

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration
Date of Meeting:	7 December 2020

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SCRUTINY REVIEW – FINAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the final report and recommendations attached at Appendix 2a resulting from the scrutiny review of the School Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To approve the final report and recommendations resulting from the scrutiny review of the School Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic along with the Cabinet Member’s comments.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To allow the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee to oversee and monitor the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee’s working group.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 The Executive has the option to request amendments to the report’s recommendations prior to approval.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”.

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 At its Workplanning Workshop on 2 July 2020 the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee identified the topic of the School Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic as an important area requiring scrutiny. As a result, Committee Members were invited to join a working group to undertake a scrutiny review of the issue.
- 6.2 The importance of undertaking the review swiftly was recognised due to the time sensitivity of the issue and the need to determine if schools had done everything required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils during the medical emergency.
- 6.3 The findings and resulting recommendations from the working group's review have been discussed with the Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration and her comments incorporated into the action plan.
- 6.4 The Chairman of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Jane Hugo, who was also the lead Councillor for this review, has been invited to the Executive meeting to make representations on behalf of the Committee.
- 6.5 Once approved by the Executive, the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in line with the target dates agreed with the Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration and the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.
- 6.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 2a – School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Final Report.

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 There are no foreseen financial implications as a direct consequence of the recommendations, however schools have incurred some costs due to the Covid Secure arrangements they have had to put in place such as the provision of hand sanitiser/hand wash stations and face coverings. In addition, during lockdown schools would have lost income due to the closure of children centres and after school clubs.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no foreseen legal implications as a direct consequence of the recommendations, however there could be significant financial/legal risk if a civil claim was brought against a school for Covid-19 (if a member of staff or pupil were to get the virus). Covid-19 is an uninsurable risk and therefore the school/Council would be liable for any claim if negligence could be proved.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 As long as the Covid Secure risk assessments continue to be updated and monitored to ensure that they are working in practice and that the schools continue to follow the national guidance about opening then this will protect them should a claim be received. The health and safety team have continued involvement with the schools to offer advice and guidance as required to mitigate this risk.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 The following external stakeholders contributed to the review:
Feedback from Blackpool headteachers on the support provided by the Council.
Responses from the JustUz group of young people on their experience of attending school during the pandemic or the support they received for home education.

Internal consultation was undertaken with the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion and his team.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

15.0 Key decision information:

- 15.1 Is this a key decision? No
- 15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:
- 15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No
- 15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

- 16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No
- 16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: N/A Date approved: N/A

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 Notes:

25.1