

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 13th September 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Educational Position and Updates 2021

WARD(S) All

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide PPB with an annual report regarding the educational position in Halton and key updates. Due to cancellation of Early Years and Primary Assessments and the changes due to COVID for Secondary and Post 16 Assessments, performance data is not available for this year.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

i) **Members of the Board comment on and note the information provided.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Note of Caution:

Please be aware that this year has been an unusual and challenging year following the further impact of COVID. Due to the COVID outbreak and the subsequent Department for Education response there have been many changes to educational provision, assessment and examinations during 2020. The validated national results will not be published this year for the second consecutive year.

3.1 **Statutory Assessment and Key Issues:**

3.1.1 In terms of Primary assessment data, there have been no primary statutory assessments nationally for “Good Level of Development” (GLD) indicator; Year Two (Key Stage One) assessments; Year Four multiplication tests and Key Stage Two Tests. Phonics tests were carried out by school in the autumn term 2020 for children who would normally have been assessed in July 2020. However, this information is not published or validated.

- 3.1.2 With regard to A level, vocational and GCSE results this has been a further year of change. Last year, schools GCSE, A Level and Vocational results were based on Centre Assessed Grade (CAG) for each student for each subject. Within that grade boundary, schools and colleges had to rank a pupil against others in that cohort studying that subject. This was to be based upon teacher assessment; ongoing school year performance and mock results that the student had achieved. This CAG and rank were submitted to Ofqual early in June and it was reported that whilst schools had carried out moderation, the CAG received nationally would be much higher than previous year's results. Ofqual then applied an algorithm to try and prevent grade inflation. The outcome of this decision and the anomalies it created were published widely in the national media and it was decided to reverse that decision on Monday 17th August. Students received either the CAG or calculated grade, whichever was higher.
- 3.1.3 This academic year 2020-21, the government were keen to avoid a repeat of last year's situation. Grades this year have therefore been determined upon Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG). Teachers based their TAG upon a range of evidence including sample assessment materials; mini exams, tests, coursework etc. Each school/Centre would use their own sample of work based on their own circumstances. There have been huge disparities across the country and across the region as to the adverse impact of COVID on education. Some students have missed much of their teaching time due to lockdown and self-isolation and were unable to complete the full curriculum, others were minimally impacted. As a result, each TAG is based upon different evidence by each school and would not be comparable data. Therefore, for the second consecutive year, educational attainment and progress data will not be published. Due to the individual circumstances of each school/College across Halton, there will be no data releases for comparative purposes as this would be an unfair and unreliable measure and unfair to students and education institutions. Students and staff however are to be congratulated on their hard work and achievements and demonstrating such resilience in stressful and challenging circumstances.
- 3.1.4 Remote education has made a significant contribution to enabling students to continue to learn and progress, and to mitigate any widening of the attainment gap for the disadvantaged. Access to appropriate devices and connectivity was essential for technology-led approaches to remote education, securing access for all pupils was also a significant challenge in many contexts, but was achieved successfully.
- 3.1.5 Students who will undertake exams in 2022 have also been affected by missed teaching and learning due to lockdown. Halton have been adversely affected due to lockdown and high infection rates. For a

period Halton's transmission rates of COVID-19 were particularly high, peaking at 1300, this was amongst the highest rate in the country.

