

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 14th March 2018

Wards: All wards

Subject: Departmental Update Report March 2018

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead member: Cllr Katy Neep, Cabinet Member for Children Services
Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Education

Contact officer: Mark Gwynne, Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel to discuss and comment on the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments not covered elsewhere on the agenda and affecting the Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in January 2018.

2 DETAILS

2.1 **Harris Academy Wimbledon** – The council has exchanged conditional contracts with the Elim Church, which is the last piece of land assembly for the new school in South Wimbledon, and enabled the council to enter into contract for the building works to Merton Hall. This in turn gave the Department for Education sufficient confidence to sign a funding agreement on 28 February 2018, which officially opens Harris Academy Wimbledon as the council's ninth state funded mainstream secondary school.

2.2 The school will therefore open as planned in September 2018 at the former Adult Education building at Whatley Avenue, SW20 for two years before moving to its permanent site in South Wimbledon in 2020.

2.3 **School Admissions** - Admissions offer day was 1 March 2018. Despite 274 extra secondary school place applications compared to last year (a 13% rise), nearly 85% of Merton resident children have been offered a place in one of their top three preferred schools with over 90% receiving a place at one of their six preferences. The opening of Harris Academy Wimbledon in September 2018 will ensure that there are sufficient school places for all Merton residents this September.

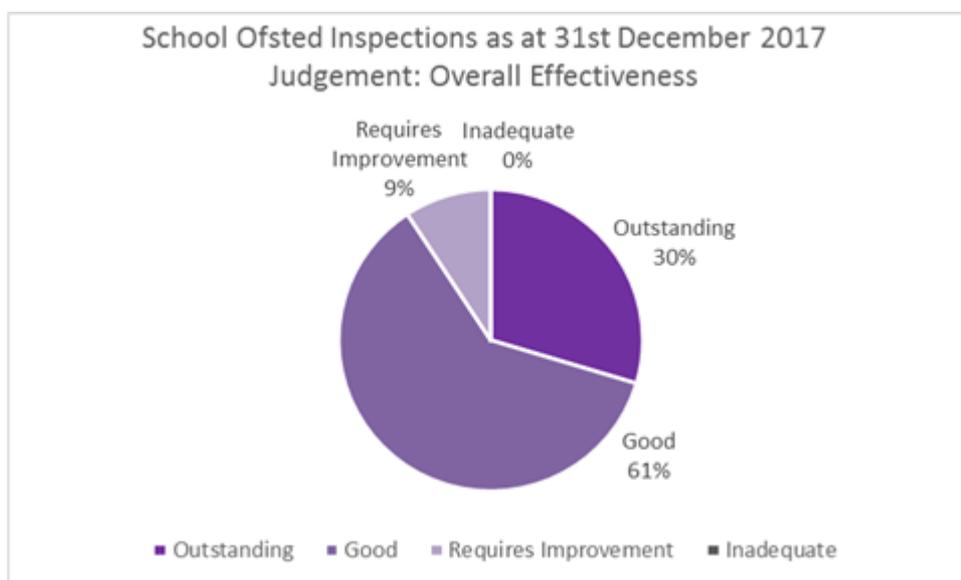
2.4 Due to Harris Wimbledon's confirmed opening for September 2018 being after the application process, parents received a separate offer letter for this school and so there are some parents who will receive duplicate offers of a school place. As a result of the high demand for places for our "Good" and "Outstanding" schools, 95 applicants did not

receive an offer of a place on 1 March but the council will be able to ensure everyone will receive an offer this spring, and there is a second round of offers before Easter. Places will become available due to duplicate offers from Harris Wimbledon being resolved and from parents who have received an offer of a state school but will choose the independent sector.

2.5 Parents have been advised to follow the instructions in their notification as soon as possible and, especially if they wish to take up an offer from an Independent School or Harris Wimbledon, to inform the admissions team in order to free up the school place for children that need it.

2.6 **School Ofsted Inspections** – Further inspections have been held in the following schools: Sacred Heart and Hillcross. The report has been published for St Matthews, which remains as good. The publication of this report will not result in any changes to our overall Ofsted ratings as published last month meaning that we continue to have:

- 100% of secondary schools being rated as “Good” or “Outstanding”
- 91% of all schools now rated as “Good” or better; and
- 93% of our pupils are educated in schools rated as “Good” or better.



2.7 **School Attainment** – details of educational attainment for 2016/17 are now available and included within the School Standards Report presented elsewhere on this agenda.

