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1. Background

The local authority has a statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age at school or otherwise. This education must be suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they might have. The local authority 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 receiving a suitable full-time education, as described.

The groups of children who are identified as being at an increased risk of missing out on education are:

- **Children missing education (CME)**
children who are not on roll of a school
- **Children who are electively home educated (EHE)** where parents are failing to provide a suitable, efficient education that meets the needs of their child
- **Children not attending regularly**
pupils who have not attended school for a period of 10 consecutive school days and their absences have been unauthorised (**PNAR**)
pupils for whom a fixed penalty notice has been issued due to persistent absence/unauthorised holiday
pupils whose parents are being prosecuted due to their child's poor attendance
- **Pupils on reduced timetables**
pupils who are not receiving a full-time education due to e.g. medical needs

2. Coronavirus (Covid-19) and School Attendance

Due to the spread of the pandemic Coronavirus (Covid-19), on the 20th March 2020, schools were closed for the majority of children, remaining open only for those children of workers critical to the Covid-19 response - who absolutely needed to attend, and vulnerable children. On 1st June 2020, schools were asked to open to allow children to attend who were in Reception, Year 1, Year 6 and Year 10 as well

as continuing to be open for vulnerable children and critical workers. Schools were expected to continue to provide learning opportunities to children at home through online resources and teaching.

Due to the disruption in the physical attendance at school, school attendance was deemed as 'non compulsory' for a period of time, which resulted in the following suspension of data collection and non-attendance processes from the 20th March until the end of the 2019/20 academic year:

- DfE attendance data
- Children not attending regularly (issuing of fixed penalty notices for non-attendance and legal action)
- Reduced timetables

The data in this report that relates to the above areas is for the period of the academic year 2019/20 when education at school was compulsory.

3. Notification of children who are missing out on education (CMOE)

2016/17 saw the introduction of online surveys that allow schools to notify the local authority of children who are or may be at risk of missing education. The introduction and use of Synergy in 2018 allowed the local authority to improve the processing of the two new DfE files, CMJ- child joining a school and CML – child leaving a school. Most school management information system (MIS) providers have now built the use of these files into their system and schools are therefore more easily able to provide the local authority with the data it requires. Once received, the system matches leavers and joiners; when a child is not matched, further enquiries are made with schools, to ensure that they have used the notification survey as required. If the child's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, the child is considered as missing education and the search for this child is supported through the child missing education process.

4. Children Missing Education

Since November 2016, schools have used the notification survey to report a child as missing education. Other authorities that wish to report a child missing education refer directly to the CME team. In 2019/20 **1207** CME notifications were received, **962** were reported by Lincolnshire schools, **245** were referred from out of county. Overall there has been a 17% decrease in the total number of CME children most likely explained by the lack of reporting during the first Covid-19 lockdown when attendance at school was not compulsory. There was also a lower rate of closure as it was difficult to determine if a child had returned to school until September 2020. The CME team continue to find children and close cases from previous years; A further 253 children were found in education from the 474 remaining open cases in 2018/19 and 117 from the 183 remaining open cases for 2017/18.

New sets of information were collected for 2019/20 which includes the source of the referral, the reason a child has been referred as missing education and the district breakdown of the location of the CME. Just over half of the referrals received are from Lincolnshire schools when a child does not return to school or start when expected. Approximately 10% of the referrals are passed to the CME team from Admissions when a school place is not taken up. 27% of cases become CME because they have moved out of county and 22% are reported CME when they arrive in the county without a school place. Nearly 20% move out of the UK with no known destination address. A fifth of the CME notifications for 2019/20 were from the Boston area most likely due to the high number of Eastern European families who return to their home country without stating a next destination school.

In 2017 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) introduced a process which allowed local authorities to report a Child Missing Education to them following which they will inform the local authority if the family is still living at the same address, a different address or not found. This process was suspended during lockdown and restarted for the new academic year 2020/21. The conditions are that the child must have been CME for 10 weeks and that a recent home visit had been carried out prior to the referral. Lincolnshire began this process on the 5th February 2018. There are also plans to liaise with the district councils who may have information on housing

and benefits that will help to locate the family and child if they remain in the county. CME referrals continue to be risk assessed in order for the team to prioritise those classed as red rating i.e. known to social care, a victim of crime etc.

