



REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 9 March 2011

SUBJECT: Attendance and Exclusions Report 2009/10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The annual report on attendance and exclusions is intended to provide analysis and review of Leeds' data with regard to levels of attendance and persistent absence, permanent and fixed term exclusions in the city. Data is used to show progress across academic years, areas of the city, specific settings and individual pupil cohorts. The report also identifies key areas of activity and their impact on rates of attendance and exclusion.
- 1.2 The report does not seek to single out individual schools for particular scrutiny; however, examples have been provided to illustrate, draw comparative conclusions and provide contextual evidence of the progress being made and challenges remaining in the city.
- 1.3 This report pertains to the attendance and exclusions data for the Autumn and Spring terms only of the 2009/10 academic year. The complete data set upon which the report is based is presented in Appendix 1. This full and comprehensive data set is presented in order to fulfil our reporting responsibilities.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Although the data informing this report is taken from September 2009 to April 2010, it is necessary to recognise that the Transformation Programme in Children's Services is having a significant impact on how school attendance and inclusion is being approached **now**, as services move across from Education Leeds to Children Leeds and a new directorate. The approach championed by the new Director of Children's Services has located attendance at the heart of what the city aims to achieve for its children and young people, where improving attendance is one of the '*three key priorities*' alongside our work with looked after children and our work to reduce levels of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the city. The development of services being planned at the heart of the transformation programme should serve to support and maintain children and young people in their local, universal settings.
- 2.2 A pupil who is persistently absent (PA) has attendance less than 80% by definition. The proportion of children in a school who fall into this category has been a key measure for the DfE since 2006.

- 2.3 2.5% of all secondary absence is due to fixed term exclusion which will therefore contribute to levels of persistent absence (which includes both authorised and unauthorised absence). The decision to exclude is also one which is directly in the control of schools: so reducing these figures will impact directly on overall school attendance.
- 2.4 This report explores in more detail two key themes that become evident on examination of the data: firstly a widening gap between Leeds primary and secondary schools in terms of attendance of pupils. Secondly, the over-representation of some specific pupil cohorts as poor attenders and excludes from school, namely pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- 2.5 Levels of attendance and persistent absence in the primary phase in Leeds remain close to national and statistical neighbours (the gap having been narrowed in 2009/10). However, despite levels of secondary persistent absence decreasing year on year in Leeds (reaching 6.9% in 2009/10 excluding academies), the gap appears to be widening as the pace of progress has been slower than that seen nationally. This is despite the number of secondary schools with less than 5% PA increasing from 9 to 13 in and 23 out of 35 of Leeds high schools reducing their PA in 2009/10.
- 2.6 The high correlation between levels of attendance and attainment is evidenced by more than two thirds of pupils with attendance higher than 95% achieving 5 GCSE grades A*-C including English and Maths, but only 10% of PA pupils achieving such results.
- 2.7 This rate of permanent exclusion in Leeds remains lower than the national rate of exclusions for 2008/09 and over 50% of all Leeds schools now have only 0-1 permanent exclusions. The rate of fixed term exclusions in Leeds maintained schools remains below the national rate of exclusion published for 2008/09. There were two permanent exclusions from Leeds primary schools in 2009/10 matching figures from the previous year and no permanent exclusions from Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres.
- 2.8 However, specific pupil cohorts at risk of poor outcomes – such as Gypsy Roma Travellers, pupils eligible for FSM, are far likelier to be permanently or fixed term excluded; almost three quarters of all permanent exclusions were for pupils with non-statemented special educational needs.
- 2.9 In terms of data relating to individual settings in the city, despite their comparatively smaller numbers, the greatest level of challenge regarding attendance and exclusions is in our targeted and specialist provision, namely those pupils educated in the Key Stage 4 Teaching and Learning Centre and the Central BESD SILC.

