

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Deputy Mayor & Executive Member for Education and Culture

DATE OF MEETING: 10 September 2025

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

*Successful & Ambitious Town
A Healthy Place*

Update:

1. HIGHLIGHTS

- Progress on Outwood Riverside
- South Tees Youth Justice Inspection
- New Send and Inclusion Strategy
- Decline in Exclusion and Suspension Rates
- Early Years with Discovery Special Academy
- Grants for schools
- Colourscape
- Middlesbrough Museums in your Classroom
- Events team recruitment
- Performing Arts Grants for Schools

2. Education and Partnerships

2.1 Progress on Outwood Riverside

B&K, the contractor appointed to build the new secondary school at Middlehaven has started work on the site. Outwood Academy Riverside has been operating from temporary accommodation for the last 5 years, but students, parents and staff are now eagerly awaiting the opening of their brand new school, which is on track for completion in the Spring of 2027.

The DfE and the Trust have organised an official 'breaking ground' ceremony to take place at the site on 1st October.

2.2 Youth Justice

On 18th June 2025, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) announced that they would be conducting an 'Inspection of Youth Justice Services' of South Tees Youth Justice Service during the weeks commencing 14 July 2025 and 21 July 2025.

The service was the first in the country to receive this type of inspection under the new inspection framework launched in March 2025. The first fieldwork week focussed on inspecting work with children and victims and included meetings with case managers and victim workers.

The second week included a range of meetings to provide evidence in respect of leadership and governance, staffing and services. Notification of ratings was sent on 7th August 2025 which cannot be made public until the final report is published commencing 6th October 2025.

I'd like to thank Kay Dargue, Caroline Cannon, Paul Harrison, Sarah Bartlett, Melissa Young, Catherine Milestone, Laura Tyerman, Lisa Stirling, Sheelagh Gillespie, Susan Matthews and the casework team for all the effort, hard work and hours that they put in to the inspection

2.3 Inclusion, Assessment and Review • SEN and Vulnerable Learners Update

2.3.1 SEND Reforms

The government have announced that information regarding the SEND Reforms will be announced during the Autumn and I hope to cover the changes and what this will mean for our schools, children and families in my next report.

2.3.2 SEND and Inclusion Strategy

Work is under way to develop and implement our new SEND and Inclusion Strategy. It is incredibly important that children and families are directly involved in the shaping of this strategy. This is currently being co-produced with children, young people, families and stakeholders. The new strategy will be published in 2026 and will align to the new SEND Reforms.

2.3.3 Changes to school Uniform

The cost of school uniform continues to be prohibitive for many families. Legislation is currently with Parliament and if passed will mean only 3 items of uniform can be branded. This will come into effect in September 2026. I'd like to thank all the schools, community groups and facebook groups who have organised uniform swap shops and reduced cost preloved uniform sales.

2.3.4 Exclusions and Suspensions.

Academic Year 2024-25 has seen a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions issued by Middlesbrough Schools. This is the third consecutive year that there has been a reduction and there is evidence of the rate plateauing and beginning to reduce.

The most frequent reason for exclusion continues to be persistent disruptive behaviour. This is in line with previous years where this reason was the most commonly recorded and is in line with both regional and national data.

Academic Year	Total Number of Permanent Exclusions
2022-23	112
2023-24	111
2024-25	106

The data for suspensions is shared via school census returns and is validated and published by the DfE on a lagged basis. Middlesbrough continues to have high levels of suspension compared to regional and national rates. However, the growth rate for suspensions in Middlesbrough is significantly lower than the growth rate seen in regional and statistical neighbour local authorities. In addition, the number of days lost to suspension in Middlesbrough has reduced, this is bucking the trend when compared to regional and statistical neighbour local authorities who are seeing increasing rates of suspension and increasing days lost. There are also a handful of schools in Middlesbrough who have seen their suspension rate reduce which is a positive indicator of the work that is taking place towards inclusion in these schools. The data for the 24-25 academic will be available to the local authority for analysis by Jan 2026, with final validation and publication by the DfE in June 2026. Early indications are that the trend of plateauing growth and a reduction in days lost is continuing. This does not mean that work around this can stop – it absolutely must continue and the rates must reduce further and continue the downward trajectory.

2.3.5 Early Years Specialist Support and Partnership working with Discovery Special Academy

The establishment of a new early years partnership with Discovery Special Academy will see the Cleveland Unit Assessment nursery co-located in a brand new purpose built nursery building at the Discovery Academy Sandy Flatts school site. This will allow the local authority early years specialist support team to increase capacity for early years assessments for children with SEND and further support the early years outreach offer. This will significantly help children, families and carers. The partnership will also provide opportunities for good practice sharing and workforce development between the two organisations.

3.3.6 Grants for schools

Grants for schools were included in the Mayors priority funds. This will be available from the end of September for schools to bid into for books, art equipment, PE equipment and performing arts equipment. Details will be sent out to schools about this.

3.3.7 Achievement Update

To follow once data for results have been published.

4. Culture

4.1 The Space Digital Commission

Thanks to funding from The Space and Arts Council England NPO the new 180-degree projection within the dome of the Nelson Gallery is due to be complete by Autumn.

