

Report of the School Inclusion Advisor – Inclusion
Services

Behaviour and Attendance – Mainstream Primary and Secondary pupils

Summary

1. This report captures 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.

Recommendations

2. 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.

Background

3. This is the first 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. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

- 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

[School suspensions hit six-year high after pandemic lull \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](http://schoolsweek.co.uk)

Consultation

4. The detail of this report includes consultations that have occurred with York Schools and Academies Board and Schools Forum, namely:
 - £150000 of investment in a support centre at York High School over a two year period
 - £105000 of investment in the School Wellbeing Service each year until at least 2026
 - £100000 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 (one primary) |
| 2020/21 | 18 (all secondary) |
| 2021/22 | 16 (all secondary) |
| 2022/23 to date | 10 (one primary) – would project to 40 at current rate |

Suspension Analysis – Primary Phase

| Primary Cluster | Suspensions (previously fixed term exclusions) September 2022/23 to date |
|--------------------|--|
| West Cluster | 61 |
| East Cluster | 21.5 |
| North East Cluster | 17 |
| North Cluster | 53 |
| South Cluster | 5 |
| Southbank Cluster | 18.5 |

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 present | 575 – would project to 2300 at current rate |

6. Key messages:

- Permanent Exclusion rates have risen this year significantly
- Previous positive comparisons with national figures and regional/statistical neighbours are at risk
- Six Permanent Exclusions come from schools in the West cluster of the city

7. Actions taken to date:

- a) Regular meetings with Headteachers, Pastoral Leaders, Special Educational Needs Coordinators and Designated Teachers leading to peer challenge, shared problem solving and close partnership working
- b) Development of a Learning Support Hub for schools to access all school support staff in one place
- c) Improvements in Special Educational Needs practice and support (see recent Local Area SEN OFSTED)
- d) Support from the Virtual School (see recent ILACS OFSTED)
- e) Investment in support centre at York High School by York Schools and Academies Board **leading to reduced Permanent Exclusions**
- f) Strategic placement of Wellbeing in Mind team in the West area of the city **enhancing the support for these schools**

- g) Maintaining a strong and universal School Wellbeing Service with investment from Schools Forum
- h) Introduction 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 and increasing provision options for schools**
- i) Introduction of pilot 14-16 provisions at York College **reducing permanent exclusions and increasing provision options for schools**
- j) Establishment of the School Inclusion Advisor role to coordinate key information sharing, policy and practice, and to create strong networks
- k) Refresh (and extension to primary phase) of the cities Fair Access Meetings to offer a coordinated multiagency approach
- l) Investment in Danesgate and Applefields to manage increased complexity of need
- m) Significant £8m agreed investment through safety valve in range of new or extended Special Educational Needs provisions within the city
- n) Training for school staff around best practice in 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 1 in the second half term to date
- Fewer students have been placed at Danesgate through managed moves with more held in mainstream settings, with numbers reducing from 180 to under 50 currently, allowing for increased placement of EHCP students at this specialist provider

9. **Potential further actions:**

- Develop stronger multi agency working in areas of the city with the highest need
- Continue to focus on the strength of the mainstream offer and appropriate specialist provision carefully commissioned to meet the needs of our young people

Absence and Persistent Absence Analysis

| Secondary Absence | 2021/22 | 2022/23 to date | National Average (Italics from 2021/22) |
|-------------------|---------|-----------------|---|
| All students | 10.6% | 8.6% | 7.7% |
| SEN – EHCP | 23.4% | 17.0% | 13.4% |
| SEN – Support | 16.8% | 14.1% | 12.2% |
| Free School Meals | 18.9% | 17.1% | 13.1% |
| Children in Care | 21.7% | 17.6% | 25.5% |

| Primary Absence | 2021/22 | 2022/23 to date | National Average (Italics from 2021/22) |
|-------------------|---------|-----------------|---|
| All students | 7.2% | 4.8% | 5.1% |
| SEN – EHCP | 12.4% | 9.0% | 9.7% |
| SEN – Support | 9.5% | 7.1% | 7.8% |
| Free School Meals | 10.7% | 8.3% | 8.2% |
| Children in care | 14.7% | 7.9% | 10.6% |

