

5 September 2023

Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Report of the School Inclusion Advisor – Inclusion Services

Behaviour and Attendance – Mainstream Primary and Secondary Pupils

Summary

1. This report updates the current picture of Exclusion and Attendance across the secondary and primary phase in York. Wherever possible this looks to capture the picture before and after the pandemic. The report indicates key priority areas for the future and current support work and proposes how this may be developed.

Background

2. This is the second report of this nature since 2019 and comprehensively covers key indicators for Behaviour and Attendance in the city. This includes the statutory oversight roles of the Local Authority with regards to exclusion and attendance, and updates regarding responses to increased duties in these areas. Critically it gives a clear sense of the situation post pandemic and the current key challenges and support in place or being considered to meet them.
 - Attendance has decreased substantially nationally since the pandemic and is a significant focus of the DFE in this current climate. [Absence rates signal a crisis of confidence in education \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](https://schoolsweek.co.uk)
 - The 'ghost children' crisis explained: No single reason for surge in school absences but it has serious consequences. The sheer number of children missing big chunks of school is a crisis with many parts. Read in Sky News: <https://apple.news/AXewGtna4QnmMkAAMKGJAFg>
 - There has been a national increase in suspensions since the pandemic. This year this is potentially also the case for permanent exclusions nationally and this is reported by neighbouring regional Local Authorities. <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/exclusions-up-on-pandemic-lull-as-suspensions-reach-at-record-high/>

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to note contents of the report and consider plans for ongoing scrutiny of the issues raised within the analysis of the data.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee fully discharges its responsibilities in relation to behaviour and attendance in schools.

There are no current recommendations for action in this report, but I would draw members attention again to future considerations that may be raised and encourage their ongoing careful scrutiny of the needs in our city that are evidenced by the data in this report.

Consultation

4. The detail of this report includes consultations that have occurred with York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) and Schools Forum, namely:

- £150,000 of investment in a support centre at York High School over a two-year period that has now been extended to a further £75,000 for the next academic year to support the Southbank Inspire Centre initiative.
- £105,000 of investment in the School Wellbeing Service each year until at least 2026.
- £100,000 investment in appointing two Local Authority posts supporting increased national focus and duties regarding School Attendance.

The report also links to the decision by elected members to invest £2m in capital improvements to Applefields and Danesgate site and the more recent decision to invest £8m in wider Special Educational Needs provision.

Analysis

5. Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions Analysis

Permanent Exclusion Analysis

Year	Permanent Exclusions
2018/19	19 (all secondary)
2019/20	11 (ten secondary, one primary)
2020/21	18 (all secondary)
2021/22	16 (all secondary)
2022/23 to date	34 (30 secondary, 4 primary) from CYC schools 1 York child permanently excluded from Outwood Academy in Easingwold (NYCC) 1 York child permanently excluded from Woldgate School (East Riding) 3 additional permanent exclusions rescinded. 39 in total

Suspension Analysis – Primary Phase

Primary Cluster	Suspensions (previously fixed term exclusions) Academic Year 2022/23	Permanent Exclusions
West Cluster	88	2
East Cluster	30	1 rescinded
North East Cluster	27	
North Cluster	36	
South Cluster	24	2
Southbank Cluster	35	

Suspension analysis – Secondary phase

Year	Secondary Suspensions (previously fixed term exclusions)
Sep 2020 to Sep 2021 (school closures)	1081
Sep 2021 to Sep 2022	1515
Sep 2022 to Sep 2023	2804

6. Key messages:

- Permanent Exclusion rates have risen this year significantly, more than doubling.
- This is in line with national increases.
- Eleven Permanent Exclusions come from schools in the West cluster of the city.