3.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and celebrate and endorse the work of the range of partners which include the Area Inclusion Partnerships, clusters, children's services and schools to promote inclusion and good attendance
- Comment and endorse the conclusions and proposed/on-going actions
- Make any further recommendations for future action



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Electoral wards Affected:

 Ward Members Consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Equality & Diversity | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Community Cohesion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Narrowing the Gap | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The annual report on attendance and exclusions is intended to provide analysis and review of Leeds' data with regard to levels of attendance and persistent absence, permanent and fixed term exclusions. Data is used to show progress across academic years, areas of the city, specific settings and individual pupil cohorts.
- 1.2 This report pertains to the attendance and exclusions data for the Autumn and Spring terms only of the 2009/10 academic year. The complete data set upon which the report is based is presented in Appendix 1. This full and comprehensive data set is presented in order to fulfil our annual reporting responsibilities to the Education Leeds Board.
- 1.3 Although the data informing this report is taken from September 2009 to April 2010, it is necessary to recognise that the Transformation Programme in Children's Services is having a significant impact on how school attendance and inclusion is being approached **now**, as services move across from Education Leeds to Children Leeds and a new directorate. The approach championed by the new Director of Children's Services has located attendance at the heart of what the city aims to achieve for its children and young people, where improving attendance is one of the *'three key priorities'* alongside our work with looked after children and our work to reduce levels of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the city. The development of services being

planned at the heart of the transformation programme should serve to support and maintain children and young people in their local, universal settings.

- 1.4 The reasons for irregular school attendance are complex and are often located in a child's home or family circumstances and the wider community, not only school. For some pupils, poor behaviour in school can also be an expression of personal or family situations but can also be a result of their learning needs not being met or their curriculum offer not being appropriate. Levels of attendance and exclusion are key indicators as to how successful schools and settings will be in getting good outcomes for children in terms of their attainment, health and well-being.
- 1.5 Attendance and good behaviour in school are therefore integral to the drive to raise standards in schools and settings and to impact positively on wider outcomes for children and young people. There is a broad range of evidence, including the PA research undertaken in Leeds that indicates sustainable improvements will depend on close partnership and integration between education, school improvement and children's services.
- 1.6 This report therefore seeks to identify key data themes and activity that partners have been engaged in to support Leeds' drive to raise standards of attendance, attainment and promote inclusion.

2.0 **KEY DATA SUMMARY**

2.1 **Analysis of Rates of Attendance and Persistent Absence**

- 2.1.1 In 2009/10 the overall level of secondary attendance achieved was 91.6% including academies and 91.88% excluding academies. The equivalent national averages were 93.16% and 93.24% respectively.
- 2.1.2 The level of PA in Leeds has fallen year on year since this measure was introduced by the DCSF, in 2006/07. For the Autumn and Spring term in 2009/10 the level of secondary PA was 6.9% (excluding academies) and 23 out of 35 maintained schools successfully reduced their overall number of PA pupils in the same period. However, 3 schools were effectively responsible for 21% of the total secondary PA cohort. Those schools were Lawnswood, Primrose and Swallow Hill.
- 2.1.3 There is a strong correlation between the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and levels of PA e.g. Primrose has the highest number of FSM pupils and highest proportion of PA. When comparing FSM numbers and levels of PA, there are notable differences in performance between some schools who have similar FSM numbers.
- 2.1.4 For example, Lawnswood have a similar proportion of FSM eligible pupils to Ralph Thoresby and Corpus Christi Catholic College yet their rates of PA were 15.7%, 4.4% and 3.1% respectively.
- 2.1.5 There is a significant over-representation of pupils in the secondary PA cohort who have special educational needs and in particular pupils described as "School Action Plus" where these pupils are 4.5 times more likely to be a PA pupil. There is also a gap between the attendance of these cohorts in Leeds and that seen nationally where the average attendance of a child with a statement of

educational needs nationally is 90.8% but is 88.7% in Leeds. In the primary phase, there is much less deviation from national data.

- 2.1.6 In the primary phase, it is significant that poorest attendance is seen in year 1. This is a trend reflected nationally and is therefore not just a Leeds issue.
- 2.1.7 Illness is the biggest reason for absence across all phases. Rates of illness in primary and secondary are lower than that seen nationally. This could indicate that schools in Leeds are more inclined to challenge regular absence from school on the basis of parents reporting illness. Medical and dental appointments during school hours also contribute to almost 5% of all absence from school.
- 2.1.8 The level of “*agreed family holidays*” is lower in Leeds secondary schools than nationally, whereas “*not agreed family holidays*” are higher. This further evidences Leeds’ schools willingness to challenge requests by parents to remove their children from school for holidays.
- 2.1.9 However, data reveals that parents of primary age pupils are more likely to extend a period of absence due to religious festivals and also primary children are twice as likely to be absent from school during term time due to requests for holidays which possibly reflects a disparity between parental attitudes to the importance of the primary curriculum.

