

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 7 October 2020

**Subject:** Update on opening of schools and colleges for all children and young people

**Report of:** Director of Education

---

**Summary**

This report provides an update on the full reopening of schools for all pupils in September and the current challenges faced by schools. The report provides an overview of the work that has taken place in Manchester to support our school leaders at this time.

**Recommendations**

The committee is asked to recognise the challenges faced by school leaders at this time and discuss the measures being taken by schools and colleges to reduce the risk of infection within the school community and support all children and young people to continue to access education while in or out of school. The committee is also asked to comment on the support provided by the Local Authority to ensure that schools and colleges have the information, guidance and tools to put these measures in place.

The committee is asked to agree that future updates focus on school attendance data and any new developments or significant changes to the current situation.

---

**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</b>
---

Through the learning and education system children are informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon; promoting safe and healthy lives.
--

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	It is important we build a safe, healthy, happy and successful future for all of Manchester's children so that they can benefit from and contribute to the sustainability of Manchester thriving, economically diverse and successful. Children and Education

	Services work with all schools and early years settings in Manchester to promote children's learning and engage with those children and their families who need help, support and protection. The aim is for children to be safe, healthy and make progress in terms of education, training, social development so that they are successful and contribute and benefit from living in Manchester.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Children and young people matter in Manchester. The work of the Children and Education Directorate is driven by a commitment to provide opportunities and achieve positive outcomes; building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for all of the city's children and young people
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Increase the influence Manchester's children and young people have on decisions that impact on them by supporting and enabling their voice to be heard; promoting a fair and inclusive place to live and work.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	A safe and effective children and education system is important to promote the awareness and inclusion of children in the engagement of wider societal issues; which together with a successful education offer make Manchester a place parents choose to visit, live and work.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Continually improve outcomes for all children and 'reduce the gap' against the national attainment average

### Contact Officers:

Name: Paul Marshall  
Position: Strategic Director Children and Education Services  
Telephone: 0161 234 3804  
E-mail: p.marshall1@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Amanda Corcoran  
Position: Director Education Services  
Telephone: 0161 234 4314  
E-mail: a.corcoran@manchester.gov.uk

### Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

September opening of schools and colleges for all children and young people - paper presented to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 5th September 2020

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In Manchester, throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the majority of schools have remained open to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers and all schools and colleges have retained contact and an overview of their pupils/students. This has included a significant number remaining open for vulnerable children and key workers during the school holiday periods with many schools staying open during bank holidays as well. Following the easing of lockdown restrictions in June, Manchester schools safely increased the numbers of children who were able to access school and this offer by 13th July 2020 had increased to approximately 12 % of the school population. Following Government Guidance issued in July and subsequent Guidance in August, all schools were required to open to all children and young people in September 2020. In Manchester, all schools were allocated 2 additional training days to enable them to fully brief staff and prepare the learning environment and some schools then had a phased opening for their pupils. All schools were open to all of their statutory school age pupils by 14th September.
- 1.2 Throughout this time, officers from the Council have continued to work with education leaders to provide guidance, tools and support on the measures to be taken to reduce the spread of infection in schools. This has included regular communication, virtual meetings with headteachers and school leaders with responsibility for different roles across different phases and partnerships, school governors and Trade Unions. The Council has provided model policy documents, templates for risk assessments, staff risk assessments, updated step by step guidance in line with changes and learning from cases, regular Workforce and Health and Safety advice and direct support for individual schools as well as continuing to distribute PPE to special schools.
- 1.3 It is important to remember the statement made by the four UK CMOs on 23rd August that there is a low risk of severe disease or death from COVID in children and young people of school ages and this should be balanced with the certainty around the long term risk of harm to children and young people from not accessing education in any decision about schools.
- 1.4 Manchester has high numbers of disadvantaged children who are particularly adversely impacted by not accessing education in a school setting. For a whole variety of reasons linked to disadvantage, these children will not access high quality learning, linked to national expectations when they are not in school. In addition, there is likely to be impact on their physical and mental health. This is despite the best efforts of schools and families. It is therefore important that we continue to support our schools and colleges to remain open for all children and young people.
- 1.5 All schools in Manchester have provided detailed risk assessments of the strong control measures they have in place and for maintained schools these have been reviewed by our Health and Safety team and advice and support provided where these need to be strengthened. 10% of schools will be visited by the team to ensure compliance. This is in addition to spot checks from the

Health and Safety Executive which many of our schools have already experienced.

