

**Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee** 1 October 2024

Report of the School Inclusion Advisor – Inclusion Services

## **Attendance – Mainstream Primary and Secondary pupils**

### **Summary**

1. This report updates the current picture of Attendance across the secondary and primary phase in York. 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 third report of this nature since 2019 and comprehensively covers key indicators for Attendance in the city. This includes the statutory oversight roles of the Local Authority with regards to attendance, and updates regarding responses to increased duties in these areas. Critically it gives a clear sense of the current key challenges and support in place or being considered to meet them.

There is new statutory guidance to respond to this area of National Challenge – ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’

[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/124444/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_(applies_from_19_August_2024).pdf)  
([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))

### **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 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 CYC Attendance team have engaged in half termly attendance meetings with a DFE appointed advisor Kevin Burns.

Half termly School Attendance meetings are held with both primary and secondary settings.

Six weekly multiagency meetings are held encompassing Health, Social Care and wider services.

The Attendance Team have presented on multiple occasions to the Safeguarding Partnership and are in the process of compiling provider commitments to the School Attendance agenda from all partnership members. The safeguarding partnership also hosted a multiagency audit of Attendance cases.

The Attendance Team have presented to GPs within the city on School Attendance to establish stronger working partnerships and understanding of each other's processes and practice.

## Analysis

5. (All data drawn from first five half terms of the academic year 2023/24 with national comparisons drawn from the most recent full year validated data).

### Primary School Absence rates

#### All Pupil Primary Attendance Summary

	<b>CYC</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Yorkshire and Humber</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	94.7%	94.6%	94.5%
<b>Persistent Absentee rate</b>	12.7%	15.0%	15.7%

## Further Analysis

<b>Primary School Absence</b>	<b>2021/22 (%)</b>	<b>2022/23 (%)</b>	<b>2023/24 (%)</b>	<b>National Average For 2022/23 (%)</b>
<b>All students</b>	7.2	5.2	5.3	5.9
<b>No SEN</b>	5.7	4.8	4.9	5.4
<b>SEN – EHCP</b>	12.4	10.6	12.6	10.5
<b>SEN – Support</b>	9.5	7.9	8.2	7.8
<b>No FSM</b>	12.5	4.4	4.3	5
<b>Free School Meals</b>	10.7	9.3	10.0	8.6

## Primary School Persistent Absence analysis:

<b>Categories</b>	<b>CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 (%)</b>	<b>CYC Persistent absence 2023/24 (%)</b>	<b>National Persistent Absence from 2022/23 (%)</b>
<b>All students</b>	12 (16.8 in 2021/22)	12.7	17
<b>No SEN</b>	10.7	11.1	14.9
<b>SEN – EHCP</b>	29.1	33.1	33
<b>SEN – Support</b>	20.7	24.2	25.4
<b>No FSM</b>	8.2	8.2	12
<b>Free School Meals</b>	29.2	33.2	30.5

## Secondary School absence rates

### All pupil Secondary Attendance

	<b>City of York</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Yorkshire and Humber</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	90.2%	91.2%	90.4%
<b>Persistent Absentee rate</b>	25%	25.9%	27.8%

## Further Analysis

<b>Secondary School Absence</b>	<b>2021/22 (%)</b>	<b>2022/23 (%)</b>	<b>2023/24 (%)</b>	<b>National Average for 2022/23 (%)</b>
<b>All students</b>	10.6	9.6	9.8	9.2
<b>No SEN</b>	8.5	8.7	8.8	8.2
<b>SEN – EHCP</b>	23.4	19.5	23.4	16.8
<b>SEN – Support</b>	16.8	17	17.6	14.1
<b>No FSM</b>	7.9	7.8	7.6	7.4
<b>Free School Meals</b>	18.9	19.1	20.3	14.8

