

17th January 2022**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
SKILLS****CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION SIX MONTHLY UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update to the Committee in relation to Children Missing Education in Nottinghamshire. The report also provides the fourth six monthly update of the Children Missing Education Dashboard following Committee approval on 14th January 2019 to report the Dashboard six monthly.

Information

2. This report is presented to Committee within a context that almost all Nottinghamshire children and young people are educated in good and outstanding schools. 102,421 pupils aged 5 - 15 years at the start of the 2020/21 academic year were educated in Nottinghamshire's publicly funded schools. May 2021 Ofsted data suggests that 86.4% of pupils are educated in good and outstanding schools. It should be noted that the Children Missing Education Dashboard report focusses on the Fixed Term Exclusion data reported by schools and the 1,951 (2%) children and young people who were supported by a range of Local Authority service areas to ensure they had access to an appropriate full-time education.
3. Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age (5 – 16 years). Local authorities are expected to have robust policies and procedures in place to enable them to meet their duty in relation to these children, including ensuring that there are effective tracking and enquiry systems in place, and a named person to whom schools and other agencies can make referrals about children who are missing education. Nottinghamshire County Council's Children Missing Officer supports in cases where children and young people's whereabouts are unknown; the Fair Access process and Pupil Missing Education Officer focusses on children and young people whose whereabouts are known and who are known to be missing education.
4. The Children Missing Education process focuses on known children and young people who are not accessing their full educational entitlement as a result of failing to secure a school

place, facing permanent exclusion from school, refusing or being prevented from attending their school place, on a school roll but accessing less than their full educational entitlement, those unable to access full-time education due to their mental or physical health needs, those who are in unsuitable elective home education, as well as any child or young person known to other local authority services without a school place or refusing to attend school.

5. The Children Missing Education Dashboard, attached as **Appendix 1**, reports on the data collated from the Academic Year 2020-21 regarding children and young people who are known to the Local Authority to be Children Missing Education or at risk of becoming Children Missing Education. The exclusion data relates to the 2019-20 Academic Year as this is the most recent validated data for an entire academic year published by the Department for Education from the school census data. The data analysis is intended to report on the effectiveness of current systems to identify, track and support Children Missing Education back to education and to inform future policy and practice. Data sets will need to continue to be collated and analysed over future years to allow year on year comparison for more complete conclusions to be drawn.
6. The reporting period for this dashboard is an academic year that follows on from one significantly disrupted by partial school closures and periods of national lockdown due to the Covid pandemic. Within the reporting year there were again partial school closures from January to March 2021, causing further disruption and anxiety for children and young people and the services in place to support them. The data must be viewed in the context of children being in school with heightened anxiety about coronavirus and with very different lived experiences of lockdown. For all children, and particularly those transitioning between settings, the usual range of support to enable smooth transition to a new academic year had not always been possible. For children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) the July 2021 report 'SEND: old issues, new issues, next steps' highlights the disadvantage experienced by children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities during the pandemic, particularly during the first period of national lockdown. Office for National Statistics data published in November 2020 reports that in mid May 2020 there was a 12% increase in the number of domestic abuse cases referred to victim support.
7. The data shows that the risk of children and young people becoming Children Missing Education has continued to increase through secondary and peaks at Key Stage 4. Children where Elective Home Education has ended, referrals to the Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum and referrals to the Health Related Education Team are all significantly higher for both Year 10 and Year 11. Elective Home Education ends peak at a concerning high (19) in Year 11.
8. The spend through the Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum for children Educated Otherwise Than at School decreases very slightly when compared with previous period spend. Rising numbers of Elective Home Education registrations have impacted on this spend as, when Elective Home Education provision ends due to unsuitability in Year 11, any children and young people who cannot be placed through the 'Fair Access Protocol' process are provided for via the Council's Educated Otherwise Than at School arrangements and funding agreed by the Council through the Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum. The resilience and determination of secondary schools to support the work of Nottinghamshire County Council in placing children through the Fair Access Protocol has been evident and has ensured that many children have been placed

in school appropriately rather than requiring alternative provision to be made for them from this budget.

