

Education Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 26th March 2019

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Exclusions, Attendance, Transport and Elective Home Education

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Executive Summary

The report provides detail of issues connected to attendance and exclusions. It provides details about children missing education and those who are educated at home. In addition, it provides detail about school transport.

Recommendations

The Education Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the information provided.
- ii. Consider work being undertaken to address any issues and sustain improvement around permanent exclusions.
- iii. Note the review to be undertaken on transport to Pupil Referral Units and consider the wider options available.

Background and Advice

The Local Authority has a range of teams that provide advice and guidance to school leaders on issues regarding attendance and exclusions, working with parents, pupils and schools to try and support pupils at risk of exclusion. Colleagues also work with pupils missing education, or those who are missing out on education, supporting a return to education wherever possible. There are close working relationships with the Virtual School, meeting the needs of children looked after. Teams also work closely with the Inclusion Service (formerly SEND) and Children's Social Care to help and support our most vulnerable children.

As with every Local Authority, more can and must be done to ensure all pupils are able to access the best and most appropriate education possible.

Attendance

Pupil attendance in Lancashire schools is above the national average.

Primary Schools

Overall Absence	England	North West	Lancashire
2017/18	4.2	4.2	4.0
2016/17	4.0	3.9	3.7
2015/16	3.9	3.9	3.6

Attendance rates in primary schools are higher than the local and national averages, with attendance at 96%. Rates of absence are lowest in Chorley and South Ribble, and highest in Preston and Burnley. However, there is a three-year trend of rising absence.

Secondary Schools

Overall absence	England	Lancashire
2017/18	5.4	5.1
2016/17	5.2	4.8
2015/16	5.0	4.7

Rates of attendance are also above the national and north-west averages in secondary schools. Attendance overall stands at 94.9%. Attendance is highest in Chorley, Hyndburn and Preston, and lowest in Burnley and Pendle. There is however a rising trend of absence over the last three years, similar to the national picture.

Permanent Exclusions

Rates of exclusions are well above the national average, at both secondary and primary school.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	17/18
Primary	52	78	55	55
Secondary	192	222	298	314

The picture within primary schools has remained quite stable over the last four years, apart from a sharp rise in 2015/6. However, the rate of exclusions in secondary schools continues to rise.

This chart is taken as a snapshot of exclusions at the end of December, and provides a comparison with the same period last year.

District	Primary		Secondary	
	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18
Hyndburn	3	2	10	11
Burnley	1	2	15	8
Pendle	3	2	9	11
Rossendale	1	2	6	11
East	8	8	40	41
Lancaster	1	1	3	9
Wyre	0	0	11	7
Fylde	0	2	5	7
North	1	3	19	22
Preston	4	3	14	18
South Ribble	1	1	13	11
West Lancs	1	0	19	8
Chorley	2	1	4	3
South	8	5	50	40
Totals	17	17	109	103

It also shows wide variations between the districts. It suggests that there has been a reduction in six districts, but substantial rises elsewhere. Evidence would suggest that exclusions rise most noticeably in schools that are judged to require improvement or special measures. There also rise in schools that have recently converted to become an academy.

Work is currently being undertaken to develop inclusion hubs in each district that will provide additional support for schools, such as training, advice and guidance, as well as short-term provision for pupils at risk of exclusion. This will start in primary schools in April 2019, and we will develop our plans for secondary schools over the next academic year.

Elective Home Education

Home education is an option that any family may consider for their children. The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. In England, education is compulsory, but school is not. The reasons for deciding on this approach are many, as are the styles of education undertaken. For some families it is a decision based on their philosophical, spiritual or religious outlook; for others it is to meet the specific needs of a child or children. It may be because of dissatisfaction with 'the system' or used as a short-term intervention for a particular reason.

The number of children known to the authority to be home educated is growing. In 2015, the total number of cases registered with Lancashire County Council at any time within the academic year was 921. This grew to 1123 in 2016 and by the end of the last academic year last was 1662. By February this year, the number is already 1519. There are more secondary age children in Elective Home Education (EHE) than primary, with the majority of children in Y9, Y10 and 11.

