

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Children Not In School Update

Wards All

Service: Access Service

Portfolio: Education and Skills, Councillor Statham

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide an update of on how Walsall continues to meet its statutory responsibility in regards to:

- Attendance
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Exclusions

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides whether there should be further information or updates

3. Report detail

Attendance – overview

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

Attendance – Statutory Duties of the LA

In May 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) published non-statutory guidance, [‘working together to improve attendance’](#). From September 2022, this document replaced all previous guidance on school attendance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities except for the existing statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures.

The guidance makes clear that all local authorities are expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.

- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):
 - Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.
 - Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
 - Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
 - Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.

- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

The pressures on the Parliamentary timetable remain and legislation to make the guidance statutory will not be in place before the beginning of the new academic year as planned and therefore the guidance will not be statutory from this September. All authorities have been asked to work towards the guidance with the aim of it becoming statutory in 2024. It remains top of the legislative priorities for the Department for Education and will be pursued at the next available opportunity. This means that schools and local authorities should continue with their implementation as it may become statutory at short notice.

DfE – Statistical Release

This release is the latest current data and looks at pupil absence and persistent absence during the 2021/22 academic year.

The national average for overall absence in 2021/22 was 7.6%. Walsall's overall absence rate was 7.9%, 0.3% higher than national average.

		2021/22			
		Authorised absence rate	Overall absence rate	Unauthorised absence rate	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)
West Midlands		5.60%	7.80%	2.20%	24.00%
England		5.50%	7.60%	2.10%	22.50%
North West	Bolton	5.00%	6.90%	1.90%	20.30%
	Rochdale	4.70%	7.90%	3.30%	25.40%
	Tameside	4.50%	7.20%	2.70%	20.10%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Doncaster	5.40%	8.40%	2.90%	26.10%
	Rotherham	5.20%	8.20%	3.00%	25.80%
East Midlands	Derby	5.20%	7.60%	2.40%	23.70%
West Midlands	Dudley	5.70%	8.00%	2.30%	26.00%
	Sandwell	4.70%	7.40%	2.80%	23.30%
	Stoke-on-Trent	4.70%	8.20%	3.50%	26.20%
	Telford and Wrekin	5.80%	7.80%	2.00%	23.70%
	Walsall	5.00%	7.90%	3.00%	24.90%
East of England	Wolverhampton	4.50%	7.00%	2.50%	21.30%
	Peterborough	5.80%	7.90%	2.00%	24.80%

The Department for Education's national statistical full-year release shows that:

- The national average for overall absence in 2021/22 was 7.6%
- Walsall's overall absence rate was 7.9%, 0.3% higher than national average.
- Walsall's overall absence rate increased by 2.5% from 2020/21 – 2021/22.
- Walsall is 8th for overall absence rates out of 13 statistical neighbours.
- Walsall's overall absence rate has a higher element of unauthorised absence against statistical neighbours- see tables below
- Persistent absence rates are higher in the secondary phase compared to the primary phase



Whilst the table above shows that our absence rates are negatively impacted by the unauthorised absence rates in both Primary and Secondary phases. The overall absence rates for Special Schools and PRU's is better than national average. Unauthorised absence in Special schools is still an area for improvement though.



How the Local Authority is continuing to support improvements in school attendance

The DfE have allocated a Strategic Attendance Officer to support each Local Authority (LA).

They will support LA's to review and develop attendance strategies and data, consider how best to use staff and resources, ensure attendance is considered across all relevant services, and build strong links with schools, families and other partners.

They may also hold regional meetings of councils to discuss practice.

Another one or two advisers will be hired to work specifically with multi-academy trusts and schools to review their current approach to tackling persistent absence. This will include helping them develop a whole school culture of excellent attendance.

Each trust, council or school will receive between two and 10 days of support.

In March 2023 we had our first visit and shared our self-evaluation, data and action plan. These were recognised by the advisor as being rigorous and demonstrating good practice.

As part of our action plan we discussed how Walsall schools share attendance data with the LA and have monthly performance meetings with a LA attendance officer focusing on strengths, concerns, and next steps. Half-termly data comparisons identify increases and decreases, and weekly attendance trackers support targeted support meetings.

Each school has a named point of contact who routinely works with schools to tackle the fundamental challenges that they face, using lessons learned from other schools. The Termly Targeting Support Meetings were established in the Spring Term for each School in Walsall. There has been really positive feedback from the meetings and schools feel confident in how to adapt their processes to meet their new expectations.

A self-assessment tool has been developed to help schools identify where there is good practice in relation to reducing pupil absence and to identify where further strategies need to be developed to ensure maximum attendance by all pupils. This has been shared with schools and is used as part of the termly meeting and support and challenge conversations. The tool is attached as Appendix 1.

A working group of headteachers has also been established over the last academic year, and half termly meetings take place.