2.2 Analysis of Rates of Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusion

- 2.2.1 There were 47 permanent exclusions from maintained secondary schools in Leeds in 2009/10, representing a ratio that has remained at 0.11% - lower than the national rate of exclusions published for 2008/09.
- 2.2.3 Over half of Leeds schools now have a rate of 0-1 permanent exclusions. In 2009/10, only one secondary school excluded 5 or more pupils, John Smeaton Community College, which equated to 20% of the total number of exclusions from Leeds maintained schools.
- 2.2.4 The year groups with the highest levels of fixed term exclusions are years 9 and 10 which account for almost half of all fixed term exclusions in Leeds. Increases in the proportion of exclusions were seen for years 8, 9 and 11 in 2009/10, with exclusions in year 10 continuing to decrease.
- 2.2.5 The rate of exclusions for pupils with a statement of SEN continues to rise and these pupils are now 8 times more likely to receive a fixed term exclusion than the Leeds average. This is impacted on by the high level of permanent and fixed term exclusions from the central BESD SILC.
- 2.2.6 For pupils eligible for free school meals, the rate of exclusion increased slightly in 2009/10, following a recent trend of reducing exclusions for this group of pupils. Pupils eligible for free school meals have a rate of exclusion 2.5 times the Leeds average.
- 2.2.7 Although the rate of exclusion for all pupils of BME heritage is lower than the Leeds average there are some groups that are over-represented in fixed term exclusions. The groups with rates of exclusion higher than the Leeds average are: White Irish Travellers, Gypsy/Roma, pupils of Black Caribbean, Other Black,

Mixed Black Caribbean and White and Mixed Asian and White heritage. The rate of exclusion has reduced for pupils of Black African heritage in 2009/10.

3.0 FURTHER CONTEXT - Targets

- 3.1 The move away from centrally imposed targets and into locally negotiated and agreed targets is reflective of a significant change in policy under the new government where the locus of ownership of targets and accountability for outcomes is at a school and cluster/ locality level. The Area Inclusion Partnerships in Leeds will perform a critical role in reporting to the Children's Trust Board.
- 3.2 After 2010/11, there will no longer be a statutory requirement for schools to set individual absence targets and the target to local authorities to achieve a maximum of 5% PA has been removed.
- 3.3 However, the DfE and Ofsted will continue to keep PA as a key indicator and it remains a priority in the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 3.4 Although academies are not required to report on and share attendance data in the way that maintained schools do, some have chosen to do so. This, together with data obtained from Census, reveals that levels of attendance and persistent absence in some academies benchmark with poorly performing maintained schools.
- 3.5 Academies receive the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent for the provision of attendance services. However, Leeds academies have elected not to purchase services from the local authority and so only receive the statutory service (namely the enforcement of irregular attendance through legal and parental responsibility measures). The combination of low attendance and lack of monitoring capacity is a cause for concern. The local authority will be encouraging accountability for all schools through local partnerships and support for improvement through integrated locality working.

4.0 ACTIVITY AND IMPACT

- 4.1 The Attendance Strategy Team (AST) provides a targeted whole-school improvement and statutory function alongside a family support/casework service directed at a cluster level according to need i.e. numbers of PA.
- 4.2 The AST analysed the impact of the use of Penalty Notices for irregular attendance in 2009/10. This analysis demonstrated that an overall 5.4% increase in attendance was achieved and sustained, even 8 weeks after the Penalty Notice had been issued. However, the average attendance of this cohort of pupils was 51.4% at the start of the intervention. When attendance rates are already this low, even this intervention will not impact positively on overall attendance.
- 4.3 The analysis above was made possible by the scheme to extract pupil level data from schools on a regular basis, enabling a more forensic and timely scrutiny of attendance data across individual pupils, localities and the city.
- 4.4 23 out of 35 high schools reduced their PA in 2009/10. This trajectory across the majority of schools is to be celebrated, with particular recognition for

individual schools such as Ralph Thoresby who reduced their persistent absence from 10.9% of their pupils in 2008/09 to 4.4% in 2009/10. Mount St. Mary's made an overall reduction in PA across the same period of 4.1% and City of Leeds achieved a 5.9% reduction.

