

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny (Children’s Services and Safeguarding)		
Councillor	Portfolio	Date
Diane Roscoe	Cabinet Member Education	30 th January 2024

DBV (Delivering Better Value)

- Grant application was submitted in July 2023.
- Grant application was agreed in September 2023.
- Delay in grant funding being allocated prevented swift recruitment of staff and has created a time lag on current timelines. A new proposed timeline will be submitted to SENDCIB (SEND Continuous Improvement Board) in January.
- Grant funding timescales of spend have been extended until September 2025.
- Senior leadership absence(s) have delayed strategic decisions impacting on some workstream timescales.
- Recruitment to increase Inclusion Service/Team capacity through the appointment of Inclusion Support Workers has been unsuccessful. Consequently, a new plan has been agreed. This has been signed off by SENDCIB; timescales have been adjusted accordingly.
- Initial meetings with Early Help and Health to discuss next steps for the Graduated Approach (GA) across all four broad areas of need. Dates in place for GA mapping processes across all services.
- Workstream strategic management plan devised and groups to meet fortnightly from January 2024.
- Workstream on communication with families has not started and timelines will need to be reviewed.

SEND

Compliance with the 20-week timeframe for education, health care (EHC) Assessments currently sits at 41.2% for the year, which is an increase of 2% since last reported. November’s monthly figure was 59.1% and this is the highest reporting for the year. The current backlog of cases is 174, this is an increase since the last update due to the team focusing on the 518 statutory amends we need to make for those children and young people in transition year groups. The SEN team currently has 2 vacancies for Casework Officers and the recruitment for these will be complete in January 2024. The Interim Head of Service for SEND has started at the end of December 2024 and the Interim Team/Service Manager SEND. One permanent Senior Casework Officer and an Interim Senior Casework Officer are also in post. There will be a business case proposed for business support within the SEN team to alleviate pressure of the team and increase compliance.

Inclusion

All Inclusion Teams have attended Sefton Local Offer Event organised through the Sefton Carer Forum.

Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain/discuss the Graduated Approach, next steps and guidance around schools to visit to see this in practice.

Follow up sessions for the Inclusion Strategy took place in November and priorities, principles and vision were further discussed, and next steps decided; including virtual/ face to face sessions with parents and carers in the New Year.

All teams continue to support Team around the School project and development of the Inclusion and SEND offer.

Discussions with Early Help to develop the Family Hub training and support offer for SEND and Inclusion, from Early Years to Secondary.

Positive parental feedback about multiagency work and maintaining placements for vulnerable children in schools.

Continuation of training offer from all Inclusion Services.

Alternative Provision (AP) commencing strategy and QA framework has been finalised and initial meetings with a range of AP providers to provide them with the framework and expectations for QA.

Meetings set up to look at joined up consistent ways of gathering pupil voice (links with Children and Young People Board CYPPB).

Hearing Need and Visual Impairment team delivered training for Sefton Aquatic teams to support children with sensory impairments in swimming sessions.

Meetings with Business Intelligence Team have supported collation of sufficiency data that has supported the sufficiency agenda with schools.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) leading on Emotionally Based School Avoidance (ESBA) guidance for parents and schools and offer of support supported by the EP service and Inclusion Consultants (ICs).

ICs working directly with crisis cases to support C&YP back into school offering strategies and supporting school and families.

Adaptive teaching (evidence based EEF) is supporting schools to widen their universal offer to ensure accurate identification of SEND and provide targeted evidence-based interventions. 44 schools have accessed adaptive teaching training so far and more planned Spring term. 9 Schools have accessed Teaching Assistant training this term.

School Improvement

Ofsted: As of 1st December, 95% of maintained primary schools are rated good or better, with 12% outstanding. 100% of the maintained nurseries are good or better. 2/3 maintained secondary schools are good; 1 is Requires Improvement but has recently been inspected and is awaiting its report.