9. An area that the Council is required to monitor is in relation to publicly funded schools providing less than full-time education or school-commissioned Alternative Provision to children and young people. Despite this requirement, schools are not legally required to provide this data although almost all of Nottinghamshire's publicly funded schools do. The Council currently requires schools to report instances where children and young people are in receipt of less than 25 hours of education during the week or who spend all or part of their week accessing school commissioned Alternative Provision. Where concerns are identified, these are followed up by the Fair Access Team to ensure that schools are following an appropriate response. Where further support and challenge is required, this is escalated to the Fair Access Team Manager and then through an agreed process to the Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum and the Children Missing Education board. Outcomes and progress for children identified on the collection is tracked on a termly basis and for children where progress is not evident, they are flagged through the following collection. Following a halt in collections during the Spring 2020 partial school closures, children of concern identified on the Summer 2021 collection were raised at the earliest opportunity with the Fair Access team to allow for early intervention. The Information and Systems team continues to work with teams to ensure that the collection is timely and relevant, with the ongoing ambition to move to a live reporting system.
10. A particular area of focus is in relation to vulnerable children on Child Protection Plans, Child in Need Plans, with an Education, Health and Care Plan and those who are Looked After Children. Any child who falls into these categories is closely monitored. In the case of Child Protection and Child in Need children, a formal letter from the Fair Access Team Manager is sent to the headteacher, chair of governors and copied to the relevant social worker seeking assurances around the provision being commissioned. Where there is no response, this is escalated, and a further letter sent from the Group Manager, Education Access and Partnerships, and then the Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills. The Co-ordinator of the Virtual School reviews the provision of every Looked After Child on part-time or Alternative Provision with the Group Manager, and the Integrated Children's Disability Service reviews every child with an Education, Health and Care Plan identified by schools as accessing part-time or Alternative Provision. The increase in the number of children with a social care status returned in the Summer 2021 will be carefully monitored for future trends with early analysis of the Autumn 2021 data already underway.
11. Nottinghamshire County Council continues to work in partnership with both Primary and Secondary School Behaviour Attendance Partnerships across the County to ensure that pupils, wherever possible, remain in publicly funded schools rather than excluded. The exclusion data for this period shows a decrease in the use of both Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusion by schools but should be viewed with some caution as numbers will have been impacted by partial school closures in Spring 2020. It is anticipated that a full validated data set for 2020-21 will be available in the next six-monthly update and this may provide a truer picture of the impact of Covid on young people's emotional wellbeing.
12. The data raises questions regarding Year 8, with Fair Access referrals at their highest for this year group and the use of part-time timetables over the academic year highlighted as a concern. Further analysis of Fixed Term Exclusion data and part-time timetable use for this year group (now Year 9) in the next six-monthly report will help to start establishing whether

there is a concerning trend or whether this spike in data could be attributed to other reasons. It is certainly the case that these young people experienced a disrupted Year 7 and this may have contributed to them experiencing greater anxiety and dysregulation on their return to school in Year 8.

Other Options Considered

13. The County Council remains statutorily responsible for ensuring that all children and young people in Nottinghamshire of statutory school age access full-time education. The Children Missing Education Strategy initially endorsed by the Children and Young People's Committee on 13th January 2020 and approved by Policy Committee on 12th February 2020 continues to be implemented to ensure that every school aged child is placed on a school roll, with the exception of those who are electively home educated. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. Members will wish to be assured that the Council's statutory duty to provide full-time education for all children and young people of statutory school age is being fulfilled.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

16. It should be noted that although there are no financial implications arising directly from the Children Missing Education Dashboard, the increasing numbers of pupils whose education is mediated by Local Authority teams to prevent them from becoming or continuing to be Children Missing Education is contributing to the financial strain within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

17. The Children Missing Education Strategy supports safeguarding of children in Nottinghamshire by ensuring that children are not missing education or at risk of educational neglect, and ensures appropriate actions are taken where this is found to be the case.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the issues contained within this report.

- 2) agrees to receive a further update on Children Missing Education in six months and that this be included in the work programme.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 23/12/21)

18. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee.

Financial Comments (MDN 20/12/21)

19. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
20. The increasing numbers of pupils whose education is mediated by Local Authority teams to prevent them from becoming or continuing to be Children Missing Education, however, is contributing to the financial strain within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[SEND: old issues, new issues, next steps - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

['Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England, Academic Year 2018/19 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children Missing Education - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 14th January 2019](#)

[Revised Children Missing Education Strategy and Elective Home Education Policy – report to Policy Committee on 12th February 2020](#)

[Children Missing Education – six monthly update – report to Children & Young People's Committee on 26th July 2021](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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