

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 6 January 2010

SUBJECT: Attendance and Exclusions Report 2008/09

<p>Electoral Wards Affected:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin-left: 20px;"></div> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)</p>	<p>Specific Implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Equality & Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Eligible for Call-in <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Not Eligible for Call-in (Details contained in the Report) <input type="checkbox"/></p>

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This annual report on attendance and exclusions provides a summary of performance in Leeds schools with regard to school attendance, persistent absence, and permanent and fixed term exclusions.
- 1.2 Leeds has made good progress in reducing permanent exclusions, year on year. The rate of permanent exclusions across both phases of schooling in Leeds 2008/9 was 0.05%, 46 pupils. This is half that seen nationally in 2007/8.
- 1.3 Significant progress has been seen in reducing levels of persistent absence in Leeds secondary schools with the numbers falling by 289 from 4625 in 2005/06 to 3322 in 2008/09.
- 1.4 This overview report draws attention to patterns and trends across the city, performance against targets and highlights the next steps towards further improvement.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Attendance and exclusions play an important role in improving the Every Child Matters outcomes and play a significant part in delivering our key priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan (2009). The link between attendance, exclusion and attainment is well documented locally and nationally. Improvements in reducing exclusions and increasing school attendance will significantly contribute to the achievements of all our children and young people.
- 2.2 The category of persistent absence as a measure was introduced in 2006. In line with all authorities, Leeds is expected to achieve less than 5% overall persistent absence by the end of 2011. Individual schools are not required by DCSF to set targets for persistent absence. However these have been set in Leeds to ensure an upward trajectory which ensures our overall target will be met.
- 2.3 The Inclusion Partnerships were formed in 2008/9 to enhance the locality children's trust arrangements and to strengthen the transformation of previous Area Management Boards (No Child Left Behind) into new broader partnerships focused on the wider inclusion agenda as well as to fulfil the functions of the statutory Attendance and Behaviour Partnerships in each wedge. The AIPs now oversee the adoption of local targets for reducing persistent absence as well as continuing to improve on their excellent track record of reducing exclusions across the City.
- 2.4 Leeds continues to perform well nationally in reducing permanent and fixed term exclusions from school as a result of a strong partnership between governors, school leaders, AIPs and Education Leeds. For example, the percentage of permanent exclusions in Leeds has been below national averages every year since 2004/5 (62% reduction overall).
- 2.5 The effective use of Fair Access Panels ensures successful inclusion of substantial numbers of in year transfers of children and young people including those with challenging behaviour. Through this process, the most vulnerable children and young people were included within their local school. The Attendance Advisors have worked closely together with the Pupil Planning Team to ensure effective mentoring and tracking systems were in place to keep children safe and to monitor progress of individuals.
- 2.6 During 2008/9 the behaviour support teams were commissioned by Education Leeds across the city to provide multi-disciplinary support in localities overseen by the Area Inclusion Partnerships, This built on previous targeted Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) and Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST) to provide support across all five wedges.
- 2.7 The Attendance Strategy Persistent Absence research report highlighted a number of common factors that need to be in place to bring about improvements at an individual school level including greater ownership of the issues, an appropriate and exciting curriculum offer, ownership and following up of patterns of absence as problems emerge, and individual action plans in place for each PA young person. It also recommends that greater ownership is needed at cluster area levels with additional capacity built at the front line through integrated locality teams. These were incorporated into the Children's Services Attendance Strategy for 2009/10.

MAIN ISSUES

3.0 Attendance

- 3.1 Taken overall, significant progress has been made in improving attendance at

schools in Leeds. Attendance in all Leeds schools increased year on year from 2004 until the end of 2007. However the pattern in primary has remained fairly static over the last five years with some slight variations year on year and a fall of over 0.50% to 94.1% in 2008/09. In secondary following the best figures to date in 2007/08 there has been a slight decline in 2008/09 to 91.54%.

