

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	08 September 2021
Title of Report:	Schools Catch-up
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People)
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Ming Zhang
Contact Email:	Ming.zhang@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	AB.MZ.08092001.2
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To provide a Schools update to the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Recommendations and Reasons

For the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive the report for information and consideration.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable - report is for information only

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Plymouth Plan

Policy HEA2: Delivering the best outcomes for children, young people and families.

Policy GRO2: Delivering skills and talent development

Corporate Plan: A Growing City

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

There are no implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan arising from this advisory report.

Financial Risks:

None

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental issues identified

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

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Appendices

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Background papers:

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ming Zhang											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 26/08/2021											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Downie approved by email											
Date approved: 20/08/2021											

School Update

The national picture, funding and the debates

DfE research estimates that in the first half of autumn term 2020, pupils in:

- year 3 – 9 were on average 1.6 to 2 months behind on their reading
- year 3 – 7 were around 3.2 months behind in their maths
- schools with high numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals were on average further behind those schools with low free school meal eligibility

Nationally, anecdotal evidence also points to children and young people's mental health having suffered from lockdown and from periods of individual or class isolation.

Additional finding for local authorities

All local authorities have been issues with a **'Wellbeing for Education Return' (WfER)** grant. The purpose of the grant is to build on previous work to help schools to better meet the wellbeing and mental health needs of their pupils during the recovery period. In terms of 'catch up' support, this is the focus for Plymouth City Council.

A plan for the **'Wellbeing for Education Recovery Fund'** has been drawn up jointly between the Educational Psychology Service and the Commissioning Team. The plan will help local education settings navigate existing local provision and support through the further development of the Local Offer on POD; expansion of the Wellbeing for Education Return training to include Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) training; ongoing support and advice through existing provision and the delivery of a series consultation sessions to assess the needs of schools via the Educational Psychology team. The Educational Psychology team will also deliver training for senior mental health leads in schools which will equip a senior member of staff to develop a holistic school approach.

The positive impact of WfER was reflected in the feedback from the schools confirming that staff from schools and settings have an improved understanding of emotional wellbeing and mental health to support pupils and students. Followings are a few typical quotes:

Impact of Wellbeing for Education Return:

'The staff have been so pleased with the wellbeing check-ins – Thank You.'

'Flip your Lid is being used in school and is a really useful model ... the children know now and use the hand gesture [as a way of letting] a teacher or member of staff know they are struggling'

'The boys absolutely loved the online session today ... They were buzzing afterwards ...'

'I need to look at and update policies and practices with regards to the most up to date guidance.'

'Jodie seems to understand the pressures and pinch points of our profession. I think what I find useful is to be able to offload to someone who can empathise.'

Apart from the WfER programme, the multi-agency EHWP Steering Group planned and delivered a coordinated campaign this year for Mental Health Awareness Week (10-16 May 2021). The national theme this year was “Connect with Nature” so we linked locally with Green Minds and Nature Plymouth to share resources with schools. MHAW online campaign on PCC’s Nature Plymouth social media with Twitter impressions of 6,678 & engagements of 202 and Facebook impressions of 2,931 & engagements of 124. Note: Impressions are no. of people who saw the content and engagements are the no. of people who reacted to it.

Many schools in Plymouth used the occasion to launch their mental health for education initiatives or participated in organised events, among them are a few examples:

ACE School, alternative provision for the vulnerable students who require extra time-out support. Activities at the school included:

- Bringing nature in - Eat breakfast in front of the window, observing the nature outside or watching a wildlife programme. Opening the window and listen to all the different sounds we can hear.
- Explore our local natural spaces - what is on our doorstep? How many different outdoor spaces can we visit?
- Stay active – getting out for a run, walk or cycle. Playing football or practicing yoga
- Taking a moment to be mindful (to be ‘in the moment’ and pay attention to what we feel/ see/ hear in the world around us).
- Getting creative – writing, sketching, taking pictures, or playing music outside.

Progeny (The Zone):

- Delivered workshops to 612 young people across 13 schools during Mental Health Awareness Week with Stress and Resilience being the focus of each workshop. The workshops were delivered remotely and face to face to 11 secondary and 2 special schools.
- Resource packs including the nature themed resources were shared with all secondary and special schools for use during face to face lessons, remote lessons and short 20 min sessions for tutor time.
- Mental Health Awareness Week opened up a conversation between The Zone and Green Minds. Green Minds now regularly send through information and opportunities to share with the young people and schools that The Zone work with.

Eco-Therapy Activities:

- Primary and Secondary age children and their families were invited by Livewell’s CAMHS and Mental Health Support Team (MHST) to take part in activities at Poole Farm run as part of their eco-therapy group. Families could also talk to mental health staff present on the day about their children’s emotional health and wellbeing.

Additional funding for schools

Schools have been issued with a ‘**Recovery Premium**’. Building on Pupil Premium, this funding will support schools to deliver evidence-based approaches for supporting the most disadvantaged pupils. School allocations are in the process of being published by the DfE, funding commences September 21.

Prior to the summer break secondary schools were invited to express an interest in running a funded **summer school** by the DfE (normally focused on Year 7 pupils).

Debates

School leadership

For Head teachers and their staff, COVID 19's challenges have been unprecedented through the management of school safety and shifting regulatory demands.

Learning lessons

Key themes include: the role of remote learning; access to technology to support learning and assessment methods for public examinations (GCSEs and A Levels)

- **Local issues:** existing disadvantaged gaps vs possible Covid impacts and mental health in education

The impact of COVID 19 will need to be considered against the backdrop of priorities indicated by the last national data set (2019). At key stage 2, priorities include boys' attainment in reading, and targeting interventions to tackle the disadvantage gap (a widening trend).

At key stage 4, raising progress and attainment against key measures (progress and attainment 8) is an ongoing priority. Plymouth sits in the bottom quartile banding for the attainment of boys in receipt of FSM and the third quartile banding for attainment of those pupils receiving SEN Support.

- **Local developments:** Children's Services Planning, measures taken by schools to support "catch up", mental health for education return, Summer Schools and the challenges

A Bright Future sets out the strategic intent for how Plymouth City Council will work with partners to address key priorities. In addition, the Plymouth Education Board is well established as the vehicle for addressing city-wide issues; the education return from the pandemic is embedded into planning.

The city was selected by the DfE as one of the 4 local trailblazer areas for education improvement, attracting more funding into the city's education system. The programme has strengthened the partnership working across the city for education improvement.

EPS Officers have worked closely with the DfE to maximise the uptake of the '**summer school**' offer by all schools.

EPS Officers will monitor the impact of the '**Recovery Premium**' across the city through regular dialogue with Head teachers and MAT CEOs. Regular reports will be made to the Plymouth Education Board by school leaders.