

The Children and Young People's Service

**Report to Haringey Schools Forum:
12th October 2023**

Report status

For information/ notes

For consultation and views

For decision

Report Title: Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Authors:

Jane Edwards
Assistant Director Schools and Learning
Email : jane.edwards@haringey.gov.uk

Report authorised by:

Ann Graham
Director of Childrens and Young People's Services
Email: ann.graham@haringey.gov.uk

Purpose: To provide a summary of the new duties for the local authority as outlined in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#) and to review how the Education Welfare Service will work with all schools to ensure that the responsibilities for schools attendance are met. The table of responsibilities are attached as Appendix 1

Recommendations:

1. To note and comment on the work already undertaken to improve accessibility, quality and efficacy of the EWS.
2. To note and comment on the proposals for the core offer to all schools from 1st April 2024.

1. Introduction

1.1 The local authority has a range of statutory duties regarding attendance for all schools.

A local authority must:

- make arrangements to identify children not receiving education (section 436A, Education Act 1996).
- send a written notice to a parent whose child of compulsory school age is not receiving suitable education, followed by a school attendance order if they do not comply with the notice (section 437, Education Act 1996); if exercising its power to prosecute a parent for a child's non-attendance (section 446) the local authority must consider whether to apply for an education supervision order (section 447).
- publish a code for penalty notices to address poor attendance and administer the penalty notice regime according to the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and subsequent amendments.
- improve attendance where schools report absence to them according to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- investigate the whereabouts of pupils who have poor attendance and are at risk of being deleted from the schools' admission register (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).
- comply with all its statutory obligations under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

The service also works with children and their families who are on the elective home education register and also undertakes child and chaperon licencing.

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 12th 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 Following the meeting of Schools' Forum in January, the EWS has been proactive in implementing a service improvement plan and inviting feedback from settings regarding the work of the EWS. There has been a focus on

sharing good practice through our school visits and through the EWS Attendance Forums. There has been a key focus within the team on raising aspirations and having a greater sense of accountability and performance management, led by the Acting Senior Education Welfare Officer.

2.2 Over the last six months the service has;

- Evaluated and redeveloped the EWS internal systems to make the service more efficient and consistent and accessible. A duty officer system has been established as part of this.
- Focussed on the development and embedding of a robust and consistent approach across the service, in line with our offer/service delivery. This has been done through regular and proactive line management and supervision.
- Staff training for all has looked at the ways of working, expectations of service delivery and updating knowledge and skills.
- Half termly consultation with an allocated EWO has been offered to all non-traded schools from April 2023, in line with the DfE guidance –working together to improve school attendance across the borough.
- Termly EWS Attendance Forums have been made available to all schools. 68 attended the Attendance Forum 24th Jan 2023 and 70 attended the May event. 35 attended July 2023 (strike day). An online poll after each event has helped shaped content and delivery.
- EWS evaluation feedback forms were sent out to all traded schools in the spring and summer terms, to elicit feedback and ensure the required support was delivered. However, it is important to capture the experience of all schools and as such, feedback has been requested of all schools at the beginning of this term. This gives an opportunity for ongoing feedback and improvement towards the service.

2.3 Recruitment to the Principal EWO role has commenced.

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.

- 3.2 In the first two terms of 2022/23 we have seen some minor improvements in attendance across the borough. However, the range of persistent absence across mainstream schools is from 6% to 39%, Irish Traveller and Gypsy Roma pupils had some of the lowest school attendance figures followed by Mixed Black Caribbean and White pupils. SEN groups also have low attendance, with PMLD, PD and SEMH groups being the lowest attendance of primary needs. Reception Year group was the lowest attended of all the year groups.

4. Looking forward

- 4.1 The local authority now needs to lead on the strategic approach to improving school attendance and work with schools to develop a robust attendance strategy to reduce persistent absenteeism, in line with the new DfE guidance. We are in the process of completing a self-assessment ahead of a Deep Dive from an adviser from the DfE. The self-assessment has already identified key actions which we need to complete immediately. This includes RAG rating our schools to target support where it is most needed and putting together a comprehensive Comms plan to reach parents and carers. We also need to ensure that multi agency working accurately identifies barriers to attendance, with all services understanding the importance of attendance and their role in securing an improvement when it is not good enough. Improving attendance and reducing the vulnerability of poor attenders needs to be flagged within an overarching education strategy that seeks to reduce inequalities and promote equity for all our children and young people in the borough. Targeted work may also include an action plan, when appropriate, for schools as part of our statutory work.
- 4.2 In order to improve our service and have a positive impact on attendance we have reviewed the summary of responsibilities for school attendance (Appendix1) to create a new core offer to all schools. At the same time, we have reviewed our current traded offer to allow more flexible working with schools based on need.
- 4.3 We will provide regular updates to all schools on progress made in increasing absence and reducing persistent absence.

- 4.4 We will continue to deliver Attendance Forums /training to support attendance officers, identifying good and effective practice and encouraging schools to share successful strategies.
- 4.5 We will review the work undertaken with parents and carers, clearly identifying the universal offer and what is effective in a more targeted approach.
- 4.6 Identify ongoing training needs of the EWS team, alongside robust feedback and performance management.
- 4.7 We will work with schools to co-produce a whole school attendance approach and policy.