- 3.2 Persistent absence rates have increased in primary by 101, from 1,323 in 2007/08 to 1424 in 2008/09. In contrast 2008/09 has seen a marked improvement in the levels of persistent absence rates in secondary schools where the rate has fallen by 28% from 4625 in 2005/06 to 3322 in 2008/09. Despite this improvement more progress is needed at a faster pace in order to match national expectations and to meet our aspirations in Leeds.
- 3.3 Significant progress has been made in some schools where combined attention has brought forth good results. For example 3 secondary schools and 6 primaries meet national targets across all four indicators, attendance, persistent absence, exclusions and fixed term exclusions
- 3.4 Whilst the five year picture shows an improving upward trend at secondary level this has not been matched by primary school performance which shows more fluctuation each year. Schools in both phases have been tackling inappropriate requests for absence from school as evidenced in increases in unauthorised absence levels. Often increases in unauthorised absence in local authorities can be seen as evidence of truancy. However the data in Leeds showed an increase in schools not agreeing to family holidays as well as other authorised reasons (e.g. snow)
- 3.5 It can be seen that significantly more progress needs to be made to improve attendance to the national average and match that of comparable core cities and statistical neighbours.
- 3.6 The focus for DCSF is now on reducing persistent absence (PA) as a strategy to prioritise or target schools. This is well established at secondary level (22 schools) but has only been recently introduced in 08/09 for primary schools (91 schools in 08/09 but this will be 50 in 09/10). Overall improved levels of persistent absence have been achieved in Leeds through an enhanced targeted approach. A Children's Services Attendance Strategy has been adopted which tackles some of the fundamental social and familial constraints which act as a barrier towards improving school attendance.
- 3.7 A more in-depth analysis of attendance in different areas of the city has enabled a range of successful strategies to be used with target schools. For example, the South wedge demonstrated success in supporting children to increase their attendance so they were removed from being classified as persistent absentees. The East wedge showed most success in preventing children from becoming persistent absentees, some of which was a result of the Reach for the Stars programme. Equally at secondary targeted schools the decrease in persistent absence has been twice the decrease seen for all schools. 13 of the 22 targeted schools achieved reductions in 2008/09 and 9 will have already met or exceeded the target (5%) by 2010/11.
- 3.8 Early intervention programmes such as reach for the stars have positively impacted on preventing 385 primary age children from becoming persistent absence pupils. The highest uptake was in the East where 159 young people benefited from the

programme. The greatest improvement was found at an individual school level where the Attendance Strategy team worked in partnership with National Strategy consultants, School Improvement Advisers and SIPs, to provide targeted support and challenge in identified secondary schools.

3.9

With regard to differences by year groups, there was less variation in the pattern of attendance at primary than secondary but a marked difference in Year 1 where attendance had continued a downward trend over the last 3 years. Attendance in Year 5 was highest of all the primary years with absence increasing through Year 6 and then continuing to increase through the secondary years. Similarly persistent absence increased with age with 14% of Year 11 persistently absent compared to 4% of Year 7. Despite these patterns persistent absence fell across year groups in 2008/09.

