

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SAFEGUARDING)**



**IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON PRIMARY CURRICULUM
WORKING GROUP**

**FINAL REPORT
JULY 2022**

Overview
& Scrutiny



Overview & Scrutiny

**'Valuing
Improvement'**

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LEAD MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to introduce this Overview and Scrutiny Report on the impact of covid 19 on the primary curriculum.

The Working Group was set up to look at the impact of education for our primary school children in Sefton against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have all endured lockdowns and restrictions to our day-to-day living during the last few months, and concerns were held for our younger children who had missed the full educational experience through no fault of their own.

This has also been a particularly challenging time for our teachers and everyone within the education system.

The Working Group has sought the views of headteachers, mental health experts and the voluntary sector establishing the main issues that have arisen in primary schools in particular, following successive lockdowns.

We also considered possible measures to support our teaching staff which in turn, we hope will impact on the support our teachers are able to offer to the children of Sefton and help reduce some of the issues that have arisen since the pandemic.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in interviews and submitted information that helped inform the Working Group. I am grateful to the Working Group Members for their commitment and efforts in looking at this issue. Finally, I would like to thank our support officers for their assistance and professional support provided to the Working Group and for producing this final report on behalf of Members.



Councillor Paula Spencer
Lead Member of the Mental Health Issues Working Group

Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(Children's Services and Safeguarding)

BACKGROUND TO REVIEW

1. At its meeting held on 7 September 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) considered the establishment of a working group on the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum. The Committee:

"RESOLVED: That

(4) a working group on the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum be established, to include the consideration of the impact of lockdown and home schooling, comprised of the following Members of the Committee:"

(Minute No. 22 (4) of 28 September 2021 refers).

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUP

The following Members were appointed to the Working Group by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) at its meeting held on 28 September 2020:

- Councillor Spencer
- Councillor Yvonne Sayers
- Mrs. S. Cain, Independent Advisory Member
- Ms. M. McDermott, Parent Governor Representative

LEAD MEMBER

Councillor Spencer was appointed as the Lead Member for the Working Group and it is anticipated that she will present the final report to the Committee; to the Cabinet and to the Council.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OBJECTIVES

The Terms of Reference and Objectives for the review were as follows:

- To consider the impact of Covid 19 on the primary curriculum, to include the consideration of the impact of lockdown and remote learning.

METHODS OF ENQUIRY

1. Consideration of documents.
2. The interviewing of service providers.



3. Site visits.
4. Consideration of documents.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP HELD

Details of Working Group meetings are as follows:

Meeting Date	Activity
9 November 2021	Appointment of lead Member and scoping of the review.
2 December 2021	Discussion with headteachers.
19 January 2022	Discussion on the Mental Health Toolkit for schools.
8 February 2022	Discussion with the Chair of the Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers.
28 March 2022	Consideration of Conclusions and Identification of Possible Recommendations

SITE VISITS

Plans were made for Working Group Members to visit St. Nicholas' Primary School, Blundellsands on 25 January 2022. Unfortunately, the visit had to be cancelled due to the prevalence of the Omicron variant at the time.

Details of the site visit undertaken by Working Group Members are as follows:

Date of Site Visit	Venue Visited
23 March 2022	Site Visit to Netherton Moss Primary School to meet with members of staff and pupils, to hear about the impact of Covid on the primary curriculum. A tour of the School was also undertaken.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The following links to articles were provided to Working Group Members during the course of the review:



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1027745/COVID-19_Snapshot_Report.pdf

https://nfer.ac.uk/media/4435/the_impact_of_covid_19_on_schools_in_england.pdf

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/nfer-impact-of-school-closures-and-subsequent-support-strategies-on-attainment-and-socioemotional-wellbeing-in-key-stage-1?search_term=impact%20of

<https://www.oecd.org/education/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-insights-education-at-a-glance-2020.pdf>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-covid-19-on-pupil-attainment>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/infographic-covid19-coronavirus-impact-global-education-health-schools/>

https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4119/schools_responses_to_covid_19_the_challenges_facing_schools_and_pupils_in_september_2020.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-23-march-2020-to-25-november-2021>

<https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/what-has-been-the-impact-of-covid-19-across-the-uk-countries>

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/impact-of-covid-19-mainstream-schools-england>

KEY WITNESSES

Working Group Members met with a number of key witnesses, including the following:

Meeting Date	Witness(es)
2 December 2022	Headteachers – Interviews regarding their experiences during lockdowns and the current situation in schools.
19 January 2022	Development Manager, Health and Wellbeing Children and Families Development Officer, Sefton CVS – Discussion on the mental health toolkit for schools.
8 February 2021	Discussions with the Chair of Sefton Association of Primary



	Headteachers, to hear about her experiences and the challenges being faced in schools.
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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE WORKING GROUP REVIEW

Ordinarily, Working Group Members would have undertaken further site visits to relevant premises/locations during the course of the review, but this was not possible due to the on-going pandemic throughout the duration of the Working Group.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The Head of Education has advised that there is no data available on primary school performance, including SATS results and outcomes of any testing at Key Stages 1 and 1, as data has not been published due to the pandemic. This has resulted in difficulties in monitoring performance, particularly in primary schools. Working Group Members considered that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) would wish to receive data which would assist in , in drawing comparisons with 2019 pre-pandemic performance and also with regional and national performance. This would illustrate Sefton primary school performance.
2. Working Group Members considered that it was very important for the Council to recognise the hard work schools faced during successive lockdowns. Not only did teachers have to provide on-line learning, a very difficult achievement with young children, they also had to provide learning for children of key workers who were physically attending school whilst their parents provided vital services.

