

Education Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 24 March 2015

Electoral Division affected: All

School attendance of pupils in Lancashire and the rate of exclusion from school

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Executive Summary

The report outlines the most recent attendance and exclusion figures for primary, secondary and special schools in Lancashire, with national comparators. The attendance data includes overall and persistent absence figures and a ranking in relation to statistical neighbours. For each of the areas of attendance and exclusion there is a brief summary of support for schools, and in the case of attendance this includes support for families.

Recommendation

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the report.

Background and Advice

Attendance

The official attendance figures (set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below) only become available for whole school years in March of the following year, so 2013-14 validated data will only be published later this month.

N/

Table 1

Primary Whole Year Data (Half Terms 1-5)

School Year	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank	England PA%	LCC PA%	SN Rank
2010-11	5.0	4.7	=1/11	3.9	3.6	4/11
2011-12	4.4	3.9	=1/11	3.1	2.6	2/11
2012-13	4.7	4.2	=1/11	3.0	2.5	2/11

Table 2
Secondary Whole Year Data (Half Terms 1-5)

School Year	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank	England PA%	LCC PA%	SN Rank
2010-11	6.5	6.0	2/11	8.4	7.4	2/11
2011-12	5.9	5.3	2/11	7.4	6.0	2/11
2012-13	5.8	5.3	2/11	6.4	5.3	2/11

Table 3
Special Schools Whole Year Data (Half Terms 1-5)

School Year	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank	England PA%	LCC PA%	SN Rank
2010-11	10.0	9.4	7/11	16.7	15.7	5/11
2011-12	9.6	9.0	6/11	16.3	15.1	5/11
2012-13	9.7	9.2	7/11	16.1	13.9	5/11

A review of the above information shows that Lancashire's attendance figures compare favourably with the national figures – over the last three years Lancashire has generally outperformed national figures for both Overall Absence (OA) and Persistent Absence¹ (PA) in all phases and consistently compares well against our statistical neighbours (SN).

For the first time, overall absence data was collected in respect of four year olds from the Autumn Term 2012. These figures are set out in Table 4 (below).

Table 4
Overall Absence 4 Year olds Autumn and Spring Terms

	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank
2012-13	6.4	5.3	1/11
2013-14	5.3	4.4	1/11

Lancashire's figures again compare favourably against national figures and when compared to our statistical neighbours. This is a very positive position as it is vital that children establish a regular pattern of attendance at school from an early age.

The most recent data for the Autumn and Spring Terms 2013-14 is set out in Tables 5 and 6 but is only available for primary and special schools.

¹ Persistent Absence – children who miss school for approximately 15% of sessions (currently defined as missing 38 or more sessions in Half Terms 1-4 or 46 or more sessions in Half Terms 1-5).

Table 5
Primary Autumn and Spring Term Data

School Year	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank	England PA%	LCC PA%	SN Rank
2013-14	3.9	3.4	1/11	2.8	2.1	2/11

Table 6
Secondary Autumn and Spring Term Data

School Year	England OA%	LCC OA%	SN Rank	England PA%	LCC PA%	SN Rank
2013-14	5.1	4.6	2/11	5.8	4.8	2/11

Lancashire's most recent figures show that strong performance is being sustained. Attendance continues to compare favourably with national figures and when compared to our statistical neighbours.

From September 2015 the methodology for identifying PA pupils will change slightly and the threshold for PA will move from 15% absence to 10% absence. Both of these changes are expected to lead to an increase in figures for PA pupils both within Lancashire and nationally.

Support for Schools and Families

The local authority attendance service works to ensure that schools have a clear understanding of their attendance profile, and can identify those pupils who are Persistent Absentees or are on track to become PA if their attendance does not improve. The Behaviour and Attendance Consultants (secondary phase) and School Attendance Consultants (primary phase and cross-phase in special schools) offer advice to schools on whole school strategies to improve overall levels of attendance across the school profile, with a particular reference to vulnerable groups. They also advise schools on the use of the reporting options within the Schools Information Management System (SIMS) attendance module which allows schools to identify young people in those vulnerable groups whose attendance is becoming a cause for concern.

Funding has been devolved to secondary schools along with the responsibility for undertaking attendance related casework in order to support young people who are not attending. Such casework includes identifying barriers to education, implementing packages of support to overcome those barriers and facilitate engagement back into education, and, where appropriate, working in partnership with the school attendance service to challenge parents who are not fulfilling their responsibility to ensure their children receive an appropriate education.

For primary and special schools, the School Attendance Consultants offer case specific advice at an early stage to assist schools in managing low level attendance and the Pupil Attendance Support Team are also available to help schools who are

experiencing more challenging cases of non-attendance on an individual casework basis.

The attendance service's legal team issues education related penalty notices on behalf of schools – both for low level truancy and more particularly in respect of unauthorised leave of absence (usually for family holidays), and also conducts legal proceedings (parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court, applications for Education Supervision Orders in the Family Proceedings Courts).