Since the inquest of Headteacher Ruth Perry, and the coroner's decision that Ofsted were partly responsible for her death, the school improvement team has responded by writing to all Headteachers offering guidance and support. The team is encouraging all schools to attend the termly briefings provided by our regional senior HMI and is working closely with other services to ensure any pressures on schools are proportionate and reasonable.

Support for schools: Keeping in Touch (KIT) priority meetings between schools and their professional partner are almost complete; all reports have been quality assured by the SI team and common themes or concerns identified.

There are 10 schools currently on the 'Schools Causing Concern' protocol: 6 primaries, 1 secondary, 1 nursery, 1 special and 1 PRU. 3 schools have been moved from the protocol and 1 has been added this academic year. Schools can be added to the protocol as a preventative measure, sometimes due to a time-limited and specific barrier, as well as due to wider systemic issues.

Bespoke packages of support are in place for schools causing concern, including a termly or half termly challenge meeting where impact is monitored, and support amended where appropriate. Evidence from recent Ofsted inspections shows that LA support is well received and has impact (and in some cases prevented a judgement of SW/SM (serious weaknesses, special measures)).

14-19 Participation:

An application for "Gaps in Provision" funding was submitted to the D for E on the 30/10/2023 in response to the removal of the Traineeship programme and the change in age profile for the Talent Match programme. We are still awaiting the outcome.

Schools are still making steady progress in achieving the Gatsby Benchmarks in relation to standards for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). All secondary schools apart from 1 who have been inspected in 2023 have been judged to be meeting their statutory requirements for CEIAG. An Action Plan has been agreed to address the concerns raised in relation to the school that needs to make improvements.

Early Years

The Early Years Attachment and Trauma project has been a success. All the schools and settings who have accessed the project are due to gain their bronze award in the coming weeks.

Our Early Years Language project (SSTEW – Sustained shared thinking and emotional well-being) is due to host the final celebration session in July. All schools who have been part of the project have seen improved outcomes in terms of their audit and successfully completed the project.

We have successfully supported a number of our private nurseries and childminders to move from inadequate or requires improvement to 'Good'. The LA staff working with them have been very supportive and challenging in ensuring they were all fit for inspection and that the children are receiving good support. All of our private providers are now either rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

Our SEND caseload continues to increase, and we now have 600 children across the Early Years SEND service with 172 Early Years Children accessing high needs funding (HNF). In order to support settings our early notification has been launched. Two master classes for professionals on the importance of informing the service have been held. School support has increased and there is a joint team approach across quality and SEND in schools and settings.

The Early Years team work closely with the inclusion service on delivering better values. This has included multi-agency work on the Graduated Approach document in Early Years – with the launch of this set for September 2023.

Virtual School

Early Years Personal Education Plans (PEPs) have now been finalised, and training has been completed ready for the launch in January.

Following the launch of the FE College and Virtual School Partnership Agreement, we have already seen a reduction in students dropping out, compared with last year.

We have increased the provision of the Well Young Person offer from 3 days per week to a full-time post (equivalent) following last year's pilot.

The Zing study is now underway, with over 200 children involved in Phase 1. This will be the biggest ever study of this intervention.

The Foster Carer Conference (funded by VS) was held in September and was a great success. Two of our children performed a piece of verbatim theatre about their experience of being cared for. They were supported by 'Dramatic Recovery' theatre group, who have now set up a weekly drama group for our children.

Advent calendars (filled with mini books) delivered to Reception/ KS1 children

Books For Birthdays. The Virtual School has funded a book voucher for each child's birthday. The Social Worker will use this to buy a book for the child and write a message inside as a birthday gift.

Sefton Superstars (formally 'No Limits' celebration) planning underway (22nd March).

The quality of PEPs continues to improve, and the return rate is currently 92%

Attendance is, overall, above national average. However, there is a concern about Years 9-11. An incentive programme was put in place for the current academic year, with termly rewards available, and a further incentive for the 2 weeks leading up to Christmas. The effect will be assessed in January.

