL adviser provides a termly network meeting for EAL leaders and provides bespoke support for EAL leaders in individual schools, for example those new to the role. There are also initiatives which support schools in meeting the needs of EAL pupils (and other pupil groups) and these include an Oracy project: Power of Reading, Storytelling Schools, Voice 21. Support for individual schools in 2021 – 2022 has included leading staff meetings, supporting individual teachers and support with curriculum development to ensure that EAL learners have equal access.

### **Attain Partnership**

- 3.15 Attain is the partnership of Merton schools with London Borough of Merton. The Attain Board combines expertise across the borough with two headteachers representing each of the 8 school clusters, Primary and Secondary phase governor representatives and LA officers.
- 3.16 2021/2022 highlights include
- The Young People's Race Equality Conference at which students aged 16 – 24 worked with an external facilitator and a Merton Youth Worker to create a Young People's Race Equality Manifesto which has been shared with school leaders and school staff through the Black Lives Matter and Equalities Forum. A student group continues to meet to share their voice, with support for this led by Merton's Participation and Engagement Manager.
  - Attain funded a Race Equality in Education Conference on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, which was attended by 73 school leaders and council officers, and 31 schools were represented. Cllr Kenny opened the event and it was drawn to a conclusion by Cllr Kaweesa. Guest speakers included Laura Henry-Allain MBE and Professor Paul Miller. There was an excellent presentation by Alison Jerrard and her Student Cultural Ambassadors. Themes explored included racial stereotyping, organisational culture and adultification. In 2022 – 2023 we intend to bring together the school staff and student conferences so that there is a platform for young people to speak directly to an audience of school leaders.
  - The Merton Reading Fluency Project was designed to increase the number of Y2 pupils achieving the Expected Standard (ES) in reading at the end of KS 1 and cultivating enthusiastic, confident readers able to tackle challenging texts. All 11 schools in the project found their

implementation of the project hugely affected by Covid absences of pupils and staff. Nevertheless, at the end of the one year project, 71% of the targeted cohort reached the Expected Standard in Reading at the end of Key Stage 1; the average improvement in comprehension for pupils was 24 months. Black pupils made more progress in reading comprehension than any other wider ethnic group, with an average of over 31 months progress. EAL boys made 3 years and 6 months progress.

- 3.17 In 2022 – 2023, Attain funded projects and initiatives will include a comprehensive support package for new headteachers in Merton schools, the extension of the Secondary School Peer Review programme into the primary school phase and an expansion of the Reading Fluency project into the KS 3 cohort.

## **4 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

### **Ofsted Action Plan**

- 4.1 Members are aware that the department's Social Care and Early Help services were inspected (ILACS) in February and March 2022. An overview of the positives and the overall outcome was provided in the departmental update of June 2022. Over the summer period, the department developed and submitted the post ILACS inspection action plan to Ofsted in August.
- 4.2 Although the overall judgement was Outstanding, the two areas identified for improvement were:
1. The quality of work with some children by out-of-hours staff when children need to come into care;
  2. A flexible needs-led housing offer when young people leave care.
- 4.3 The appended action plan (Appendix 2) provides an overview of the activities already undertaken as well as those underway as part of further improvement work. The progress of these actions is overseen within various departmental meetings and overall line of sight will continue to be held through the monthly Learning and Improvement Board.

### **Disproportionality and the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board**

- 4.4 The Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board (YCPEB) is a partnership board chaired by the Director of Children's Services and attended by various agencies. It is responsible for the management, oversight and strategic direction of Youth Justice and Prevention services.
- 4.5 A Disproportionality Subgroup of the YCPEB is chaired by Education and includes representation from Police, Youth Justice Service, Early Help, Housing, and Mental Health. The Subgroup addresses the overrepresentation of Black and Mixed-Heritage children and young people in the youth criminal justice system. The group has reviewed data

and potential drivers for overrepresentation and agreed key areas where partners can work together to make a positive impact on outcomes. While there has been much work done in this area, it is recognised that issues of disproportionality persist.

- 4.6 As part of the above, the group undertook a Disproportionality Data Review to understand if Lammy Review<sup>1</sup> findings are replicated in Merton regarding 'no comment interviews' and other disproportionalities. If a young person gives no comment, they are more likely to be charged and go to court, which increases their chances of being put on a Youth Justice Order rather than triaged and having an out of court disposal.
- 4.7 South West London Borough Command Unit (BCU) reviewed data for all young people that came to notice in a 3 month period: Black young people were more likely to give no comment interviews than other young people. They were also more likely to be arrested for higher gravity offences i.e. those that are deemed more serious. It made no difference who accompanied the young person at the interview.
- 4.8 In response, a court process was agreed that if the young person gives no comment, then chooses to comment in court, it can be returned to the police to decide if an out of court disposal is possible. The youth justice service is also working with young people to look at what and who might be able to influence them to give a comment-based interview.
- 4.9 The second theme reviewed by the Subgroup was stop and search, which is often not only the first point of entry to the system, but also disproportionate. We know from Merton's Youth Survey<sup>2</sup> that trust in the police correlates strongly with having been stopped or a friend having been stopped. Therefore, improving practice in stop and search may be able to affect higher trust in the police, which is central to no comment interviews. Data has been reviewed by young people and senior police officers; workshops were held and a reverse mentoring project was successfully run between young people who have been stopped and senior BCU police officers. The findings and graphic minutes have been widely circulated (graphic minutes are available at Appendix 3).

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<sup>1</sup> The Lammy Review was an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. [Lammy Review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Lammy_Review_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton was a co-produced research report which reached over 2,000 children and young people living and learning in Merton, and was co-produced by Merton's Young Inspectors. [The Impact of Covid19 on young people in Merton - Final.pdf](#)