- 1.6 By being in school, children and young people are in a managed and highly controlled environment for most of the week. School also provides an opportunity for education about containing the virus and control measures such as handwashing and good hygiene, maintaining physical distance, face covering for older children to be reinforced on a daily basis so that they become habitual. This will impact on the implementation of these measures in households and the wider community.

## **2.0 Attendance**

- 2.1 Overall, headteachers are saying that schools are very calm - much more so than usually for September, with children responding really positively to the changes and also very keen to get back to learning. Many schools are considering how they may use some of the current practices in place in future (post COVID) because of how well they are working. There have been 1 school exclusion from a Manchester school which is lower than compared to September in previous years.
- 2.2 Since schools have fully opened, attendance across the City has been over 80% each week with some schools reporting attendance of 97/98% which is higher than usual attendance in the first few weeks of term. School attendance the week beginning 14 th September averaged 81% and 80% for the week beginning 21st September. Although this is obviously much lower than attendance rates pre COVID, this means that on average there were approx. 67,200 children and young people attending school last week.
- 2.3 The attendance team have continued to operate a helpline for professionals and parents/carers. To date they have received 110 calls with the majority from schools. The main reasons that parents made contact was to discuss anxiety about children returning to school, wanting to know about home educating and issues with staggered starts.
- 2.4 During the summer period, the admission team received 945 in year school admission applications. Work is progressing with our schools to allocate school places and ensure that these children are put on a school roll and admitted to school quickly.
- 2.5 The number of notifications for families wanting to home educate their children has now started to increase Manchester which reflects the situation nationally. The number of new notifications received during September is 63 compared to 32 last September. There are a higher number of notifications from children who currently attend special school than usual. We have asked our headteachers to work with parents to ensure that they fully understand that by electing to home educate, their child will be removed from a school roll and will therefore not access the school's remote learning offer. All new cases are then being contacted by officers from Education who also discuss with parents the reasons why they want to home educate and ensure that parents who are not

sending their child to school because they are anxious about this, understand their options and the implications of home education. The team also provide information to parents on home education and establish whether the education provided by the parent is suitable for the child.

- 2.6 There were 57 children and 36 adults who tested positive for COVID19 in schools last week. This resulted in 1211 children and 42 adults at home self isolating as they have been identified as close contacts of those infected being told to self isolate for 14 days. This impacted on 42 education settings. This is in addition to 1211 children and 42 adults self isolating from the previous week.

### **3.0 Infection Control**

- 3.1 All schools in Manchester have provided detailed risk assessments of the strong control measures they have in place and for maintained schools these have been reviewed by our Health and Safety team and advice and support provided where these need to be strengthened. 10% of schools are being visited by the team to ensure compliance. This is in addition to spot checks from the Health and Safety Executive which many of our schools have already experienced. Early feedback from these visits has been really positive with schools demonstrating that effective procedures are in place to manage risks
- 3.2 Over the last 2 weeks, all schools have been invited to attend a webinar with briefings provided by the Council's Health and Safety team, Community Infection Control and Public Health. Each service has taken headteachers through different scenarios which could be applied to their own setting when appropriate and provided key messages which have been posted on the Schools Hub. Overall approximately 90 schools have engaged with these sessions and feedback has been positive.
- 3.3 There have been positive cases in schools and these have been responded to by schools sending home the close contacts that are identified - usually within the child or adult's 'bubble'. This shows that the measures in place are working and that by isolating groups of children, it is clear which children need to self isolate. Schools have reduced movement around the school and are splitting lunchtimes and social times to reduce contacts across bubbles. As we learn more about what is working well in schools and how best to reduce the numbers of close contacts, this information is being shared across schools, so that risk assessments and where possible the size of 'bubbles' children are working within can be adjusted to minimise the number of pupils required to self isolate.
- 3.4 Initial feedback from school leaders was that they were waiting too long for advice from Public Health England and the GM hub when they were notified about a positive case although they were generally positive about the advice that they were receiving. The delays are due to the high volume of calls from schools and insufficient capacity in the system to deal with this demand. In response to concerns being raised about waiting times nationally, the DFE without prior notice set up a centralised DFE helpline for schools to contact.