Secondary School Persistent Absence analysis:

| Categories | CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 | National Persistent Absence from 2021/22 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| All students | 23.1% (26.8% in 2021/22) | 28% |
| SEN – EHCP | 39.6% | 37.3% |
| SEN – Support | 33.9% | 37.9% |
| Free School Meals | 44.2% | 41.5% |
| Children in care | 36.7% | - |

Primary School Persistent Absence Analysis:

| Category | CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 | National Persistent Absence from 2021/22 |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| All students | 14.0% (16.8% in 2021/22) | 21.5% |
| SEN – EHCP | 23.5% | 32.5% |
| SEN – Support | 24.1% | 28.1% |
| Free School Meals | 29.3% | 30.2% |
| Children in care | 18.8% | - |

Embedded Absence for Primary phase:

| Primary Student Cohorts | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | National Average |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Students Below 50% | 66 | 53 | N/A |
| Students Below 35% | 30 | 32 | N/A |

Embedded Absence for Secondary phase:

| Secondary Student Cohorts | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | National Average |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Number Students Below 50% | 296 | 300 | N/A |
| Number Students Below 35% | 123 | 205 | N/A |

10. Key messages:

- a) Primary School Attendance is improving rapidly from the pandemic and above recent or current national areas for all students and vulnerable groups aside from those with Free Schools Meals where figures almost match
- b) Secondary School Attendance has improved but not recovered as quickly and remains below national averages for all vulnerable groups aside from 'Children in Care'

- c) Persistent Absence again shows a strong picture at Primary level and improvement from before the pandemic
- d) Persistent Absence at secondary level is also showing improvement from before the pandemic and is below national average for all students
- e) Students with EHCP and Free School Meals have higher levels of persistent absenteeism at secondary phase
- f) There are currently a number of young people with significant embedded absence in the city. Whilst these numbers are similar to last year in the primary phase they are growing in our secondary schools, specifically for those students below 35%

11. Actions taken to date:

- a) 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 will be supporting Data Analysis and Enforcement and the other will be meeting regularly with schools and modelling Early Help for low attending students
- b) The introduction of half termly primary and secondary Attendance Lead groups to centralise messages and strategy, and to share best practice
- c) The introduction of a Graduated Response to Attendance across the city that describes the supportive routes schools should take to improve attendance
- d) The graduated attendance response details 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.
- e) The introduction 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
- f) The introduction of a centralised Communication strategy across all schools in the city including an electronic leaflet, social media campaign, press release and updated online information
- g) 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.
- h) 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

- i) Regular meetings with CAMHS and designed training for school staff by the Educational Psychology Team on EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) identification and strategies
- j) Ongoing support of the School Wellbeing Service (funded by Schools Forum until 2026)
- k) Embedding of a Wellbeing in Mind Team in the West and North clusters with plans to bring in a further team this academic year
- l) Partnered work with Children's Social Care (including Early Help) around creating best practice approaches to students with Social Workers who are struggling with attendance
- m) Access to a wider and centrally quality assured Alternative Provision directory that schools can commission to enhance their mainstream offer
- n) 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, a reduction in those repeating Year 11 at Danesgate and enhanced outcomes for children and young people in the provision

12. Impact

- a) Increased attendance for all groups in the primary phase to levels below national averages
- b) Reduced persistent absence in the primary phase to levels below national averages
- c) Increased attendance of all groups in the secondary phase
- d) Reduced persistent absence in the secondary phase
- e) Increased access to early help mental health support for all students in the city through the School Wellbeing Service
- f) Further increased access to such support in the West and North of the city

13. Potential further actions:

- a) Develop stronger multi agency working in areas of city with the highest need
- b) Continue to focus on strength of the mainstream offer and appropriate specialist provision carefully commissioned to meet the needs of our young people

Options

14. 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 may become essential parts of our work leading to a need for some or all of their £100000 cost
 - There is a need for intense family working in certain areas of the city that may in the future come as a new request to elected members

Council Plan

15. 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.

Implications

16. 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 that are essential to the 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 likely to be increased use of Fixed Penalty Notices and potentially 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

17. 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

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

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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 Education Needs |
| EHCP | Education Health and Care Plan |
| FSM | Free School Meals |
| OFSETD | Office for Standards in Education |
| ILACS | Integrated Local Area Children's' Services |