7. Actions taken to date:

- Regular meetings with Headteachers, Pastoral Leaders, Special Educational Needs Coordinators and Designated Teachers leading to peer challenge, shared problem solving and close partnership working.
- Development of a Learning Support Hub for schools to access all specialist school support staff in one place.
- Improvements in Special Educational Needs practice and support (see recent Local Area SEN OFSTED).
- Support from the Virtual School (see recent ILACS OFSTED).
- Further investment in support centre at York High School by York Schools and Academies Board **leading to reduced Permanent Exclusions and recognition of this in York High Ofsted.**
- Strategic placement of Wellbeing in Mind team in the North and West. areas of the city **enhancing the support for these schools.**
- Maintaining a strong and universal School Wellbeing Service with investment from Schools Forum.
- Continued development of a centrally quality assured Alternative Provision Directory comprising of over 20 providers well placed to meet more complex needs as part of a mainstream owned package **reducing permanent exclusions risks and increasing provision options for schools.**
- Introduction of pilot 14-16 provisions at York College **reducing permanent exclusion risks and increasing provision options for schools.**

- Embedding of the School Inclusion Advisor role to coordinate key information sharing, policy and practice, and to create strong networks.
- Refreshing the Fair Access Meetings to offer a coordinated multiagency approach with primary meeting cycles now well embedded.
- Investment in Danesgate and Applefields to manage increased complexity of need.
- Significant £8m agreed investment through safety valve in range of new, or extended, Special Educational Needs provisions within the city including new ERP at Huntington and extended primary EPR offer at Ebor Academy.
- Training for school staff around best practice in approaching shared cases with Social Care.

8. **Impact:**

- Permanent exclusions have been significantly below national average for the last two years.
- Quick action during this year has reduced the permanent exclusions in this year from 9 in the first half term to an average of six in the following half terms.
- Schools report universally positively about the support they have received from the Learning Support Hub and the School Wellbeing Service.
- Fewer students have been placed in Danesgate's PRU (non-EHCP) strand through managed moves with more held in mainstream settings, with numbers reducing from 180 to under 50 for the start of next year, allowing for an increase of 20 placements of EHCP students at this specialist provider.

9. **Potential further actions:**

- Developing stronger multi agency working in areas of the city with the highest need.
- Supporting the impact of the Inspire offer in Southbank Trust and ensuring the whole city benefit and that learning from this is shared.
- Considering further development of registered Alternative Provision in York through the Schools Forum working group.
- Continue to focus on the strength of the mainstream offer through the development and embedding of the Ordinarily Available Provision offer in our schools.

- Embedding the new Mental Health Support Team in the East and North East of the city.
- Appropriate additional specialist provision carefully commissioned to meet the needs of our young people within available funding.

Absence and Persistent Absence Analysis

Primary School Absence Rates

Primary School Absence	2021/22 (%)	2022/23 (%)	Trend	National Average For 2022/23 (%)
All students	7.2	5.2	Improved	5.9
No SEN	5.7	4.8	Improved	5.4
SEN – EHCP	12.4	10.6	Improved	10.5
SEN – Support	9.5	7.9	Improved	7.8
No FSM	12.5	4.4	Improved	5
Free School Meals (FSM)	10.7	9.3	Improved	8.6
Children in Care	14.7	5.5	Improved	N/A
Previously in care	Not collected	5	N/A	N/A

Primary School Persistent Absence Analysis

Categories	CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 (%)	National Persistent Absence from 2022/23 (%)
All students	12 (16.8 in 2021/22)	17
No SEN	10.7	14.9
SEN – EHCP	29.1	33
SEN – Support	20.7	25.4
No FSM	8.2	12
Free School Meals	29.2	30.5
Children in Care	12.5	N/A
Previously in Care	14.5	N/A

Severe Absence for Primary Phase

Primary Student Cohorts	2021/22	2022/23	National Average
Students Below 50%	66	63	N/A

Analysis of Severely absent primary school CYP

	Total Number	Percentage
Non-FSM	30	47.6
FSM	33	52.4
Non-SEN	19	30.2
SEN – Support	19	30.2
SEN – EHCP	25	39.7
No CSC	44	69.8
CLA	1	1.6
CPP	5	7.9
CIN	5	7.9
Early Help	8	12.7
Autism diagnosis	23	36.5