However, the feedback on the advice received by schools using this helpline has not been positive and advice to schools has tended to be to send home large groups of pupils.

- 3.5 During the first few weeks of term, the advice to schools on how to respond to a positive case has varied and there have been inconsistencies in the response to schools locally as well. In the best case scenarios headteachers are reporting high quality and forensic questioning from staff in the GM hub where they are able to work through with the headteachers all of the possible contacts and risks to determine who actually needs to self isolate. This is obviously reliant on schools having good records and being able to quickly identify where a child may have had other contacts beyond their bubble.
- 3.6 There have been regular meetings with Education staff, Public Health and the GM Hub to review the feedback and processes and changes have been made in response to this. For example, changes were made early on which has enabled headteachers to take action in advance of a conversation with a contact tracer about which close contacts need to self isolate following a single positive COVID case and further guidance has been provided to support their decision making. The GM Hub has also regularly updated step by step guidance based on learning, feedback from schools and new guidance from the DFE and has provided clear guidance on how to respond to different situations to ensure consistency across schools (Appendix 1). More recently, three staff from Education have been deployed to support the Community Infection Control team to support with the high volume of enquiries from schools.
- 3.7 Schools with positive cases are also contacting senior education staff who are discussing options and supporting headteachers with their decision making.
- 3.8 In the first two weeks, a few schools reported issues of adults not socially distancing outside the school gates when dropping off and picking up children especially where they are in locations with narrow pavements, residential roads or there are 2 or more schools close together. In response to this some schools have been provided with metal barriers, cones etc to support with managing queuing systems and banners which promote standing at a physical distance have been ordered for all schools. However, there are some ongoing issues with this.
- 3.9 A letter has been provided via schools to all parents/carers from the Director of Education and Strategic Director of Children and Education services (attached as Appendix 2) which asks parents to support schools with the changes that have been made to ensure the safety of staff and children and which reminds parents/carers about their responsibilities to reduce the spread of infection.
- 3.10 When schools or colleges have multiple positive cases these schools are being monitored by the Community Infection Control team who will determine whether an Outbreak meeting is required. This meeting includes staff from services such as Health and Safety team, Communications team, Education,

Public Health and Infection Control to understand how the infection has spread and to provide support and advice to the school/college.

- 3.11 Access to tests has also been raised as a concern by schools and reflects the situation nationally. Schools have been using their supply of 10 COVID tests to help with testing and most have been able to order replacements tests using the DFE portal which opened last week.

#### **4.0 Workforce and wellbeing**

- 4.1 One of the most significant risks to being able to keep schools open is not having enough staff available on site. There are currently a number of staff across the schools system who have tested positive for COVID19; who have symptoms of COVID 19 or other illnesses; are close contacts and are self isolating or who are having to look after their own children who are unable to attend school. Recent Government guidance stating that children can be looked after from adults in other households is helpful, however, there are still many challenges to ensuring there are enough staff in school. In addition, there is feedback from school leaders about the overall stress and pressure the workforce are facing on a daily basis dealing with COVID19.
- 4.2 The Council has provided school leaders with regular responses to frequently asked questions to ensure consistency about how different situations are dealt with across schools and they also have direct access to specialist HR advice for individual matters. There continues to be regular meetings and with all Trade Unions to discuss all matters relating to the workforce.
- 4.3 All new headteachers have been contacted directly by their Senior School Quality Assurance (SSQA) officer to offer support and they have also been offered an experienced headteacher in the City as a 'buddy' to support them during this time.
- 4.4 All headteachers in the City have an allocated SSQA who is their key point of contact with the Council and headteachers are regularly contacting officers for support and advice. In addition, all schools have been offered a visit in the Autumn term from an independent Quality Assurance professional. This is also intended as a supportive measure for headteachers.
- 4.5 Through an arrangement with the Manchester Schools Alliance school staff have access to an Employee Assistance Scheme which offers a number of products including a helpline and access to structured telephone and face to face counselling. This has been promoted through COVID bulleting to schools.
- 4.6 The importance of looking after yourself and your staff has been a constant message at meetings with school leaders and at the Autumn term briefing for Chairs of Governors this was also emphasised.

