

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	16 November 2021
Subject:	School Attendance Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Education		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary update, to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to school attendance since September 2021.

Recommendation:

That the Committee notes the report

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To update the current situation in relation to school attendance and following up actions from Persistent Absence Working Group.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no additional costs associated with this report. The school attendance statutory functions and the traded offer with schools used to support school attendance in Sefton are contained with existing budget resources and through school buy-in.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): N/A	
Legal Implications: School attendance is mandatory for pupil attendance at school is compulsory and the usual rules on school attendance apply once more. This includes the parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16.	
Equality Implications: The equality Implications have been identified and mitigated.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	Yes
Have a neutral impact	No
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	No

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: Encourages children from our most vulnerable families to attend early years settings and schools. We know children are attending school and accessing education and we want all children to achieve their full potential.</p> <p>Good attendance in the early years' settings help build good habits for the children, it can also help alleviate academic problems later on. If children are regularly absent, they may not be fully prepared for school. Preschool is a time for building the social, emotional, cognitive, and language skills needed for school readiness.</p>
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: As above
Commission, broker and provide core services: As above
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
<p>Drivers of change and reform: Actions undertaken contribute to the continuous improvement for attendance at early years settings and schools including those children who are vulnerable.</p>
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Yes
Greater income for social investment: N/A

Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6605/21) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4806/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Information will be shared at the Education Collaborative Group and the primary and secondary head teachers' associations.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Schools are fully open in Sefton and the Department for Education expect schools, education settings and local authorities to utilise interventions and sanctions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

2. Progress update school Attendance from September 2021

- 2.1 School attendance is a standing item on the agenda at the Education Collaborative Group. Updates are provided from schools both secondary primary and special and any barriers are discussed and debated with ideas being shared. The impact of COVID 19 forms a part of this discussion for example some of the challenges schools and parents are facing in relation to if people have been previously shielded in the lockdown.
- 2.2 School attendance parental responsibility measures and statutory functions are now fully operational. The school attendance panel will resume on the 1st November 2021. The school attendance panel allows an opportunity for families to meet with school and local authority staff to address any difficulties that a family is experiencing that is negatively impacting on a child attending school. At the panel

relevant information is shared between families and on some occasions agencies who are working with the family. Recommendations and interventions are agreed to support the family to improve their child's attendance. A monitoring period will also be established and if there is no improvement legal proceeding may be instigated against the parents for failing to secure regular attendance at schools.

- 2.3 During the first half term Sefton have issued 157 warning letters to parents in relation to school attendance who cannot provide a valid reason for their child to be absent from school. This has resulted in 141 penalty notices being issued. 109 for holidays in term time and 31 for general unauthorised absence.
- 2.4 Communication will be going out to parents from the council about the importance of school attendance. Information will go via the schools and the council's variety of social media platforms.
- 2.5 All Sefton schools are fully open despite some staff and children testing positive for COVID 19 Attendance (snapshot) is at the current time is approximately 93.49% The reason the detail behind the data summary is not as accurate as it should be is due to the fact the DfE have produced sub-codes relating to the absence related code for COVID which affects the council's extraction of attendance data. Solutions to address this are currently being explored as a priority by the Business Intelligence and Data Team
- 2.6 Guidance across Early years settings to encourage attendance has now been finalised produced to support practitioners, leaders, managers, owners and governing bodies. It offers information and practical suggestions around promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children.
- 2.7 Schools are continuing to use the first day response school attendance initiative model of practice. Schools report daily any child who is absent with a social worker.
- 2.8 Since mid-October there has been a marked increase overall in schools' referrals to Complimentary Education, 13 pupils since September 2021. Children access this service when a clinician deems the child is not fit to attend school. This is usually a CAMHS practitioner.
- 2.9 Across Sefton there are a number of children who have not returned to school with mental health being cited as the reason. Some of these children are not accessing any mental health services. Sefton are currently undertaking an audit across all schools to understand the scale of this issue and the senior school attendance lead and the Service Manager for school support Services will be meeting with these parents to try to find a solution to address this.
- 2.10 Sefton Council have reviewed the guidance in relation to children who are accessing reduced education provision through a part time timetable. The guidance is very clear that reduced education provision should only be used in certain circumstances outlined by the Department for Education and short be short term.
- 2.11 From 1st November 2021, the school attendance statutory functions and the traded offer have transferred to Education Excellence. This will strengthen the relationship between school attendance and school improvement.