This group provides opportunities for schools to shape improvements across Walsall. An annual 'conference' focusing on attendance, refreshing expectations, answering questions, sharing good practice is being planned for the Autumn term that focuses on the attendance data that needs to be used to set a vision for improvement in overall absence, persistent absence and severe absence, focusing on individual cohorts. Appendix 2 is a copy of the working group remit, membership and terms of reference.

The Early Help Support in Walsall is embedded, and schools can provide early preventative support, and know how to source further advice and interventions when required. Walsall's Early Help Partnership recognises that an effective Early Help offer is not the responsibility of one single agency. It requires a partnership approach from all stakeholders working with children, young people, their families and the community. Schools are aware of referral processes and are advised to do so (if not already) where there are potential indicators of concern for children and their families and can be used to enhance and support collective understanding of risk.

The Virtual School monitors Walsall's children's attendance using 'Looked After Call', providing daily emails to highlight unauthorised absences and authorised absences over three days. A dedicated attendance officer follows up on poor attendance. The Vulnerability Matrix in the Vulnerable Learners Hub tracks and monitors attendance of children with a social worker. Staff liaise with schools and social workers to raise awareness of poor attendance. Training is provided for teachers and safeguarding leads to improve educational outcomes. The Head of the Virtual School reports on attendance at monthly and termly social care performance meetings.

Many local authorities will need time to transition to meet the new expectations, therefore, local authorities should meet these expectations as far as possible. A

meeting with Walsall's DfE advisor in March reviewed the current approach and service model, and a working group of head teachers was established to provide strategic direction and leadership.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate, the local authority's school Attendance Support Team will liaise with the school and the early help lead practitioner or social worker (where applicable) to take forward attendance legal intervention and to formalise support and/or enforce attendance. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the referral form.

In line with new DfE guidance we have reviewed the way we work to ensure:

- robust assessments of parents' failings is evident in the support that has been offered,
- all support to remove any barriers to education, has been exhausted
- formalised support has been implemented or considered,
- and we feel that taking forward an attendance prosecution will bring about change.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children are classed as 'Children Missing Education' if they are compulsory school age and not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children are of compulsory school age from the start of the first school term after their fifth birthday until the last Friday in the June of the academic year in which they turn 16 years of age.

Children Missing Education (CME) are distinct from Children Missing from Education (CMfE). This term is used to refer to children who are on roll at a school but not attending regularly or full time.

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation, and becoming part of the NEET cohort (not in education, employment or training) once these cease to be compulsory school age.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools, local authorities, and other agencies is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Local Authorities have a legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to decide to identify children missing education. Local Authorities should consult the parents or carers of a child when trying to establish whether a child is in receipt

of a suitable education. Those children identified as not receiving suitable education should be returned to full time education either at a school or in alternative provision.

A child can become open to Walsall Local Authority as a child missing education (CME) for a variety of reasons. These can include Children and Young People who:

- move to Walsall from a different local authority area or from outside the UK and are unable to secure a school place that is within a reasonable distance of their new home address via either primary or secondary mid-year process.
- fail to take up the school place that is offered to them via the phased admissions process, the mid-year admissions process or Walsall's Fair Access Process.
- are removed from a school roll after a long period of unexplained absence, or after failing to return from an extended or unauthorised holiday.
- have previously been open to the local authority as being electively home educated (EHE) but are deemed by the local authority not to be in 'receipt of a satisfactory education.'
- who are Walsall residents and have who have been permanently excluded from school. In these circumstances, the local authority will open these children and young people as missing education whilst ensuring that appropriate six-day provision is secured for pending the outcome of the governing body hearing process and decision.
- have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) and for whom the local authority is unable to secure a permanent education provision that can meet their special educational needs. In these circumstances, the local authority will put in place temporary tuition, but the child will still be opened as child missing education until suitable permanent education provision can be secured via the EHCP consultation process.