The Virtual School is working with a designated SEN Caseworker for Cared For children with an EHCP to streamline processes and ensure that school provision is appropriate to meet needs.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Sefton's overall attendance during the first term has improved. In December 2023 Sefton's overall attendance was 92.7%, in comparison to December 2022 the overall attendance was 91%. The persistent absence of pupils in December 2023 was 18% in comparison to December 2022 which is 20% which is an improvement. The table below shows the first term across the neighbouring LA including primary, secondary and special schools.

LA	School	Attendance rate	Overall absence rate
Knowsley	Primary	94.1%	5.9%
	Secondary	88.9%	11.1%
	Special	84.3%	15.7%
Liverpool	Primary	94.5%	5.5%
	Secondary	90.8%	9.2%
	Special	86.8%	13.2%
Sefton	Primary	94.1%	5.9%
	Secondary	90.7%	9.3%
	Special	86.7%	13.3%
Wirral	Primary	93.7%	6.3%
	Secondary	90.7%	9.3%
	Special	86.0%	14.0%

The message is consistently conveyed that School Attendance is everyone's business. Pathways are beginning to align in early help, social care, youth justice, health and via the integrated front door.

For those persistent absent pupils not known to frontline services they will be discussed and triaged in the targeted support meetings and advice and guidance will be given by the School Attendance Support Worker and an attendance support plan will be put into place.

Sefton promote the importance of good school attendance through the Education Collaborative Group (ECG) that meets each term. Updates include data and public health messages, school nursing service, voluntary community sector, headteachers, Early years, SEND, Virtual School, Youth Justice This meeting creates a joined-up approach with both internal and external partners.

We have a new team around the school early help model of multi-agency working in clusters that addresses poor school attendance across the local area.

We have increased the number of staff now in the School Attendance Support Team. This enables us to provide a Single point of contact for all schools including the academies.

We have established an attendance network forum for discussions. Chesterfield High School is recognised by Sefton as having very strong attendance practice. The head teacher has presented and shared their approaches, interventions and initiatives that have improved attendance and reduced persistent absence. His next session will focus on "**Attendance and the SEND review**".

The LA Education Safeguarding Lead will deliver a session in relation to the learning from local childcare practice review in Sandwell focussing on "**Education Neglect.**"

Sessions are being delivered to schools on the effective use of penalty notices (January 2024)

Guidance is being developed to Screen for Emotionally based school avoidance that includes strategies that are being put into place.

Good practice through our attendance toolkit has been shared across the school improvement groups.

Sefton have worked with all schools, including academies, to ensure robust and regularly reviewed attendance policies are in place. These policies reflect the views of pupils and parents, set out clearly the expectations, roles and responsibilities for parents, pupils and staff, explain how absence from school will be monitored and managed, how the school will intervene when a child's attendance becomes a cause for concern and how good attendance will be celebrated.

Governors have received a presentation on DfE guidance "Working together to Improve attendance" focused on the expectations of school leaders, governing bodies, and academy trusts. This session will be repeated in January 2024.

Through our Education Portal that the majority of Sefton Schools are signed up to, we send out weekly newsletters covering both local and national priorities relevant to the time of the school year.

We have established a system to convey messages to parents/carers about the importance of school attendance through campaigns using a variety of social media platforms. (September 2023)

There is now a single point of contact (SPOC) for each school and meetings are taking place. Data is provided to the SPOC prior to the meetings and shared with schools and there is some discussion around understanding data trends at a pupil level and the challenges for that particular group and possible early interventions. An agenda is prepared in advance by School Attendance Team to ensure consistency in the approach and outcomes to be achieved.

Schools are supported by the School Attendance Support Team to make referrals where relevant to the Early Help Hub which is part of the Integrated Front Door and MASH team. Schools also attend the Early Help Partnership Group meeting which is made up of partners who are all part of the wider Early Help System. This enables schools to see what is available to families needing support and how to access these.

Family hubs using a whole-family approach need to continue to be developed providing a single access point to integrated family support services across health (physical and mental health) and social care, as well as VCS and education settings.