- 3.1.6 Ministers are currently considering how exams will go ahead next summer taking into account some adjustments for the impact on next summer's Year 11 and Year 13 cohort. The Year 13 cohort would have had their GCSE's affected by COVID and Centre Assessed Grades (CAG); may have missed schooling last academic year and experienced remote learning and will now be facing Year 13 with further uncertainty about their vocational or A Level assessments. Whilst current Year 11's may not have experienced the same challenge in relation to statutory exams, they will have been impacted on lost learning throughout their key Stage Three Curriculum.
- 3.1.7 Many young people are demonstrating resilience and adapting to the ever-changing requirements. However, the impact of COVID has taken its toll affecting many young people with their social, emotional and mental health and high levels of anxiety. No two students have experienced the same circumstances and it cannot be underestimated the effect and impact on young people in our borough and nationally. Schools are doing all they can to support, but are facing challenges of capacity; further uncertainty about curriculum, assessments, expectations, accountability and potential staffing shortages due to further illness/isolation. As a borough, support is available within schools/College and across LA commissioned services and health, although demand is high.
- 3.1.8 Ofsted is the regulator for educational provision. In response to COVID, inspection activity also changed over the last academic Year. In summer 2020, Ofsted inspections were paused. In autumn term 2020, Ofsted resumed some activity but purely carried out "visits" to school in the autumn term to listen to school leaders experiences and plans so that these could be shared with parents/carers to understand how children and young people were being supported back into education following lockdown. During spring term 2021, Ofsted commenced their phased approach to inspection focusing upon monitoring inspections of schools who were require to be in most need such as any school graded as requiring "Special Measures" or had been graded as "Requires Improvement" on the last two graded inspections. These inspections were not graded but would decide if leaders were taking effective action in response to offering remote learning during national lockdown and keeping children safe. Two of our schools received such monitoring inspections and both were deemed to be taking effective action and keeping children safe. In summer term 2021, Ofsted resumed graded inspection activity based against the Education Inspection Framework. This was a return to full, rigorous and robust inspection against a stringent quality framework. Three of

our schools received inspection notifications. One inspection was deferred due to high levels of COVID infection and self-isolation of pupils and staff; one went ahead as a full Section 8 Inspection of a good school, (report is not yet published); the other went ahead as a Section 8 Monitoring Inspection of a school graded as “Requires Improvement.” The monitoring inspection findings were that “Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.”

3.2 Educational Challenges for September 2021 onwards and strategies to support

3.2.1 Challenges will now lie in supporting pupils to reach their destination to continue their education, employment or training. Two of the key challenges will be how to support Year 11 and Year 13 students who will be expected to take GCSE, A level and vocational qualifications next summer. These two cohorts have experienced almost eighteen months of disruption to their education with remote learning during lockdown; a blended approach and some in school/College education affected by COVID rates and bubble isolation. All year groups have experienced the impact, but the proximity to statutory assessments poses an added pressure for these cohorts. The LA have worked throughout COVID supporting schools; sharing information, advice and toolkits to help identify gaps in learning and strategies to address any lost learning opportunities. Schools have received laptops and digital devices from the government scheme to support access to IT during lockdown and remote learning. School leaders, teachers, education and childcare staff have worked tirelessly to support pupils throughout and have organised virtual transition events when physical transition events have had to be cancelled due to infection rates. Schools and childcare have continued to provide transition information between sectors to aid transition processes and class teachers, form tutors and pastoral leads have provided a wealth of support and information to children and their families. Schools will support children and young people as they return to support transition processes, reduce anxiety and address gaps in learning.

3.2.2 Children and young people transitioning into school or between schools will also require support. Those starting in reception have had their Early Years learning and development affected to varying degrees. Those transitioning from primary to secondary or secondary to post 16 Education and training have had less opportunity than would be typical to visit their new establishments; experience the curriculum offer and meet/mix with new friends. Virtual transition events; information and support have been and will continue to be provided to children and young people. TALK Halton has developed a Communication Hub, Strategy and Communication pathway to ensure multi-agency staff and parents/carers are able to support and develop speech, language and communication

development. 64 out of 66 Early Years Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers have engaged with the project; have accessed training; developed Communication Friendly Spaces and used the Wellcomm Screening Tool and toolkit to identify children who may be at risk of delay. Those who have been at risk have received a range of intervention strategies to aid their development and reduce delay. Next steps are to further develop this approach with reception classes in mainstream schools.