Secondary School Absence Rates

Secondary School Absence	2021/22 (%)	2022/23 to date (%)	Trend	National Average for 2022/23 (%)
All students	10.6	9.6	Improved	9.2
No SEN	8.5	8.7	Declined	8.2
SEN – EHCP	23.4	19.5	Improved	16.8
SEN – Support	16.8	17	Declined	14.1
No FSM	7.9	7.8	Improved	7.4
Free School Meals	18.9	19.1	Declined	14.8
Children in Care	21.7	18.3	Improved	N/A
Previously in care	Not collected	18.5	N/A	N/A

Secondary School Persistent Absence Analysis

Category	CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 (%)	National Persistent Absence from 2022/23 (%)
All students	25.1 (26.8 in 2021/22)	27.8
No SEN	22.7	25.1
SEN – EHCP	44.2	43.3
SEN – Support	44.3	41.3
No FSM	19.9	21.6
Free School Meals	52	46.4
Children in Care	36.4	N/A
Previously in Care	35	N/A

Severe Absence for Secondary Phase

Secondary Student Cohorts	2021/22	2022/23	National Average
Number Students Below 50%	296	254	N/A

Analysis of Severely Absent Secondary Aged CYP

	Total Number	Percentage
Non-FSM	137	53.9
FSM	116	45.7
Non-SEN	141	55.5
SEN – Support	81	31.9
SEN – EHCP	32	12.6
No CSC	200	78.7
CLA	5	2
CPP	9	3.5
CIN	16	6.3
Early Help	24	9.4
Autism diagnosis	40	15.7

Analysis of use of FPN by CYC 2022-23

	Issued	Paid	Remain in payment date or have agreed extension	Unpaid
CYC Persistent Absence (PA) 2022/23	71 (6.6%)	29	7	35
CYC 2021/22 PA	14 (4%)			
Y&H 2021/22 PA	2547 (9%)			
England 2021/22 PA	30685 (15%)			
CYC Leave of absence 2022/23	1012 (93.4%)	530	354	128
CYC 2021/22	367 (96%)			
Y&H 2021/22	32113 (91%)			
England 2021/22	186281 (85%)			
CYC Total 2022/23	1083	559	361 (33%)	163 (15%)
CYC 2021/22	381	244		137 (36%)
Y&H 2021/22	35180	24484		10696 (30%)
England 2021/22	218235	155357		62878 (29%)
CYC Issue Rate/100 students 2022/23	4.8			
CYC Issue Rate 2021/22	1.7			
Y&H Issue Rate 2021/22	4.8			
England Issue Rate 2021/22	3			

10. **Key messages:**

- Primary School Attendance continues to improve rapidly from the pandemic and is better than recent or current national figures for all students. Attendance is generally in line with national figures for SEN students with or without EHCPs and is improved on last year. The standout vulnerable group is those with Free Schools Meals where figures are below national averages.
- Secondary School Attendance has improved but not recovered as quickly and remains below national averages for vulnerable groups particularly strikingly for students who receive FSM. Attendance for students with SEN and FSM is declining.
- Persistent Absence again shows a strong picture at Primary level and improvement from before the pandemic.
- Persistent Absence at secondary level is also showing improvement from before the pandemic for all students and is better than national average for all students. Students with EHCP and Free School Meals have higher levels of persistent absenteeism at secondary phase and again this is particularly striking for students in receipt of FSM.
- There are currently a number of young people with severe absence in the city (below 50%). Whilst these figures have reduced, they remain high and are an area of significant focus. Deeper analysis shows a disproportionate number of such students have a SEN need and/or are in receipt of FSM, and there is a significant number of such children and young people (CYP) with an autism diagnosis.
- There is an increased use of Fixed Penalty Notices in CYC, but these are still below local and national rates regarding use of this response for Persistent Absence – we believe this is due to the high expectations of the Graduated Attendance Response and the careful way we consider any mitigations before choosing to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- The increase is significantly driven by an increase in FPNs for Leave of Absence which has been more consistently applied by the school system.