Table 1
Primary attendance by year group

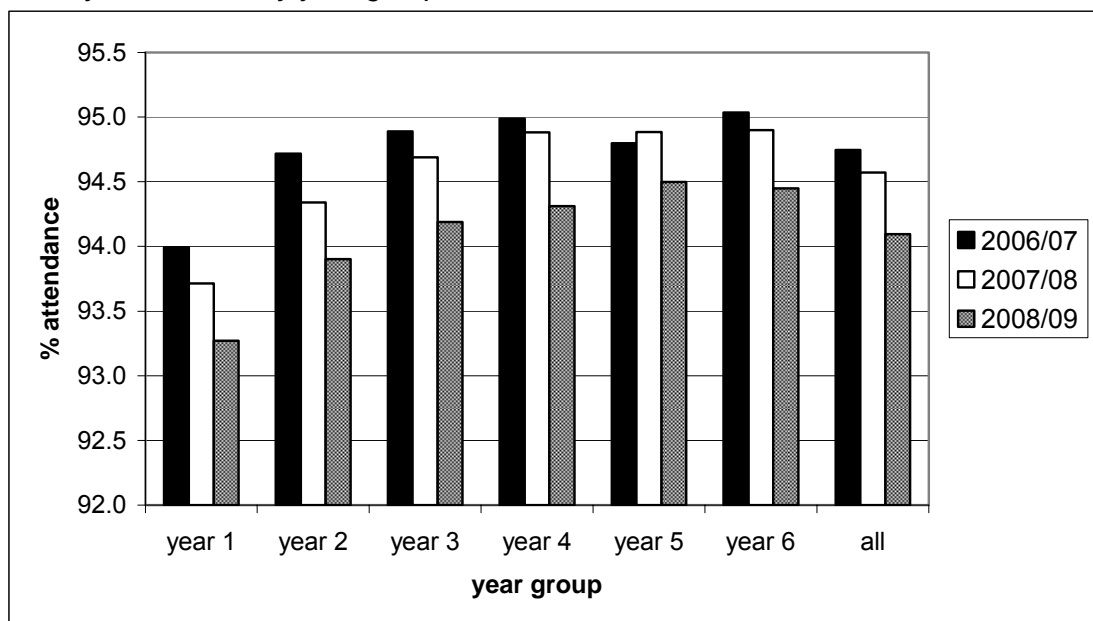
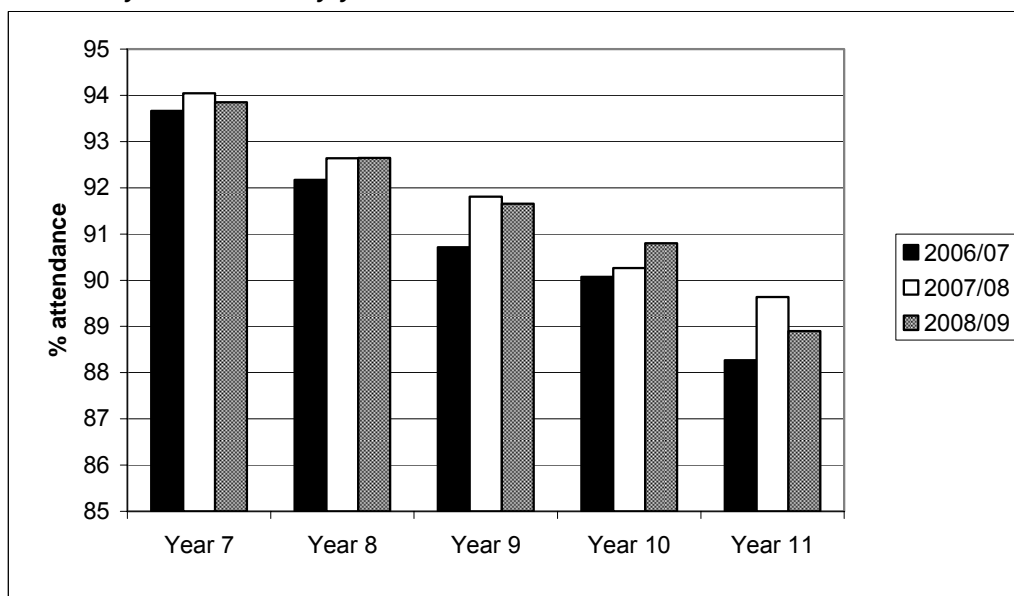


Table 2
Secondary attendance by year



3.10

Taking into account the differences between children and young people, the lowest

levels of primary attendance were seen for these eligible for free school meals, these with Statements of SEN and in particular those in receipt of inclusion funding (Level 2 FFI) who are more than 3 times more likely to be persistent absentees. In 2008/09, there were reductions in persistent absence for those with a Statement of SEN at primary and secondary schools. Those in the care of the local authority had levels of persistent absence from primary below the Leeds average; similar for pupils identified as Black Caribbean. Children and young people from Black Caribbean and Mixed Black African and White heritage had reduced levels of persistent absence.

- 3.11 Positive trends were seen in the improved attendance of looked after children at primary level, where attendance was above 95%, higher than the Leeds average. At secondary phase, attendance has improved for looked after children although this remained lower than the Leeds average.
- 3.12 Overall, all wedges across the city have shown demonstrable improvements in overall school attendance in secondary schools since 2006/07 and overall persistent absence in secondary schools has reduced. Despite progress, the levels of attendance are too low in East, South and West and rates of persistent absence too high. There were differences in performance in attendance across the wedges. For example, attendance at secondary level in the West wedge increased slightly in 2008/09, remained static in the North wedge but decreased across the East, North East and South wedges.

4.0 Exclusions

- 4.1 Excellent progress has been made in continuing to reduce exclusions from school year on year. In particular the rate of permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools for 2008/09 was 0.05% which equates to just 46 young people. The percentage of permanent exclusions in Leeds has been below national average every year since 2004/5.

Table 3
Comparative permanent exclusion data

	Leeds			National
	Target	Number of Exclusions	Percentage of pupils excluded	
2004/05		120	0.11	0.12
2005/06	100	85	0.08	0.12
2006/07	70	65	0.06	0.12
2007/08	40	51	0.05	0.11
2008/09	40	46	0.05	

Source: Leeds data: Education Data Management System; National Data: Statistical First Release

- 4.2 Significant success has been achieved in ensuring that vulnerable children and young people have been included in maintained schools in Leeds. The number of fixed term exclusions continued to decrease in 2008/09, falling significantly by a further 14% since 2006/07. For the second consecutive year there were no permanent exclusions of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. The trend of zero permanent exclusions from Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres was successfully maintained.