3.2.3 In terms of curriculum, breadth of offer has been affected for example music, singing and playing of wind/brass instruments was affected; in Science subjects access to labs for practical work was affected; visits on field studies or trips to theatres/museums/arts was impacted; in sports cross school or regional events could not take place as planned. Schools and services have been innovative and creative in ensuring a breadth of curriculum was offered but valuable enrichment and practical, relevant experiences have been affected to varying degrees. The impact of remote learning during lockdown also affected the length of children's concentration spans, so planning was adapted on return to schooling to bite size chunks incrementally increasing over time. An emphasis on using IT has meant fine motor skills have been affected and handwriting and writing at length has been affected. In the Early Years, communication and language has been limited due to reduced opportunities to interact with a range of people in a variety of circumstances. Impact of experiences is also manifesting in increased levels of anxiety; poor mental health and some incidences of behavioural challenge. Schools have carried out their own analysis of impact, have identified, and shared both positive impact as well as concerns. Some positives include increased time spent with family and in some cases one to one support from family members, whilst others have enjoyed learning more about areas of their own individual interest. Ofsted have published a range of subject specific guidance, which has been shared with schools, and National Governance Association (NGA) have published guidance for governors in relation to the Arts and Music. These have been shared with school leaders and governors. Accent Music Hub is also ensuring that a wide range of provision is available and schools have been keen to access this offer.

3.2.4 Currently the government does plan for statutory assessments to be used next academic year including GLD; phonics; multiplication tables check; Key Stage One and Two statutory assessments; GCSE; A level and vocational assessments. Schools have been informed of this from DFE and the Local Authority. The LA Statutory Assessment lead will be providing training, advice and support to schools regarding their roles and responsibilities in relation to moderation and standardisation of statutory assessments. Schools will be regularly updated of any changes to guidance and training and support is available for moderators. Currently the Standards

Testing and Testing Agency (STA) plan that statutory assessment will be resumed next spring/summer in which case the LA moderation role will also be carried out and data checked and submitted as appropriate.

3.2.5 Ofsted is planning to continue full inspection activity in the autumn term. Whilst we have a number of schools who are currently graded as good who will be over five years since their last inspection, they will be on a priority list to be inspected. Other schools will be falling into that time frame. From 1st September 2021, schools who are currently graded as “Outstanding” by Ofsted will no longer be exempt from inspection. Ofsted will be prioritising visits to schools who are graded as Outstanding prior to September 2015. Monitoring inspections will also continue for schools who require improvement or are classed as Inadequate or “Special Measures” schools. We are therefore anticipating an increase in inspection activity of our schools from September 2021 onwards as Ofsted are aiming to catch up on time lost during the COVID outbreak and response. This information has been shared with schools; Preparation for Inspection networks and training have been running and delivered throughout COVID and principles and pedagogy of effective teaching learning and assessment have been shared. Associate School Improvement Advisors (ASIA’s) and School Improvement colleagues have provided bespoke support, training and advice to schools and the impact of this work has been recognised by Inspectors from the inspections that have taken place. Regular meetings with Senior Ofsted HMI’s (Her Majesty’s Inspectors) have shared the foci of work with schools and impact on learners against intended outcomes.

3.2.6 Changes to education are also seen in Early Years this year. A new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework comes into effect on 1st September 2021. This will see changes to the learning and development requirements. The aim is to improve outcomes for all children, but particularly the language and literacy outcomes for disadvantaged children, extending children’s vocabulary and aiming to reduce teacher workload. There is an increased focus on extending and developing vocabulary across the 7 areas of learning (Communication and Language; Physical Development; Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Math’s; Literacy; Understanding of the World and Expressive Arts and Design). Other changes are linked to the assessment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the curriculum guidance, revised Development Matters. Children used to be assessed against their development in ages and stages, this has now been reduced down to birth to 3; 3 and 4 year olds; children in reception. The intention is that there will be a greater emphasis on professional judgement rather than tracking against each statement and creating a more manageable workload for teachers. Training has been delivered throughout the spring and summer term to Early Years

practitioners, teachers and school leaders to ensure changes to curriculum planning, learning opportunities and assessment methodology has been shared and planned for.