2.8 **Early Years South West London Bid** – Young children in Merton and Wandsworth are to benefit from an Early Years Hub being funded by the Mayor of London’s office. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is delivering on his pledge to improve access to high quality, affordable early years education for the most disadvantaged families in London. The Wandle Early Years Hub is one of only three hubs across London and is a collaboration of a range of education and early years agencies. It will be led by the Wandle Teaching School Alliance.

2.9 The Hub will work with early years providers and local families to improve the take up of free quality childcare and early education provision for eligible 2 year olds. It will improve early years provision for the most disadvantaged children, promote early years as a career and improve early intervention for children with special educational needs and disabilities. One of the hub’s priorities will be to offer access to accredited training

to staff working in childcare settings, which will give them the skills, knowledge and confidence to provide an increased number of places for eligible children who have special educational needs and disabilities. For more information about the hub visit the WEYH [website](#).

- 2.10 **Performance Management** – Following implementation of MOSAIC in May 2017, we have been working hard to establish effective performance reporting to Scrutiny, at a team, directorate and corporate level and to meet statutory reporting requirements. This has entailed working to resolve a number of data quality and data migration issues, requiring an iterative process of exception reporting and data checking. Whilst this work continues to get the required level of data accuracy, we are now at the stage where we are able to report on a number of our performance measures with a high degree of confidence. These indicators are contained in Appendix 1.
- 2.11 Work continues to get the same degree of confidence around the other indicators and extra resource has been brought into the directorate on an agency basis in order to progress this work as quickly as possible and help with identification of any further issues for resolution. Simultaneously, work is in hand to resolve the remaining migration issues – some of which have been escalated to the system provider to resolve wider system issues.
- 2.12 **CSE Awareness Days** – CSE Awareness Day is on Sunday 18th March. In response to this Merton is holding two awareness days in the Council Chamber on 15th and 16th March. This will enable a range of activities in civic centre in order to inform, educate and prevent this form of child abuse within the borough and the UK. These sessions include hearing from a survivor of CSE in Rotherham, learning from their experience, and cover topics such as:
- Domestic violence
 - Impact of gender bias
 - Pornography and CSE
 - Gangs and County Lines
 - Harmful sexual behaviour
- 2.13 **Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)** – The MSCB is continuing to embed the working being done around Think Family. The Board has approved a new multi-agency protocol, which outlines how we will all work with parents who experience poor mental health. We are also looking forward to our Joint Annual Conference, entitled, Think Family: No Wrong Door A spotlight on parental mental health. The conference will take place on Wednesday 21st March 2018 at Epsom Downs Racecourse.
- 2.14 The Board is also continue in its work to address adolescent vulnerability. The MSCB was pleased to welcome Dr Carlene Firmin, from the University of Bedfordshire, who gave a presentation to help the Board think through the implications of Contextual Safeguarding as a way of managing adolescent risk and vulnerability (especially with regards to peer-on-peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, gangs, county lines, CSE etc.).
- 2.15 The Board is also making progress in embedding the reviewed Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model with the review of early help and the planned multi-agency roll out of the Signs of Safety approach.
- 2.16 **Merton Data** – The department has been actively involved in informing and supporting development of Merton Data as part of the performance work stream of London's Best Council. Merton Data now provides a central repository of data and information about

Merton that will be available for members, officers, partners, the voluntary sector and residents to use.

- 2.17 The site is available [online](#) and is regularly and automatically updated from a series of national datasets from different government departments and other bodies. Merton Data provides access to the latest information about Merton from 29 different datasets and nearly 5,000 indicators.
- 2.18 Merton Data will facilitate evidence based decision making, including informing the commissioning or reconfiguring of services and operations. It will assist in strategic planning and policy development by enabling officers to set out quickly and easily the strategic context. As a department, we are also eager to ensure that inclusion of the correct information can minimise the burden of responding to a large number of Freedom of Information Act enquiries on a very small range of datasets.
- 2.19 **Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)** – Working together with Croydon County Court, West London Family Court and the Inner London Family Court, the partnership will offer an alternative form of care proceedings for parents and children in those cases where substance misuse is a key factor in the decision to bring proceedings: known as the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC).
- 2.20 The FDAC service went live on the 1st January 2018 with currently 15 referrals made by the 9 boroughs within the Partnership. Southwark are no longer within the Partnership, which led to the reduction in referrals numbers from 60 to 57 per year. Merton have made 2 referrals. The Terms and Conditions of the contract has now been finalised and formal contracts is being drawn, enabling the Collaboration Agreement to be updated with their T&C for signing.
- 2.21 **Social Impact Bond (SIB)** – The Pan-London Care Impact Partnership involving Merton, Tower Hamlets, Bexley, Newham and Sutton councils has been launched during January to deliver Multi-Systemic and Functional Family Therapy services for councils within the partnership, leveraging in financial resources using a (SIB). The aim of the programme is to keep vulnerable families together and prevent children from being taken into care.
- 2.22 The project went live on 15th January 2018 with Merton making 3 referrals so far. An interim Panel has been established and is meeting every 2 weeks to discuss existing cases and new referrals. Senior staff of safeguarding, youth justice, CAMHS and education are regular members of the Panel as well as staff from MST and FFT and PFP services. Formal agreement is now in place for the referral pathway and what does or does not constitute care to aid the identification of outcome payments. Performance reporting is being established to enable monitoring of referrals to track the child post service intervention. Formal agreement is also in place for information governance and data sharing protocols have been established. A commissioning officer has been appointed in Sutton Council to administer payments and provide quality assurance.
- 2.23 **Autism Strategy** – We want Merton to be an autism-friendly borough in which people with autism are able to reach their full potential at all stages of their lives. To facilitate this, Merton Council and Merton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group have developed a strategy for the next five years which includes all ages - children, young people and adults with autism and the needs of families and carers. We have listened to the views of a wide range of people in developing this strategy. The draft Autism Strategy has now entered a phase of public engagement where parents, carers, voluntary or

