
COVID-19 RECOVERY IN SCHOOLS

Purpose of the Report

1. For Members to receive a brief overview of this issue ahead of a presentation on the latest position in relation to Covid-19 Recovery in Schools being made at this meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Background

2. During 2020/21 as part of its work programming, Members of this Scrutiny Committee agreed to receive regular updates from Education & Lifelong Learning in relation to Education and Schools Pandemic Recovery. At its work programming forum on the 19th July 2021, the Committee resolved to continue this approach during 2021/22, which also linked with the Cabinet's Renewal & Recovery Agenda; and the Child Friendly City Accreditation.
3. At its work programming forum on the 19th July 2022, the current Committee agreed that it would wish for "***Covid-19 Recovery in Schools***" to remain a priority topic for the Committee during 2022/23 and that bi-annual reports be considered by the Committee – one following the start of the school year, and one towards the end of the school year, looking towards the Summer Programme.

Issues

4. Since July 2020, this Scrutiny Committee has provided a number of comments, observations and views on the following issues. Links to relevant letters and papers can be found in the next Section of this Report:

- Learning and attainment for all
 - Ensuring all schools work to similar standards and approaches – learning from best practice etc;
 - Pupils who had disengaged with learning and the knock-on effect this may have in relation to their individual achievement and attainment;
 - NEETS;
 - Post 16 learning;
 - Digital Deprivation & Inequality;
 - Support for vulnerable learners;
 - Non-Formal education settings
- Planning/Preparing
 - Use of Welsh Government Funding – where is it going, how will it be used?
 - Summer Provision
- Health and Well-being
 - School Based Counselling and Pupil Wellbeing;
 - Mental health services and capacity for children & young people;
 - Staff Health and Well-being.
- Examinations and Assessments;
- Inspection Activity;
- Consultation and Engagement with Children & Young People.

5. The current Committee also raised the following issues they wish to explore, including:

- Impact on attendance levels
- Impact on vulnerable pupils, including Children looked after, EMTAS, ALN/CLN; physical disabilities etc.
- Impact on EOTAS
- Impact on attainment

- Programmes, initiatives and partnership working to address some of the challenges faced
- Issues and challenges relating to Mental health and well-being and support services
- Any positives effects/practices that should be preserved arising from any changes to working practices brought in during the pandemic
- Ascertain what effect the pandemic has had on the above and identify solutions that the council (and maybe other councils and WG) could implement to address them

Previous Scrutiny

6. This Scrutiny Committee has considered this topic on the following dates:

- 30 July 2020¹
- 12 October 2020²
- In December 2020, Members of this Scrutiny Committee were sent a further briefing via email on further updates in relation to education recovery dated 15 December 2020.
- 15th March 2021³
- 11 May 2021⁴
- 21st September 2021⁵

7. Members have also raised issues on this topic when considering the following issues:

- Child Friendly City Agenda Item – 19 January 2021⁶

¹ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 30th July, 2020, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

² [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 12th October, 2020, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

³ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 15th March, 2021, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 11th May, 2021, 5.00 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 21st September, 2021, 4.30 pm : Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

⁶ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 19th January, 2021, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

- Corporate Plan and Budget Scrutiny – 23 February 2021⁷

Third Sector Views

8. The role the Third Sector has played in Covid-19 Recovery in schools in Cardiff will be touched on as part of the presentation at this Scrutiny Committee meeting.
9. More widely, a range of research and engagement projects have been carried out by Third Sector organisations in relation to children and young people and the impact of the pandemic on them. These include reports from Action for Children; Barnardo's; Hafal; MEIC; MIND; NSPCC; and National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS).
10. A full literature review will be undertaken and reported to Committee Members in due course; and Members may wish to invite representatives from these organisations to a future meeting.
11. A selection of key documents Members may wish to consider include the following. Whilst many date back to 2020, they may be useful reference points for Members, particularly around some groups of children and young people. Please note that some of these documents look at wider issues than just young people and schools, but again, may provide useful context:
 - Action For Children - Childhood during coronavirus: protecting children from the effects of poverty – October 2020 - [ecc-executive-summary.pdf \(actionforchildren.org.uk\)](#)
 - Barnardo's/ Action for Children - Lessons from Lockdown , Supporting vulnerable children and young people returning to school and to learning - [lessons-from-lockdown-supporting-vulnerable-children-young-people-returning-school-learning-english.pdf \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#) / [lessons-from-lockdown-supporting-vulnerable-children-young-people-returning-school-learning-welsh.pdf \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#)

⁷ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 23rd February, 2021, 10.30 am : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

- Meic – Your Voice: Back to School – Covid-19 Survey Report – December 2020 - [Meic-Report-English-21_12_20-Final.pdf \(meiccymru.org\)](#) / [Meic-Report-Welsh-21_12_20-Final.pdf \(meiccymru.org\)](#)
- MIND Cymru - Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health in Wales – July 2021 (adults and children) [the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-in-wales-final-report.pdf \(mind.org.uk\)](#)
- NSPCC - Isolated and struggling - social isolation and the risk of child maltreatment, in lockdown and beyond – June 2020 – [The impact of COVID-19 on child abuse in the UK | NSPCC Learning](#)
- NSPCC Statistics briefing: the impact of coronavirus This briefing looks at what data and statistics are available around the impact of coronavirus on children and their families – February 2022 - [Statistics on the impact of COVID on children | NSPCC Learning](#)
- Mental Health Foundation Guides – Returning to School After Lockdown – the Challenge Facing Schools and Pupils - [The challenge facing schools and pupils | Mental Health Foundation](#) / [Yr her sy'n wynebu ysgolion a disgyblion | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- NYAS Young Lives in Lockdown: NYAS' Survey Of Care-Experienced Children And Young People During Covid-19 -2020 - [NYAS-Mental-Health-Report \(amazonaws.com\)](#)

Way Forward

12. A presentation will be made at this meeting, and the following witnesses will be in attendance meeting to answer any questions on this:

- Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education;
- Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning;
- Mike Tate, Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning;
- Patrick Brunnock, Head Teacher, Corpus Christi RC High School
- Claire Skidmore, Head Teacher, Radyr Primary School
- Michelle Jones – Head Teacher, Lansdowne Primary School

13. Members will be able to agree any comments, concerns or recommendations that they wish to pass on to the Cabinet Member and Senior Officers during the Way Forward and decide whether they wish to receive further updates from witnesses in the future.

Legal Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

15. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee considers this report and information provided at the meeting and agrees any recommendations, comments or advice it wishes to offer to the Cabinet Member and Senior Officers in Education & Lifelong Learning, as well and any future scrutiny Members may wish to undertake on this issue.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and Legal Services

2 December 2022