PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 June 2020

11.00am

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH MAY 2020

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

6. SCHOOLS OPERATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Performance Management
Scrutiny Committee
10 June 2020

Schools Operation During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Context

Commencing 23 March 2020

All schools requested by Department for Education (DfE) to offer provision for:

- Children of critical workers
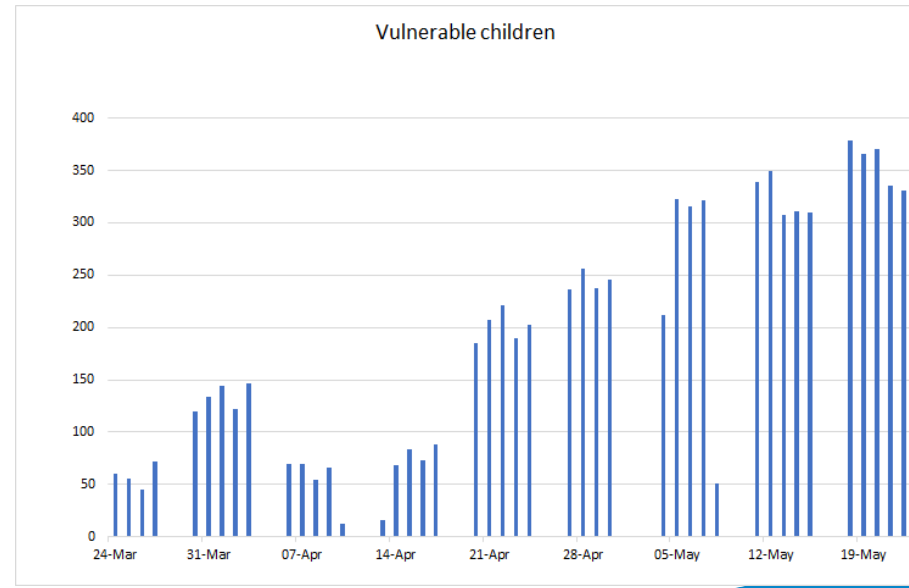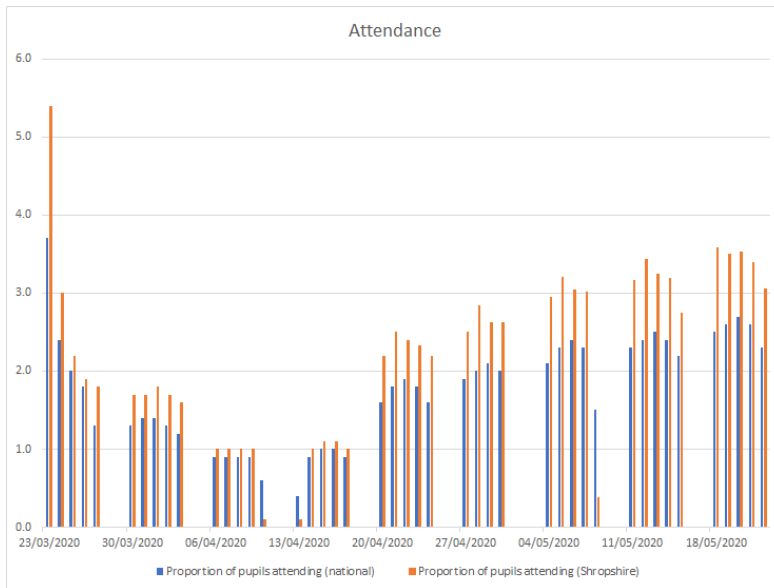- Vulnerable children

Commencing 1 June 2020

Primary schools also requested to offer places for Reception, Year 1, Year 6 pupils

Commencing 15 June 2020

Secondary schools also requested to offer increased contact to Year 10 and Year 12 pupils

Attendance (23/3 – 22/5)

Source – DfE data dashboard

Attendance (5 June 2020)

- 3,503 pupils attended primary schools, an increase of over 2,000 pupils compared with prior to wider re-opening.

- 80.3% of schools had opened to one or more of the wider year groups (Reception, Year 1, Year 6).

- Overall attendance in primary schools was approximately 16.5%.

- 18.9% of schools have introduced rotas.

- Number of primary schools re-opening to Reception, Year 1, Year 6 is expected to further increase to over 95% by 15 June.

