

26th July 2021

Agenda Item: 9

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 third 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 1,006 (1%) 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 Autumn Term 2020 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 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 the first full term following the wider reopening of schools after the first National Lockdown. The data could therefore be viewed in the context of children returning to 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 been possible. For vulnerable children in particular, many were living below the poverty line, with families struggling to meet the basic needs of their children and ensure access to remote education. In many households, children's emotional needs were being balanced with the need to continue to work at home without access to childcare support. 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 of 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 continues to increase through secondary and peaks at Key Stage 4. Children where Elective Home Education has ended, referrals to Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum and referrals to Health Related Education Team are all significantly higher for Year 11 students, with all at least doubled when compared to any other year group.
8. There has been a slight increase in spend through the Vulnerable Children Education Commissioning forum for children Educated Otherwise Than at School when compared with previous period spend. Rising numbers of Elective Home Education registrations may impact on this moving forward if the trend of Elective Home Education provision ending due to unsuitability in Year 11 continues, as 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.
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. 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 Pupils Missing Education Practitioner 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. 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, the collection for Summer 2021 is in progress with any situations of concern being flagged immediately to the Fair Access Team.

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 Children 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. 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, Integrated Children's Disability Service, reviewing every child with an Education, Health and Care Plan identified by schools as accessing part-time or Alternative Provision.
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. Validated fixed term exclusion data for this period is not yet available and will be reported upon in the next Children Missing Education dashboard. The rate of permanent exclusions, during a period when many children returned dysregulated to schools after a period of lockdown, remains below the national average.
12. The data raises questions regarding Year 8, with both Fair Access referrals and permanent exclusions being at their highest in this year group. Further tracking and analysis of this cohort will be required in subsequent dashboards and through available fixed term exclusion data to establish any ongoing trends and support needs.

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.

Marion Clay

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Constitutional Comments (AK 05/07/21)

18. This report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (MDN 05/07/21)

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 \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[‘Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

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

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

Nottinghamshire County Council Children Missing Education Strategy, February 2020

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1485