## **5.0 Newly Qualified teachers (NQTs)**

- 5.1 NQTs did miss a proportion of their practical experience following the COVID restrictions and although theoretical input did continue online, the issue has been discussed recently with Headteachers who recognised that NQTs because of a lack of practical experience had been disadvantaged during the interview process.
- 5.2 As of 24th September there are 200 newly registered NQTs in Manchester schools. Taking into account those still under induction having started in January or April the total of active NQTs is 239. In terms of professional support and development NQTs in Manchester will benefit from the Early Career Framework (ECF) which is being piloted in Greater Manchester (and some other areas). The ECF is a programme of professional development for the first two years of a new teacher's career and will become compulsory for all NQTs from September 2021. This will not bridge the 'practical experience' gap but it will provide a level of early career support which has been missing from the teaching profession up until now. 65% of newly registered NQT's are signed up (by their schools) to the Early Career Framework pilot with the vast majority working under two (UCL and Teach First) of the four providers.
- 5.3 The NQT team within MCC are working with science colleagues at the University of Manchester to develop a programme whereby groups of NQTs are offered specific mentoring on primary science - a bit of of a primary science back up for the coming year when the challenges for delivering high quality teaching will be greater given COVID. The particular focus on primary science is because NQTs who haven't had experience of science in schools during their placements will find this especially daunting. In addition the NQT team continue to provide detailed advice and guidance to NQT tutors to ensure that the NQT induction year is well supported and fairly assessed.

## **6.0 Remote Learning**

- 6.1 All schools are required to have a remote learning plan in place by the end of September, however, obviously many schools have already been required to provide this already during September. Throughout the term, due to the increasing infection rates, it is highly likely that significant numbers of children will need to be at home self isolating and so the provision of a strong remote learning offer so children can continue to access education is essential. This is one of the areas that the Quality Assurance professionals, who have been commissioned by the Local Authority, will be looking at when they visit schools this term. It is also a focus for OFSTED in their visits to schools this term.
- 6.2 Schools have continued to distribute laptops to children so they can access learning when not in schools and the DFE is also enabling schools to order more laptops when they are aware that 'bubbles' have been sent home to self isolate. Schools have a set amount of laptops available, depending on their percentage of disadvantaged pupils.

- 6.3 There have been two sessions for secondary leaders where schools have shared their learning and practice. Manchester Academy shared their tailored approach using the United Learning Trust website and/or Microsoft Teams depending on the key stage of pupils and also if they were in an self-isolating bubble or self-isolating because of contact out of school. St Matthew's shared another approach tailored to pupils' key stage and situation using a combination of Screencasts and live lessons. They also shared their approach to 'assessments' using 'checkpoints' after a self-isolation so teachers know what pupils have retained and their use of 'Knowledge Organisers' to support in class and home learning. More generally, all schools participating talked about their careful use of recovery curriculum language such as 'boost' rather than 'catch-up'.

Loreto Sixth Form shared their experience of the Ofsted pilot back in the summer term and the journey they have been on in using Microsoft Teams. In lockdown they used audio only for home learning. Pupils who self-isolate in the autumn term now log into their in college lessons via Microsoft Teams and access the lesson at the same time as those attending college. This approach is also been used across some of our other secondary schools.

- 6.4 A session for primary leaders to share their learning and practice is planned for 2nd October. The DFE are also providing webinars for schools this week on remote learning. Primary schools are looking at more of a blended approach to remote learning which does not just use online lessons.