Communication with schools/DfE

- Since 23 March, daily email sent to headteachers in maintained schools and academies, sharing policy and guidance from a local, regional and national perspective.

- Central Policy Group of senior school leaders meeting held online to help shape Shropshire's position and agree common principles. Position statement shared with elected members.

- Maintained Schools Headteacher Forum meeting (regional headteacher representatives) held online twice in addition to a maintained headteacher meeting.

- All maintained headteachers offered 1:1 meetings/support, as well having access to officers across all Council services supporting schools.

- Meetings with DfE/Regional School Commissioner's (RSC's) office, initially daily during first weeks of lockdown, before reverting to twice per week – provides mechanism for escalation of local issues and influencing further guidance.

Actions taken – pre 1 June

- From 23 March, a daily list of school closures, including schools hosting provision for displaced critical worker and vulnerable children, has been posted on the Council website.

- Council officers have arranged school places for critical worker/vulnerable children unable to access places at usual school, including pupils from independent sector.

- A dedicated customer helpline was set up for parents/carers.

- A risk assessment template, with RAG rating, for vulnerable children created through collaboration between Education Access Service, SEN and social care teams.

- Schools have been challenged by officers and, where appropriate, through the RSC's office.

- Officers have supported schools on the provision of free school meals for pupils not in school, provided guidance on the national voucher scheme, and taken up individual issues with the DfE.

- Maintained schools invited to submit claims for inclusion in the Council's submission for support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) i.e. furloughing.

Actions taken – for 1 June onwards

- Dedicated helpline for parents/carers re-established for extended opening of primary schools, while updated FAQs have been posted on the Council website.

- Emergency packs of PPE have been sourced and distributed to all schools and academies requiring it (a minority sourced their own).

- A risk assessment template was provided for all schools, with the completed assessments for maintained schools quality assured by Council officers prior to the extending opening. All completed by 1 June where necessary.

- Liaison with trades union representatives, particularly in relation to the detailed risk assessments required for schools to open safely and securely for staff and pupils.

- Detailed *'Guidance for School Transport Provision from 1 June 2020'* was consulted on and distributed to operators and schools.

- Officers currently working closely with public health on the production of the local outbreak control plan for the testing, tracking and isolating of Covid-19 cases in education settings.

Home to School Transport

- A tiny number of entitled critical worker pupils transported (less than 1%) since 23 March.
- A few Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils returned on 1 June taking transported numbers up to 3%.
- Indications that secondary entitled pupils returning from 15 June will be low.
- School buses at 25% capacity maximum (i.e. 2 metre separation).
- Could go to 50% capacity September 2020 (i.e. 1 metre)
- But 50% still means there won't be capacity for a third of entitled pupils, unless we double trip or provide extra vehicles, which will be limited in supply.
- Working on solutions and awaiting further Government guidance.
- SEND transport numbers low currently, minibus capacity is circa 4 pupils with a capacity of 25%.
- Face covering for passengers on public transport from 15 June.
- Face coverings may need to be considered on school transport if we cannot maintain the 2 metre social distancing on vehicles when more pupils return in September.
- School transport operators have lost the majority of public/private work – paying 'Supplier Relief' to them until the end of June, but concerned about their future viability beyond this.

Schools' finances

- Schools funding has been protected, all receiving their core funding allocations and targeted funds (e.g. SEND top up) for the 2020 to 2021 financial years.

- Funds are being made available for additional Covid-19 related costs, with banded limits of £25,000 for schools with 250 pupils or fewer, up to £75,000 for schools with over 1,000 pupils.

- Guidance is due on how schools can claim these costs – officers have canvassed the DfE to have these extended to include costs not currently covered including PPE and supply costs.

- 'Private income' (e.g. paid school meals, breakfast and after school clubs) is not covered by the guidance – this is presenting a minority of schools with potential financial problems.

- 9 maintained schools submitted claims to furlough 31 employees through the CJRS.

- A report on the impact of Covid-19 on school finances is to be presented to Schools Forum at their meeting on 25 June 2020.

Early Help Activity Supporting Schools

- Family Support Workers financed through the Troubled Families funding have supported a further 226 families in total.
- During this period the Early Help teams have worked with 48 families at Tier 2 that would normally access their schools and other agencies for this level of support and the Schools Family Support workers have offered support to 134 families from the schools 'vulnerable list'.
- Overall during the month of April and period of Covid-19 lockdown, the Council's Early Help teams have supported a total of 407 families, offering direct support to more than 314 parents/carers and more than 145 children.

