

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30th September 2021

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF COVID ON THE EDUCATION OF RUTLAND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and Families

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| Strategic Aim: | Protecting the Vulnerable | |
| Exempt Information | No | |
| Cabinet Member(s) Responsible: | Cllr David Wilby: Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services | |
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| Ward Councillors | N/A | |

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

Notes the content of this report and the actions being taken within the education sector to address the impact of COVID on the education of Rutland children and young people.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report aims to provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with information on the response from the Rutland education sector to mitigate the impact of the disruption to the education of children and young people in early years settings and schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 This report will consider the questions:
 - What steps are being taken to address academic recovery?
 - What steps are being taken to provide mental-health support for our young people?
- 1.3 Please note that there will be a presentation to the Scrutiny Panel which will augment this report and offer greater insight into the actions in place to support academic recovery and on-going mental health and wellbeing across the education

sector.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The 0-18-year-old education offer in Rutland includes 16 Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) nurseries and 18 childminders; the local authority does not maintain any mainstream nursery provision. There are 2 primary schools currently maintained by the local authority with the remainder of state funded education within 5 primary academies, 3 secondary academies and a 6th form free school.
- 2.2 In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, early years settings, schools and colleges nationally were closed to pupils, other than children of critical workers or those identified as Vulnerable Children, from 23rd March 2020 as part of mitigation efforts to reduce transmission.
- 2.3 Attendance for statutory school-aged children in Rutland schools who were identified as Vulnerable or were children of critical workers was above national average; for example, during the week before May half term 2020 between 2.9% and 3.3% were in attendance in Rutland schools compared with between 2.3% and 2.7% nationally.
- 2.4 Provision for children with social workers or classed as vulnerable was offered throughout the Easter and half term breaks, including bank holidays. Children and young people who were not attending school were offered home-learning opportunities by their school and by some early years' providers.
- 2.5 From June 1st, 2020, restrictions were eased and education on all primary school sites was offered to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, and from June 15th to Year 10 and Year 11 students at all three secondary schools.
- 2.6 Numbers attending Rutland early years provision and schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year continued to compare favourably to national data. For example, in the week beginning the 5th July – the attendance in Rutland schools remained above the national average. On the 8th July, the attendance in Primary Rutland schools was 93.39% compared to the national average of 85.1%. In secondary schools the attendance in Rutland schools was 89% compared to the national average of 73.6%. This was recognised by the Department of Education as evidence of good practice within the sector, reflecting the actions taken to build confidence with parents and carers and responding appropriately to national and regional guidance and advice.
- 2.7 The academic year running from September 2020 to July 2021 continued to suffer from interruptions to education with either wholesale lockdown restrictions which saw all but those targeted children receiving remote education or, more frequently, 'bubbles' of children sent home from school to isolate and, once again, maintain their education through remote provision.
- 2.8 The examination and testing arrangements for the summer of 2020 and 2021 were significantly adjusted to reflect the unprecedented disruption the pandemic has caused to education, with the end of Reception Year Early Years Profile, the end of Key Stage One and end of Key Stage Two tests and tasks not completed. A-level, GCSE and vocational examinations were also cancelled. This year grades instead have been determined through teacher assessment, based on work that had been

completed by students rather than the full curriculum expectation.

- 2.9 This DfE made the decision that academic outcomes for individual settings would not be published for the school year ending summer 2020, stating in their Guidance (Coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college accountability 2019/20) *'We will not hold schools and colleges to account on the basis of exams and assessment data from summer 2020 and that data will not be used by others, such as Ofsted and local authorities, to hold schools and colleges to account'*. It is not intended that outcomes for summer 2021 will be published at individual establishment level.

