

**Agenda Item  
7**



**Report Status**

For information/note   
For consultation & views   
For decision

**Report to Haringey Schools Forum: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Report Title: Working Together to Improve School Attendance**

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**Purpose:** To provide an update to the report presented to Schools' Forum in October 2023 and seek approval for the allocation of the additional CSSB funding of £122k to support the work of the Education Welfare Service. The new duties for the local authority are outlined in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#) and the previous report outlined how the Education Welfare Service will work with all schools to ensure that the responsibilities for schools attendance are met. The table of responsibilities for the local authority, for schools and for parents are attached as Appendix A.

**Recommendations:**

1. To note and comment on further work undertaken to meet the new duties including the local authority engagement in a DfE Deep Dive.
2. To note and comment on the proposals for the core offer to all schools from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 which is attached as Appendix B. The core offer, subject to the agreement of the additional £122k of CSSB will ensure that schools are supported beyond the statutory duties of the local authority. Without the additional CSSB, the local authority will not be able to provide this level of support to schools.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The local authority has a range of statutory duties regarding attendance for all schools. These were set out in the previous paper to Schools' Forum and are laid out in Appendix A and C of this paper.
- 1.2 The Education Welfare Service is funded through the councils general fund, income from traded services and fixed penalty notices and through the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)
- 1.3 At the Schools' Forum meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023, members unanimously agreed the transfer of £122k from the schools' block to CSSB for the Education Welfare service for one year only. This reflected concerns over inconsistency in the quality of the service, a lack of progress with service development and little or no sustainable changes noted by schools in addressing historical issues.

## **2. Work undertaken by the service last academic year.**

- 2.1.1 In addition to work set out in the October Schools' Forum paper we have engaged in a DfE Deep Dive. This involved the completion of a comprehensive self-assessment prior to a full day visit by a DfE adviser on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The day included interviews with the Interim EWS lead, Early Help, SEND and Virtual School colleagues as well as a discussion regarding the local authority's strategic approach to improving attendance. The adviser also tested the accuracy of the self-assessment. The self-assessment and the report from the adviser have now helped us to draft an action plan which will be signed off and monitored by the CYPs management team.
- 2.1.2 As part of the self-assessment, we recognised some areas of strength but also some areas of work that are very underdeveloped. This includes our communications work with parents to highlight the importance of good attendance and their duties as outlined in Appendix A.
- 2.1.3 Following the resignation of the Service lead, we advertised the permanent post. Three candidates were shortlisted for interview and a panel (including a Headteacher representative) conducted the interviews on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The panel unanimously decided that we did not have the right candidate and so agreed not to appoint. Subsequently, we also interviewed candidates for interim cover.
- 2.1.4 The role was previously line managed by the Education Service Manager post. This post has been vacant since the postholder stepped up to be the AD Schools and Learning. This structure meant that the EWS lead post was evaluated at a lower salary than a Head of Service. We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise and re drafted the job description to reflect the additional responsibilities and a change to the post reporting directly to the AD Schols and Learning. As a result, we will now re advertise.

- 2.1.5 As a result of new vacancies in the team, we are in the process of arranging interim EWO cover and arranging the recruitment process for the substantive posts.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1 School attendance has been impacted by Covid and other factors over the past three years. Haringey's overall absence rates increased from 4.6% in 2018-19 to 7% in 2022/23. For secondary schools it increased from 5.1% to 8.0%.

The overall increase of +2.4% in Haringey was less than the +2.8% increase in England and the +2.7% in Inner London.

The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent in this period has almost doubled in Haringey with 1 in 5 pupils (20.8%) being absent for more than 10% of the year. 1.3% of Haringey pupils were severely absent (attendance 50% or below) in the first two terms of this academic year. This has also doubled since 2018/19. It is however lower than the national and Inner London percentage. The school with the highest PA had 42.2% of their pupils being absent for more than 10% of the year.

- 3.2 Thirteen schools (5 secondary and 8 primary) had less than 92% attendance in the academic year 22/23. The lowest attendance in a secondary school was 88.5% and the lowest in primary 90%.
- 3.3 Year R had the lowest attendance of all year groups, followed by Year 11.
- 3.4 Pupils from Irish Traveller and Gypsy Roma communities and Irish and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils had the lowest attendance.
- 3.5 We have also analysed SEN pupils' attendance by school, showing the attendance of all pupils, EHCP pupils and SEN support pupils. This analysis will inform joint work between EWS and the SEND team in the next two terms. SEND pupils persistent absence was 34.1%. This was lower than the national figure but higher than London at 32.8%
- 3.6 Unauthorised absence in the borough was 2.67% with the highest UA in a mainstream school being 7.94% and the lowest being 0.19%.
- 3.7 Now that we have an accurate self-assessment in place and the right data analysis, we can appropriately target support and identify good and effective practice to share across our schools. Addressing the inconsistency in the data will improve the overall performance. This will also require effective multi agency work with pupils and their families.

### **4. Looking forward**

- 4.1 In addition to the work plan outlined in the October paper to Schools' Forum we will work with the DfE to ensure that our action plan is fully implemented, using the pan London support networks that are provided.
- 4.2 An attendance working group will be established to have oversight of the work of schools and the local authority and monitor improvements.
- 4.2 Appendix C summarises the core offer that the DfE expect to be provided free of charge to all schools in the area. It also outlines areas that the LA could continue to trade. To reflect the additional £122k of CSSB some of that potentially traded offer has been pulled into core offer outlined in Appendix B. Some of the proposed core offer has previously been for traded schools only. If Schools' Forum decide not to allocate the additional £122k then the local authority will only deliver that which is statutory as set out in Appendix C.