

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 31 January 2023

Improvement in School Attendance

**Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments**

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the interim response to the 2 action points from the motion on attendance at full Council in October 2022. (Please see 3.1 Background Information)
 - 1.1.2 Note that a full committee report to review progress on the Attendance Thematic Review 2022 will be shared with Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2023

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Report

Improvement in School Attendance

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an interim statement on attendance in schools, in response to the motion at full Council in October 2022, and in advance of the full report on attendance due in March 2023
- 2.2 The report confirms that the local authority and schools track attendance by SIMD demographic and by low attendance (below 85%); further that supports are in place for learners to improve, though more improvement is required, particularly post-COVID.

3. Background

- 3.1 This report responds to the request for information on the two actions from the motion noted below:
 - 1) Ensuring schools identify children who have had less than 85% attendance in the years following covid in order to support them.
 - 2) Whether schools are providing tailored catch-up plans for the children noted above with specific measurable achievable learning outcomes for each child; Whether provision of private one-to-one tuition or small group tuition is available outside the normal school day.

Where the above is not in place, what steps the Authority can take to assist Headteachers in providing pupils with increased assistance to improve attendance and, ultimately individual attainment.”

4. Main Report

- 4.1 *Ensuring schools identify children who have had less than 85% attendance in the years following covid in order to support them.*
 - 4.1.1 All schools have an Attendance Policy, based on the local authority policy and which reflects their context. This sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff to ensure tracking and monitoring, as well as guidance on the

importance of developing strong, positive relationships with parents and carers, taking early intervention and action based on accurate data.

4.1.2 Headteachers also receive monthly tracking reports from the local authority which highlight their relative and actual performance in maximising attendance for pupils below 85%. Schools are shown in learning communities, and those making progress are highlighted. It also reflects progress each school is making in relation to its LA comparator schools, i.e. those with similar SIMD. Head Teachers own the data and use it to identify and support children and young people in their schools appropriately in order to meet their needs.

4.1.3 The FOCUS tool is available to all Headteachers to explore their performance against Comparator Schools, and to work together to share good practice.

4.2 *Whether schools are providing tailored catch-up plans for the children noted above with specific measurable achievable learning outcomes for each child;*

4.2.1 All children are subject to GIRFEC tracking and monitoring. Any child who falls behind in learning for whatever reason, including low attendance should be identified and supported in whichever means their teachers identify. This may include additional literacy or numeracy and will be recorded in their Support Plan.

4.3 *Whether provision of private one-to-one tuition or small group tuition is available outside the normal school day.*

4.3.1 The forthcoming Thematic Review of Attendance will quantify how many of these interventions are in place.

4.4 *Where the above is not in place, what steps the Authority can take to assist Headteachers in providing pupils with increased assistance to improve attendance and, ultimately individual attainment.”*

4.4.1 Educational Research confirms that the most impactful strategic action to improve attendance is to employ specialist staff who build strong, positive relationships and can take preventative and have early interventions with families to support them to get children and young people to attend school. High quality professional learning and sharing of practice are crucial for the staff who undertake this role, and is provided by the local authority.

4.4.2 Attendance Conferences now take place and an Attendance Network has been established to develop the skills and experience for staff whose remit is improvement in attendance.

4.4.3 If a child's attendance does not improve despite a range of supports and interventions, a formal report to the Children's Reporter would identify any role that social work may have in ensuring that parents support their child to attend.

5. Next Steps

5.1 Provide a full review on progress on Attendance in March 2023

6. Financial Impact

6.1 There may be costs involved in the Catch-up Learning Pilot.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

8. Background reading/external references

9. Appendices