3 ADDRESSING ACADEMIC RECOVERY

- 3.1 The academic years of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 were severely disrupted because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the longer-term effects of this have yet to be fully understood. However, the education sector in Rutland has demonstrated significant resilience, perseverance and determination which can be evidenced through the number of establishments which kept doors open for those children and young people who could attend and offered remote learning when on-site education was not an option.
- 3.2 Through regular 'keep in touch' meetings with education leaders, the Local Authority remained well-informed about the responses being made by early years providers and schools in Rutland to the frequently revised national advice and guidance, with good practice and problem solving shared collaboratively within the sector.
- 3.3 The presentation to the Scrutiny Panel by representatives from early education, primary school sector and secondary school sector will provide real-life examples of the responses made and the preparation for further mitigation of the impact of Covid-19 on education.
- 3.4 Ofsted is the sole arbiter of the effectiveness of education and the quality of provision in the education sector, and measures effectiveness against criteria in Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF). However, in recognition of the challenges faced by Early Years Providers, schools and colleges, Ofsted inspections and associated measures of success were postponed from the start of lockdown in March 2020.
- 3.5 Ofsted began to restart some on-site inspections under the EIF which included section 8 monitoring inspections of schools graded 'inadequate', and those graded 'requires improvement' at their last 2 consecutive full inspections; this did not include any Rutland school. Ofsted has confirmed that the full programme of graded school inspections will resume in autumn 2021.
- 3.6 On-site EIF inspections of registered early years providers also began from 4 May, prioritising providers that were judged less than good at their last inspection, those that registered recently but have not been inspected or whose first inspection was overdue. Two Rutland nurseries were inspected during the summer term. All inspection reports can be found at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>
- 3.7 Ofsted will return to a full programme of graded inspections for schools no earlier than the start of the Autumn term 2021. Ofsted recognises that most schools will have been unable to implement the curriculum in the usual way during the COVID-19 pandemic and so inspectors will seek to understand how the school adapted and

prioritised the curriculum from September 2020. Ofsted inspectors will also focus on understanding the steps that leaders have taken to offer a wide range of personal development opportunities since the school opened to all pupils in March 2021.

4 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- 4.1 It is now compulsory for all schools to teach pupils about mental health and wellbeing as part of health and relationships education. At primary school, pupils learn that mental wellbeing is a normal part of daily life and why simple self-care – like getting enough sleep and spending time outdoors and with friends – is important. At secondary school, the teaching builds on everything learned at primary school, ensuring pupils can spot the signs of common mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression in themselves or others. Young people also learn how to discuss their emotions accurately and sensitively and how to access professional help.
- 4.2 The Government is currently rolling out new Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to work with and in schools and colleges to provide early intervention support to pupils and students experiencing mild to moderate difficulties such as low mood and anxiety. The teams will also support participating schools and colleges to establish their whole school or college approaches and integrate with existing provision, to help pupils and students access the right support and stay in education. This is being delivered in Rutland through the Mental Health Support Team from Leicestershire NHS Partnership.
- 4.3 Government funding for the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme for this coming academic year builds on the Department for Education's Wellbeing for Education Return programme and funding.
- 4.3.1 The Wellbeing for Education Return programme provided funding in the academic year 2020-2021 for locally adapted expert training, support and resources to support staff in meeting the needs of young people dealing with additional pressures from Covid and disruptions to the school lives. In Rutland, much of this programme was delivered through the Educational Psychology Service but was supervised by the Local Authority to ensure it aligned to other support mechanisms already established and implemented in our schools.
- 4.3.2 The content of Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme for 2021-2022 has yet to be finalised. A review of the Wellbeing for Education Return is being completed and, in consultation with schools, the programme for this academic year will consolidate good practice established and target areas where further support and guidance is still required to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.
- 4.4 Prior to the disruptions to education caused by Covid-19, Resilient Rutland had been offering programmes to support schools with mental health and wellbeing in partnership with the Local Authority with additional bespoke support provided through the Local Authority team. An overview of this activity will be shared by Resilient Rutland and LA representative through their presentation to Scrutiny Panel.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 No consultation was required for this report

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 There are no alternative options

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Actions taken by the education sector do not have direct financial implications for the Local Authority.

7.2 However, there may be longer-term implications for local authorities' high needs funding if social, emotional and mental health concerns cannot be addressed.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 There are no legal or governance considerations for the LA

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 An equality impact assessment has not been completed because there are no service, policy or organisational changes being proposed.

11 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no community safety implications associated with this report

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The long term health and well-being implications as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic are uncertain, so it is vital that all services continue to work to mitigate the effects as effectively as they can, and utilise external funding, guidance and support to best meet the needs of the children and young people in their context.

13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the stability of the education offer to children and young people and has potential longer-term implications for academic achievement and wellbeing. However, early years settings and schools in Rutland have responded appropriately during very challenging times and continue to demonstrate sustained commitment to ensuring the children and young people in their care continue to achieve well.

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 There are no additional background papers to the report

15 APPENDICES

15.1 There are no appendices to the report. There will be a presentation to the Panel and a copy of any PowerPoint presentation will be included with the minutes.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.