Walsall Children Missing Education Process

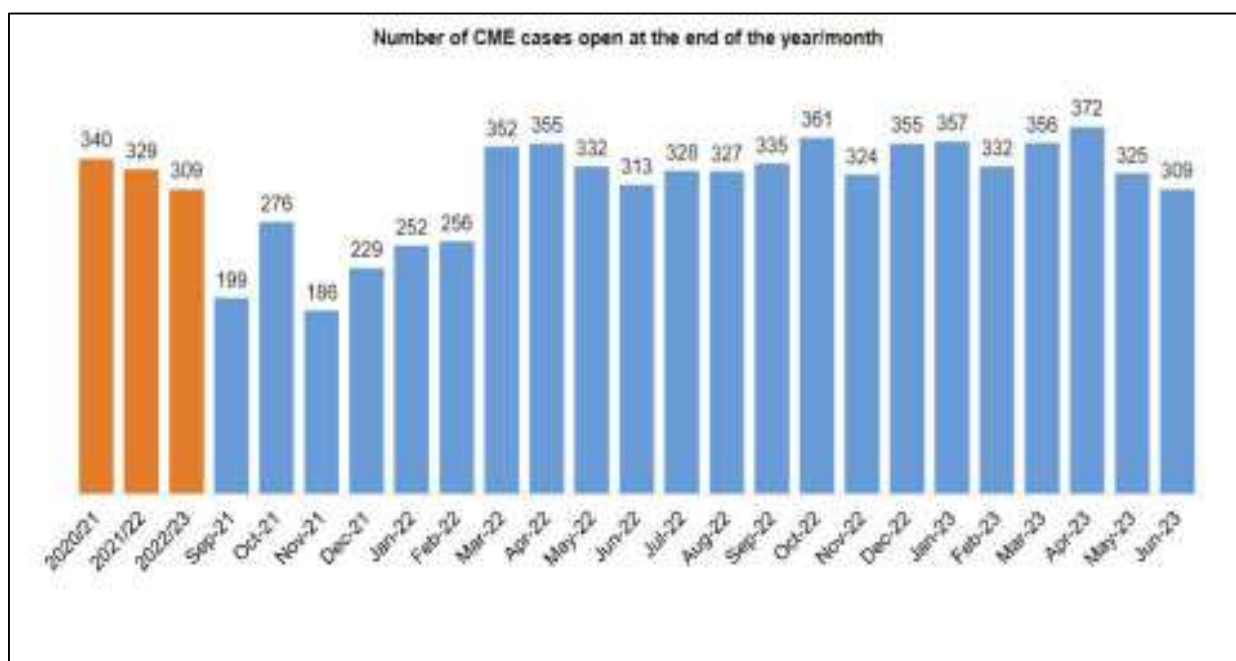
When a child is opened to CME they are allocated a caseworker and become subject to the local authority's monitoring procedures, working closely with the school admissions team an offer where possible will be made through the midyear admission process. Failing a place being able to be offered through the midyear admissions process the child will be taken the ether the Primary or Secondary Fair Access Protocol (FAP). If a child does not taken up an allocated school place then the CME team will establish the reasons for this.

- If an academy school is refusing to admit a child then then the matter will be escalated in accordance with the Department for Education's direction to admit process by application to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has the power under an Academy's Funding Agreement to direct the Academy to admit a child and can seek advice from the Schools Adjudicator in reaching a decision.
- If a maintained school is refusing to admit a child then the Local Authority has the power to direct the governing body of a maintained school for which they are not the admission authority to admit a child in their area even when the school is full.

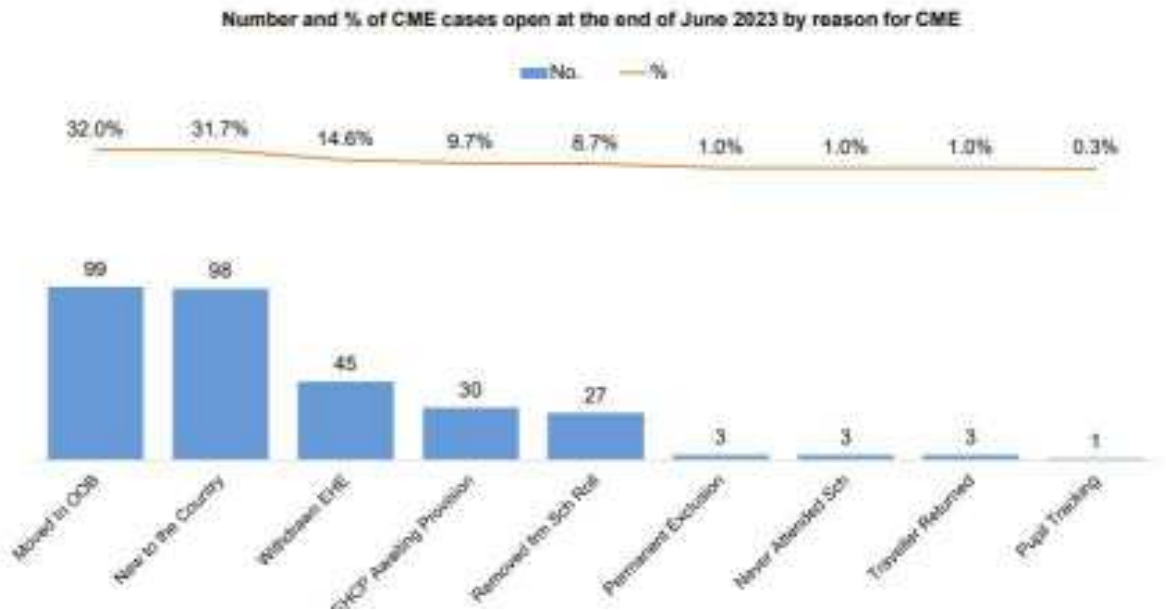
- If a parent is refusing to take up the offer of a school place then the matter will be escalated via the school attendance order process – a legal process of naming a school that the parent must enrol their child at.
- Any child that is open to Walsall CME must be seen by a relevant lead professional on a regular basis or the CME team will commission the education welfare service to undertake a home visit every 20 days or more regularly if deemed appropriate.