5. Children not attending regularly

5.1. School Assurance

Most recent data	National Unauthorised absence		Lincs. Unauthorised absence		National Authorised absence		Lincs. Authorised absence		National Persistent absence		Lincs. Persistent absence	
	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18	2018/19	2017/18
All schools	1.4%	1.4%	1.02%	1.1%	3.3%	3.5%	4.15%	3.7%	10.9%	11.2%	14.22%	11.5%
Primary	1.1%	1.1%	0.88%	1.0%	2.9%	3.0%	3.47%	3.1%	8.2%	8.7%	11.61%	8.6%
Secondary	1.8%	1.6%	1.12%	1.2%	3.7%	3.9%	4.79%	4.2%	13.7%	13.9%	16.63%	14.2%
Special	2.3%	2.2%	2.47%	1.9%	7.8%	8.0%	8.09%	10.5%	28.8%	29.6%	30.82%	32%

- Lincolnshire's unauthorised absence in mainstream schools decreased compared with an increase nationally. Unauthorised absences in special schools increased.
- Lincolnshire's authorised absence in mainstream schools increased compared with a decrease nationally. Authorised absences in special school decreased.
- Lincolnshire's persistent absence increased compared with a decrease nationally. Persistent absence in special schools decreased.

The particular concerns are the continued increase in persistent absences in primary and secondary schools. Whilst absence in Lincolnshire special schools is still higher than national data, the gap has reduced.

There will be no comparable data for 2019/20 and the full 2020/21 year due to Covid-19 however hopefully there may be data available for the spring and summer term of 2021 which will be available for the 2021/22 annual report.

There were 171 primary schools, 26 secondary schools and 10 special schools who had higher than national average overall absence and 52 primary, 24 secondary and 6 special schools that had higher than national average for unauthorised absence. The local authority routinely writes to these schools raising its concerns however, due to the pressures that schools were under due to coronavirus, this did not

happen. The Inclusion and Attendance team continue to promote the Managing Attendance package of workshops, audit and advice and guidance which 140 schools have purchased for 2020/21. The attendance of schools at the 'managing attendance' workshops is very high indicating that there is a will to achieve better.

5.2. Pupils not attending regularly: 10 consecutive days unauthorised absence

The Children Missing Education guidance September 2016 stated that schools should agree with the local authority, an interval at which they will inform the local authority of a pupil that fails to attend regularly. To support this, a notification survey has been designed that allows schools to notify the local authority of any child who has been absent from school without permission for more than 10 consecutive school days.

The table below shows the number of pupils notified as not attending regularly for the period September 2019 and March 2020.

School type	No. submitted	No. repeat
Primary	37	9
Secondary	161	36
Special	33	13

In 2019/20 there were 231 entries and 58 pupils entered more than once. This is an increase on 2018/19 and only covers a 7 month period.

Schools are supported to explore all possible strategies to return the child to school or alternative provision and, where appropriate, the local authority may write to parents on behalf of the school reminding them of their duty and requesting the child returns to school. Schools are requested to review and resubmit every four weeks in order for the local authority to monitor children with long term absence from school.

6. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

When a child has unauthorised absence of more than 4.5 days over a six week period, schools are permitted to request the issue of a penalty notice. There were

1600 FPN's issued in 2019/20. If the process had not ceased in March due to the pandemic, there would have been at least the same number of FPN's as 2018/19. With the introduction of the Single Justice Process (SJP), cases of non-payment were being heard by the courts, hence the significant increase in prosecutions. Based on the first six months, payments of fines had increased to 66%. The introduction of the new web portal for schools to request FPN's and for parents to pay was delayed until September 2020 due to issues with the new JADU platform. This will hopefully reduce the amount of time allocated to processing an FPN and may see an increase in fine payment and less court hearings.

Lincolnshire is usually required to complete an annual return to the DFE as part of the Parental Responsibilities - Attendance data collection; however, this was not required for 2019/20.

7. Prosecutions for non-attendance

Over the 2019/20 period, 293 cases were presented to the courts for poor attendance which includes those cases heard through the Single Justice Process. This is significantly more than previous years due to the prosecution for non-payment of FPN's. Prosecution for persistent absences which are ordinarily heard in the live courts was on a trajectory to be higher than last year. This would reflect the strategies that schools are taking to address the increase in persistently absent pupils. No cases were heard in the courts either on-line (SJP) or live from March to September 2020.

8. Children on Reduced Timetables

The legislation states that all children have a right to a full-time education which is defined by Ofsted as 25 hours per week. If at any point in a child's education, it is deemed that he/she is not capable of doing a full-time education principally due to medical needs, the school must inform the local authority. The school must indicate why the reduced hours timetable is in place and for how long; this must be for no longer than 6 weeks and be in agreement with the parents.

