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| TITLE | Education Update |
| FOR CONSIDERATION BY | Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 January 2023 |
| WARD | None Specific; |
| LEAD OFFICER | Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson |

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

- Understanding of the breadth of the work of the Learning, Achievement and Partnerships Team within each service area
- Understanding of the current issues faced by the wider schools system
- Consideration of the impact and extent of officer engagement with the schools system to improve outcomes for the children and families of the borough

RECOMMENDATION

For information

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report outlines the key areas within Learning, Achievement and Partnerships Team which covers a portfolio of work encompassing the following:

- **Virtual School for Looked After Children (LAC)** and Unaccompanied Asylums Seekers (UASC)
- **Education Welfare Service**, including Children Missing in Education (CME), Elective Home Education (EHE),
- **School Improvement**, including Governor Services, SACRE, support for New Arrivals/Refugees and S175 Safeguarding audits
- **SEND** including provision and statutory assessment processes
- **Educational Psychology Services**, including Mental Health Support Teams (MHST),
- **Adult Education & NEET Prevention** – provision of learning opportunities for adult residents including functional skills; supporting young people (post 16) into positive destinations in Education, Employment or Training.
- **Early Years** support and sufficiency of provision (*currently managed within the Education Psychology Service area*)
- **Admissions & Home to School Transport** including in year admissions and appeals
- **Pupil Place planning** for sufficiency and school capital programmes
- **CAHMS Phoenix- Hospital School**

Background

The Learning, Achievement and Partnerships Team covers a portfolio of work encompassing the following:

Service Descriptions

Virtual School. The Virtual School sits within the Education Service, its role being to champion the educational needs of young people for whom the Local Authority is the Corporate Parent, as well as provide strategic advice and guidance regarding outcomes for all children who have or have had a social worker. The key priority is to raise attainment and close the gap between Looked After Children's outcomes (LAC) and those of their peers and provide advice and guidance regarding education for families of children previously looked after and the education settings that they attend.

Education Welfare Service. The EWS continues to support multiagency work where attendance is low and where children are missing out on their education and regularly attends the Early Help Hub to ensure education is prioritised. The EWS works in close partnership across internal and external agencies and core priorities such as Children Missing Education (CME), GRT and Elective Home Education (EHE).

School Improvement Service. The school improvement service works to ensure schools are ambitious for the children of the Borough, delivering excellent standards of education and supporting the well-being of all their pupils in a changing landscape. The service uses a system of categorisation to fulfil its role as a catalyst for change and a champion for pupils and their families and to provide appropriate challenge to secure better outcomes for the children and young people in Wokingham. This enables engagement with all schools in the borough, irrespective of risk assessment or status. Schools are able to purchase Headteacher Performance Management, NQT training, governor support and training and other support from the team.

SEND 0-25 Vulnerable Learners Service. The SEND 0-25 Vulnerable Learners service provides support to schools and children and families in respect of EHCP planning and the identification of appropriate educational arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The service provides support to parents through direct communication and with SEND Voices Wokingham and SENDIASS. The SEND Service will be key in delivery of the Safety Valve programme for Wokingham.

Education Psychology Service (EPS). The Wokingham EPS supports WBC in discharging its statutory duty to provide psychological advice as part of Education Health and Care needs assessments. In accordance with the SEN Code of Practice the EPS also supports the annual reviews of children in year 5 and in year 9. The service also supports the LA in presenting psychological advice to the SENDIS Tribunal. The EPS operates a link EP approach where each publicly funded school in the borough has a named link EP and also offers school

surgeries. This operates in similar manner to a GP surgery where teachers or TAs can discuss any concerns with their link EP. The EP Service will also be key in relation to Safety Valve delivery.

Adult Education Service & NEET Prevention Team. The NEET Prevention Team used to be based at the Elevate Hub in Wokingham Library and provided a drop in centre for young people up to the age of 25 providing information, advice, guidance and support to move into employment education or training.

Wokingham also receives funding from the Education Skills Funding Agency to deliver an adult education service. This is delivered through a combination of directly delivered courses and commissioned activity.

Early Years & Childcare. In Wokingham, most children in the EYFS phase are well-prepared for school. The Early Years Service works with early years and childcare settings (childminders, nurseries, schools), to ensure quality provision that supports school readiness, and supports access to the free early education entitlement.

School Admissions The School Admissions service manages the processes for admissions to Infant, Primary, Junior and Secondary Schools in Wokingham. The service acts as the admissions authority for local authority maintained schools and on behalf of Academies who are their own admissions authority. The service also manages in year admissions and admissions appeals.