Walsall currently have 309 children open to CME as of June 2023, this is the lowest the Children Missing Education numbers have been since February 2022.

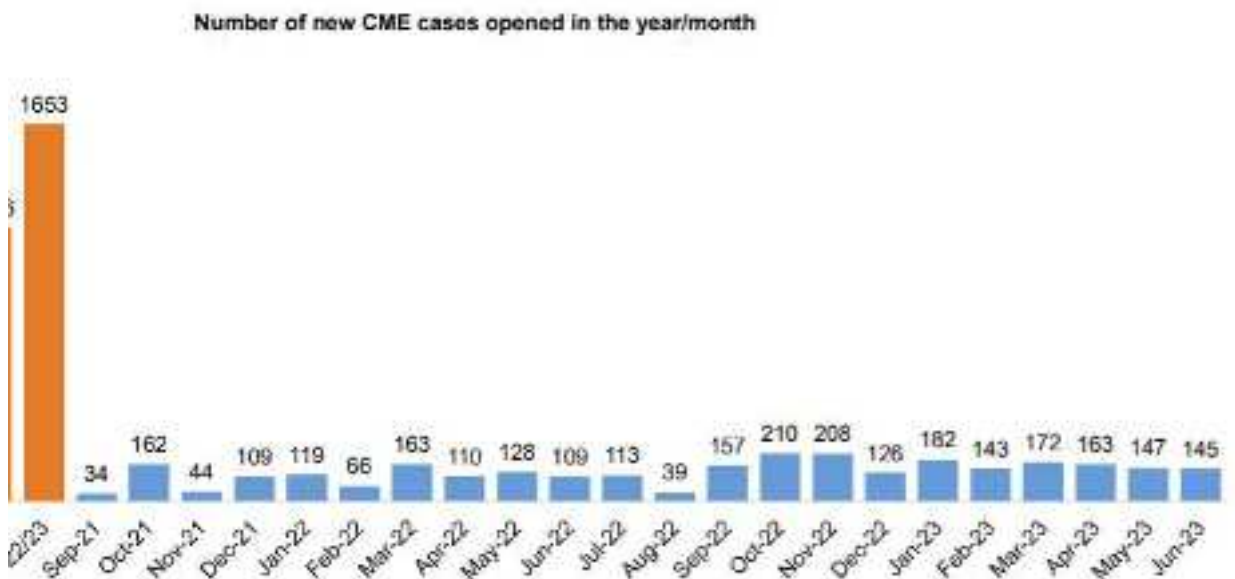
During the summer period, the figure may increase as whilst parent/careers can still submit midyear admission applications they cannot be processed until the schools return following the summer break.



The majority of the cases that are open to children missing education are for children who are New to the UK or moved from another borough totalling 197 cases. All children that arrive in Walsall as New to the UK are immediately open to CME. In addition to the newly arrived pupils to Walsall there were 45 pupils opened to CME where it was established that parents were not able to demonstrate provision of a suitable education. This process is an additional assurance that all known pupils in Walsall are appropriately tracked and monitored to ensure a suitable full time education is provided.



The table below shows that the total number of CME cases opened during the year was 1653 so whilst the 'open' cases generally remain between 3-400, there is a constant 'flow' of pupils being opened to CME, appropriate casework undertaken via admissions or the Fair Access Protocol to ensure that children and families are able to access an educational provision in a timely and efficient manner.



The last Ofsted Inspections of Walsall local authority children's services and SEN reports noted:

An inclusion policy and enhanced tracking and monitoring of vulnerable pupils' attendance are now in place. Leaders know where children are and provide comprehensive support if they are not in school.

The children missing education (CME) team ensure regular multi-disciplinary oversight of those pupils who are not attending an educational setting. For example, professionals within the speech and language therapy team help families accurately understand pupils' needs so appropriate provisions can be identified. Regular meetings with senior officers in the local partnership keep the profile of these children and young people with SEND high.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term that is used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full time. There is only a voluntary register for EHE. If a child has never attended school parents have no legal obligation to notify the local authority or to seek consent if they intend to home educate their child. If a child is withdrawn from school for EHE the school has an obligation to notify the local authority.

The local authority has a statutory duty (under s.436A of the Education Act) to make arrangements to enable it to establish the identities, so far as it is possible to do so, of children in its area who are not receiving a suitable education. We do this by working closely with various partners including: parents, school admissions (including children missing education and pupil tracking teams), Special educational needs service, Attendance service, Data matching Team, local schools & colleges, School health, Early help, educational psychologists, social workers, and other neighbouring authorities.

The EHE service is responsible for identifying and recording compulsory school aged children who are home educated. The service also makes enquiries as to whether that education satisfies legal requirements. If it is deemed that the educational provision at home is unsuitable we also have rigorous processes to return the child/young person to school.

