



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
23 November 2021

Subject Heading:	Adaptions due to Covid and Covid Recovery
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Policy context:	Education
Financial summary:	None immediately arising from this report

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

1. Since March 2020, schools have been required to make huge changes to their operations in all areas. They have made many adaptions to both the content of their curriculum and most notably to the delivery of the curriculum.
2. These adaptions broadly fall into four phases: first lockdown from March 2020 through to Summer 2020, Autumn term 2020, interrupted education, when schools had many pupils self-isolating and many class and year group

bubbles closing, second lock down from January 2021 through to the Summer term 2021. Finally the last phase from summer 2021 and continuing, the Covid Recovery phase.

3. There is as yet no definitive date when we will be able to say “we have recovered”, as the impacts are wide and various.
4. Throughout, members of the Havering School Improvement team have had regular conversations with school leaders as every school was allocated a lead officer. Our conversations with schools through this time show a rapid advancement in both staff and pupils’ capabilities to engage with remote teaching and learning and rapid learning about utilising new technologies in a positive way.
5. Schools have played a major role and are continuing to play a role in community and family support and well-being.
6. There has been much discussion regarding the difficulties involved and the pupils who have suffered detriment, but our schools also talk about the positive gains made and the impact these will have on delivery in the future and some transformative teaching.
7. Schools have responded to the challenges in many different and unique ways. There is no single response as they have sought the best often bespoke options for their communities and circumstances. This gives a flavour of the responses and their impacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Members of the OSSC are asked to note the content of the report.

REPORT DETAIL

First Phase

9. The majority of schools focused primarily on maintaining close contact with pupils and their families and ensuring that some work was provided to do at home. Schools remained open throughout for the children of Key Workers and pupils deemed vulnerable because of Special Educational needs, additional needs, safeguarding, or because they were considered so by their school for other reasons. Leaders talked of schools taking a central role in their communities, signposting parents to wider health and well-being and financial support.
10. This has led to a greater link between schools and wider community services. Most schools remained open during the holiday periods to provide for children

of Key worker and vulnerable children. Schools took a leading role in food distribution programmes.

11. At the outset the capabilities of different schools to utilise technology to provide home learning was extremely variable. There was also variability in the availability of IT resources that schools were able to obtain, or re-purpose. In general, secondary schools were better resourced and more used to this type of provision. Most already had well-established learning platforms to provide work and pupils were familiar with submitting homework virtually, so the transition was easier. This applied to primary schools to a lesser degree, although some were well advanced in this respect. In this phase access and the digital divide amongst families was the main issue schools had to overcome.
12. Schools rapidly developed their systems and invested in technology to support pupils who had little or no access at home, making use of government supplied devices and a wide variety of innovative ways to provide more machines and to utilise technology in the home. This included mobile phones, tablets, gaming machines and smart TVs. Schools provided internet access for some families, through SIM card, dongles etc. Leaders used school websites to post key messages, including video messages and “how to” information. Other tools/apps e.g. Class Dojo, Purple Mash and Seesaw were used by some schools as a point of contact with pupils and parents.
13. Most schools offered a blend of textbooks, customised work packs, generic projects and some on-line access to pre-prepared materials made by their teachers, or websites provided by third parties, such as “BBC Bitesize”, “Bounce Back” (Well-being), “Spelling shed”, “Maths factor”, “Bug Club” (reading).
14. During this phase the curriculum often tended to be focused on the core areas or reading, writing, and mathematics, with projects set that could be accessed at pupils’ own pace and level and often worked on in families for primary age pupils.
15. Teachers set work and broadly speaking pupils in school were following the same work as pupils at home usually supported by their TAs. This meant that not all pupils were provided with work at the correct level for themselves.
16. Technology changed the way of working and communicating in schools-virtual meetings for staff, parent teacher meetings, meetings with other Head Teachers, clubs, staff socialising and peer support and assemblies.
17. Pupils returned to school in late summer 2020 and schools reported they were happy to do so and keen to engage with learning initially. Schools felt that while some learning time had been lost this would be quickly made up and set about beginning to deliver business as usual for most, although some families were reluctant to send their children back.
18. There was initially a focus on exam classes and year six, and early years, who would be transitioning to their next phases of education. Some schools

created return to school videos to support pupils' when transition preparation plans interrupted. In one school for example, children returned in the September to their class teacher from the previous year and after one week moved to their next classroom, class teacher. Head teachers reported these strategies were successful and well received by parents.

Second Phase

19. It quickly became apparent that it was not business as usual with rapidly increasingly large numbers of pupils missing sometimes multiple segments of their education. Schools report that this was the most difficult period as they were struggling with staff absences and teaching classes and those at home. Some pupils were missing repeatedly chunks of learning and this was uneven.
20. Providing the home learning to keep absent pupils in line with attending pupils was extremely difficult. This led to greater personalisation of teaching. There was a rapid growth in provision of on-line resources to support schools and parents and carers and carers. Many schools adopted Google Classroom and Teams or Zoom for the delivery of remote learning and teachers quickly developed resources so that they were available online.
21. There was an urgent need to ensure that staff themselves were trained and confident in using the technology. This was an unprecedented period of rapid staff development and innovation. Much work was done regarding the protocols and safety of teaching remotely.