## **7.0 Post 16**

- 7.1 Leaders of our post 16 Colleges and 6th forms have also met with officers and overall reported that learners have settled in well and there has been a positive start to the year especially considering the amount of time learners who were in year 11 have been out of education. Most of the sector also reported that enrolment numbers are up on previous years, the process of enrolling students went well and there have not been the anticipated issues regarding public transport due to the measures put in place by TFGM. Most are offering a full timetable, with a few offering a blended offer which includes on line learning and face to face sessions.

## **8.0 Virtual School**

### **8.1 Attendance of Our Children and Young People**

There has been a positive school attendance picture since the start of the Autumn Term for Our Children and Young People in Reception to Year 11. Last week their overall attendance was 83.3% which was up from 81.1% for the previous week. Where Our Young People are absent for coronavirus related reasons the Virtual School is asking Designated Teachers to provide more information within the young person's electronic PEP about the reasons for their absence and about the remote learning offer that they are accessing whilst unable to physically attend school. The breakdown of school attendance up to 25.09.20 across sectors is below:

School Type	Our Young People attending Manchester Schools	Our Young People attending Schools outside Manchester	Total attendance for all Our Young People
Primary	87.3%	87.9%	87.5%
Secondary	77.1%	82.9%	80.2%
Special	79.7%	82.0%	79.9 %
All	82.3%	84.6%	83.3%

## 8.2 Exclusions of Our Children and Young People

In line with the picture for all Manchester children the Virtual School is receiving reports about a generally calm atmosphere within education settings which is bringing with it, compared to other years, reduced contacts to the Virtual School about young people at risk of exclusion. The Virtual School Team is having a strong focus on the early identification of young people at risk of exclusion. Members of the team are having discussions with education settings to ensure appropriate plans are being put in place to understand and address the underlying needs of young people at potential risk of exclusion.

- 8.3 Since the start of term we have had no reports of young people being at risk of permanent exclusion and only a low number of young people, again compared to this time in the term in previous years, who have been issued with a fixed term exclusion. The breakdown of fixed term exclusions across sectors is below:

## 8.4 Fixed Term Exclusions

School Type	Number of Our Young People issued with a fixed term exclusion (Young People attending Manchester Schools)	Number of Our Young People issued with a fixed term exclusion. (Young People attending Schools outside Manchester)	Total Number of Our young people issued with a fixed term exclusion for all Our Young People
Primary	0	0	0
Secondary	3	4	7
Special	2	2	4

All	5	6	11
-----	---	---	----

## 8.5 Remote Learning

The Virtual School is working to ensure that all young people have a laptop or other appropriate device for their individual use to enable them to access remote learning whenever they are unable to physically attend their education settings. Devices continue to be purchased with pupil premium for young people up to Year 11. These devices will remain with the young people whenever they move to a new education setting. During the week beginning 07.09.20 the Virtual School distributed 520 laptops provided by the DfE to Our Young People aged 16 and 17 and Care Leavers aged 18 plus who did not have an appropriate device. Working with others to ensure that all of Our Young People have a device to access remote learning will remain a key priority for the Virtual School.

## 9.0 Conclusion

9.1 It is important that our schools continue to stay open for all pupils because of the long term impact of missing education. The control measures in place in schools are working but this does mean that as part of their business as usual 'bubbles' of children will be sent home in response to a positive case when appropriate and that these children will access remote learning while at home.

9.2 By being in school, children and young people are in a managed and highly controlled environment for most of the week. School also provides an opportunity for education about containing the virus and control measures such as handwashing and good hygiene, maintaining physical distance, face covering for older children to be reinforced on a daily basis so that they become habitual. This should impact on the implementation of these measures in households and the wider community.

## 10.0 Recommendations

The committee is asked to recognise the challenges faced by school leaders at this time and discuss the measures being taken by schools and colleges to reduce the risk of infection within the school community and support all children and young people to continue to access education while in or out of school. The committee is also asked to comment on the support provided by the Local Authority to ensure that schools and colleges have the information, guidance and tools to put these measures in place.

The committee is asked to agree that future updates focus on attendance data and any new developments or significant changes to the current situation.