



CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 29 March 2022

Subject Heading:	Attendance and Exclusions
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Policy context:	School Attendance and Exclusions Overview

SUMMARY

To be consistent with Havering's vision to ensure a good start for every child to reach their full potential during their educational journey.

This report updates members of the Committee on the progress made to improve School Admissions & Inclusions arrangements, across all Havering's Schools/Academies and Alternative Provisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report, and they continue to receive updates on attendance and exclusion arrangements.

REPORT DETAIL

School Attendance

1. The Attendance and Traveller Support Service, an Early Help Education Service monitors pupil attendance where the attendance of pupils falls below the acceptable level in school. This involves working closely with parents to overcome barriers to school attendance whether it be medical, social, and emotional or for any number of reasons. In 2021, the Attendance Service was successfully integrated into the School Admissions and Inclusion Team.
2. Whilst there are legal routes open to local authorities where parents do not ensure that their children receive a suitable education, these legal sanctions are generally a last resort after a period of working alongside parents and professionals to reduce/remove any barriers to good school attendance. The Early Help Attendance and Traveller Support Service are located in the MASH service every day and perform the school welfare checks for students. Children Missing Education (CME) are monitored and tracked through the Attendance Service as a statutory function.
3. The Attendance Team are ensuring that schools' understanding of Covid Coding on absences is regularly checked, and remains in line with changing guidance from the DfE. During the Pandemic, the team worked to support schools and families, completing remote consultations, telephone/video meetings, with home doorstep visits conducted safely and after completing a Risk Assessment when necessary, where there were concerns that the parent and young person were not engaging with the school and online learning.
4. The Team are providing both remote and onsite support, and report that schools are requiring additional time for consultations due to the increased number of pupils now deemed persistently absent. The number of absence in both secondary and primary schools have been hugely affected by high number of COVID related absence such as; positive cases, recovery/ isolation periods, increased general illness particularly in younger pupils, anxiety around returning to school and mental health is another factor in the rise in absences.
5. The Team are seeing a rise in applications for leave in term time due to rebooking holidays (due to the impact of Covid) and families wishing to take extended travel to re-unite with relatives abroad.
6. All of the above are causing an impact school attendance, and we are noticing higher levels of absence and greater numbers of pupils to monitor. Where appropriate, we have issued Penalty Notices for casework non-attendance and unauthorised leave in term time. Updates to the way in which coding is recorded also impacted from the start of September 2021 as schools were required to code as illness (I code) rather than X codes, , which can now only

be used to the point of positive or negative test result. This has caused these students to drop into PA, even if it is their only absence, particularly where these are COVID related.

7. The team are providing support across all schools by offering increased visits, both remotely and on site and being available to offer advice and support. The team are working with schools to ensure early intervention is completed by school staff, to then enable our service to step in to support the families and signpost them to other agencies who can help, the team complete Home Visits, telephone/meetings with parents and follow the legal process when required. We continue to liaise with support agencies such as AP and Inclusions, Universal Plus, Early Help, Health and CAMHS etc. to ensure good cross agency support for pupils and families.
8. The Team have taken on an additional Traded Education Welfare Officer due to the increased traded work from both in and Out of Borough Schools and have also taken on a Business Administration Apprentice to support with the increased administration that the increase in open cases has brought about and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Fines
9. Attendance and Persistent Absence (PA) levels are closely monitored by the individual School Attendance Officer, targeted intervention for vulnerable groups is identified with schools and close liaison with Children's Services continues to support families and address any safeguarding issues, we are finding the workload has increased and the level of referrals from schools for poor attendance casework has increased during and post Covid Lockdown.

The Five Year Trend

10. Levels of overall absence and PA (persistent absence) has reduced in Havering in the past 5-year period, and only remain slightly higher than London and national averages. However, unauthorised absence was slightly below London average in in both primary and secondary schools over the 5-year trend which is a very positive step in the right direction. This indicates that lower PA rates and lower authorised absence by schools are contributing to reducing overall absence rates, therefore increasing overall attendance levels within our schools and academies.
11. During the last academic year, The Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Service led on an attendance project with the key aim of sharing outstanding practice within schools and academies across key stages with a focus on challenging the rationale for authorising absence; this resulted in an Attendance Summit that was attended by thirty of our Schools and Academies.

The key measures around attendance/absence are set out by the following indicators:

- Overall Absence
- Authorised Absence

- Unauthorised Absence
- Persistent Absence at 90% and below

12. The definition of Persistent Absence or PA is any student with an attendance level below 90% the figures are based on the overall population of the school; this would be made up from the indicators as above. The information is taken via school census data on attendance/absence each year the average figure is collated from national data and Havering schools.

Primary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):	2020/21**	2019/20*	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Overall Absence	2.60%	3.87%	3.90%	4.20%	4.20%
Authorised Absence	2.14%	3.05%	3.10%	3.30%	3.40%
Unauthorised Absence	0.46%	0.83%	0.80%	0.90%	0.90%
Persistent Absence	5.48%	10.07%	8.30%	9.00%	9.20%
Secondary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):	2020/21**	2019/20*	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Overall Absence	3.60%	5.05%	5.10%	5.50%	5.50%
Authorised Absence	2.73%	3.84%	3.90%	4.10%	4.20%
Unauthorised Absence	0.86%	1.21%	1.20%	1.40%	1.40%
Persistent Absence	8.54%	13.33%	12.90%	13.60%	13.80%

13. The team do not have full data for 2019/20 and 2020/21, as DfE were not collecting, nor publishing data during this period; in addition to this, during 2020/21 schools, were able to X code pupils for COVID related absence i.e.: isolation, Covid illness and quarantine. This meant that pupil/school levels for attendance/absence were not impacted during this academic year. Since September 2021, X coding is more restricted to isolation ahead of Positive or Negative test results, thereafter normal absence coding is applied, so we are seeing a natural increase in absence figures during the current academic year.