A revised 'Reduced Timetable' protocol is now available to schools and the local authority will monitor the use of this, principally looking at children who are subject to a number of periods of reduced timetables and schools who frequently use this approach.

The data below shows the number of reduced timetable notifications from schools from September 2019 to March 2020. There were no notifications for the remainder of the year due to non-compulsory education.

School type	No. submitted	No. repeat	No. Closed
Primary	238	90	47
Secondary	209	68	33
Special	40	6	3

Throughout 2019/20, 486 children were reported to be on a reduced timetable. Considering this is data for only 7 months of the academic year, this is a significant increase on the previous year. This is likely to reflect an increase in reporting since the release of the new protocol rather than an increase in the use of reduced timetables in school. 164 children were assessed at the 6 week maximum period for a period of reduced timetable and re-entered on to the system for a further period. A third re-entry would have resulted in a dialogue with the school, however reduced timetables ceased until September 2020 when children returned to compulsory school.

9. Children who are electively home educated

The local authority maintains a register of children who are home educated. Schools are legally required to inform the local authority when a parent decides to remove their child from school, to home educate. Other children, who have never entered the education system, are often identified by other agencies. At the end of the academic year 2019/20 there was 1123 EHE children known to the local authority. This is slightly higher than the numbers for 2018/19 despite the fact that there were few

notifications from March to August due to the lockdown, only 138 were received compared with 293 over the same period for 2019.

In Lincolnshire and nationally, home education numbers have been increasing. This can be for many reasons and with more publicity being given to home education, parents may perceive it as a viable and even more desirable alternative to school, without understanding the complexities of providing a suitable education at home.

The result has been that a growing number of children are out of school for a significant amount of time whilst they move through the EHE process only to be returned to school when it becomes evident that no full-time, suitable education is being provided.

In April 2019, the local authority adopted a more robust process to address this concern. Parents are now required to demonstrate that they have an intention to educate and have an awareness of how they are going to approach this. Initially parents could either have a visit from a Safeguarding and Education Welfare Officer to allow them the opportunity to discuss their intention to educate or they could provide written information. However, since March 2020, visits have had to be curtailed due to the Coronavirus pandemic and parents can now either submit information or have a phone or video call. Whilst for the majority, these methods of communication have been effective; there is added value to making a home visit to assess the suitability of the environment for learning and the overall wellbeing of the child.

Once a judgement of 'satisfactory' with regard to intent to home educate has been given, parents can receive a visit by an education provision advisor or they can send the LA information about the provision they are making. Up until March 2020 this was the process which was followed. From September 2019 to the end of February 2020, 385 children were visited and 93% were judged as suitable compared with 91% of 316 children for the same period a year previously.

Where the parents have opted to send information, the rate of suitable judgements is lower. There were 97 submissions from September 2019 to the end of February

2020, with 78% being judged suitable. This is, however, higher than the previous year which was 60% of 57 submissions. This improvement in outcomes for both visits and submissions, is likely to be due to the initial stage of the process when parents who are unable to provide evidence of their intention to educate are directed to send their child back to school, thus increasing the possibility that the remaining families are able to provide a good level of education at home. This improvement to the process has also impacted on the number of failed visits reported due to family not being present or did not expect a visit (all visits are confirmed in writing). This has decreased compared to the previous year from 185 to 139 for the same period September 2019 to February 2020.

