

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13th March 2023

Agenda item:

Subject: Education Standards Report

Lead officer: Jane McSherry, Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families

Lead member: Cllr Sally Kenny, Cabinet Member Education and Lifelong Learning

Contact officer: Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director Education and Early Help

Recommendations:

A. Members to note the contents of the report

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report provides information about the education standards, and achievement of children and young people in Merton over the academic year 2021-2022. It identifies how the Local Authority (LA) has worked in partnership with schools to secure and maintain improvement.

2 DETAIL

2.1. The proportion of schools judged to be good or better in Merton rose from 95% to 96% over the course of the academic year. This proportion is 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 44% of secondary schools judged as outstanding (well above national and London averages). Two out of the three special schools are judged as outstanding; 34% of special schools nationally are judged outstanding. Two of the Borough's 44 primary schools were not yet judged to be good or better as of August 2022. This means that 95% of primary schools were judged to be good or better at that point, which is above the national average of 89% for this educational phase. Where a school is not yet judged to be good or better, or where LA monitoring or school self-evaluation would identify there is a risk that a school would be judged as less than good the next time they are inspected, they are supported and challenged as per the LA's school improvement strategy.

2.2. In 2022 attainment at all key stages and in the vast majority of indicators is above national averages. However, the outcomes for 2022 in most primary phase indicators are lower in comparison with pre-pandemic performance (as has happened nationally), whilst it has risen slightly in most secondary phase indicators (again mirroring the national picture). National rankings continue to be strong in particular in the progress measures at KS2 for reading and maths, and for GCSE. The quartile performance in relation to the Borough's statistical neighbours and to other Outer London boroughs 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.

2.3. The proportion of children in Merton schools achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2022 is 3.8 percentage points above the national average and

1.2 percentage points above the London average. There has however been a significant dip in national, London and Merton proportions of pupils achieving the GLD in 2021/2022 compared with the last two years in which there was published data. This reflects the unique circumstances this cohort of pupils experienced in Nursery and Reception as well as the changes in how their achievement was assessed and reported.

2.4. 80% of pupils reached the expected standard for phonics decoding in Merton, this is above both London and national averages. Although Merton outcomes represent a drop of three percentage points since 2019, this is less of a decline than that seen in London (six percentage points) and nationally (seven percentage points).

2.5. At Key Stage 1 (KS1), in reading and in maths performance remains slightly above London averages at both the expected standard and greater depth, and performance continues to be well above national averages. Performance in writing is above national averages, but is in line with or below London averages. However, post pandemic, in each subject, performance at the expected standard and at greater depth has fallen in Merton, mirroring the trend in London and nationally. This reflects the disruption to pupils' learning caused by the pandemic. Pleasingly, performance in all three subjects at the Greater Depth standard ranks Merton highly in comparison with all other LAs (maths = 7th nationally, reading and writing = 16th nationally), and in comparison with its statistical neighbours and other Outer London boroughs in reading and maths.

2.6. At Key Stage 2 (KS2), the progress and attainment scores in each of reading, writing and mathematics are all above the national averages, and above or in line with London averages, with the exception of writing where the progress score and attainment at the Expected Standard is below London. The progress score in mathematics ranks Merton 13th.

2.7. Performance in Merton secondary schools at KS4 remains very strong. At 0.52, the Progress 8 score in Merton is well above national and London averages, and ranks the Borough 2nd in the country. This strong performance has been maintained for many years. In the Attainment 8 indicator, Merton's average (53.6) is above the national and the London averages. Three Merton mainstream schools are just below the national average (Harris Academy Morden, St Mark's Academy and Raynes Park High School). The proportion of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in the EBacc subjects, including English and maths is above the local as well as the national average. This is one indication of the breadth of curriculum being offered in Merton schools at KS4. The proportion of students achieving a standard 9-4 pass in English and mathematics is in line with London average but above the national average.

2.8. For KS5 qualifications the Average Point Score (APS) per entry is above the national averages for all qualification types. Whilst being above London averages for Tech Level and Applied General qualifications, outcomes for A level and Academic qualifications is just below. Merton's ranking in comparison with other LAs for Applied General qualifications has improved significantly (from 58th to 32nd), and the average grade is Distinction.

2.9. The proportions of young people who are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and whose status is not known, have again fallen and are significantly better than national and London averages. Performance in all three indicators continues to place Merton in the top quintile of performance nationally. Merton has now moved to 5th best performance in England. This has been achieved as a result of

significant and robust tracking and partnership working across schools, colleges and CSF teams.

2.10. This year the proportion of 16 – 17 year olds participating in education and training has increased by 0.5 percentage points, and continues a four-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.

2.11. Attendance is at lower levels nationally than before the Pandemic and remains a national challenge. The most recent data for overall pupil attendance shows that Merton's performance is above the national average and just below the London average. This follows a number of years where we have been above London. The picture is the same for persistent absence. Attendance in special schools, affected particularly by the pandemic and the ongoing requirements to self-isolate following contact with Covid cases, is lower than London and national.

2.12. Merton had no primary or special school permanent exclusions in 2021-2022. This has been true for a number of years. This was achieved through ongoing significant and complex inclusion work carried out by primary schools and the LA's Virtual Behaviour Service (VBS). The number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools has increased slightly but remains below the national average and in lines with London averages. The number of fixed term exclusions has risen slightly in primary schools and though the rate is below that seen nationally, is just above the London averages. The number of fixed term exclusions in secondary schools has risen slightly but is below London and national averages. The figures for fixed term exclusions in Special Schools are based on small cohorts, with individual exclusions therefore being recorded as a high percentage. Nevertheless the significant rise is concerning and is a focus for 2022/23.

2.13. For children who are electively home educated, following the steep rise in numbers in 2020/21, which was mirrored nationally, for which the impact of the pandemic was cited as a key reason, there has been a small drop this year. Nevertheless, numbers remain high and are well above pre-pandemic levels at both the primary and the secondary phase. Over the past decade numbers have risen by over 200%, with the larger rise being seen in the primary phase. The numbers of boys and girls being electively home educated are broadly similar. The numbers starting to be home educated in Reception and in Year 7 remain higher than in other year groups, resulting in overall spikes at the beginning of both the primary and secondary phases.

2 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

3.1 Not applicable

4 TIMETABLE

4.1 Not applicable

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Not applicable

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Not applicable

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Not applicable

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Not applicable

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable

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

10.1 Education Standards Report 2021-22

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None