By writing to schools to thank them for their efforts during the pandemic, Working Group Members also considered that this would provide an opportunity to remind schools of the continued support available from the Council; of the various options available for securing additional teaching staff; and the availability of mental health support, including the Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit.

Many supply teachers left their positions during lockdown as they were not provided with furlough payments. This has been problematic since children returned to school as there has been a shortage of supply teachers to help cover when teaching staff have succumbed to covid and long-term covid symptoms. Working Group Members felt that it might be beneficial to remind schools of the opportunities to secure additional teaching staff.

Working Group Members found that the very beneficial activities provided at family centres pre-covid have been slow to resume following the pandemic and they considered that schools should be encouraged to resume this



mutual support **where possible and where practical**, particularly given any on-going covid concerns.

3. Following the initial lockdown, Council workers were awarded an additional day's leave for their birthday during 2021, in recognition of their hard work and the continued provision of services by the Council.

On 15 July 2021, the Council agreed to grant the Freedom of the Borough to Aintree and Liverpool NHS Foundation Trust, Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust, Alder Hey Children's NHS Trust and Mersey Care NHS Trust and for representatives of those bodies to be invited to an Extra-ordinary Council meeting and civic reception in due course, in recognition of their hard work and dedication during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Teaching staff have not been recognised in the same way for their hard work and dedication during the pandemic and Working Group Members wish to celebrate the achievement of teaching staff in Sefton.

4. By the conclusion of the Working Group, Members were concerned to hear of the forthcoming literacy and numeracy expectations on primary schools by 2030, particularly as most schools are already going "above and beyond" in terms of the teaching hours they offer to pupils. Schools are at a loss to know how they can deliver additional learning without additional resources.
5. The usual six-monthly monitoring report, setting out progress made against each of the Working Group recommendations, would be required in due course. Relevant officers would be required to liaise in order to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) received the monitoring report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

In producing this report on mental health issues, acknowledgements and thanks are attributed to the following individuals for their time and input:-

- ***Service Manager, School Improvement***
- ***Head of Education***
- ***Senior Democratic Services Officer, Corporate Services***
- ***Headteacher, St. Nicholas' Primary School***
- ***Headteacher, Netherton Moss Primary School***
- ***Deputy Headteacher, Netherton Moss Primary School***
- ***Development Manager, Health and Wellbeing***



- *Children and Families Development Officer, Sefton CVS*
- *Chair of Sefton Association of Primary Headteachers*
- *Pupils of Netherton Moss Primary School*

Thanks must also go to the Members of the Working Group who have worked hard and dedicated a great deal of time to this review, namely:-



***Councillor Paula
Spencer
(Lead Member)***

***Former Councillor
Yvonne Sayers***

***Mrs. Sandra Cain
Advisory Member***

***Ms. Machalla McDermott
Parent Governor Representative***



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That, once data is available, the Head of Education Excellence be requested to submit a monitoring report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), on primary school performance, to include school attendance and any available information on SATs results, and other performance indicators, in order to draw comparisons with 2019 performance and also with regional and national performance.
2. That the Council be requested to agree in writing to all Headteachers of schools throughout the Borough, to thank teaching staff for their on-going input throughout the pandemic and to raise the following matters:
 - (a) to remind schools of the continued support available from the Council.
 - (b) to remind schools of the various options available for securing additional teaching staff, such as:
 - the graduate teaching apprenticeship scheme
 - School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)
 - Teach First
 - Degree course in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and
 - a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
 - (c) to remind schools of the availability of mental health support, including the Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit that can be accessed via the following link:

[Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing \(sefton.gov.uk\)](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/mental-health-emotional-wellbeing)
 - (d) to encourage schools to try to re-engage with families as a source of support in schools **where possible and where practical**, particularly given covid concerns.
3. That the Mayor of Sefton be requested to consider hosting an event for representatives of all schools throughout the Borough, to thank them for their on-going input throughout the pandemic.
4. That the Council be requested to agree to writing to the Department for Education in the strongest terms, to request additional resources for Sefton schools, particularly in view of forthcoming literacy and numeracy expectations on primary schools by 2030.
5. That the Senior Democratic Services Officer be requested to liaise with relevant officers in order to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) receives a six-monthly monitoring report, setting out progress made against each of the recommendations outlined above.



Overview & Scrutiny



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Sefton Council 