community groups, practitioners and professionals are encouraged to express their views.

- 2.24 **Youth Justice** – the team, through adopting a whole system approach including engagement of an education practitioner, a forensic psychologist and a school nurse, continues to focus on working with a relatively small number of young offenders: a high proportion of whom have some form of special educational needs. At the end of the intervention with the Youth Justice team, as well as reducing reoffending over 80% achieve other positive outcomes with our EET figures (those in education, employment or training) being amongst the best in the country.
- 2.25 Serious Youth Crime continues to be a strong area of focus for the department in response to a significant number of serious incidents in the capital where young people have been killed. A local analysis of the last 30 stabbings in January 2018 indicated that in 20% of cases there was a link to Merton despite these events taking place across the capital. The council continues to work closely with the Police and other partners on this issue and developing our local response on contextual safeguarding.
- 2.26 **User Voice Rapporteur Report** – The user voice rapporteur report focussed on how the Panel should receive more feedback from looked after children and wider groups of young people to inform its perspective. Various ideas were discussed that might be employed to achieve this objective such as those summarised below:
- Receiving regular updates from the Children in Care Council as part of the departmental update. A panel member might also join the statutory Lead Member once or twice per year in attending Children in Care Council meetings;
 - For the CSF department to consider what user voice information it would be possible to share with the Panel. It is evident that there is a lot of user voice activity ongoing throughout the year but currently none of this is shared with the Panel;
 - For the Panel, either via the lead member or via a champion to seek feedback on specific issues, although this would have to be agreed with the CICC and would need to reflect their planned programme;
 - That the Panel should write annually to the Children in Care Council to explain the work it has undertaken on matters relating to LAC and Care Leavers to make this transparent and accessible to looked after children.
- 2.27 It will be important to involve the Children in Care Council in determining how they wish to engage with scrutiny in order to facilitate a good working relationship between the two bodies and enable a flow of information in both directions.
- 2.28 **Self-Evaluation** – The department is currently drafting a self-evaluation which will inform a peer review scheme which has been organised on a sub-regional basis across London. We will be working with Wandsworth and Croydon, with self-evaluations being completed for submission at the end of April. This will be further developed into the self-assessment required for the ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) which will be submitted to Ofsted at the end of September.
- 2.29 **Ofsted Action Plan Progress** – The Ofsted inspection last year generated four actions, against which progress is being made, as summarised below:
- **Ensuring SMART plans for all children** – expectations have been set for the standard of plans and this is checked through an improved audit process, which also identifies any themes and areas where further training is required.

- **Improve use of return home interviews** – we are working with Catch 22 (the new return home interview provider) to ensure an efficient and timely response and ensuring that there are reduced delays in them being advised that the young person has returned home. Catch 22 are implementing a new data system and enhancements to the Mosaic case management system being considered will enable easier recording.
- **Staying Put** – a refreshed Staying Put policy has been developed. As at the end of January there were six people staying put with more in the pipeline, helping to facilitate a smooth transition to adulthood.
- **Health histories** – a new approach has been launched, leading to significant improvements. We now have 49 young people who should have received their health histories, with 45 having received their histories. Of the remaining four, there are reasons for why each has not received or wanted the information.

3. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 No specific implications from this report.

4. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 No specific implications from this report.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

5.1 No specific implications from this report

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No specific implications from this report.

8. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

8.1 None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None