School Place Planning. School place planning supports the statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children of statutory school age residing in the borough. Through needs analysis and forecasting, school place planning colleagues work with existing schools on the availability of places and supports the development of new schools in the borough where and when needed.

CAMHS Phoenix School The CAMHS Phoenix Hospital School is attached to CAMHS Phoenix Tier 4 unit for patients aged 12– 18 who have severe and enduring mental health illnesses. The unit is based at Wokingham Community Hospital. Referrals to the CAMHS Phoenix unit are received from other Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams, and other clinical practitioners. Students are dual registered with their home school whilst attending the hospital school. The hospital education team support patients with their education, apprenticeship, or a return to employment by offering a wide and diverse curriculum.

Analysis of Issues

In 2022 the government published papers setting out intentions at that point for the future of the wider educational landscape including those set out below and a proposed Schools Bill ([Schools Bill: policy statements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/schools-bill).)

[Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Implementing school system reform in 2022/23 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[SEND review: right support, right place, right time - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

However, as we commence 2023, we find that the Schools Bill has been withdrawn with implications for the potential implementation of the White Paper proposals. The outcome of the SEND Green Paper is still awaited.

It is in this context of shifting national direction that the local Education System is working. Pressures and challenges remain:

- Schools are working relentlessly to meet increasing pupil needs and manage resourcing in fiscally challenged system.
- Meeting pupil need is translating into significant increases in requests for Education Health Care Plan support for children from parents and schools with consequential pressures across the system but in particular for SEND and Educational Psychology services.
- The schools system is structurally fragmented with more than 50% of children nationally still attending a community maintained school, and at a local level our pupil community served by 12 different Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and 3 Single Academy Trusts (SATs) alongside our community maintained schools.
- The attractiveness of the borough as a great place to live and grow up is bringing about significant numbers of new arrivals, in particular the system has welcomed Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian refugees alongside large numbers of repatriating Hong Kong nationals. In the autumn term of 2022, applications for school places were received by the admissions team for 211 newly arrived pupils from Hong Kong. Wokingham is one of the LAs in the southeast that has welcomed the highest number of new arrivals from Hong Kong.
- In addition, since March 2022, the borough has welcomed many families from Ukraine. In the autumn term of 2022, 47 applications for school places for children from Ukraine were received.
- Unplanned new arrivals place pressure on school place availability across the local system and increasing demand for services.
- The gap in attainment between the disadvantaged and their peers remains stubbornly large at a local level and has increased in against some indicators post-pandemic.
- Delivery of the Safety Valve programme, which seeks to ensure a balanced budget within the Dedicated Schools Grant. Primarily focused on High Needs Block overspend, safety valve will deliver a number of workstreams to rebalance spend and ensure improved provision within the Borough.

Key drivers for each service include:

Virtual School

- Raising attainment and close the gap between outcomes for Children in Care and those of their peers and provide advice and guidance regarding education for education settings and families of children previously looked after.
- Increasing numbers of UASC.
- Increasing numbers of older children and young people coming into care with increasing levels of complexity, at risk of exclusion, without an EHCP and exacerbated by a lack of local alternative provision.
- The new exclusions guidance relating to Virtual School

Education Welfare Service

- Implementing the framework of the White Paper supporting ALL schools in the Local Authority around attendance issues (a shift from trading a service)
- Fulfil statutory legal duties including Penalty Notices, Fast Track and Prosecution work; Children Missing in Education; Electively Home Educated children; Child Employment.
- Provide support to refugee children and families to obtain school places, transport and equipment.
- Partnership working in respects to our Fair Access Protocol (FAP) – ensuring that all children have access to a school place if they meet the FAP criteria.
- Partnership working with other professionals to ensure attendance is seen as everyone's responsibility. [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) EWS are a visible presence within other service areas including; Early Help, Youth Justice, SEN, EMRAC, Social Care.

School Improvement & Governor Services

- National policy direction encourages system led, school to school support. Current legislation and statutory responsibilities mean that accountabilities and responsibilities for system outcomes remain with the LA and are discharged by the SI Team, providing intelligence and information for scrutiny at local, regional and national level.
- Changing Ofsted Inspection expectations requires evaluation of school performance and likely outcomes, with provision of attendant support for successful inspection. Current key themes include provision for the most vulnerable, curriculum impact, reading and writing, use of alternative provision (AP), effective attendance strategies and SEND pupil access to wider curriculum
- Safeguarding – Section 175 annual audit requested of all maintained, academy and independent schools within the Borough to ensure all are discharging their statutory safeguarding responsibilities as part of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) initiative.

