

Review of Improving School Attendance Inquiry (September 2015)

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p>Recommendation 2 - That the Director of Children's Services engage with School Governors to establish a special responsibility for one Governor in each school which includes challenging the attendance performance of the school and maintaining a focus on reducing absence levels.</p>	<p>Directors Response: There is a specific training briefing for governors on attendance, available through the governor support unit and guidance has been issued to governors about utilising the committee framework to monitor and challenge attendance throughout the course of the school year. The advantage of the committee framework is embedding a shared understanding of attendance across the whole of the governing body. In schools with good attendance, distributive leadership across the whole organisation generates shared ownership. Schools with poor attendance often place responsibility for attendance with one particular role e.g. assistant headteacher, head of pastoral etc. Targeted Services regularly communicate to governors through the governors bulletin with respect to attendance and the role all governors can play in supporting their school improve policy and practice in order to raise attendance.</p> <p>13 December 2012: Governor training on attendance is being delivered in the New Year and Targeted Services will be taking the opportunity to support the governor's marketplace event.</p> <p>Feb 2014: Advice and guidance about the recent changes to legislation has been provided to all headteachers and governing bodies and the attendance training programme continues. In addition, training across a number of clusters has taken place that has included governors who have also been invited to join Outcomes Based Accountability workshops for attendance. Governors continue to play an additional role</p>	2 – Achieved	

	<p>in the governance of clusters that enables influence on activity and provides a channel for support and challenge, particularly around the obsessions and other cluster priorities, of which school attendance is key.</p> <p>70 of 266 schools have a named attendance governor and where there is none, the chair would take this role (the majority of named attendance governors are the chairs). Without exception, attendance is an item on the head teacher's report at every governing body meeting for discussion and many governing bodies also utilise the sub-committee meetings that shows a distributive leadership/challenge model providing a detailed scrutiny of attendance at the school.</p> <p>September 2015 The guidance for Governing Bodies regarding school attendance has just been reviewed and will be shared with all Governing Bodies over the next Academic Term; the guidance recommends a nominated Governor has responsibility for Attendance. Governor Training continues to be available as part of the Governor Training programme. Based on the actions identified above the Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider this action now completed.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 6 - That the Director of Children's Services engages with National Health Service providers and General Practitioners in Leeds to identify how absence from school for health appointments could be reduced.</p>	<p>Directors Response: A small scale information gathering exercise in the CATTs (Ardsley and Tingley) cluster was undertaken during the Easter term to investigate what types of medical appointments children are missing school for. The findings have been shared with School Health, the lead for Emotional Health and Well-Being in the West North West and the Head of Commissioning Children and Families in NHS Leeds.</p>	<p>2- Achieved</p>	

Next steps planned are to repeat the investigation in a more inner-city/deprived area of the city and to try to expand the data captured to the number of appointments not attended, whether GP appointments were routine or responsive to illness and to establish if children returned to school in the afternoon – the greatest majority of appointments were during the morning.

An Outcome Based Accountability workshop with Children's Services and partners in health is planned for the next academic year. Preliminary discussions have already generated no-cost, low-cost ideas such as community paediatrics including text in their appointment letters advising parents that their child will be able to return to school following their appointment; for GP practice managers to be advised of school holidays to offer routine appointments during these periods which could also increase the likelihood of children attending the appointments.

13 December 2012: Open XS cluster have agreed to undertake an investigation into the types of medical absence across schools in the cluster. This represents a much more diverse locality with much higher levels of deprivation.

February 2014: Unfortunately, the Open XS cluster were not able to undertake this piece of work. Discussions with the CCG have identified that there is little influence possible over this type of absence as the vast majority of appointments during the school day are required because of genuine illness and that routine appointments would not generally be offered to children during the school day. The CCG's have also been engaging in the cluster model of service delivery and are looking for opportunities to pool resources or jointly commission services to tackle health inequalities and key issues for children and young people, such as mental health and emotional well-being as these are a far more significant cause of prolonged absence from school.

	<p>September 2015 The CCG's have invested a significant amount of funding to support the provision of services for children and young people with emotional and mental health issues. This will result in much closer working between the schools, cluster and GP practices and it is anticipated that where issues relating to appointments in the school day are a problem these can be addressed locally. For example in Seacroft Manston Cluster a monthly meeting between the Cluster and GP practice takes place. This type of partnership is developing across many more Clusters in the city. Based on the outcome from the February 2014 update and the progress regarding improved partnership working with CCG and GP practices it is recommended that Scrutiny Committee now consider this action completed.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 11 - That the Director of Children's services investigates the problems associated with transient neighbourhoods. In addition, investigates how the schools admissions system for Leeds could be adapted in our most deprived wards to ensure parents can place their children in schools close to their homes and siblings.</p>	<p>Directors Response: The problem of transient neighbourhoods is one that is limited to a small number of localities in the city, Inner East being one of these. The cluster have undertaken an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop for a host of services/agencies to look at this issue in their locality, which has a particular focus on the impact and needs of the Roma community.</p> <p>A pathfinder project has already begun to allow schools to accept applications directly from parents for in year admission transfers. The aim is to reduce the amount of time taken to find school places for children and young people. All schools will be managing admissions in this way by September 2013. There is a small working group of specialists within Children's Services considering the impact of admissions on children missing education particularly in transient neighbourhoods where there is a high degree of mobility between schools.</p>	<p>1- Stop monitoring</p>	

We will continue to seek to provide additional permanent and temporary school places in areas where families are not always able to secure a place at a reasonable local school. We want all children to have access to a good local school.