Table 4

Comparative fixed term exclusion data: rate of exclusion per 1000 pupils

	Leeds			National ²
	Number of exclusions	Target (rate of exclusion)	Rate of exclusion per 1000 pupils	
2004/05	7612		68.26	51.2
2005/06	7513		68.09	na
2006/07	6527	39	60.15	56.6
2007/08	5837	25	54.37	51.4
2008/09	5018	25	46.34	

Source: Leeds data: Education Data Management System; National Data: Statistical First Release

Notes: 1: not including exclusions from Pupil Referral Units; 2: national data is not available for 2005/06 or 2008/09

- 4.3 With regard to the reasons for exclusion, there was an increase in the proportion of permanent exclusions for verbal abuse of staff in 2008/09 but reductions in the use of permanent exclusions for physical assaults on young people, dangerous behaviour halved, and permanent exclusions for persistent disruptive behaviour reduced by 25%.

Table 5
Reasons for permanent exclusions

Reason for Exclusion	% of Permanent Exclusions			
	Leeds			National
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2007/08
Physical Assault – Pupil	15	20	13	16
Physical Assault – Staff	17	22	22	12
Bullying	9	4	4	1
Dangerous Behaviour*	14	14	7	na
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	18	12	9	31
Damage to Property	6	0	4	2
Drug and Alcohol Related	6	6	0	5
Other	8	2	17	14
Racial Abuse	0	0	0	1
Sexual Misconduct	0	0	0	2
Theft	5	0	2	2
Verbal Abuse – Pupil	2	4	2	4
Verbal Abuse – Staff	0	18	20	12

Source: DfES statistical first release

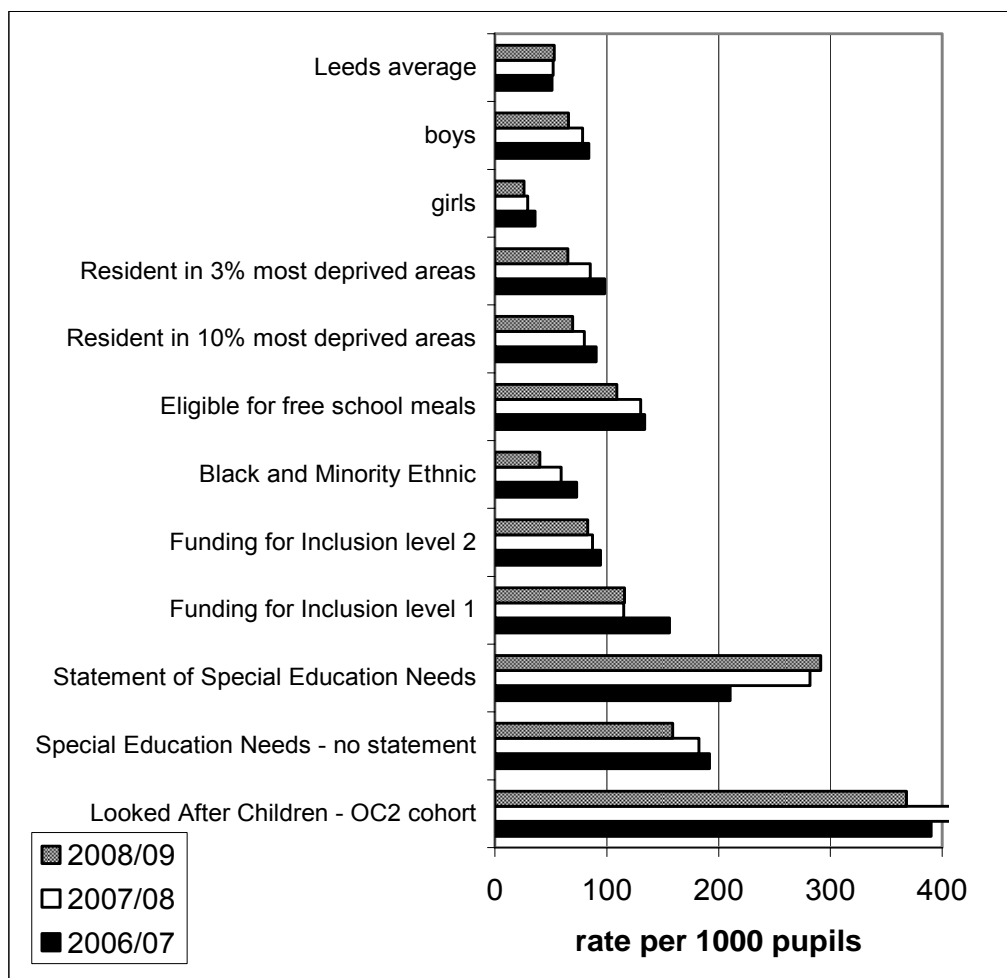
Notes: * Leeds local reason for exclusion