SEND Team

- Statutory duties in relation to legislation around the assessment of children and young people's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Statutory assessments within a maximum twenty-week timeframe.
- The annual review process and updates Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans as required.
- Coordination and facilitation of the Safety Valve programme, which is a key council priority and wider area priority. The Safety Valve programme seeks to deliver a balanced budget position within the Dedicated School Grant over the course of the programme (6 years). Currently the DSG is significantly compromised with at year end a forecast cumulative balance within the High Needs Block of c£16,5m. Engagement in the Safety Valve programme could see investment of c£20m from the DfE to assist in the reduction of the cumulative deficit.

Educational Psychology Service

- Provision of psychological advice as part of the Education Health and Care needs assessment process.
- Supporting key annual reviews of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan)
- Advice and/or attendance for SEND tribunals.
- Leads the response to Health services statutory duty to notify the LA of young of young children who may have SEND.
- Advice and support to school and Early Years Special Educational Needs and Co-ordinators (SENCos)
- Non-statutory assessment of children and young people's special educational needs (SEN)
- Delivery of the Mental Health Support Team which provides support to children and young people in 12 identified schools who present with mild to moderate mental health needs.

Adult Education & NEET Prevention

- Procurement exercise for this year for Community Learning providers was unsuccessful in the main, we have one community subcontractor for this year. This will impact on the number of community learning courses delivered and total number of learners.
- Delivery of English courses due to high demand from new arrivals from Hong Kong and Ukraine. We have one new ESOL tutor starting, but unlikely to be able to accommodate all learners this term.
- The Multiply programme (adult numeracy).
- Reduction in NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).

Early Years & Childcare

- Support for maintained nursery, Private and Voluntary Sector EYs (Early Years) to ensure providers are legally compliant, prepared for Ofsted inspection and deliver appropriate EYs curriculum.
- Ensure sufficient providers of Early years education in the local area.
- Support settings to ensure their practice is inclusive and that provision is organised and targeted towards the full range of needs of children
- Delivering training to EYs staff and SENCos on a range of SEND related topics and advising on evidence-based strategies to meet children's SEND in their setting.

School Admissions & Transport

- Statutory admissions service for parents and all schools, in accordance with the School Admissions and School Admissions Appeals Codes.
- Co-ordination of the main admissions round for all schools (primary, junior and secondary), as well as managing waitlists and the in-year process for Academy/Free Schools that pay for our service.
- Operation of the fair access process.
- increase on the pressure of school places, predominantly in years 5 to 9, caused in the main by people moving into the Wokingham Borough mid-phase, causing the majority of schools to reach capacity in most year groups.
- Significant challenge regarding the cost of Home to School Transport, particularly impacted by SEND transport needs and exacerbated by current mainstream sufficiency issues (note additional report on HTST to Committee)

CAMHS Phoenix School

- Provision of education for patients aged 12-18 years who have been admitted to CAMHS Phoenix Tier 4 Unit at Wokingham Hospital and works alongside CAMHS colleagues.
- Admissions are wholly based on the medical needs of the patient. Referrals are received directly from health professionals within the locality Child & Adolescent Mental Health teams (CAMHS). Each young person has an individual medical care plan, which incorporates their educational package.
- Increase in number of young people with significant mental health issues in area and nationally. This puts pressure on services including our school.

School Place Planning

- High rates of immigration over the past 18 months leading to rapidly rising mid phase rolls.
- High numbers of children entering Year 7 reflecting primary "bulge" now entering secondary schools

- High Key Stage 2 numbers making it very difficult to keep the supply of places greater than the demand.
- Limited number of schools able / willing to provide additional places.
- Cost of additional places at those schools that can provide Year 7 places leads to a strain on other WBC priorities.
- Risk of too few Sixth Form places for southern wards resident young people (and no local sixth form provision)

Conclusion

The past few years have been quite challenging for these school and family support services given the Covid Pandemic, changes in possible statutory direction, Ofsted inspection activity (including Written Statement of Action including CQC oversight), cost of living challenges, and the ongoing financial pressures that affect all services and provision; but the raft of services within LAP continue to deliver high quality services and support to schools and setting within the Wokingham system, and directly to children, young people and their families.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

| | How much will it Cost/ (Save) | Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall | Revenue or Capital? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Current Financial Year (Year 1) | | | |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2) | | | |
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | | | |

| Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision |
|--|
| N/A |

| Cross-Council Implications |
|-----------------------------------|
| N/A |

| Public Sector Equality Duty |
|------------------------------------|
| N/A |

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

N/A

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

N/A

List of Background Papers

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