The last Ofsted Inspection of Walsall local authority children's services report noted *'There is robust oversight of children who are electively home educated (EHE). There is strong partnership working with schools through a new EHE policy and positive relationships with families*

Elective Home Education (EHE) Data

The Department for Education (DfE) collected data from local authorities on a voluntary basis for the first time in Autumn 2022 and they released the latest EHE dataset on 18th May 2023. The information below is extracted from their dataset.

Total EHE Registrations

	Total EHE Registrations*	
	Autumn 2022	Spring 2023
Walsall	390	440
National	80900	86200
West Midlands	9080	9990
Birmingham	2120	2440
Coventry	400	380
Dudley	460	480
Herefordshire	250	290
Sandwell	530	560
Shropshire	520	570
Solihull	310	290
Staffordshire	1080	1260
Stoke-on-Trent	350	390
Telford and Wrekin	370	400
Warwickshire	890	980
Wolverhampton	460	490
Worcestershire	950	1040
Statistical Neighbours	4170	4560
Bolton	**	**
Derby	410	490
Dudley	460	480
Kirklees	520	590
Peterborough	630	650
Rochdale	300	330
Sandwell	530	560
Stoke-on-Trent	350	390
Tameside	210	230
Telford & Wrekin	370	400

* Published numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

**Bolton did not submit an autumn 2022 or spring 2023 voluntary return.

Autumn 2022 - Local authorities reported that there were an estimated 80,900 children in elective home education at the census date in Autumn term 2022.

Spring 2023 - Local authorities reported that there were an estimated 86,200 children in elective home education at the census date in Spring term 2023.

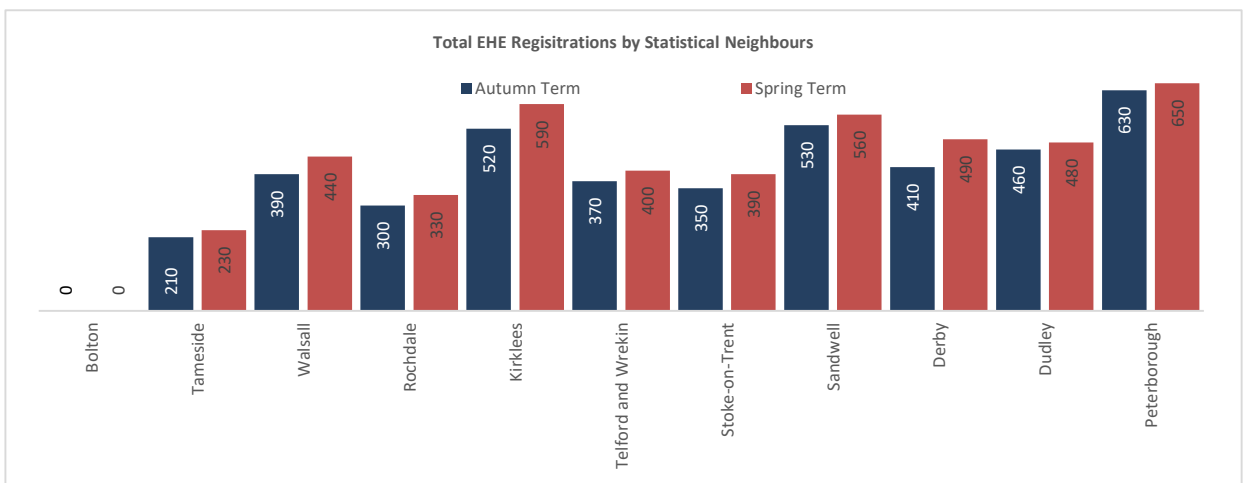
This shows the continued increase in children being registered as EHE

At present, there is no clear legal framework for local authorities to monitor home education on any sort of routine basis, and parents have no obligation to co-operate with authorities' efforts to do so. Authorities have a duty to identify so far as possible children who are not receiving a suitable education. Until a local authority is satisfied that a home-educated child is receiving a suitable full-time education, then a child being educated at home is potentially in scope of this duty.

Although we currently maintain a voluntary EHE register there are concerns regards the accuracy of the numbers. The EHE register is currently compiled through information received from parents, schools, colleges, other LAs, Early Help, School Nursing, Social Workers, Health visitors, School admissions, the Attendance service and the Special Educational needs team amongst others. We have also linked all siblings of any EHE children on our data base and this ensures we can query the educational base for any siblings who are not showing as registered at a school.

The DfE have recently advised they are currently reviewing legislative measures to establish a local authority registration system for children not in school (CNIS). This will place a legal duty on parents to provide information to a register when their child is not in mainstream education. Currently only schools are duty bound to notify us when they remove a child from their school roll due to EHE and although parents will contact us to notify us of their intention to EHE there is no legal requirement for them to do so. This increases the risk of ‘hidden children’ that we have no knowledge of as they have never been to school.

Comparison of Walsall and statistical neighbour’s data



In spring 2023 there were 440 EHE registrations recorded on census day in Walsall, 50 EHE registrations more than in autumn 2022.