- 4.4 The most significant year group for exclusions was year 9. This accounted for 55% of permanent exclusions. The rate of exclusions for boys remained higher than for girls. The rate of exclusions in the 10% most deprived areas of the city and those eligible for free school meals both rose in 2008/09. For the first time in a few years, there were two permanent exclusions of primary aged children.
- 4.5 With regard to permanent exclusions by wedge, the rate fell significantly in the North East, West and South. Significant progress has been seen in the South wedge over the last three years where the data showed this wedge has moved from being the wedge with the highest permanent exclusions in 2006/07 to the

second lowest in 2008/09. The only wedge where no progress has been seen in 2008/09 was the North West.

- 4.6 There has been a slight increase (10) in the number of fixed term exclusions from Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres. These can be attributed largely to the Central BESD SILC (Elmete) and the North East SILC (6).
- 4.7 There were nine secondary schools which accounted for almost two thirds of exclusions and one primary school with more than 30 fixed term exclusions. Positively 64% of primary schools had no fixed term exclusions in 2008/09.
- 4.8 Fewer young people with special educational needs (without a statement) were excluded on a fixed term basis in 2008/09; although the rate overall remained three times higher than the Leeds average. Fixed term exclusions of Looked After Children remained seven times higher than the Leeds average. Significant progress was made in reducing fixed term exclusions for young people of Pakistani heritage but some groups, for example from Black Caribbean, Mixed Black Caribbean and White and Black Other groups have rates of exclusion which, while reduced, remained twice the Leeds average. The pupil group causing the greatest concern across both primary and secondary are those of Gypsy Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage. This is because persistent absence is highest and attendance lowest for these young people.

Table 6
Fixed term exclusions by pupil



- 4.9 Rates of fixed term exclusions fell in all the wedges of the city apart from the East,

which maintained its lower than average (for Leeds) fixed term rate, and the South where a marginal increase was seen in 2008/09. Reductions in fixed term exclusions have been a consistent target for the East Area Inclusion Partnership over the last three years.

KEY ACTIONS

- 5.0 To build upon successes to date further actions will be taken over 2009/10 to:
- 5.1 Fully implement the Children's Service Attendance Strategy and monitor the impact of the action on individual children, families, schools and across clusters and areas.
- 5.2 Further strengthen the accountability framework of the Area Inclusion Partnerships to meet the Statutory requirements of Behaviour and Attendance partnerships.
- 5.3 Identify and promote 'best practice' in attendance, reducing PA and exclusions in local schools and endorse and celebrate this practice at a local and city wide level, including partnering schools with exemplary practice with those requiring additional support through the school improvement policy.
- 5.4 Further strengthen the Inclusion Chartermark to endorse and celebrate best practise in relation to attendance, PA and exclusions.
- 5.5 Work with partners across Children Leeds to review our policy and practice in early years and primary, with a particular focus on transition from Children's Centres and early years, tracking individual children and families and setting aspirational targets for individual cohorts and groups as part of the whole target setting process.
- 5.6 Alongside our revised strategy and improved action planning at individual, whole school, cluster and area level we will be embarking on a marketing campaign that positively promotes good attendance for all children and young people.
- 5.7 Improve the interrogation of pupil level data and tracking attendance of vulnerable pupils – eg. looked after children, and enabling better targeting of resource and evaluation of impact of intervention.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Improving attendance and reducing persistent absence are core priorities for Leeds City Councils and its schools. Evidence is widely available that demonstrates the measurable link between improved levels of attendance, reduced levels of persistent absence and improved levels of achievement and attainment. Local and National research demonstrates that children and young people attending schools have the very best chance of delivering across the five outcomes.

7.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Attendance and exclusions are both supported by a number of legal and statutory regulations that need to be adhered to. These are all highlighted in the Attendance Toolkit and widely available to all schools.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Board is asked to:

Note the contents of the report and recognise the continued successes and the challenges ahead.

Background Papers

Further detailed information and analyses are available to Board members on request, which are designated as exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(1) and (2).