- 3.2.7 The new reception baseline assessment measure will be introduced from 1st September 2021, as a Statutory Assessment method to identify children's starting points when they commence reception class. This will be a short, practical assessment carried out with a teacher to assess literacy, communication, language and maths skills when children start school. It must be carried out within the first six weeks and data will not be published, it is not a pass/fail assessment. The purpose is to establish the starting point of the class group and these children will then be assessed in Year Six at the end of primary school, to measure the amount of progress this year group have achieved compared to other schools nationally.
- 3.2.8 Halton has seen a shift in educational leadership over recent years. This is due largely to retirement of headteachers and promotion. This last academic year, Halton thanked and said goodbye to a further six headteachers, whilst welcoming a further four new headteachers who also started headship in January 2021. This equates to 20% of our headteachers being new to headship and has a further impact on deputy head/assistant headteacher roles and middle leadership changes. This is likely to be an ongoing pattern due to the demography of our current school leaders. In order to support schools in their succession planning and leadership development, the school improvement team have expanded the new to headship training; matched and organised mentors to new headteachers; have developed an Aspiring to Headship leadership programme; have re-instigated and developed training packages for deputy heads and assistant heads and have worked with many schools middle leaders on bespoke support in middle leadership development. The deputy head network has been very well received and is supported by monthly network meetings and a monthly leadership newsletter. In addition, there has been a programme of school leadership development training planned with key note speakers and follow up sessions to support school leaders (headteachers, senior leaders and governors) in "bouncing back" having led a school in uncertain times and driving forward with renewed focus and ambition in a post COVID climate.
- 3.2.9 From 1st September 2021, new teachers to the profession will no longer be referred to as "Newly Qualified Teachers" (NQT's) but will be known as "Early Career Teachers" supported by an Early Career Framework. This will replace the existing NQT training and will now cover a development programme over two years instead of one year. These teachers will receive 10% Non-contact time for training and development in their first year of teaching and 5% non-contact time in their second year of teaching. This is in addition to teachers planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA). Teachers who

achieved or are still working through their NQT training will continue as legacy NQT's. However, those, who are embarking upon their teaching career from 1st September will be identified and trained as Early Career Teachers. The Local Authority will still carry out the Appropriate Body role for those who wish to retain this function with the Local Authority (a previous statutory function). However, schools can opt to select this role from our assigned Teaching School Hub which for Halton is Generate Teaching School Hub. Training for ECT's whose schools select a training programme through Generate Teaching School Hub will have training delivered by Teach First. To date the majority of Halton Schools have opted to stay with the Local Authority for this role.

3.3 National Tutoring Programme

3.3.1 The [National Tutoring Programme](#) was a government-funded, sector-led initiative to support schools to address the impact of Covid-19 school closures on pupils' learning. From the 2020-21 school year, £350million nationally was being used towards the National Tutoring Programme to provide high-quality tuition available to state-maintained primary and secondary schools, providing additional support to help pupils who have missed out the most as a result of school closures. The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) consisted of two pillars:

- [Tuition Partners](#): schools were able to access heavily subsidised tuition from an approved list of tuition partners. These organisations – which were all subject to quality, safeguarding and evaluation standards – were aiming to reach as many disadvantaged pupils as possible.
- [Academic Mentors](#): schools in the most disadvantaged areas were going to be supported to employ in-house academic mentors to provide intensive catch-up support to their pupils

3.3.2 School leaders and governors will need to share if they did engage with any of these programmes and if they did the impact of these strategies and support programmes. Governors will be asked about such measures in any forthcoming inspection process. More importantly the Local Authority will be encouraging schools to share locally the impact of effective practice and which strategies worked well for their schools and students.

3.3.3 The National Tutoring Programme in its first year was led by a collaboration of five charities - the Education Endowment Foundation, Sutton Trust, Impetus, Nesta and Teach First - supported by the KPMG Foundation.

3.4 **Catch Up Premium**

3.4.1 The Government announced £1 billion of funding in total to support children and young people to catch up. This included a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. The remaining £350 million was used for the National Tutoring Programme.

