

**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy,
Executive Director – Children's Services**

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 January 2021
Subject:	Children Missing Out on Education Annual Report 2019/20

Summary:

This report collates data and commentary on groups of children who are identified as being at increased risk of missing education. It is the fourth report in this format and compares, where possible, three years of data.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and comment on the Children Missing Out on Education Annual Report 2019/20.

1. Background

The local authority has a duty under **section 436A of the Education Act 1996** to have processes in place to identify children who are not receiving a full time suitable education. This report provides an update on the processes in place to capture this information and explains any trends where possible.

The definition 'Children missing out on education' is used in this report to encompass children who are out of any form of education i.e. they are not on a school roll, not receiving full time education because their attendance is irregular or they are not receiving a suitable education elsewhere.

Covid-19 resulted in schools closing in March 2020 and reopening to all pupils in September 2020 which resulted in a significant impact on attendance at school. Therefore, some of the data presented in this report is limited to the period in which schools were fully open which was September 2019 until end of February 2020.

The following points are highlights of the activities and trends for the academic year 2019-20:

- The number of children being removed from school to be electively home educated continued to grow despite the period of non compulsory schooling from March to September 2020. This was in line with a national growth in

this area. During the lockdown, contact with families was limited and initially this impacted on the ability to assess the education being provided at home. This improved by June 2020; however, the lack of visits to a child's home has made it difficult to truly assess the education and welfare of those children causing most concern.

- The process for reporting children missing education and following up notifications continues to improve with the introduction of the new data management system, Synergy. Children reported as Children Missing Education (CME) dropped during the lockdown as schools found it difficult to establish the education status of some of the children and visits did not initially take place to find the whereabouts of the family. The latter recommenced in June 2020.
- During the first part of the academic year, schools continued to use Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) as a tool for addressing irregular attendance. The number of FPN's by February 2020 was more than half that of the previous year indicating that total numbers would have been higher for 2019/20 than 2018/9 if the process had not been suspended in March. During the period FPN's were being used, a higher percentage were issued for persistence absence than previously, which indicates that schools were more prepared to use this strategy to address long term absences. Prosecutions also increased mainly due to the introduction of the Single Justice Process to address non payment of Fixed Penalty Notices for holiday leave.
- The school absence rates refer to 2018/19 and show that Lincolnshire's persistent absence rate increased compared with national data. This accounts for 171 primary schools sitting above the national average for overall absence. Covid-19 has made it difficult to address this individually with the schools however a high number of schools have attended virtual workshops on managing attendance which indicates a will to improve. It will also be challenging to show improvements as 2019/20 attendance data will be seriously impacted by the pandemic.
- Between September 2019 and March 2020, the use of the reduced timetable increased as more schools followed the guidance introduced in June 2019. The guidance states that the implementation of a reduced timetable should only be done with the consultation of the SEND team, Pupil Re-integration Team (PRT) and the Social Worker if the child is known to these services. This has raised the awareness of the importance of monitoring the use of a reduced timetable to ensure the child is receiving the education they are entitled to. Understanding the reduced timetable process has been essential going into the new academic year, as schools use it to reintegrate children with anxiety due to Covid-19 back into school.

2. Conclusion

The Committee is invited to review and comment on the Children Missing Out on Education Annual Report 2019/20 attached at Appendix A.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children Missing Out on Education Annual Report 2019/20

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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