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| TITLE: | Working Together to Improve School Attendance |
| FOR CONSIDERATION BY: | Children’s Select Committee |
| REPORT DATED: | 29th February 2024 |
| DIRECTOR: | Kathryn Davis Interim Director - Education and Skills |
| REPORT AUTHORS: | Karen Green Team Manager, Education Welfare |

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide a regular update on the Council’s implementation of the 2022 DfE guidance ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’.

1.2 The guidance was updated by the DfE on 29th February 2024, with the following changes:

- Greater clarity on the link between improving attendance and wider school culture, including the importance of working in partnership with families to find supportive routes to improve attendance.
- Reflect changes to the law on keeping school attendance and admission registers including a revised set of codes, granting leaves of absence and access to, and sharing of, attendance information introduced through the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Set out the new National Framework for issuing penalty notices and reflect changes to the law introduced through the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Change ‘parenting contracts’ for attendance to ‘attendance contracts’ to better reflect the agreement between parents, schools and/or local authorities.

1.3 Expectations of schools have also been updated:

- Update to the section on pupils who are prevented from attending school due to physical or mental ill health to be clear where schools’ role starts and ends, provide further clarification around medical evidence, additional support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and part-time timetables.
- Explain the new requirements for schools on data sharing introduced through the Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Provide clarification of the expectations of schools’ senior attendance champions.
- Expect schools to inform a pupil’s youth justice service worker of any unexplained absences.

1.4 The expectations of local authorities have been updated:

- Provide further detail to clarify additional attendance services that may be traded with schools, local authority responsibilities in relation to cross-border pupils and how to hold effective Targeting Support Meetings.
- Allow flexibility in how local authorities work with independent schools to better suit the needs of different local independent schools.
- Provide further detail on cross partnership ownership of attendance improvement.

2. Attendance Data

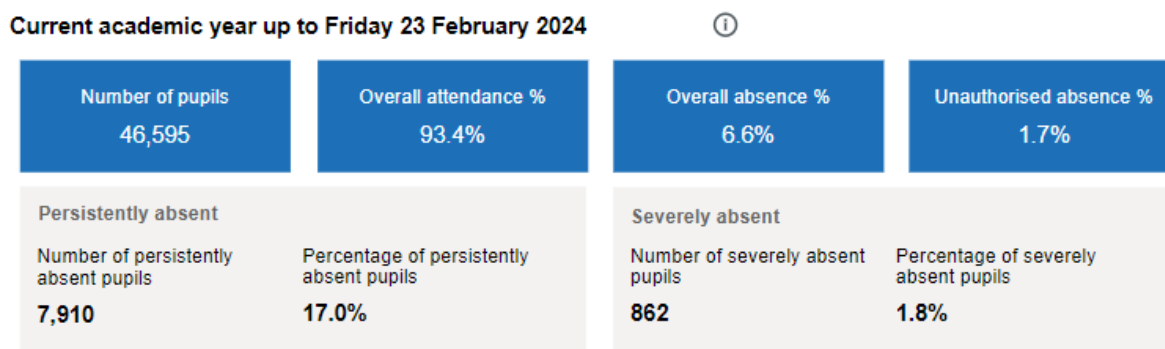
2.1 The committee has requested further breakdown of the attendance data from Wiltshire schools. The latest published data is for the academic year 2021-22. Data for the full academic year 2022-23 is due to be published by the DfE in March 2024.