Teesside University has been commissioned to design and develop the content for the 'Bridging the Future' project which will reflect and animate Dorman Museums wider gallery spaces as visitors are transported from space to a prehistoric landscape with Dinosaurs all the way to a future Middlesbrough which community groups have shared their hopes and aspirations for what the town could look like.

4.2 Captain Cook Animations

Following a successful Grants for the Arts application from Arts Council England, Middlesbrough Museums worked with a newly graduate animation company Silverling Animation to re-interpretate the story of Captain James Cook. The Animations were purposely designed to be short, informative and engaging to a younger audience. Working with pupils from Breckon Hill Primary they guided the content and helped framed the storytelling to be more appealing. Information incorporated into the storytelling included a more reflective view of the voyages in our aim to democratise and reframe the story of Captain Cook.

The Animations were installed into the galleries of Captain Cook Birthplace Museum for the summer holidays where they have since received positive reviews from all visitors. The animations will also be used as learning resource for pre visits from schools.

4.3 Time Odyssey

After a successful pilot with local primary Schools Middlesbrough Museums will be rolling out an exciting new digital learning experience for schools. As part of a national partnership delivered by Art Explora, Dorman Museum will be the first Museum in the Tees Valley region to offer the Augmented Reality experience as part of a learning experience.

Through a gamification process the workshop is self-led and delivered on tablets, pupils are set missions to explore the galleries to capture objects and information to complete tasks throughout the day.

Schools In Middlesbrough and the wider region that have not visited Dorman Museum in the last 12 months and have a minimum of 40% pupil premium can also apply for up to £500 travel bursary to support transport costs to the museum making the museum more accessible to our local schools.

4.4 Colourscape

The Colourscape experience returned to Captain Cook Birthplace Museum in August. The inflatable experience brought together light, colour, music and dance as visitors are invited to explore the colourful labyrinth installation. Over 700 visitors attended Colourscape. It was a huge success with visitors demanding for it to return in 2026.

As part of the Colourscape experience the museum worked with Holmwood School to bring a Colourscape workshop to the school. The workshops, which ran from Monday 9 to Friday 13 June, invited students to explore art and music through Colourscape's unique sensory space, where students could control sounds and colours through the use of infra-red and pressure sensors.

The workshops are a unique approach to developing performance skills, where students can work together to play as an ensemble, creating their own sounds and working towards a finished performance. Holmwood School is the first in Middlesbrough to have received the workshops, which Colourscape run in schools across the UK. Dennis Ley, Headteacher at Holmwood School, said:

"We were extremely fortunate to have Colourscape visit our school, providing a vibrant and enriching experience for our students. The pupils fully engaged with both the music and art activities, finding joy in each creative endeavour. They thoroughly enjoyed expressing their creativity and all expressed how much they learned throughout the week. The visit left a lasting impression on the students, enhancing their appreciation for the arts."

4.5 Middlesbrough Museums in your Classroom

The Middlesbrough Museums in Your Classroom project is a targeted outreach programme meticulously designed to bring authentic museum collections and the specialised expertise of museum educators directly into primary school classrooms. This initiative moves beyond the traditional confines of singular museum visits, consciously seeking to embed rich heritage learning within the familiar, inclusive, and supportive school environment.

Its overarching goal is multifaceted:

- To significantly enhance core literacy skills.
- To cultivate imaginative and diverse creative expression.
- To foster an enduring engagement between museums and schools that can enhance curriculum teaching through new models.

Working with its partner School, Beechgrove, Middlesbrough Museums completed its first year of the 3-year project. The evaluation of the first year of the project was highly successful and exceeded expectations across its key performance indicators on its impact which demonstrated:

- Effectiveness in enhancing literacy
- Impact on confidence
- Engagement with heritage
- Collaboration and partnership

The accumulation of the pupils work over the year was curated into their own School exhibition where pupils shared their learning with fellow pupils, guests and the wider school community.

I'd like to thank the Museum Service and all the teachers staff and post importantly, students at Beechgrove School for the huge amount of work that went in to the exhibition.



4.6 Programming

A mixed media exhibition titled 'Our Place in the Family of Things' created and curated by Climate Action Middlesbrough is currently on display at Dorman Museum until early September. The temporary exhibition is free to access and explores theme of environment and climate change through creative media. Some of the work featured was created in collaboration with communities of Middlesbrough.

4.7 Events Team

Two additional officers have been recruited to the events team. A creative programmer and an apprentice role.

3. ARCHIVES

A draft version of the Tees Valley Heritage Feasibility Report proposes opportunities to incorporate Teesside Archives into a broader visitor experience (titled 'The Vessel') which would sit at the centre of the Tees Valley's heritage offer and maximise the assets within the archive collection to tell stories of our region and signpost visitors to other heritage attractions across the area. However, no Tees Valley funding for such a project has been proposed.

Therefore, as the lead authority we are proposing a number of interim arrangements for the service including:

- Agreeing a new 3-5 year service level agreement for the Archives
- Extending the current collections contract with Restore to July 2028
- Agreeing annual targets for outreach programme delivery in each of the four boroughs
- Continuing the conversation with TVCA about becoming a partner in Teesside Archives – so far none of their documentation comes to the Archives and it should as they are part of local government structure.
- Developing the relationship with Teesside Archives and Tees Valley Museum Group NPO