3.4.2 The £650 million of universal catch-up premium funding was made available for all state-funded mainstream and special schools, and alternative provision. It covered:

- primary, secondary and all through local authority-maintained schools, academies and free schools
- local authority-maintained special schools
- special academies and free schools
- special schools not maintained by a local authority
- pupil referral units
- alternative provision (AP) academies and free schools
- local authority-maintained hospital schools and academies
- independent special schools

3.4.3 School leaders and governors will need to track and identify how this funding has been used and how this has positively impacted upon pupils outcomes. School leaders and governors will need to share how they strategically planned and used the funding and share outcomes with parents/carers and Ofsted.

3.5 **Return to School/Education in September 2021**

3.5.1 In July 2021, the government published their Operational Guidance to support school leaders in their planning for a September return as the government moved to Phase Four of their Roadmap including learning to live with COVID infections. In mid-August DFE subsequently published their Contingency Framework. This has provided some conflicting messages to the earlier publication. Prior to September return, Secondary School students will need to complete two onsite Lateral Flow Tests 3-5 days apart. This can be done prior to school return or at the beginning of the academic year. Students and staff will then be asked to continue carrying out twice-weekly Lateral Flow Tests. The Government have asked that messages be shared to encourage testing to help identify any positive cases. Any positive cases will be required to self-isolate. However bubbles will no longer operate and students/staff will not

be asked to self-isolate (if double vaccinated and 18 or over, or if under 18) unless they have been a direct contact of a household bubble. Schools/Colleges and settings are now though being asked to identify when they have 5 or more positive cases or 10% of their school/college/Early Year's community with positive cases within 10 days. If and when this threshold is reached, school leaders will decide which mitigation risks in place. Whilst this will be a school leader decision, we would encourage educational providers to continue gaining support and advice from Public Health colleagues. Once clusters or local patterns emerge, Public Health will decide which actions to take either through numbers and patterns of outbreaks or due to the detection of a Variant of Concern. This does require that whilst Public Health England were initially going to fulfil all track and trace contacts, schools will now have to record positive case numbers and notify Local Public Health and Local Authority teams. This is necessary but will place demands on schools who will also be supporting the return of students and pupils; addressing lost learning and gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding; reporting into DfE attendance portal which will be re-instigated in September 2021 whilst preparing for an influx of accountability measures such as inspection activity and return of statutory assessments. Attendance is also likely to be impacted by those returning from red and amber list countries who will need to quarantine, whilst preparing for an increase in childhood illness and respiratory illnesses (other than COVID) as immunity levels will have dropped due to limited mixing in the previous two years. We know that school/college/Early Years staff will carry out sterling work in order to ensure children and young people are safely returned to school, but do need to understand the immense pressure the education sector will be facing on their return in September.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The DfE allocated each school funding to support the catch up of pupils/students. Schools will need to demonstrate the impact of how this funding was used and impact of spend on pupil outcomes.

5.2 Financial implications will be linked to staff absence due to illness; increased cleaning costs; purchasing of PPE equipment and testing sites to support safe return of pupils.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

It is essential that all children and young people can return to school

safely in September as research shows that the gap for disadvantaged pupils has grown during the lockdown.

Local Authority teams capacity is limited due to having a very small team who will be required to support an increase in school Ofsted inspection activity; support a high proportion of new school leaders and leadership development activity; continue to work closely with Local Public Health teams and Public Health England Teams regarding strategic outbreak management planning and liaising regularly with DFE, RSC and Ofsted. Strategic Priorities will be supported, but limited capacity may impact on timeliness of response.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Education providers will be supported in partnership with Public Health to ensure safety of pupils, staff and school communities on their return to school and throughout the year.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

A Strategic Contingency Plan and Coordinated Outbreak Management plan will continue to mitigate risks and keep communities safe.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 It is crucial that the impact of any further lockdown is minimised through blended learning where some education is delivered on line and some elements in school for those pupils who are isolating or unwell.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Lockdown has increased the gap for those most disadvantaged. The funding available through the government needs to ensure this gap can be narrowed.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.