Source: *Explore Education Statistics > Pupil absence in schools in England > Absence rates by pupil characteristic - full academic years:*

| | | Wiltshire | South West | England |
|------------------------------|---|-----------|------------|---------|
| Total | Number of pupil enrolments | 62,957 | 678,215 | |
| | Overall absence rate | 7.5% | 8.0% | 7.6% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 6.1% | 6.2% | 5.5% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 1.4% | 1.8% | 2.1% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 22.1% | 23.8% | 22.5% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 1.5% | 1.9% | 1.7% |
| Special | Number of pupil enrolments | 814 | 10,557 | 125,126 |
| | Overall absence rate | 14.0% | 13.7% | 13.2% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 12.2% | 11.1% | 10.3% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 1.8% | 2.5% | 2.9% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 44.6% | 43.0% | 40.4% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 5.7% | 5.8% | 5.8% |
| State-funded primary | Number of pupil enrolments | 34,577 | 364,313 | |
| | Overall absence rate | 6.0% | 6.4% | 6.3% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 5.1% | 5.2% | 4.8% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 0.9% | 1.2% | 1.5% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 15.4% | 17.4% | 17.7% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 0.5% | 0.6% | 0.6% |
| State-funded secondary | Number of pupil enrolments | 27,566 | 303,345 | |
| | Overall absence rate | 9.3% | 9.8% | 9.0% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 7.2% | 7.2% | 6.2% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 2.2% | 2.6% | 2.8% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 29.7% | 30.7% | 27.7% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 2.7% | 3.4% | 2.7% |
| | | | | |
| | | Wiltshire | South West | England |
| SEN provision SEN Support | Number of pupil enrolments | 9,041 | 94,183 | 948,254 |
| | Overall absence rate | 9.9% | 10.7% | 10.0% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 7.4% | 7.6% | 6.8% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 2.6% | 3.1% | 3.2% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 30.5% | 33.8% | 32.0% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 3.0% | 3.8% | 3.0% |
| SEN provision Statement or E | Number of pupil enrolments | 2,812 | 27,836 | 286,702 |
| | Overall absence rate | 12.0% | 13.2% | 12.1% |
| | Authorised absence rate | 9.7% | 10.2% | 9.1% |
| | Unauthorised absence rate | 2.3% | 3.0% | 3.0% |
| | Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) | 37.6% | 40.2% | 36.9% |
| | Percentage of severely absent pupils (50% or more missed) | 3.9% | 5.9% | 5.2% |

2.2 Live attendance data is available via the DfE WONDE portal. This is **unverified data** but provides schools and the local authority with a useful tool to make initial judgements and trend comparisons related to school absence in real time.

Source: WONDE DfE



This reflects better performance in Wiltshire than is seen nationally:

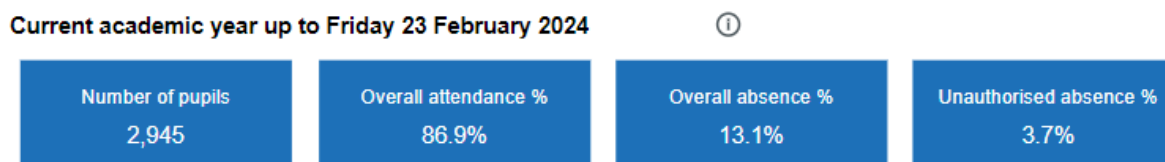
93.4% of sessions were recorded as attending in Wiltshire (compared to 93% of sessions at national level)

6.6% of sessions were recorded as absence in Wiltshire (compared to 7% of sessions at national level)

17% of pupils were recorded as persistently absent in Wiltshire (compared to 20.6% of pupils at national level)

| Attendance | National | South West | Wiltshire |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Primary | 94.6% | 94.5% | 94.9% |
| Secondary | 91.3% | 90.3% | 91.2% |
| Special | 87.1% | 87% | 88.1% |

PUPILS WITH AN EHCP



PUPILS WITH SEN SUPPORT INDICATOR

Current academic year up to Friday 23 February 2024



| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Number of pupils 7,477 | Overall attendance % 91.0% | Overall absence % 9.0% | Unauthorised absence % 2.7% |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|

Teams across children's services continue to work with families of children and young people with additional needs to help identify and overcome any barriers to school attendance.

- 2.3** Although attendance performance in Wiltshire typically compares positively with national and South West benchmarking, we are not complacent and continue to work towards achieving lower absence levels, in line with pre-pandemic outcomes.

3. Recommendation:

- 3.1** For the committee to note this update.