## Secondary School Persistent Absence Analysis:

<b>Category</b>	<b>CYC Persistent absence 2022/23 (%)</b>	<b>CYC Persistent absence 2023/24 (%)</b>	<b>National Persistent Absence from 2022/23 (%)</b>
<b>All students</b>	25.1 (26.8 in 2021/22)	25.0%	27.8
<b>No SEN</b>	22.7	22.5%	25.1
<b>SEN – EHCP</b>	44.2	48.6%	43.3
<b>SEN – Support</b>	44.3	44.4%	41.3
<b>No FSM</b>	19.9	18.9%	21.6
<b>Free School Meals</b>	52	52.8%	46.4

### 6. Key messages:

- For primary school data the absence levels for all pupils continues to be better than national averages and comparable to last year, with strong improvement from 2021/22. Students with Special Educational Needs at SEN support level have shown increased absence levels, and this is even more so for students with EHCP plans. This is also the case for families in receipt of Free School Meals.

- All primary Persistent Absence figures are better than most recent validated national averages aside from those for SEN EHCP children where the figure is in line and for those in receipt of Free School Meals.
- For secondary school data improvements have stalled and there are notable increases in school absence levels for students with an Education Health and Care Plan or in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Persistent Absence data is more positive for secondary students overall and for those without a Special Educational Need or in receipt of Free School Meals. Those with a SEN or in receipt of a Free School Meal show a picture of rising absence levels.
- This is in keeping with the Education Policy Institutes analysis from September 2023/24 data that ‘The absence gap between the most vulnerable schoolchildren and their peers has widened further, increasing “underlying inequalities” across the sector.’

#### **7. Actions taken to date:**

- The agreement to maintain the current permanent structure of the attendance team into the new academic year.
- The replacement of the retiring School Attendance Advisor Mark Smith with Stephanie Keenan Logue.
- The elevation of the Attendance Enforcement and Data Officer to a Grade 7.
- The secondment from Ebor Academy of Sam Smart as School Attendance Lead, two days a week for the school year.
- The addition of three days of administrative support to the School Attendance team.
- The strategic leadership of Karron Young, Virtual School Head whilst the School Inclusion Advisor is acting as joint Interim Head of SEND.
- 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 and is particularly considered carefully for children and young people with an SEN or who are in receipt of a Free School Meal.

- The Early Help role has led to 50 cases being modelled across the city with improvements in 90% 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.
- The safeguarding board have held a working group to establish ‘Partner promises’ from members around their contributions to supporting School Attendance.
- 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 and the ICB until 2026).
- Access to a wider and centrally quality assured Alternative Provision directory that schools can commission to enhance their mainstream offer.
- Seven 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 – most recent feedback as follows:

'Thanks for your time this morning. Look forward to hearing about the work you are doing with a focus around the early years. There are other areas looking at this too and they may benefit from hearing about your approaches and successes. As I mentioned there are already areas benefitting from the ideas and approaches you have used including the Venn Diagram to focus on specific groups and helping schools and LAs focus on where they can have a strategic focus and impact. I was using the Venn Diagram approach only yesterday in another area and they were inspired! I also often talk about the engagement you have in the City of York with partners, officers, and services to work in partnership with schools as an example of good practice. I'm sure the work you are doing will continue to have a positive impact for the children and young people of the City of York as well as helping other areas see possibilities.'

## 8. **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 or in line with national averages for all groups of CYP aside from those in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Continue to secure improved attendance figures for CYP without an SEN and/or who are not in receipt of a Free School Meal.

- Maintain persistent absence in the secondary phase for ‘all pupils’ 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 through engagement with other agencies and through the Safeguarding Partnership.

#### 9. **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**

10. There are no options for current action for council members in this report.

#### **Council Plan**

11. 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.

## 12. **Implications**

### **Financial**

None currently.

### **Human Resources (HR)**

None currently.

### **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.

### **Crime and Disorder**

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

### **Information Technology (IT)**

Not applicable.

### **Property**

Not applicable.

### **Other**

None.

### 13. Risk Management

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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**Report Approved**  **Date** 21 August 2024

### 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:

CYP	Child or Young Person
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

## Background Papers.

None.

## Annexes.

None.