13 December 2012 : The pathfinder was to be implemented in all schools by September 2013 but as the pathfinder project has been so successful it is to be rolled out across the city after the October 2012 half term holiday. A number of temporary solutions were also implemented at schools in Inner East and Inner South, two of the most deprived wards, for September 2012 and further proposals for permanent expansions will be brought forward.

Current Position: Following the changes to legislation that came into effect on September 1st, Leeds no longer co-ordinates applications for schools transfers during the academic year.

Building on the success of the pilot scheme, parents now approach schools directly to apply for a place. Since many schools are now their own admissions authority, and make the decisions on who they can admit, this has led to a reduced wait for information on whether a place can be offered. Where a place cannot be offered parents are supported with information on other local schools where there are spaces currently available. If parents continue to be unable to secure a place, the authority contacts them again and, where appropriate, make referrals through targeted services to identify a service that can offer family support.

Work between targeted services, safeguarding and admissions is on-going to ensure there are no gaps in process. This includes the work of Fair Access panels, which support the most vulnerable children and families, including many with high mobility.

Work continues to ensure sufficiency of school places, with 183 bulge reception places provided for the 2013 entry, and a staff restructure to

better support this work.

The admission policy for Leeds community and voluntary controlled schools uses both a sibling priority and a priority for the school nearest to a child's residence to support families to be able to access a nearby school. Whilst there are an increasing number of own admitting authority schools, i.e. Academies, Free Schools, Trusts and VA schools that have their own admission policies, the vast majority have retained a nearest school or feeder school criteria which prioritises local children. In addition the local authority is a statutory consultee on all policies and checks them to ensure fairness and that no children are left without access to a local school. Where any concerns exist we would seek to resolve them with the school.

When looking at school place capacity and planning any changes we consider local clusters of schools and the historical patterns of parental preference. We would always seek to ensure that even where there may be constraints on individual schools, that sufficient capacity is planned into areas so that parents can access a school within a reasonable distance. A new post has recently been created and appointed to within the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Team specifically to focus on the short term need for places, for those within the current round of applications for reception and year 7, and also for in year transfers, to give an increased focus on meeting the needs of these families in their localities. We seek to work with schools to ensure sufficiency of good local places.

September 2015

This recommendation was made before schools became their own admissions authority. The attendance service now has greater involvement in working with children missing education (CME). Attendance officers are now allocated as the lead officers for all cases when a child's whereabouts becomes known, but they do not yet have a school place. This approach has proved very effective

	<p>supporting many families who are new to Leeds, the country or have moved to a different part of Leeds. The attendance officers will support the family until they have a school place. The service supported over 800 pupils during the last academic year who didn't have a school place.</p> <p>Therefore based on the changes that have taken place in the School Admissions process, the changes to the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Team and the support offered to families without a school place the Committee are recommended to consider this action closed</p>		
<p>Recommendation 12 - That the Director of Children's service in collaboration with Cluster Chairs identifies the most effective way of sharing case information with stakeholders involved in the support of children and their families, whilst adhering to required data protection legislation and safeguarding requirements.</p>	<p>Directors Response: There is an on-going review of ESCR and investigation into the procurement of a suitable solution which will need to provide a consistent case management tool for services and practitioners which will maximise the effectiveness and timeliness of communication and understanding about children and families and those who are working with them.</p> <p>The Targeted Service Leaders and Area Heads of Targeted Services are available to support clusters in developing robust information sharing agreements which safeguard children without causing unnecessary barriers to communication and intervention by services.</p> <p>There have been preliminary discussions as to how access to the Children's Services pupil database (not ESCR) could be extended to a range of practitioners that could include school SENCOs, Family Intervention Service and cluster based staff such as Family Outreach Workers.</p> <p>The Troubled Families initiative will also map out and test the information sharing protocols between the authority and clusters/partnerships/services.</p>	<p>1 – Stop Monitoring</p>	

13 December 2012 : Staff working across 9 clusters are now able to make use of the Synergy Gateway to both access child records to view and also to add notes in respect of actions and interventions and this model is being rolled out across the remaining 16 clusters. This is enabling practitioners to see which other services are engaged in work with children and also reducing the need to hold information about children in multiple locations. The Families First Information Sharing agreement has also enabled a much wider discussion across agencies in respect of families and households causing concern to a range of agencies that covers worklessness and crime and anti-social behaviour.

February 2014: An early help module has been developed as part of the framework-I implementation. This module is separate from the children's social work services module but information can be passed between the two modules when necessary.

This will allow all relevant information from different agencies to be captured and stored in one place to allow easy, timely access to up-to-date information for anyone with appropriate consent.

Individual agencies that are involved with a child and family will be able to update their information in real time and anyone searching the system, will, as a minimum, be able to identify who is currently working with them.

Implementation has already begun with key people in clusters trained on the system in January 2014.

Ensuring the most efficient use of the system will be part of the development undertaken with all multiagency partners as the system is rolled out over the next 18 months.

	<p>September 2015</p> <p>The Frameworki system has now been implemented in Children’s Social Work Service and some access is available to some clusters and other services within Children’s Services. There are developmental challenges regarding the more extensive roll out of Frameworki early help module and access to services that sit outside LCC networks.</p> <p>While this action is not fully completed the Committee can be assured that solutions and options continue to be progressed and it is recommended that the Committee consider this action now closed subject to the Director continuing to pursue effective information sharing routes.</p>		
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