Third Phase

22. It was evident that by the time of the second lockdown in January 2021 that staff were generally confident and very adept at offering a variety of virtual opportunities for pupils. By this stage, Schools worked hard to engage pupils with online learning. There were a growing bank of high quality on-line resources provided both by the schools themselves and by third parties. Schools made good use of the Oak Academy materials, Jo Wickes PE, Charanga Music and numerous other resources to support specific areas of the curriculum.
23. The curriculum began to be broader in scope and most schools were providing the full range of subjects. During this period schools were instructed to provide live on-line lessons. Although many teachers had already been doing some, this was new for some and most extended their offer. Schools managed this very well, usually through teachers teaching from home, live-streaming lessons, usually providing opportunities for pupils to interact with the teacher and each other and teaching assistants were able to join the pupils they support in virtual classrooms.
24. During this period many schools personalised timetables to ensure that where families were sharing a device, pupils of different ages were able to access the learning. There were some cross-phase collaborations on this, demonstrating the extent of leaders' flexibility. By the end of second lock-

down provision was much broader and better matched to both the curriculum and pupils' own needs. Schools prioritised getting their most vulnerable pupils in schools and worked hard with families to achieve this.

25. During this period schools developed methods of on-line individual marking and feedback and leaders monitored the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Monitoring was variable in quality. Some schools have permanently changed the way they respond to pupils' work as a result, finding that pupils have responded very well to more immediate feedback. Schools report that virtual attendance was in the main good.
26. There was a strong focus throughout the period on engagement of pupils. Schools reported that poor engagement of parents and carers and carers, or their feeling unable to support their children, was a major barrier and they worked hard to support both pupils and parents and carers- often beyond matters of curriculum. Many schools reported that their relationships and engagement with parents and carers has never been better. Schools checked in regularly on the safety and well-being of their pupils, especially those who were absent, not fully engaged or of concern, at risk, or disadvantaged.
27. Most schools put a strong emphasis on well-being, as they reported a rise in poor mental health. Many schools ensured that the curriculum included support for aspects of well-being and healthy living. Schools also made extensive and highly innovative adaptations to the curriculum in practical subjects, such as music, art, PE, drama, science and design technology, but nonetheless many aspects of these subjects simply could not be delivered remotely, due to the lack of group activity, lack of equipment and safety concerns. Many of these subjects therefore front-loaded the theoretical aspects of the curriculum, which led to some disengagement amongst pupils. Covering the practical requirements of exam subjects was a particular issue for secondary school teachers.
28. Schools have been very conscious of the strain on staff and often adopted rotas to spread the workload. The LA offered access to a well-being and exercise programme, which was well-attended. Staff training continued, either in Covid-secure environments or virtually. Havering Education Services courses continued to offer a very wide range of training opportunities, including training designed to support remote learning and curriculum adaptation and safety and safeguarding.

Current Phase

29. Upon return after second lock down, schools reported that although initially pupils were pleased to return and most were happy and very resilient, some were anxious and some parents were also reluctant. Some pupils exhibited poor behaviours for learning, found it difficult to engage with peers, exhibited anxiety and were often tired.
30. Amongst younger pupils, they reported regression in aspects of socialisation, early reading/phonics, and physical capability. Schools reported that many pupils had also become physically less healthy, due to disrupted sleep

patterns, poor diet and physical inactivity. Some pupils had not left their homes in months. Early years leaders reported lower than usual levels of language development and lower levels of independence. Some pupils were very anxious about returning. Many schools initially adapted their curriculum to ensure there was a transition back into school.

31. For example, one school reported using the “SWAN”(S – safe W – welcoming A – all together N – nurturing) framework (Dr Pooky Knightsmith) to support a safe and successful return to school. Videos and guided discussion for staff in preparation for children’s return.
32. Schools have undertaken a variety of assessment approaches to provide a comprehensive baseline on return to school so that gaps in pupils’ understanding can be addressed alongside the obvious gaps in curriculum provision. These methods have included past national tests and exam papers, commercially produced assessments, standardised tests such as PIRA/PUMA or NFER and school-based assessments, quizzes and low stakes testing.
33. Extended writing, has been cited by many head teachers as being most impacted in terms of learning and achievements amongst primary pupils. Leaders report that, as nationally, vulnerable pupils seem to have fallen behind more than their peers, however they report that some nervous, quiet and “unseen” pupils, as well as some middle attaining boys and very able pupils have flourished within the online learning environment.
34. Schools are now far better equipped and ready to implement effective remote learning at any point and better attuned to the ways different pupils like to learn and work. Some schools report that they have made learning more flexible to better meet the varied needs of their pupils. They also say that this has improved the quality of work that can be offered to pupils who are absent for an extended period of time.
35. Most school leaders say that they have made lasting changes to the way they operate in many areas as they have found better alternatives to traditional received practice. Leaders spoke about using technology going forward e.g. parent teacher meetings, cluster meetings, providing home learning/work, virtual meetings, CPD and governing body meetings. Many of these have been better attended and more effective than when they were held at night after work. There is a perception that the impact has been a better work-life balance for teachers and greater engagement with others.
36. Initially, in summer 2020 and refreshing in summer 2021, our schools were asked to develop curriculum recovery plans. These plans typically focus on recapping key building blocks of knowledge which cohorts appeared to have understood less well, in some cases taking pupils back a stage, filling gaps in practical subjects, enhancing the wider cultural curriculum and enhancing personal development opportunities that have not been available for 4 terms. These plans are continuing through the current academic year.