- There has been an increase in requests from schools for 5-25 age group compared with last year (23/03 to 07/06)

Number of new requests for assessment		Number of assessments agreed	
2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
28	41	22	31

- 31 assessments agreed, of these 14 will be delayed as school closure means Educational Psychologists cannot undertake meaningful assessment.   This number may increase if other professionals have the same difficulty.
- The increase in requests reflects a national trend but is probably impacted further by school closure, as school staff have more time to complete paperwork.
- The majority of EHC needs assessments for 0-5 year olds are undertaken through the Child Development Centre (CDC) utilising the multi-disciplinary assessment (MDA). The process is led by health colleagues and enables assessment to take place where a child has significant special educational needs that are likely to be apparent from an early age and where the child may not be already accessing an education placement. During the period from March to June 2020 there were no assessments being undertaken, compared with 30 in the same period in 2019.
- Work is underway with health professionals to establish alternative methods of assessment using online assessment tools to support a virtual assessment.   The first pilots are currently taking place.

EAS

·The EAS team has worked with an **additional 468 families** since lockdown.

·**35** Syrian Refugee children and their families have been supported by the team's Refugee Education Support Assistant during lockdown.

·The service is responsible for monitoring children who are electively home educated (EHE). **45** families have been contacted directly during lockdown so far.

·The Education Access team have continued to participate in strategy meetings, child protection conferences and Early Help meetings.

·The service has collated all school risk assessments of vulnerable pupils for the LA and undertakes ongoing monitoring of entries.

•A Covid 19 safeguarding addendum and Covid 19 Behaviour addendum policy has been developed.

•School Safeguarding virtual 'drop in' sessions have been established.

•Increased time allocation to the daily domestic abuse triage sessions and Operation Encompass. Officers attend virtual MARAC meetings

•Continuing participation in Exploitation triage meetings and Panels. Due to demand for triage, additional time has been allocated to allow for bi-weekly meetings.

•Virtual Pupil Disciplinary Committee meetings have been convened to assist with timely responses to the Exclusion process.

•Specialist Placement and Fair Access Panels have continued to ensure that school placements are identified and plans remain in place to support vulnerable learners.

Children with a social worker

- We have consistently supported the Government guidance about children attending school where they have a social worker or are vulnerable, proactively talking to parents about the expectation that children should be in school .

- Where individual children have needed to be in school social workers have visited and worked with parents and children directly to get them back into school.

- We have delivered free school meals during the school holidays to those on a Child Protection Plan.

- For disabled children we have used flexible packages of support to assist parents where children cannot be in school.

- For several children we have provided staff to support them in school when they have needed to be in school but needed additional support.

- Provided additional materials to foster carers to enable creative activities.

Compass and Assessment teams

- Schools play a vital role in keeping 'eyes on the child'
- As a main source of referrals into compass, the numbers have considerably dropped.
- However, where schools have made referrals, many have been serious and schools have responded excellently.
- Data for year as follows:
- January 221 referrals received of these 54 were made by education
- February 156 referrals were received of these 51 were made by education
- March 150 referrals were received of these 56 were made by education
- April 89 referrals were received of these 6 were made by education
- In total 28.2% of referrals were received from educational settings across January to April.

Looked After Children and Virtual School

- Supported foster carers and parents with children placed at home to enable and support education at home.

- Individual child level decisions about whether it is best for children to attend school or remain at home, especially where there are multiple children in placement, individual home circumstances.

- Where children have wanted to go to school we have worked with the Virtual School to enable this to happen.

- Provided some technology in early weeks to enable children and young people to learn remotely.

- Seen incredible creativity from social workers, foster carers and residential care workers to engage and support children in learning.

- Enabled older looked after children and care leavers, including our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, to access technology to continue their studies.

- Some children have thrived, learning in a more protected environment.

- IROs have continued to provide scrutiny regarding the educational needs of children who are looked after.

