

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE Overview and Scrutiny (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) 16th November 2021		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Diane Roscoe	Education	November 2021

Education Excellence

The structure for Education Excellence was approved and recruitment has started. We have appointed permanent services managers for School Improvement, Early Years, Virtual School, School Services ... We are now recruiting staff in the teams so that by Easter we will hopefully have a full compliment of staff. This will ensure that we have support and challenge for education provision from 0 – 19 years.

Schools

We have had eight inspections to date (22nd October), we do not have all the reports yet but it has been mixed. Forefield Junior School remained good; Hillside have moved from inadequate to requires improvement. The support provided by the School Improvement Team has been commented on by inspectors as well as the relationships we have with the schools. All our maintained schools due an inspection whether currently RI, good or outstanding have been offered a ‘health check’ to help them consider where they are at.

All six of our new headteachers have been provided with a mentor and a package of tailored support if required. The professional partner programme has started well with five of our schools joining the programme and all our schools causing concern accessing a professional partner.

The schools causing concern programme continues with ten schools on the programme. Two schools have moved off the programme and one added. There are a myriad of reasons as to why schools are on the programme. Schools receive half termly or termly meetings to challenge progress and support is identified and brokered.

The secondary Narrowing the Gap programme has started with all secondary schools involved. This is being delivered by Meols Cop Research School and funded by the LA. Initial anecdotal information indicates schools are welcoming this programme and the opportunity to work in partnership to develop provision.

The DfE piece of work which focuses on South Sefton and North Liverpool schools will be focusing on attendance and speech, language and communication. The secondary schools will be focusing on literacy and linking to the Narrowing the Gap programme.

St Teresa’s

Several meetings have been held with the Governing Body, elected members, the Archdiocese and LA officers to discuss the continued fall in pupil numbers and rising budget deficit. The Governing Body have worked to hard to try to find solutions to keep the school viable however last month they reached the decision to ask the Council to consider consultation with a view to closing the school.

Covid

All schools opened for all pupils at the beginning of September. Pupils in secondary schools were asked to undertake two LFT within the first few days of the new term.

APPENDIX B

Government guidelines changed at the start of term and as a result schools moved to a normal operating mode, although they were encouraged to continue with a focus on keeping safe.

We have seen an upsurge in positive results both for staff and pupils. If someone tests positive the close contacts are encouraged to undertake an asymptomatic PCR however, they are allowed to attend school whilst waiting for the results. This has caused concern amongst staff and parents. PH Sefton have worked closely with several schools to support them with any concerns.

	Primary Schools	Secondary School	SEN Schools
No. meeting threshold	29	6	4
No. introducing initial measures* and receiving support from PH	29	6	4
No. receiving school-wide asymptomatic testing**	0	2	1

*initial measures include asymptomatic PCR testing for class groups, where threshold has been met, reintroduction of face coverings for staff in communal areas, actions to reduce social mixing between classes e.g. cancellation of whole school assemblies.

**in all three school settings, support was provided by mobile testing units (national) or the local swabbing team – this action is decided following an outbreak management meeting with UKHSA, where initial measures have not been sufficient to control spread

Attendance

School attendance is a standing item on the agenda at the Education Collaborative Group. Updates are provided from schools both secondary primary and special and any barriers are discussed and debated with ideas being shared. The impact of COVID 19 forms a part of this discussion for example some of the challenges schools and parents are facing in relation to if people have been previously shielded in the lockdown.

School attendance parental responsibility measures and statutory functions are now fully operational. The school attendance panel will resume on the 1st November 2021. The school attendance panel allows an opportunity for families to meet with school and local authority staff to address any difficulties that a family is experiencing that is negatively impacting on a child attending school. At the panel relevant information is shared between families and on some occasions agencies who are working with the family. Recommendations and interventions are agreed to support the family to improve their child's attendance. A monitoring period will also be established and if there is no improvement legal proceeding may be instigated against the parents for failing to secure regular attendance at schools.

During the first half term Sefton have issued 104 warning letters to parents in relation to school attendance in relation to parents who cannot provide a valid reason for their child to be absent from school.

APPENDIX B

Communication will be going out to parents after half term from the council about the importance of school attendance. Information will go via the schools and the council's variety of social media platforms.

All Sefton schools are fully open despite some staff and children testing positive for COVID 19 Attendance (snapshot) is at the current time is approximately 93.49%. Schools are continuing to use the first day response school attendance initiative model of practice. Schools report daily any child who is absent with a social worker.

Guidance across Early years settings to encourage attendance has now been finalised produced to support practitioners, leaders, managers, owners and governing bodies. It offers information and practical suggestions around promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children.