Permanent Exclusions (PEX)

14. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide pupils who have been Permanently Excluded an education from day 6 of the PEX. The Inclusion Team work with schools / academies to avoid PEX where possible and offer other alternative pathways to support pupils and set them back on track to achieve. Schools / academies are expected to work with children and their families to prevent unnecessary transfers happening.

In-Year Fair Access Protocol

15. The Local Authority has a Statutory Duty to provide a Fair Access Protocol. This is managed by the Team who:

- Assess the real needs of vulnerable young people who are not on the roll of a school and ensures an appropriate placement is identified quickly and pupils/young people are on roll within 10 school days of a Fair Access Panel meeting;
- Seek to find an alternative placement or support for those on roll of a school where it can be demonstrated that they are at risk of permanent exclusion;
- Fairly share the admission of vulnerable students across all schools / academies (where the panel agree that another mainstream school place should be identified);
- Arrange such admissions openly through a process which has the confidence of all;
- Record the progress and successes of the young people placed through this panel.

16. The Admissions & Inclusions Team, coordinates the inclusion of children aged 5-16 into school / academies and alternative provisions to prevent exclusions where possible and offers alternative pathways to support pupils and set them back on track to achieve the best possible outcome from their education.

17. During the COVID-19 school closures, Havering's alternative provision's remained open to support at risk of exclusions, vulnerable and key workers pupils. This strategy resulted in 205 pupils and their families receiving education, support and supplies during this time.

18. One of the Councils approved alternative provisions provided a virtual platform for the School Inclusions teachers and mentors to continue to teach medical pupils face to face and also reach those pupils who were in Queens Hospital. It is through our established 'Inclusions Gateway Referral Process' below that schools request educational support for their pupils as and when the needs arise.



19. The Core Alternative Provision (AP) Offer that the Inclusions Team offer to Schools and Academies to avoid Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions is outlined in the table below:

Programme Name	Impact is to:
Keep Safe & Self Esteem workshops for pupils. These are delivered in primary schools to years 5 and 6 in preparation for secondary school.	Develops an awareness of risks and how to avoid and prevent harm from knife crime, criminal and sexual exploitation. These are planned for summer term 2022
Peace of Mind face-to-face weekly therapeutic intervention in schools or at pupil's home with hypnotherapy if required.	Enables pupils to speak with someone to find clarity and develop resilience around their own mental ill health, social & emotional behaviour, trauma or anxiety that was brought about by COVID-19 or life experiences.
5 Day Direction off site to improve behaviour. This programme covers, reflection, strategies, aspirations and self-management and also includes a weekly parent's session.	Replaces suspensions of 3 days or more to allow pupils to explore their anxieties and behaviours over a 5 day period. Pupils and parents learn strategies to enable them to return to school and maintain their education.
Part time Alternative Provision which includes Medical Provision.	Provides a vocational curriculum with a more suitable learning environment for pupils who were unable to function effectively in a large school setting. This approach is also used as a direction off site to improve behaviour.
Transition Programme for pupils who are at imminent risk of Permanent Exclusions and who are presenting with social & emotional needs.	Supports pupil's full time who were unable to remain in their mainstream school due to presenting with high levels of social and emotional behaviours. 99% of the pupils who accessed the Transition Programme leave with an EHCP.
Full Time AP	Avoids a Permanent Exclusion and provide a smaller setting, where acute needs are able to be met more effectively without disrupting the education of others.

20. The strategies adopted by the School Inclusions Team has resulted in a larger number of vulnerable pupils being supported during COVID-19 and on their return to the face to face world.


21. The increase of referrals through the Inclusions Gateway to avoid exclusions, so far this year (Sep 21 - Feb 22) has resulted in further AP developments around the Raphael Site to increase the number of good or outstanding AP places being made available to meet the immerging needs of the pupils.

Number of pupils placed annually	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Total	Increase
2018/2019	133	119	49	301	
COVID Schools Closures 2019/2020	202	110	20	332	8%
COVID Schools Closures 2020/2021	138	105	142	385	14%
2021/15 February 2022	433	166		599	26%

22. Permanent exclusions for Havering are still at Zero with 61 withdrawn permanent exclusions reported between 01/09/2020–28/02/2022 (57 secondary & 4 primary). The School Inclusions Team are continuing to work closely with schools and academies both in Havering and cross borders to ensure this trend continues.

23. Suspensions (Fixed Term Exclusions) are reducing year on year as all of the AP programmes are designed to address behaviours early and avoid pupils being suspended and sent home. The 5 Day Direction provides Head Teachers with an alternative option, which means instead of suspending the pupil they can direct them off site, which is in line with government guidelines around good practice.

The 5 Day Direction Programme has avoided 79 suspension between September 2021 and February 2022.

5 Day Direction	
Year Group 	Pupils
NC Year 6	8
NC Year 7	4
NC Year 8	18
NC Year 9	17
NC Year 10	12
NC Year 11	20
Grand Total	79

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

Dedicated Schools Grant could be affected if The Attendance Service did not continue to act with due diligence and accuracy especially around safeguarding of vulnerable pupils.

By not administering and tracking Children Missing Education in line with statutory guidance this will result in the Local Authority not meeting its statutory requirements. If high needs pupils are not identified and supported the implications are that the Local Authority's High Needs Grant will be negatively affected

Legal implications and risks:

There are no apparent legal implications in noting the content of the Report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no environment and/or climate change implications associated with this Report.

That said, where prolonged absence may be allotted to illness, for example, discussions around home fuel efficiencies could be undertaken.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A