Looked After Children and Virtual School

Attendance of LAC
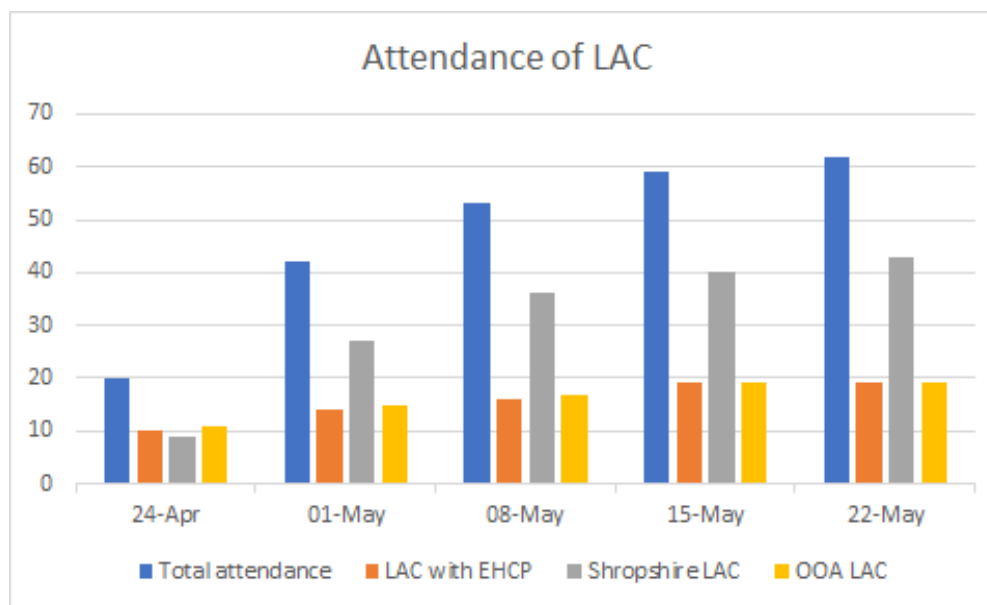
Overcoming curriculum challenges

National curriculum was suspended. DfE expectations:

- Agree what learning is appropriate (including the relationship between face-to-face and remote education), for example, identify curriculum priorities, agree revised expectations and required adjustments in practical lessons, and any approaches to 'catch up' support.
- Work with local authority or academy trust (and where applicable NHS Clinical Commissioning Group) and families to identify what provision can be reasonably provided for in line with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Agree ongoing learning offer for eligible pupils who can't attend school, as well as offer for those that continue to be out of school.
- Agree ongoing approach for learning offer for vulnerable children and children of critical workers who are in school but not in the returning year groups.

Overcoming curriculum challenges

- Guidance placed expectation on schools to offer 'blended' curriculum to meet need based on factors such as age, IT accessibility, etc.
- Resources list created by Council officers and provided signposting the Government funded online Oak National Academy.
- Shropshire Music Service and School Library Service have offered curriculum input.
- Schools expected to make regular contact with vulnerable pupils.
- Delivery of curriculum discussed in headteacher 1:1s.
- Small number of parental concerns raised with officers and followed up.
- 'Recovery' curriculum required by schools to support pupils back into full-time school-based learning and routines while supporting emotional wellbeing.

Transitional issues

- Shifting from 'childcare provision' to education.

- Need for a 're-focusing' curriculum drive to benefit pupils in re-establishing routines and expectations as well as supporting mental and emotional needs.

- Transition support.

- Support for vulnerable learners.

- Need for collaborative approach.

- Responding to an expected increase in referrals as children return to school and children can talk about their experiences at home.

- Without further relaxation in guidelines, particularly in relation to social distancing, the physical limitations of most school buildings will restrict extended opening to further year groups.

- To fully re-open the school transport network, particularly from September 2020, significant relaxation in current restrictions will be required (currently capacity is reduced to 25%).

Transitional issues

- Managing pupil anxiety and school phobia while actively encouraging attendance.

- Developing approaches to supporting pupils with re-adjustment, self-regulation and behaviour in school to ensure that exclusions do not rise due to Covid-19 related factors.

- Schools capacity to take on tier 2 work to support the Early Help system.

- Shropshire has been allocated 500 laptops for children in care and children with a social worker – officers are working with social care and schools to identify and distribute these digital devices this month.

7. QUARTER 4, 2019/20 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

8. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

9. DATE/TIME OF THE NEXT COMMITTEE