

Corporate Parenting Panel

Virtual School Update 17th October 2023



This report gives an overview of the strategies undertaken by the Virtual School to reduce Persistent Absence.

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Overview



- Harrow Virtual School tracks and monitors the attendance of CLA on a daily basis. We partner with an organisation who contacts schools every day to confirm that the child has arrived at school.
- The Virtual School (VS) attendance officer receives and responds to this information and any anomalies in attendance, is communicated to social workers, carers and other key professionals in good time.
- Pupils who are emotionally-based school avoiders are also supported by professionals in the Virtual School to include learning mentors, educational and clinical psychologists. Key assessments are conducted in a timely manner so a planned programme of support can be put in place early.

Attendance Data (2022- 2023)



- Overall attendance has increased slightly from 80% -82%.This is improving. Our target is 90% or better.
- 52% (23/44) of pupils with attendance below 90% has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or are in receipt of SEN support.
- 60% (14/23) of pupils with an EHCP or are in receipt of SEN support attend schools outside of Harrow.
- 57% (25/44) of pupils with attendance below 90% are on roll in schools outside of Harrow.
- The ratio of boys to girls with PA is approximately 1:1
- The number of pupils with at least 1 suspension has reduced from 11% (2021-2022) to 8% (2022-2023). Harrow's figures are below the England average which is 10%.

Attendance (2022- 2023) Contd.



- The national average for Persistent Absence (PA) is 19.1% for children in care for 1 year plus.
- PA for Harrow's children in care for a year plus is provisionally at 20% (20/100). This is close to national average.
- PA for all Harrow's children in care is 45%; children in care 1 year plus have better outcomes in terms of their education outcomes and attendance.
- Harrow figures over the past 3 years have decreased from 25.3 % (2020-2021) to 20.3% (2021-2022) and 20% (2022-2023).
- Although PA for the national average has doubled over the past 3 years, Harrow's figures have reduced.
- Our ambition is to reduce PA to 10% or less.

Cross- Service Action Plan

Group	Challenges	Actions	Timescales
Children in Key Stage 4	<p>Disengagement often occurs at the end of Year 9 and spills into Key Stage 4.</p> <p>Undiagnosed SEN becomes more apparent as the child enters KS4 and finds the curriculum more challenging.</p>	<p>VS transition lead to support KS3-4 transitions.</p> <p>Timely SEN assessments</p>	October 2023
<p>Children Living Over 3 Miles form School</p> <p>Children with SEND living outside of Harrow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public transport to school can be difficult to navigate, children are often tired at the end of the school day and journey times are often long. •A reliance on the placement to take the children to and from school is not always feasible for the long term. •Children cannot attend after-activities nor tuition. •Interaction with their peers, outside of school is limited. This may also have an impact on their SEMH. •There is often a delay in organising transport and school days are missed. 	<p>Transport to and from school should be in place as soon as possible.</p> <p>Where possible, a school move should be considered.</p>	September 2023

Cross- Service Action Plan Continued

Group	Challenges	Actions	Timescales
Children Placed In Semi-Independent Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This affects SSA children who are in Year 11 and have reached their 16th birthday. •In a number of cases, staff at the placement are not able to put strategies in place to support school attendance 	<p>VS and Social Care to provide more support for these provisions e.g. a education lead to be put in place.</p> <p>New legislation is in place where semi-independent provisions must be registered by 28th October 2023. This will strengthen the support our children will receive in terms of their education.</p> <p>Key workers or their representative to be present at the PEP meeting</p>	November 2023
Children on a Section 20	<p>Parents still have parental responsibility for their child and can make decisions regarding their child's education.</p> <p>The challenges are where parents are not in agreement with care plan. This may lead to children not attending school.</p>	<p>Social care to look at the S.20 agreement to see if there is any scope to include information on the local authority's statutory responsibility to monitor children looked after.</p> <p>The Virtual School headteacher to create an education statement for S.20 agreements.</p>	September 2023

Cross- Service Action Plan Continued

Group	Challenges	Actions	Timescales
Children with several missing episodes	<p>A child missing from placement usually results in poor school attendance. This group contributes significantly to our PA figures. Children not attending school are may also be disengaged with areas of their lives</p>	<p>VS to continue to support Strat meetings. An education plan is in place for when the child returns home.</p> <p>VS to recruit an enrichment officer to support engagement with school and other activities</p>	September 2023
Children with long –term illnesses or frequent absences for medical reasons	<p>Children often require medical intervention which takes place during the school day.</p>	<p>CLA Health Team/ VS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Where possible the CLA Health Team/ VS Staff encourage carers to request/book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. If this is not possible (as we are aware that some services are unable to offer this) we encourage carers to support children to attend school for, at least, part of that day. •The CLA Health Team to endeavour to offer health appointments at times/places that support children to remain in school, but this is not always possible, especially for an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) where it may be more suitable to attend a clinic. 	September 2023

Cross- Service Action Plan Continued

Group	Challenges	Actions	Timescales
Children with undiagnosed and diagnosed SEN and/or SEMH	<p>This a barrier to learning and often leads to poor school attendance.</p> <p>Children with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) need timely interventions.</p>	<p>Bespoke support via the VS Clinical Psychologist, EP and learning mentors.</p> <p>Anna Freud Centre to run a pilot programme for children with EBSA. VHT to make contact.</p>	November 2023
Children who enter the care system late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Affects pupils entering the care system age 14 plus. DfE data has shown a correlation between the age a child enters the care system and educational outcomes. i.e. the longer a child is in care-educational outcomes are improved. •Undiagnosed SEN or SEMH •Gaps in their education due to poor school attendance prior to becoming CLA •Pupils may not be able to access mainstream learning •Challenges in finding suitable alternative learning provisions 	<p>Mitigating barriers to learning e.g. EP assessments are often required imminently.</p> <p>Increased education monitoring.</p> <p>Interventions are in place to support learning e.g. 1:1 tuition is put in place to support with missed learning.</p> <p>Enrichment activities are used as a vehicle for re-engagement with their education.</p>	September 2023

Progress to date



- The Section 20 education document has been drafted. It is currently awaiting approval.
- Transport issues for children with SEN and or living over 3 miles from their school continues to be addressed. Social care have interim transport arrangements in place support good school attendance.
- CLA Health Team has clear actions to support the Virtual School, schools and carers with CLA medical appointments; where possible these will take place outside of the school day.
- The Virtual School continues to attend Strategy Meetings for children with missing episodes.