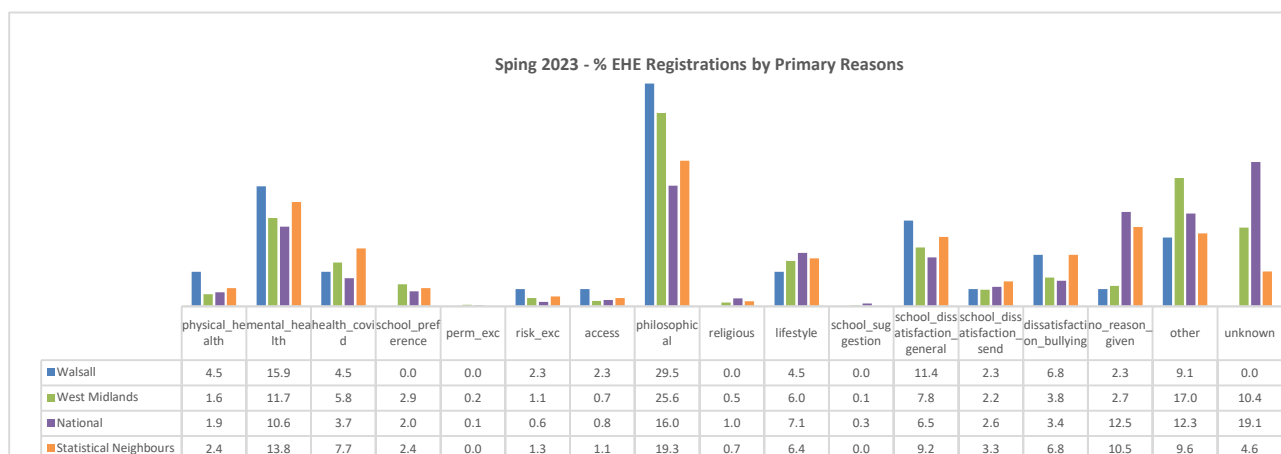
When looking at the total EHE registrations for autumn 2022 and spring 2023 it shows that Walsall has less EHE registrations than five statistical neighbours with Peterborough having over 50% more cases than Walsall in the autumn 2022 term.

Walsall has a relatively lower number of EHE registrations compared to several statistical neighbouring authorities due to the early intervention that we implement. As EHE potentially has huge implications for the child where possible, the EHE service offers parents guidance and support before they formally decide to home educate. We have built good working relationships with schools and parents. All schools have agreed to engage in Pre EHE meetings

and most parents are also willing to explore the support available in school and from other agencies prior to making a formal decision to EHE.

The Pre EHE meetings are also an ideal opportunity to remind parents they are taking on a duty of care to ensure their child's educational, social, emotional and mental health needs are met when they elect to home educate. Furthermore, it is reiterated that there is no financial support available for elective home education. This has ensured the most vulnerable are more likely to remain at school, and if parents are considering EHE because of concerns at school this can be addressed at the meetings. Professionals other than from school and EHE have also been involved in the meetings as referrals have been completed to Early Help, SENDIAS and School Nursing to ensure the best outcome for the child.

Primary Reasons for EHE



In Walsall, there were 440 EHE registrations reported in spring term. 29.5% of all EHE registrations had a primary reason recorded of philosophical followed by mental health with 15.9% and school dissatisfaction general with 11.4%. Compared to national, the top 3 primary reasons were unknown (19.1%), philosophical (16%) and no reason given (12.5%). Walsall have almost double the proportion of EHE registrations with the primary reason philosophical when compared to national and are more in line with the West Midlands where philosophical accounts for 25.6% of EHE registrations.

As mental health concerns are one of the major reasons for parents electing to home educate, the EHE service has expanded its staffing, and now has an emotional literacy support officer within the team who offers face to face, virtual and group sessions for those children who are identified as experiencing emotional or mental health concerns. The emotional literacy support has been utilised to support reintegration back to school, referrals to school health etc. and to support parents to fulfil their responsibility to provide a suitable and full-time education. The weekly sessions that the emotional literacy support officer implements also means that we have a greater oversight of EHE children.

EHE closures 1st Sep 2022 to 31st June 2023

Primary Reason for EHE Registration	Outcome on Closure								Total
	College Placement	Compulsory School Age Learners	Mixed - Other Local Authority	Refer - CME	Refer - Post-Tracking	Re-integrated now in School	No Outcome recorded	Other	
Adolescence						2			2
Cultural Reasons						1			1
Disability with System				1					1
Distance				2		1			3
Other			1	9	5	4	1		16
Parental Desire						2			2
Permanent Exclusion				1					1
Refused School Placement						1			1
SEN						1			1
Short Term Intervention						8			8
Health concerns Covid-19				1		5			6
Dissatisfaction School Bullying			1	5		8		1	15
Parent did not give reason				1		2			3
Philosophical or preferential			2	2	1	5		2	12
Dissatisfaction School general	1	1		15		3		1	17
Physical health						2			2
Risk of School Exclusion				1		2			3
Mental health		1	1	5		1			11
Unstable choice			1	2		2			5
Difficulty across school place				3		2			5
Did not get school placement				2					2
Dissatisfaction School SEND			1			2			3
Unsettled						3			3
Total	1	2	7	48	2	54	1	4	120

The table above shows 'Dissatisfaction with school general' (17), 'other' (16) and 'dissatisfaction with school bullying' (15) are the highest primary reasons for a closed EHE registration in 2022-23. 'Reintegrated now in school' (54) was the highest outcome on closure, followed by 'refer to CME' (49). This conveys the efficiency of our monitoring of EHE as 103 children have either returned to school or they are in the process of being returned to school via the CME process.