- 4.5 Over 2009/10 the Attendance Advisers have driven a number of area specific interventions through links with the Area Inclusion Partnerships including the Positive Health Initiative to tackle illness, meetings with Integrated Service Leaders to plan and co-ordinate multi-agency support for all PA pupils and a pilot to embed responses to PA through the Intervention and Children Leeds panels.
- 4.6 There is a strong evidence for the positive impact of both the Fast Track to Attendance and Positive Health Initiatives (PHI). In one high school with 9.6% PA in 2009/10, a Fast Track for a cohort of 20 pupils delivered an improvement of 16.8 percentage points in attendance sustained over a period of eight weeks.
- 4.7 The PHI – delivered in partnership between the Attendance Strategy Team and School Health - for one primary school, improved the attendance of the 21 targeted children by 19.5% percentage points 6 weeks after the intervention.
- 4.8 The AST has also facilitated whole-school attendance reviews in fourteen high schools who were identified as making little or slow progress in reducing PA, including the BESD SILC. Two primary schools have also undertaken this process which involves a full review of practice and procedure and includes the opportunity for staff and pupils to share their views of how attendance and absence is managed in their setting. An action plan is drawn up from the recommendations which is then monitored by the Attendance Strategy Team Advisers.
- 4.9 Under the sponsorship of the new Director of Children's Services, a locality leadership and casework development project will be rolled out across clusters to target attendance, taking a "Top 100" methodology to identifying the children and families in the clusters where poor attendance is a key indicator.
- 4.10 The recent Outcomes Based Accountability events (referred to in a separate report on this Executive Board agenda) have also generated a refreshed and reinvigorated children's services attendance strategy with seven activities for the City Priority Children and Young People's Plan with a wide range of ideas that genuinely cut across the whole of Leeds City Council, children's services and beyond.
- 4.11 To target primary attendance, the AST and National Strategies primary link social and emotional learning (SEAL) Consultants have worked together on a pilot to get primary schools to use SEAL approaches to tackle absence and poor attendance. Phase 1 schools demonstrated an increased level of attendance during the pilot phase which was double the improvement seen in non-pilot schools (overall attendance in the SEAL schools increased by 2.9% for half terms 3-6 compared to an increase of 1.6% across all primaries for the same period).
- 4.12 Feedback from a Note of Visit from the Regional Adviser for Behaviour and Attendance regarding the SEAL pilot stated:
'The LA has provided outstanding support to schools, enabling them to develop their focus on social and emotional skills in order to improve attendance. In both schools

visited, attendance has increased from about 91% to above 94% in two years. This work is an exemplary application of the B&A regional pilot'.

- 4.13 The Southway model of behaviour provision being delivered locally through the delegation of central budget is likely to serve as a template for other wedge areas which will have a direct impact on the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions. All schools in the south wedge (with the exception of the academy) have signed up to an agreement not to permanently exclude and to manage the previously centrally held behaviour resource.
- 4.14 Schools have been supported to reduce exclusions by effective delivery of statutory central services. 46 referrals have been made to other agencies, 38 parenting contracts established, 163 multi agency meetings attended by the service, 113 home visits and 64 detailed re-inclusion plans actioned. Of the pupils worked with, 25 had a pre-existing Common Assessment Framework (CAF). A further 52 families were advised of the role of the CAF in supporting their child, but only 9 families took up the support offered. This work is in partnership with that done by schools, extended service clusters and the Area Inclusion Partnerships.
- 4.15 Collaborative partnerships with the West Yorkshire Police via Safer Schools Partnerships have supported the schools' work in reducing fixed term exclusions particularly where crime may have formally been the reason for exclusion with a particular focus on restorative justice. The Safer Schools Partnerships could also be incorporated into strategies to tackle absence and truancy at a local level as there is little, if any, robust evidence of the effectiveness of traditional "truancy sweeps" which must be considered in light of resource implications for schools, the Attendance Strategy team and the Police.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Leeds data demonstrates a positive impact and improved outcomes for many children and young people in the city. However, the challenge remains to close the gap for identified cohorts of pupils and individual schools where there is a much greater risk of poor outcomes.
- 5.2 This is illustrated by disproportionate levels of attendance and exclusion across specific cohorts of pupils for whom attendance is poor and rates of exclusion are high. This is evidenced by the data that tell us that 3 high schools are responsible for 21% of all the secondary PA in the city: 75% of all exclusions are of pupils with SEN: Gypsy Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage are the poorest attendees and the have the lowest levels of attainment: pupils with SEN but no statement are twice as likely to be a PA pupil: pupils who are entitled to FSM are 2.5 times more likely to be a PA and 2.5 times more likely to have been excluded.
- 5.3 The correlation between poorer outcomes and FSM supports the city's drive to tackle child poverty. School improvement approaches and statutory intervention alone will not succeed in removing the impact of this disadvantage on the lives of children and young people.
- 5.4 Data from specialist provision in Leeds illustrate the disproportionate influence of relatively small settings. However, these settings present the highest level of need and provision for children and young people in terms of both challenge

and vulnerability and the complexity of their needs.