Whilst most absences arise from children absenting themselves from school and parentally condoned absence, including unauthorised leave for holidays in term time, in some instances the authority becomes aware that children are missing out on education as a result of unofficial exclusion. Due to their nature no official data exist for unofficial exclusions but the attendance service works with colleagues from Pupil Access and the Children Missing Education teams to challenge such cases when they are brought to our attention.

Permanent and fixed term exclusions in Lancashire

In July 2014 the DfE's Statistical First Release reported on permanent and fixed period exclusions from state funded primary, secondary and special schools during the 2012/13 academic year, as reported by the School Census. The data showed that in England the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions had fallen and this continued the recent downward trends. In Lancashire, as can be seen from the tables below, there is a more mixed picture.

Table 7 : Permanent exclusions in Lancashire schools – 2011/12 and 2012/13 (England figures in brackets)

	Primary		Secondary		Special	
	Number	%age of school popn.	Number	%age of school popn.	Number	%age of school popn.
2011/12	24 (690)	0.03 (0.02)	125 (4390)	0.18 (0.14)	5 (80)	0.21 (0.09)
2012/13	35 (670)	0.04 (0.02)	122 (3900)	0.18 (0.12)	x (60)	x (0.07)

Note: **x = less than 5, or a percentage based on less than 5**

The number of secondary and special school permanent exclusions in Lancashire fell between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The number of primary permanent exclusions rose. Whilst the number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools fell, the figure as a percentage of the school population remained at 0.18%, which is above the 2012/13 national figure of 0.12%.

Figures collected by the local authority's Pupil Access Team for the academic year 2013/14 show that there was an increase in the number of permanent exclusions for both primary and secondary schools. In 2013/14 there were 59 permanent

exclusions in primary and 128 in secondary. The number of permanent exclusions in special schools remained below 5.

Table 8: Fixed period exclusions in Lancashire schools – 2011/12 and 2012/13
(England figures in brackets)

	Primary		Secondary		Special	
	Number	%age of school popn.	Number	%age of school popn.	Number	%age of school popn.
2011/12	552 (37790)	0.60 (0.90)	4,481 (252,210)	6.57 (7.85)	369 (14,370)	15.72 (15.39)
2012/13	674 (37870)	0.73 (0.88)	4,131 (215,560)	6.11 (6.75)	407 (14,100)	17.9 (14.68)

The number of fixed period exclusions in Lancashire secondary schools in 2012/13 was below the 2011/12 figure. The data shows that the rate of fixed period exclusion in Lancashire secondary schools is better than the England outcome. The number of fixed period exclusions in primary schools rose between 2011/12 and 2012/13; however, the percentage of the school population who receive a fixed term exclusion remains better than the England outcome. The number of fixed period exclusions in special schools has risen between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The percentage of the school population who have received a fixed term exclusion remains above the national figure.

The data collected by the local authority for the academic year 2013/14 indicates that there is a slight increase in the number of fixed period exclusions in primary and special schools – 700 and 408 respectively. The number of fixed period exclusions in secondary schools in 2013/14 was recorded as 3533. This is lower than the previous year's figure.

Support for schools

In response to the high number of permanent exclusions – particularly in primary schools – officers from a number of teams within the directorate for Children and Young People have been exploring the most effective ways of supporting schools in order to help prevent exclusions.

Following discussions with a number of local authority services – including the Inclusion and Disability Support Service, Young People's Service, Early Help and Prevention, Pupil Access, Children's Social Care, Quality and Continuous Improvement and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service – it was agreed that the local authority will, in consultation with schools, design and publish an 'offer' which will clearly outline the expectations of schools and Lancashire services in relation to supporting pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs. The offer will detail the support available to strengthen schools' internal systems and strategies and provide an up to date directory of additional, external, support that may be available – either at no cost to schools or via traded services.

Consultation with schools will take place in the spring and summer terms 2015 and it is expected that the offer will formally be in place for the beginning of the academic year 2015/16. However, since the beginning of the autumn term 2014, elements of what may be in the offer have been informally put into operation. For example there is now a named person to provide guidance and support; closer working between services including Quality and Continuous Improvement and the Pupil Referral Units; more focused support from school advisers in supporting and challenging how behaviour policies are implemented in schools. These approaches appear to have had a positive impact and a number of permanent exclusions have been avoided. The unvalidated figures for the autumn term show that there has been no increase in primary exclusions compared to the same period in the previous year.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Risk management

No significant risks have been identified in relation to the proposals contained in this report.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Pupil absence in schools in England 2012 -13	March 2014	Jonathan Hewitt 01772 531663 Jonathan.hewitt@lancashire.gov.uk
Pupil absence in schools in England 2011-12	March 2013	Jonathan Hewitt 01772 531663 Jonathan.hewitt@lancashire.gov.uk
Pupil absence in schools in England 2010-11	March 2012	Jonathan Hewitt 01772 531663 Jonathan.hewitt@lancashire.gov.uk
Pupil absence in schools in England Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014	October 2014	Jonathan Hewitt 01772 531663 Jonathan.hewitt@lancashire.gov.uk

Permanent and Fixed
period exclusions in
England 2012-13

July 2014

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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A