Exclusions

For many pupils, exclusions may not be necessary, as other strategies can manage behaviour. However, if approaches towards behaviour management have been exhausted, then suspensions and permanent exclusions will sometimes be necessary as a last resort. This is to ensure that other pupils and teaching staff are protected from disruption and can learn in safe, calm, and supportive environments.

Schools and local authorities should not adopt a 'no exclusion' policy as an end in itself. This can lead to perverse incentives for schools not to exclude even when exclusion may be a way for a pupil to access Alternative Provision which will help ensure an excluded pupil remains engaged in education. In some cases, a 'no exclusion' policy can present safeguarding issues and expose staff and pupils to unreasonable risks. Instead, schools and local authorities should work to create environments where school exclusions are not necessary because pupil behaviour does not require it.

Walsall School Suspensions and Exclusions

This government supports headteachers in using suspension and permanent exclusion as a sanction when warranted as part of creating calm, safe, and supportive environments where both pupils and staff can work in safety and are respected. To achieve this, suspension and permanent exclusion are sometimes a necessary part of a functioning system, where it is accepted that not all pupil behaviour can be amended or remedied by pastoral processes, or consequences within the school.

Only the headteacher of a school can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently excluded.

A suspension, where a pupil is temporarily removed from the school, is an essential behaviour management tool that should be set out within a school's behaviour policy.

A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year). A suspension does not have to be for a continuous period.

A suspension may be used to provide a clear signal of what is unacceptable behaviour as part of the school's behaviour policy and show a pupil that their current behaviour is putting them at risk of permanent exclusion. Where suspensions are becoming a regular occurrence for a pupil, headteachers and schools should consider whether suspension alone is an effective sanction for the pupil and whether additional strategies need to be put in place to address behaviour.

A permanent exclusion is when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend a school (unless the pupil is reinstated). The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:

- in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school.

For any permanent exclusion, headteachers should take reasonable steps to ensure that work is set and marked for pupils during the first five school days where the pupil will not be attending alternative provision. Any appropriate referrals to support services or notifying key workers (such as a pupil's social worker) should also be considered.

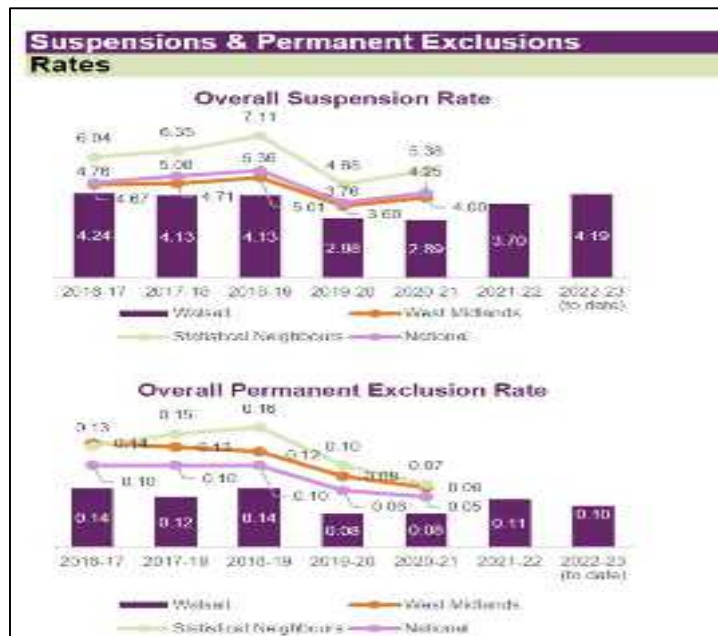
Walsall support

As part of our engagement with schools to review existing and to help reduce future exclusions, officers from both Access and Inclusion and the Early Help Service have reviewed and updated Walsall's notification process for suspensions and exclusions.

This is to ensure there is clarity about:

- The processes that need to be followed by both schools and the Local Authority in terms of notifying all relevant parties about suspensions (fixed period) and permanent exclusions.
- the levels of support that should be provided by both the Local Authority and Walsall schools to children, young people and their parent and carers prior to, at the point of and post exclusion, dependent on whether the exclusion is fixed period or permanent.
- The level of support and, where appropriate, challenge that should be provided by the Local Authority to schools prior to, at the point of and, post exclusion, dependent on whether the exclusion is fixed period or permanent Plan and SEN Support Permanent. The Local Authority support and challenge comes from a number of services including our Inclusion Hub (formally known as Vulnerable Learners Hub), Virtual School, Early Help, SEN advisory services and they utilise a graduated approach based on the individual circumstances of each pupil.