	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018-19 (01.09.18 - 25.02.19)
Total no cases registered at any point during the current academic year (broken down as below)	921	1123	1378	1662	1519
Total no Children Year 11	154	146	252	243	306
Total no Children Year 10	138	192	194	295	258
Total no Children Year 9	132	131	210	261	237
Total no Children Year 8	91	146	169	201	197
Total no Children Year 7	97	121	128	184	125
Total no Children Year 6	59	86	105	100	81
Total no Children Year 5	50	77	74	75	80
Total no Children Year 4	66	65	58	84	65
Total no Children Year 3	37	53	65	57	63
Total no Children Year 2	40	51	41	76	54
Total no Children Year 1	35	28	56	52	46
Total no Children Year R	19	24	23	32	5
Total Year Group Unknown	3	3	3	2	2
Female	461	569	679	820	759
Male	460	554	699	842	760

There is no requirement for parents to inform Lancashire County Council of the reasons for electing to home educate. For those that do, a growing number cite medical reasons, including mental health. There is no statutory duty or power to allow the local authority to routinely monitor the quality of home education.

Children Missing out on Education (CMooE)

These are defined in Lancashire as children of compulsory school age who are registered at a school but are:

- not receiving education following official exclusion – either permanent or fixed term; or
- not receiving education as a result of unofficial exclusion; or
- not receiving education as a result of attendance drift.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing Education are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not in receipt of education otherwise than at a school (e.g. via college placement or Elective Home Education).

The Children Missing Education offer from Lancashire County Council ensures that we meet our statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 of making arrangements to identify children and young people in Lancashire who are missing education and to track these children into appropriate provision.

The offer from Lancashire County Council also ensures that there are arrangements in place to track children leaving the Lancashire area and that where applicable their whereabouts is notified to the appropriate relevant authority.

Term	Autumn 2017 Referrals	Spring 2018 Referrals	Summer 2018 Referrals	Total
Referrals	756	404	694	1854
Confirmed CME	184	92	206	482
Still open	1	5	23	29

Approximately a quarter of all referrals are pupils who are confirmed to be missing education. The majority of cases are resolved within two – three months, and this is getting less in recent years.

Transport to Pupil Referral Units

For Secondary School pupils that have been permanently excluded there is currently a procedure for providing transport to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and other placement locations. The current procedure is that PRUs make direct contact with the appropriate team from LCC's Integrated Transport Service (ITS) requesting that transport be provided. There is an arrangement for PRUs to make emergency arrangements in the interim with budget that they hold but this is not universally undertaken. Where possible ITS will place the pupil on an existing taxi contract but ask for 5 working days' notice when a new contract is required. If there are any changes to arrangements then we aim to vary contracts but where this is not possible and the contract needs to be cancelled then the taxi operators may be entitled to 4 weeks' notice.

The cost of taxi contracts to PRUs during 2017/18 academic year was £844,400. The school year began with 158 pupils being transported to the various units across the county. By the end of the school year that figure had peaked at 208 in January 2018 before ending the year at 203. There is evidence that both the cost of this provision and the number of permanently excluded pupils travelling by taxi is increasing at a pace and current passenger numbers are almost double in comparison to those in 2016.

It is planned to seek more efficient ways of providing transport to PRUs than always setting up a taxi contract. In assessing each new pupil's transport to the placement that they are to attend we will be looking to devise a process that will involve assessing whether there may be an appropriate bus service for which a pass can be made available that will enable the pupil to make the journey by public transport. Where no bus service is available then a taxi will be commissioned. There will be

other circumstances where it may be assessed that it would not be appropriate for a pupil to travel on a bus service and, in such circumstances, the pupil would be transported by taxi.

We will be discussing these revised arrangements with the PRU Headteachers to make sure that the new procedures will meet their needs as well as delivering cost savings and consider concerns or improvements to the process that they may suggest.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

Risk management

There are no significant risk implications associated with this report.

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

N/A