

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 6th January 2021

Subject: Plans for Statutory Pupil Assessments during 2021

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) on the national position relating to plans for statutory pupil assessments during 2021, with particular reference to the guidance published by the Department for Education on 3rd December 2020 to support the summer 2021 exams.

2. Background information

2.1 At its meeting on 7th October 2020, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board considered the Children and Families Services' response and recovery plan for schools in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Attention was given to the government's position on exams and other testing in the 2020/21 academic year, particularly in relation to GCSEs and A Levels, and the impact that uncertainty continues to have on pupils and teachers. Board Members requested that the Scrutiny Board Chair (Cllr Alan Lamb) and the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment (Cllr Jonathan Pryor) send a joint letter to the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofqual relaying their views and concerns surrounding plans for statutory pupil assessments during 2021. After consulting Board Members on the content of this joint letter, it was sent to the DfE and Ofqual on 27th October 2020. A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix 1.

2.2 Dame Glenys Stacey, Acting Chief Regulator at Ofqual, had provided a response letter dated 23rd November 2020 which was subsequently shared with Board Members for information.

2.3 However, on 24th November 2020, Board Members formally requested that an update on this matter be considered during its January 2021 meeting.

3. Main issues

3.1 Following the Board's November meeting, the Minister of State for School Standards (Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP) provided a response letter dated 14th December 2020, which was subsequently shared with Board Members for information. The Department for Education has also since published an open letter from the Secretary of State for Education to Dame Glenys Stacey at Ofqual, dated 2nd December 2020, as well as issuing guidance to support the summer 2021 exams. These have therefore been appended to this report for the Board's consideration (see appendix 2 and 3).

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 At the request of the Scrutiny Board, representatives from the Children and Families Directorate have been invited to today's meeting to discuss the national position surrounding plans for statutory pupil assessments during 2021 and the potential implications of such plans locally.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that, where appropriate, all work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will '...review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.

4.2.2 While considerations of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration are implicit to the planning of the Council's response to Covid-19 for schools and education settings, the Scrutiny Board may wish to explore any specific equality and diversity issues relating to this matter.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The Best Council Plan (BCP) was amended during the summer to ensure that the current COVID context is captured, in so far as is possible given the continued uncertainty. Linked to this, the BCP now acknowledges the potentially significant immediate and longer-term impacts of coronavirus on the health, wellbeing and learning of local children and young people and recognises that now, more than ever, there is much more to do to ensure everyone is equipped with the education and skills they need to succeed in life. The council is therefore continuing to work with families, schools and others to secure a brighter future for every child in Leeds.

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 The Scrutiny Board may wish to consider any specific climate emergency or sustainability issues relating to this matter.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 The Scrutiny Board may wish to consider any specific resource, procurement or value for money matters associated with this matter.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 The risks related to coronavirus will continue to be monitored through the Council's existing risk management processes. Linked to this, the Children and Families directorate has business continuity plans across key areas of the directorate that focus specifically on schools and education settings and informed the critical responses during the initial days of Covid-19.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 At the request of the Scrutiny Board, this report provides an update on the national position relating to plans for statutory pupil assessments during 2021, with particular reference to the guidance published by the Department for Education on 3rd December 2020 to support the summer 2021 exams. Representatives from the Children and Families Directorate have been invited to today's meeting to discuss the national position and the potential implications surrounding such plans locally.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and comment on the information appended to this report and any issues raised during the meeting itself; identifying any additional actions and/or matters that may require further scrutiny input or activity.

7. Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.