Actions taken to date:

- Extension of the Attendance Team in the Local Authority by two full time members of staff funded by York Schools and Academies Board. One of these has been supporting Data Analysis and Enforcement and the other has been meeting regularly with schools and modelling Early Help for low attending students.
- The Data Analysis role has added significant capacity to the strategic use of newly available attendance data within and beyond the Local Authority. This has supported training, multi-agency messaging and the commissioning of additional support for Attendance based issues.
- The Enforcement nature of this role has supported the embedding of a Fast Track response to unauthorised absence in school settings that is not responsive or mitigated by the graduated response and is best served by warnings of, or actual, legal enforcement through fixed penalties or prosecution. This has led to an increase in the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, particularly for term time holidays, and for a small number of cases of persistent absence when there is no mitigation and significant support has not led to improvements. This continues to be an area approached with great care by the team and schools.
- The Early Help role has led to 28 cases being modelled across the city with improvements in 74% cases. The learning from this has been disseminated to schools and to multiagency teams.
- The introduction of half termly primary and secondary Attendance Lead groups to centralise messages and strategy, and to share best practice.
- The introduction of a Graduated Response to Attendance across the city that describes the supportive routes schools should take to improve school attendance.
- The graduated attendance response has been widened to detail work with a range of Multi agency and Voluntary Sector partners including Social Care, SEN, CAMHS and the Learning Support Hub. Variations in the school offer including Alternative Provision are also to be considered and have been utilised in over 40% of severely absent cases.
- Evidence from the Attendance Team was a key element of the successful competitive bid for a new Mental Health Support Team in the East and North East of the city – this team will have a particular focus on CYP who are not in school. This builds on the work of the existing team in the West and North of the city.

- Training has been offered to all members of children's social care in their annual conference around the importance of school attendance and a single page handout has been prepared for frontline workers.
- An Attendance Action Group with membership across Education, Health and Social Care has been formed and meets each six weeks to look at information sharing and multiagency approaches to school attendance.
- Members of the Action Group are on the RAISE YORK (family hubs) board and look for opportunities to support work that will link to improved School Attendance.
- An Attendance Summit has been called for the beginning of September to bring together school leaders and multiagency partners to further push the importance of school attendance and to develop a city attendance strategy which has multi-agency ownership.
- The safeguarding board are looking at a working group to establish 'Partner promises' from members around their contributions to supporting School Attendance.
- The actioning of a centralised Communication strategy across all schools in the city including an electronic leaflet, social media campaign, press release and updated online information.
- The commissioning of the Research School to analyse the effectiveness of the enforcement and early help strategies in improving school attendance in York, whilst ensuring that this is not through a substantial increase in young people being Electively Educated at Home.
- Targeted work in two schools of higher need in the West and North of the city, funded by YSAB, and focussing on safeguarding and strategies for students below 50% attendance **leading to a reduction in embedded absence in these settings.**
- Regular meetings with CAMHS and designed training for school staff by the Educational Psychology Team on EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) identification and strategies.
- Ongoing support of the School Wellbeing Service (funded by Schools Forum until 2026).
- Access to a wider and centrally quality assured Alternative Provision directory that schools can commission to enhance their mainstream offer.
- Co-creation of a post 16 pathway for students at York College who have struggled with school attendance and with large scale settings during their pre 16 schooling **leading to a reduction in**

NEET figures, an end to those needing to repeat Year 11 at Danesgate and enhanced outcomes for children and young people in the provision.

- Three meetings with DFE advisors on attendance who describe CYC's attendance approach as being 'in the top quartile' of Local Authority responses, and who have shared the piloted work on Early Help regionally with other LAs.