5.5 Recent activity under the direction of the new Director of Children's Services is planned to generate significant change in how attendance is addressed by a range of partners in localities and puts the child and family securely as the clients. It is highly evident that the improvements to attendance and PA and the reduction in the exclusions of children and young people needed in Leeds cannot be delivered by a single service alone and that partnership approaches are key to success.

5.6 As the 'White Paper' and other drivers for change impact on the relationship between schools and the local authority, Leeds is in the process of re-stating the "offer" to schools through the 'i-prospectus' which sets out statutory functions, the core and those aspects of services which will become traded.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Short-term – next 3 months

- 6.1
- Use the Locality Leadership and Casework project to target attendance in the range of 60-70% in every cluster and to deliver intensive work with a smaller number of clusters. This aspect of work is complementary to the realigning of the Attendance Strategy Team.
- 6.2
- Train 30 practitioners in Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) to facilitate OBA activity and action planning at a local level, and implement actions from the city-wide OBA exercises, namely:
 - enhance partnership between Attendance Strategy Team and Early Years to impact on attendance in year 1
 - develop a model of intervention for poor attendance and truancy in localities in partnership with Safer Schools Officers
 - develop "The Pledge" as a high profile and well publicised statement of intent as to how individuals can contribute to improving attendance including the whole of Leeds City Council, voluntary sector and business leaders
 - develop a city-wide incentives programme for parents/carers and families whose children have excellent attendance with a sign up across all sectors
- 6.3
- Engage and secure the support of health/ GP consortia in addressing both medical appointments during the school day and illness as a "quick-win" and a longer term strategy, respectively.
- 6.4
- Issue revised guidance to schools, parents/carers and governing bodies regarding requests for Extended Leave.

Mid-term – next 6 – 9 months

- 6.5
- Continue to support the programme to secure pupil level attendance data from every school to enable timely analysis, intervention and impact
- 6.6
- Evaluate the impact of the Southway model for devolvement of central budget to areas/localities for services to be delivered locally.
- 6.7
- A robust framework for local monitoring, support and challenge and accountability needs to be in place in the absence of central government targets. Ownership of targets must be driven by that framework to ensure

that all area partnerships and individual schools, including academies and free schools, are held accountable for their levels of attendance and PA to ensure both safeguarding and successful outcomes for children.

- 6.8 • An Intervention Task Group with a supporting action plan is in place for the BESD SILC with the support of a range of agencies with specific activity around inclusion and attendance.
- 6.9 • An Intervention Task Group supporting has assisted the Key Stage 4 Teaching and Learning Centre to make more than satisfactory progress since the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of 2010.
- 6.10 • The redesign of services across universal/universal plus/targeted/complex will engender approaches that impact on specific cohorts of vulnerable pupils (although the Green Paper on SEN has yet to be published which has a direct bearing of that aspect of provision).

7.0 RECENT PROGRESS AND LATEST DATA

- 7.1 Early indications in the Autumn term 2010/11 suggest that again the vast majority of schools are making progress in reducing PA. In half term 1, although this data has not yet been confirmed by Census, there were in the region of 600 fewer secondary PA pupils when compared to the same period last year.
- 7.2 Data returned by schools (again, yet to be confirmed by Census and excluding academies) indicates that secondary attendance in the Autumn term was 92.2% which is the highest level of secondary seen in Leeds.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

- 8.1 There are no significant implications for council policy and governance as a result of this report.

9.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It will be important to monitor the potential impact of workforce change issues as we move forward in addressing both attendance and exclusion. The high prioritisation given to this issue across children's services and the broader partnership approach being taken will help to ensure that we do this effectively.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Board is asked to:
 - Note the contents of the report and celebrate and endorse the work of the range of partners which include the Area Inclusion Partnerships, clusters, children's services and schools to promote inclusion and good attendance
 - Comment and endorse the conclusions and proposed/on-going actions
 - Make any further recommendations for future action

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 A full report outlining all the relevant attendance and exclusions data with accompanying analysis is presented as Appendix 1.