The 2020-21 academic year was interrupted by the second national lockdown. Schools remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers and all other children were learning remotely. While permanent exclusions and suspensions were still possible throughout the academic year, school closures have had a substantial effect on the number of permanent exclusions and suspensions and therefore caution should be taken when comparing figures across years. The last complete year that was not impacted by national lockdowns was 2018-19 which has been added for comparison



The tables below show the rates for primary and secondary phases



Permanent Exclusions data involves very small numbers of children so should be treated with extreme caution as small fluctuations can have a big impact.

The 2021-22 and 2022-23 data for Walsall, statistical neighbours and national are not published. Where 2021-22 and 2022-23 data for Walsall is available this has been calculated from data in Capita One and is therefore **unpublished data**.

The last complete year that was not impacted by national lockdowns was 2018-19. As advised in the SFR data guidance provided by the DfE, caution should be taken when comparing previous years to 2019-20 and 2020-21. While suspensions and permanent exclusions were possible throughout these academic years, pandemic restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers displayed.

In Walsall boys are significantly more likely to be permanently excluded or receive suspensions than girls.

Regionally and nationally boys are three times more likely to be excluded than girls but in Walsall this increases to seven times more likely.

Overall boys in Walsall are almost three times more likely to be suspended than girls.

The largest proportion of permanent exclusions based on pupils home postcode at the time of the exclusion were in the north locality in 2021-22 and this continues to be the trend so far in 2022-23.

The largest proportion of suspensions based on pupils home postcode at the time of the exclusion were in the west locality in 2021-22 and so far in 2022-23 the highest proportion are in the east locality.

In Walsall children in receipt of FSM are over six times more likely to be excluded than their peers who are not in receipt of free school meals compared to three or four times more regionally and nationally.

The proportion of children with FSM who are suspended is significantly lower in Walsall than the proportions regionally and nationally where this group of children are between three and four times more likely to receive a suspension.

Pupils with SEN are disproportionately more likely to be suspended or permanently excluded. In both 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years 32% of suspensions were for pupils with SEN support. This equates to 553 children in 2021/22 and 633 children in 2022/23 with the greatest increase in secondary aged children.

9% of permanent exclusions were for pupils with SEN Support or EHCPs. Although it needs to be noted that with reference to exclusions for children with SEN Support this equated to 23 children in 2021/22 and 17 children in 2022/3 and for children with an EHCP this equated to 2 children in both 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Walsall Learning Alliance

The Walsall Learning Alliance is a strategic group comprising representatives from all sectors of education in Walsall, that recognises a collective responsibility and accountability for improving the outcomes of all Walsall's children and young people.

The Alliance has several priorities - one of which is inclusion/exclusion. The aim - to reduce suspensions and exclusions in Walsall and for all schools to be fully inclusive.

To address this priority, the group considered what is already know about suspensions and exclusions in Walsall, initially this was data driven from the above headline data, and then identified what further information is required and through breaking into workshop groups, identified possible next steps. Further information was shared, considering research and learning from external reviews (drawn from case studies of individuals).

As a result, a smaller focus group has been formed, this group includes representatives from a range of sectors. Colleagues have been included who are not members of the alliance but who are known will have a valid contribution to make. We will recap on what we know already, consider the additional information gathered in response to previous discussions and decide how we move forward.

Much of the work will be around understanding what pre-emptive support is needed and how those at risk of suspension or exclusion could be identified earlier and appropriate support and intervention be put in place. Much of this information will be drawn from current case studies and will involve looking at health, education and social care involvement. Over time, success will be measured by a reduction in suspensions and exclusions.

4. *Financial information*

There are no direct financial implications of the report but all pupils who are permanently excluded from schools go 'on roll' at the New Leaf Centre for

assessment and provision of education. The funding for New Leaf comes from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant through the high needs local funding formula.

5. Reducing Inequalities

The principal objective of the local authority is to continue to identify characteristics of good practice in addressing inequalities in elective home education, with particular attention to the following factors, gender, ethnicity, and Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Our aim is to work towards the position where the needs of all young people are addressed in school or alternative provision and parents are only electing to home educate as a positive choice rather than being evoked due to dissatisfaction or conflict with schools

6. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position.

The Committee may decide to request further information or assurance in respect of the progress of elective home education.

7. Respond

Any recommendations made by the Committee will be assessed against the Access and Inclusion work programme and performance board.

8. Review

All areas are under constant monitoring and assessment via Children's Services Performance Board.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Attendance Self assessment Tool
- Appendix 2 – Working group remit and strategic priorities
- Appendix 3 – Attendance referral form

Background papers

- Scrutiny Paper – Children not in School – September 2022

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