We have employed 3 new School Attendance Early Help Workers who are managed by the School Attendance Support Team ensuring referrals are appropriate and relevant with school attendance being the primary issue.

We have recruited an Education MASH Liaison Officer who checks attendance on all referrals that come into Sefton via MASH and Integrated Front door. This post offers feedback to schools on referrals.

All Early Help plans are Quality Assured by the LA via the Supporting Families Programme team as improved school attendance is one of the key outcomes / regressions checks that must be achieved to achieve payment by results.

Should all efforts outlined above fail to improve school attendance then the pupil is referred back to school for them to initiate a meeting at the LA School Attendance Panel. Parenting Contracts are issued at the panel. If the parents do not attend, they are also issued with a parenting contract (this has been in place since September 2023) and a monitoring period is put into place. If there is still no improvement within the specified period, legal proceedings will commence if there is no reasonable justification for the child being absent from school.

Prior to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence (not leave in term time e.g., holidays) the school must show evidence of what interventions have been put into place to bring about an improvement in attendance.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, schools are supported by either the School Attendance Support Team or Early Help worker to make a referral into the MASH. Whatever the outcome of this is, the school will continue to be involved as a multi-agency partner via a CIN (children in need), CP (child protection), or Youth Justice Plan where school attendance remains a concern.

Persistent absence is addressed across the Safeguarding partnership level of need document and supports professionals when making decisions about what level of support a family needs and what tools and other agencies are available to support this work.

Since September the Children Missing Education (CME) Coordinator meets with the missing from home team fortnightly to discuss recent children, information is shared and children missing education because of poor school attendance are identified and supported. Children are referred over to the School Attendance Team and an individual attendance support plan is implemented. The attendance plan is closely monitored and fed into the child's ETAC plan. The development of the multi-agency Exploitation Team around the Child Approach (ETAC) assists with the identification and planning when there are concerns about a child or a young person being exploited. The CME Coordinator sits on the Contextual Safeguarding (ETAC) Panel, this panel focus on multi-agency information sharing, intel gathering planning, intervening and disruption.

Pupils at risk of severe PA are supported in the same way as those who are PA outlined above.

Understanding and utilising data effectively at a pupil level helps us to identify challenges for a particular group and what can be done to address these.

We have a dedicated SEN School Attendance SPOC who works closely with those who have an EHCP plan or are on the pathway. Termly Targeted Support Meetings across this cohort and specialist provisions enables us to better understand them and share good practice. For those on an EHCP attendance is a priority.

The School Attendance Support Team work closely with the school nursing service for those children whose parents are citing they are absent from school due to medical reasons.

Our school attendance panel remit focuses on what support is in place for pupils that will address breaking down barriers that are causing severe persistent absence.

Legal interventions are instigated following attendance at the LA School Attendance Panel. There is a period of monitoring following this by the School Attendance Workers who will then prepare and collate information necessary for Legal Interventions

The Early Help Workers based in the School Attendance Support Service will be allocated children from the integrated front door whose attendance is 50% or below (severely persistent absence). Their assessment will consider the needs of the whole family and identify barriers that are preventing the child from attending school. The plan will outline the support required to bring about an improvement in attendance/reduction in persistent absence.

The SEN School Attendance Worker works closely with Sefton SEN schools and provision, the PRU and Youth Justice Team. Those pupils are identified via data provided by the Business Intelligence Team and cohorts are monitored and good practice shared.

Termly targeted support meetings take place and where relevant specialist SEN / Youth Justice Team support services will be part of the whole family plan with appropriate interventions, actions and outcomes recorded.

The worker allocated to the Youth Justice team spends a day a week with the team looking at the cohort and can identify support for common issues as data from this cohort is matched with SEN and care data. Peer guidance and support is offered across sectors.

We have established a Multi-Agency Education planning meeting for the youth justice cohort whose attendance is a cause for concern and other vulnerabilities are identified via data.