37. Steps to ensure Covid-safe environments such as one-way systems, social distancing, enhanced cleaning, sanitisers etc were universal in line with the government guidance. These measures were a big focus for school leaders in 2020-2021 as they grappled with ever-changing government guidance. Latterly this has been the production of ventilation plans and risk assessments which are currently in place supported by HES health and safety team. It is hoped that this, along with the vaccination programmes for older pupils will keep pupils in school.
38. The government suspended all statutory assessments and exams due to Covid, so schools applied teacher assessments to pupils or did their own tests. In primary schools, these were internally moderated, due to difficulties in moderating with other schools, though this did take place in some schools (e.g. in federations and MATs and amongst some neighbourhood clusters). For national examinations in secondary schools, our schools rigorously followed national and exam board requirements and all produced clear plans working together to ensure that the grades awarded were fair and accurate. Assessments have been analysed to feed into curriculum planning and catch up programmes which are in place.
39. A range of approaches have been used to target catch up funding, for example, it has been used for equipment such as Chromebooks, teacher/TA time for extra targeted interventions for pupils who have fallen behind where they should be, resources, commercial catch-up programmes, or for tutoring costs. While a minority of schools made use of the government National Tutoring Scheme, most schools used already known tutors or their own staff, as they felt this enabled better links to learning in lessons. These catch up programmes have been reported to have variable impact. Leaders feel the hours of tuition funded are not adequate and teachers will need to implement in-school catch-up this coming year and for some pupils possibly beyond that.
40. Many schools ran summer schools. These typically targeted pupils at transition points, e.g. year 6 into year 7, SEND and pupil premium pupils, pupils who were considered vulnerable. These summer programmes were generally a mix of academic catch-up and team building with fun activities and sports. There were also some which targeted year 10 and 12 pupils who are likely to be taking formal exams this academic year but who may have gaps in the required learning.
41. Schools are continuing to focus on supporting the mental health of pupils and some schools have offered enhanced PSHE programmes to meet mental health needs of pupils. These needs are likely to remain elevated for some time.

Safeguarding

42. From day one of the first lockdown all schools established a list/community of designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) in schools (every school has to have a DSL). This list was shared in order to provide a network of support. This very active group met fortnightly and has continued throughout. Hsis organised these virtual network events.

43. There was a big focus on safety online and schools worked with Havering Education Services to ensure that all aspects around safe use of technology were in place. This has also led to an increased understanding of these matters amongst teachers and teaching assistants as well as parents and carers.
44. Safeguarding was a huge focus for all schools. Most school leaders report that cases increased and that they were in constant contact with vulnerable pupils and families. They also report that they developed better and more productive working with social care and social workers.
45. The required annual whole school safeguarding training for staff, which is usually delivered face-to-face, was offered by the LA as a film. Schools were advised and supported in how they might roll out safeguarding messages to all staff, while maintaining social distancing. The themes in required training have reflected the issues of increasing concern during the pandemic and included guidance around conspiracy theories, Prevent, increased domestic abuse etc. New updated content is provided each year to reflect risks and issues. This year schools are focussing on peer on peer abuse, following the recent Ofsted report, which exposed the extent of this and the increased prevalence during the last few terms and the specific risks with more time being spent online.
46. Schools put policies and processes in place to support safe virtual learning environments for all pupils and staff at home. There has been a continual roll out of devices (some DfE funded, some school funded or school equipment repurposed for home use) to vulnerable children.
47. The setup of these devices included safety features such as appropriate filtering and monitoring, this identified a child at risk of abuse in their home by the monitoring alerts raised on a school-supplied laptop.
48. Schools were making welfare phone contact – the class teacher in Primary and the form tutor in secondary schools- with families on a regular basis depending on the need of child, the needs of parents and carers and level of vulnerability or concern. In some cases heightened engagement is continuing.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

49. There are no direct financial implications from this report, as it is for information only. However, the teams responsible for undertaking the quality assurance functions identified above are funded from DfE grants and core Council funding.

Legal implications and risks:

50. There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

51. There are no direct human resources implications from this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

52. There are no direct equalities implications from this report, and an Equalities Assessment has not been completed as this report is for information only.