11. Impact

- Increased attendance for 'all pupils' in the primary phase to levels below national averages.
- Continued increased attendance for primary pupils with SEN (with or without an EHCP) to levels in line with national averages.
- Reduced persistent absence in the primary phase to levels below national averages for all groups of CYP.
- Continued increased attendance for 'all pupils' in the secondary phase.
- Reduced persistent absence in the secondary phase to below national averages.
- Increased access to early help mental health support for all students in the city through the School Wellbeing Service.
- Further increased access to such support in the West and North of the city, and now the East and North East of the city through establishing NHS funded Mental Health Support Teams.
- Significant multiagency work to establish an 'Attendance is everyone's business' mindset across and beyond CYC.

12. Potential further actions:

- Develop further strong multi agency working in areas of city with the highest need.
- Continue to focus on strength of the mainstream offer and appropriate specialist provision carefully commissioned to meet the needs of our young people through the embedding of agreed Ordinarily Available provision across CYC school settings.

Options

13. There are no options for current action for council members in this report, but we would like to make you aware of the following future potential considerations:
- The attendance posts are funded for one year by YSAB and are essential parts of our response to School Attendance as an issue. The Data and Enforcement role expires in November 2023 and the School Attendance Lead (Early Help) role expires in January 2024. Considerations are being given to how these may be extended but may need a request to council to be considered.
 - There is a need for increased intense family working in certain areas of the city that may in the future come as a new request to elected members.

Council Plan

14. The work taking place on behaviour and attendance supports the Council's priority to ensure a better start for children and young people by ensuring that children and young people are benefitting both socially and academically from attending school regularly.

In particular the work supports the key priorities of the council:
Affordability – through keeping the majority of CYP in mainstream education and supporting them towards successful adult lives.

Health & Wellbeing – from securing regular successful school attendance with the right levels of support, and access to supportive school settings that make time for meeting universal Health and Wellbeing needs.

Equalities & Human rights – through ensuring that reasonable adjustments (and where necessary more significant adjustments) are in place for a system that understands and invests in the individual child.

The Environment – through reducing the risk of anti-social behaviour from CYP who are not in school, and through reducing the number of students travelling long distances to their place of education by keeping them in their local school successfully.

Implications

15. Financial

Potential future requests for staffing investment to support Attendance and intensive Family Working.

Human Resources (HR)

Two posts are currently on 12-month contracts (expiring in November 2023 and January 2024) that are essential to the ambition and longevity of our work in improving attendance.

Equalities

Vulnerable groups are shown to be underperforming in attendance figures including those with Special Educational Needs and those on Free School Meals.

Legal

There is increased use of Fixed Penalty Notices and a small number of prosecutions to respond to persistent absenteeism that does not have mitigating circumstances.

There have been increased requests by parents for Independent Review panels to consider Permanent Exclusions made by schools.

Crime and Disorder

Increased levels of absence and exclusion is undoubtedly a factor contributing to crime and disorder issues in specific areas of the city.

Information Technology (IT) Not applicable.

Property Not applicable.

Other None.

Risk Management

16. Risks of exclusion growth are:

- Increased families and young people needing support from Child or Adult Social Care.
- Increased costs to the public purse (the average cost to the system for a permanently excluded child for the remainder of life is calculated by research to be £370000 to a Local Authority).
- Reductions in provision for Special Educational Needs students due to statutory provision being put in place for excluded students and costs coming from the same High Needs Funding.
- Lower outcomes and employability routes for permanently excluded students.

17. Risks of attendance not recovering:

- Increased families and young people needing support from Child or Adult Social Care.
- Lower outcomes and employability routes for persistently absent students.
- Safeguarding risks for CYP and families not seen regularly due to sever absence.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Abbreviations

The author has looked to minimise the use of all abbreviations in the report but would like to offer the following clarity:

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEN – Support	Special Education Needs without an EHCP
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
FSM	Free School Meals
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
DFE	Department for Education
ILACS	Integrated Local Area Children's' Services
CPP	Child Protection Plan with Social Care
CIN	Child in Need Plan with Social Care
CLA	A child who is looked after by the local authority.