Severely PA pupils are discussed at the targeted support meetings and what plans are in place. Where there are safeguarding concerns a MASH referral takes place. Our MASH Education Liaison Officer will liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Leads within the school that the child is on roll at. School will be part of the children and family assessment and part of the multi-agency CIN or CP plan.

We are starting to see more detailed interventions in addressing persistent absence in the planning for children.

School attendance is integral to the Sefton Level of Need document with severe PA being considered at Level 4.

The IDAMS system is being used by the Business Intelligence Team to report on specific school types – Primary, Secondary, SEND and PRU. This is currently used for statutory school age children.

The system also provides a platform to report on characteristics such as EHCP, SEN Support, CLA (children looked after), PLAC (previously looked after children) and FSM (free school meals). Reporting on these characteristics will provide insight on how to provide targeted support for set groups of children.

The team around the school model which is currently a pilot in Sefton operates on a geographical footprint with a cluster of schools. This is a multi-agency group of professionals from education, early help, social care, health, police, Youth Justice Service, probation, DWP and other commissioned services and has a data dashboard which is utilised to inform the meeting on identified risk and cohort concerns.

The Service manager for Attendance also has responsibility for children missing education, school admissions oversight of managed moves, school organisation (pupil place planning) the exclusion process, governors. Aligning these services allows the systems to be joined up. Being managed under one service ensures all the systems are aligned, joined up and robust, preventing children being lost in a system.

There is a multi-agency group chaired by the CME coordinator who meet fortnightly to discuss children missing education and to identify who is the most appropriate professional to take a lead for the case, based on the individual circumstances of the child or young person. Membership of the group include CME Co-ordinator, EHE/Complementary Manager, School Nursing Service, Head teacher, Career Connect, Educational Psychologist and a representative from SEND and Early Help,

CAMHS. Information is presented to the panel to inform the decision making about what provision is appropriate.

We work closely with the virtual school and have employed a School Attendance Worker who works only with this cohort. We facilitate a 'first day response' initiative where school refer these pupils to this worker who will facilitate a home visit on the first day of absence. All of the information is recorded to the liquid Logic module therefore strengthening information sharing.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE

The secondary preferences for September 2024, now that all LA's data has been imported, show that the pattern hasn't changed much with the massively oversubscribed schools and Salesian & Sacred Heart at the other end of the spectrum. Kings Leadership Hawthorne's is under the published admission number on 1st preferences that will probably be down to the 'not yet applied' within that area. Hillside are doing very well again. Both Kings leadership and Hillside have been recently judged as good schools after a long period of requires improvement.

Further analysis will be undertaken for each planning area and correlate that to the Year 6 figures from October census as to what the picture is looking like.

APPEALS

There have been 157 in year appeals prepared since September 2023. All shortages of places are now admitted through the in-year fair access panel.

GOVERNOR SERVICES

The campaign to recruit governors was very successful with 29 people from the Sefton Community making contact about being a governor. We are undertaking a review of Governor Services with support from a member of the national governor's association.

EXCLUSIONS

Up to 21st December 2021/22 – 2,949 sessions lost to fixed term exclusion across 485 pupils.

Up to 21st December 2022/23 – 4,610 sessions lost to fixed term exclusion across 656 pupils.

This basically translates to a 36.03% rise in sessions lost across a 26.07% rise in number of individual pupils excluded, meaning a higher-than-average amount of sessions lost per pupil. This number would be higher if we didn't have a fair access panel that facilitates managed moves to prevent exclusions. There is currently an inclusion strategy being developed associated with a revised graduated response to preventing exclusions.

Both across the northwest and the country there is a rise in exclusions.

We have no behaviour support team in Sefton working directly with children and families which is a gap.

PUPIL PLACE PLANNING

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that they provide sufficient school places. Decisions on how to achieve this are taken at local level, based on forecast pupil numbers across the planning areas (PAs) in a local authority. We are at risk of being unable to provide sufficient school places in Maghull to support the new housing there and work continues to address this.