

3 February 2022

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON CATCH UP FUNDING AND PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To update members of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee on the catch up funding available which was announced by the Government in June 2020 to support children and young people and to update on the Primary to Secondary School transitions.

2 Background

2.1 Catch-up Funding

In June 2020 the Government announced £1 billion of funding to support children and young people to catch up on missed learning caused by Coronavirus (COVID19). The funding was targeted at the most vulnerable pupils and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The funding was announced as a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure that schools have the support to help all pupils make up for missed learning.

Also announced was a £350 million National Tutoring Programme to provide additional, targeted support for those children and young people who need the most help, which includes:

- A school's programme for 5 to 16-year-olds
- a 16-19 tutoring programme
- An oral language intervention programme for reception aged children

2.2 Funding allocations

School allocations were calculated on a per pupil basis and paid in three tranches. Mainstream schools were awarded £80 for each pupil from reception to year 11 inclusive. The following settings received £240 for each place for the 2020 to 2021 academic year:

- Special schools, including special units within mainstream schools
- AP schools

- Hospital schools

2.3 Using catch-up funding

Schools were guided by DFE to use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils' education recovery in line with the published curriculum expectations guidance.

While schools could use their funding in a way that suited their cohort and circumstances, they were expected to use this funding for specific activities which would help pupils catch up on missed learning. Schools were asked to particularly focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

To support schools to make the best use of the funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) published a support and planning guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students.

Schools could also use catch-up premium funding to support any summer catch-up provision that they were offering and also carry funding forward to future academic years.

2.4 National Tuition Programme (NTP) and School Led Tutoring

Schools were offered access to academic mentors and tuition partners through the NTP programme with the cost subsidised by the Department for Education., 70% of the cost of tuition partners was subsidised and 95% of the cost of academic mentors.

Schools were also able to design school led tutoring programmes where school staff were identified to work with children. 75% of the cost of this was subsidised and the remaining funded by schools via other budgets such as the Recovery Premium or Pupil Premium. A free online training course was provided for nominated school staff to ensure provision of high-quality tuition to your pupils.

2.5 Accountability: School Leaders and Governors

School leaders must be able to show they are using the funding to support their pupils' educational recovery in line with the curriculum expectations in the published DfE Guidance.

DfE also advised that Governors and trustees should scrutinise schools' approaches to catch-up, including their plans for and use of catch-up funding. This should include consideration of whether schools are spending this funding in line with their catch-up priorities and ensuring appropriate transparency for parents.

Ofsted inspections continue and as part of these inspections, inspectors may discuss plans schools have to spend their catch-up premium funding. Recent

school inspections in Sunderland have all included questions about the catch up provision provided.

2.6 Feedback from schools about the programme

Schools have identified the obvious need for additional catch up support for all pupils and specifically for the most vulnerable children. There are a range of programmes being offered across the city to support children and all schools have programmes in place. In discussion with headteachers there have however been some key issues identified, as follows:

- Sunderland schools have mainly developed school led tutoring programmes
- Lack of availability of NTP tuition partners and academic mentors across the region
- A lack of focus and budget to support mental wellbeing and resilience support for pupils
- General budgetary challenges for schools
- Staff shortages in schools as a result of Omicron
- Pupil absence

3 Transitions

3.1 Primary to Secondary School transitions

The transition from Primary to Secondary School is a major step for most children and the impact of Covid 19 on this process has added to the anxiety and challenge that this can cause. The fact that the standardised assessment processes were suspended in 2021 created a further challenge for schools in being able to share information.

Headteachers in Sunderland recognised the challenges that this would cause and working in partnership with Together for Children created a working party to identify what could be done jointly as a family of Sunderland schools.

3.2 Transition Working Party

In discussion with headteachers a transition working party was developed in March 2021 with Headteacher representatives from Primary and Secondary schools across all areas of the city. The group is chaired by the Headteacher from Oxclose Academy and the focus of this group was to:

- Facilitate improved discussion between Primary and Secondary Colleagues around transition
- To primarily set dates for transition in the city
- Create a list of key information Secondary schools would like from Primary schools about students

After the initial group was formed it was quickly established that there was:

- Real appetite to do more than set dates and create lists
- Lots of great practice by schools not shared or talked about
- There was real potential to do more around developing English and Maths in all schools

3.3 Good Practice from 2021 to reflect on and embed for 2022 Transition

The working group has reviewed the impact of last year's transition programmes and looked to identify and share best practice. The group have also begun to identify the next steps in the development of effective transition and particularly the development of a transition curriculum focused on maths, reading and English.

3.4 The key learning from the transition work identified the following learning and best practice:

- Inviting Primary heads into Secondary school to meet their ex-students and see how they have settled was really effective
- Summer schools helped friendships and get to know staff. Most successful Summer schools looking to develop these further
- Reading and basic skills needs to be an emphasis
- Getting students to make their own way to school for transition helped them with their independence
- Extended transition for vulnerable students was effective
- Sending books from primary to Secondary really helped secondary colleagues to build on high standards at Primary school
- Primary Heads visiting secondary schools to observe Year 7 in English and maths
- SEND students come up to school for enhanced Transition and early link with SENCo starting at earlier point such as year 4 to ensure secondary can prepare for student needs and Secondary SENCo can have input to primary student's reviews
- Secondary schools receiving more information on students who could have been excluded in primary and will struggle at secondary without a plan.
- 'Insight Programme' mid-year transition to help students understand how they develop. Chat to year 6 students about A Level Courses to raise Aspirations
- Leaders from schools should play a central role and it would be a great opportunity to develop middle leaders to drive transition across the city

3.5 Transition working group focus for 2022

Feasibility of Curriculum continuity groups in English, Maths, Science starting January 2022. The aim of the group would be for subject leads in English, Maths and Science from Secondary/Primary to meet to discuss developing a transition

curriculum between years 6 & 7. This work including developing planning tools will be supported by TFC school improvement leads for maths and English and begin in the Summer term 2022.

3.6 Transitions and SEND

One of the key action points identified in the recent SEND inspection was focused on improving the transition process for children with SEND.

Together for Children are working in partnership with the DfE and an organisation called Whole School SEND to deliver a suite of free briefing sessions which are open to all educational settings across the city. The sessions are delivered by Whole School SEND, Tfc School Improvement Team and colleagues from health services discussing effective processes to support pupils transitioning between schools.

A range of training events has been planned to start in January. The first session will focus on transition between nursery and primary phase followed by sessions focused on Primary to secondary and post 16 transitions. A further session focuses on the role of governors.

The sessions are planned to support senior leaders, SENDCo, class teachers and support staff from Special, Mainstream and Alternative Provisions.

Staff delivering education in all phases are encouraged to attend including PVI, Nursery, Primary and Secondary settings as well as college staff and training providers.

4 Recommendation

Members of Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and offer any comments and note that two Headteacher representatives will attend the Committee meeting to answer any additional questions.