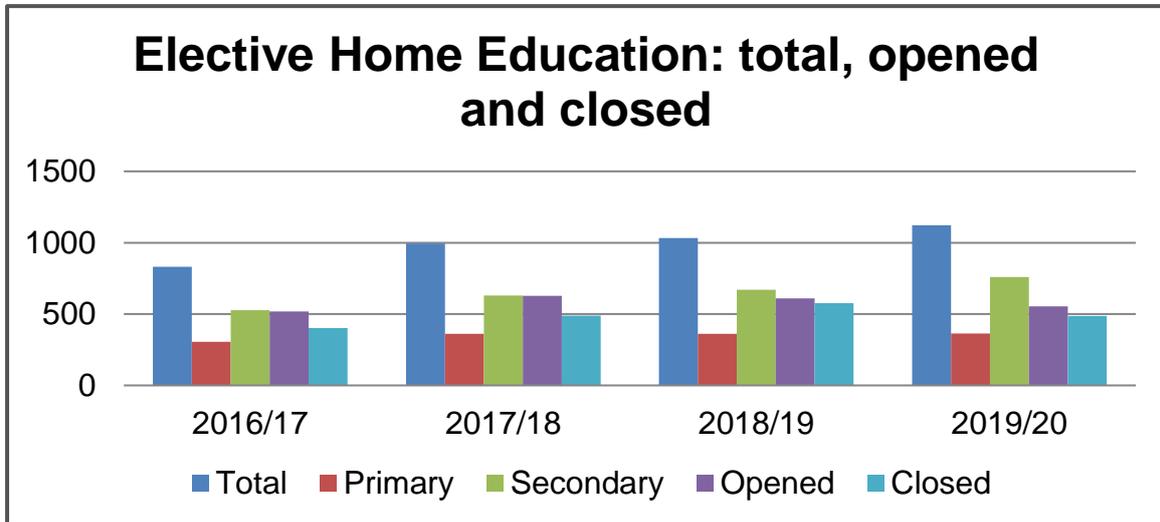
In March 2020 when it was clear that the coronavirus situation was becoming increasingly serious, the process changed due to parental anxiety over visits and the need to keep staff safe. The process was temporarily on hold until a new way of working could be established; this has impacted on the data for 2019/20. By the end of March, it was agreed that all parents could provide a submission of information about the provision they were making for their child and a longer period was given for the return. The number of submissions returned in the timescale was under 50%. To respond to this, the team began to offer a phone or video call as an alternative to a home visit, this was more successful in eliciting a reply.

Moving into the new academic year, the team has continued with the new ways of working. The legacy of delayed notifications, limited contact with parents and in some cases, poor evidence provided during the lockdown, is currently having a negative impact and this will continue whilst the numbers of children being home educated continue to significantly increase. One of the consequences is the increase in School Attendance Orders issued by the local authority.

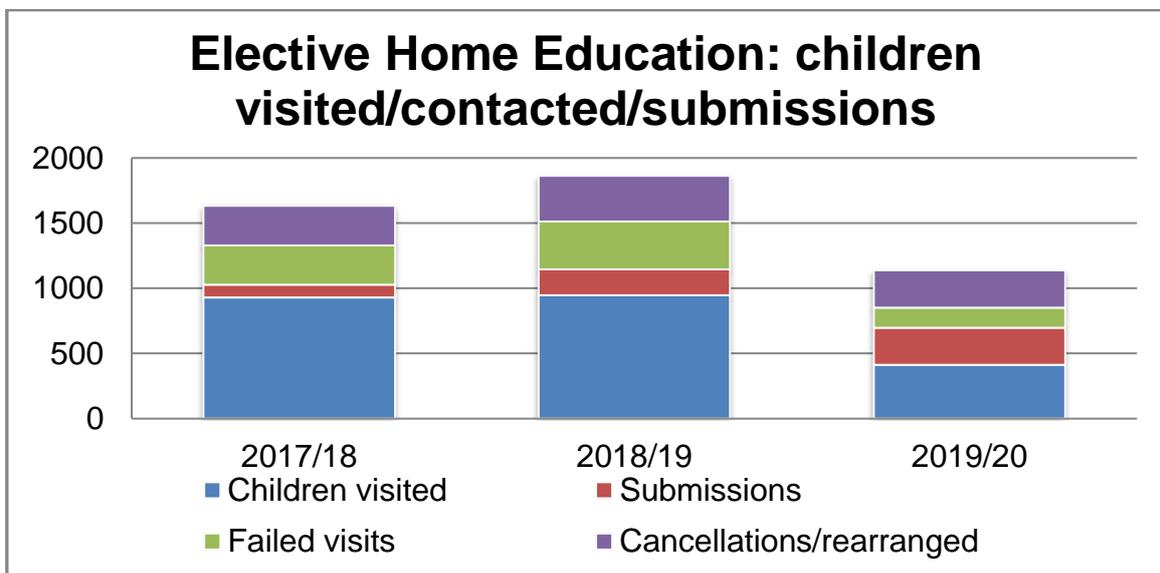
The number of children who were electively home educated and on a Child in Need (CiN) or Children Protection (CP) plan or receiving Early Help was collated and is included in the report. There have been some data quality issues which were unable to be resolved by the time of submission of the report. Additional data has been collated for this year, however, to include children who have been previously CiN, CP or Early Help. This information gives a more informed idea of the vulnerability of

the children being home educated. Currently there are 24 EHE children on a child in need plan with 274 previously CiN. There are 2 children currently in child protection and 72 previously on a CP plan. It also shows that 13 children who are currently being home educated were previously Looked After. Finally the number of children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has increased this year by 40%. From December 2020, this data will be available on a monthly basis as part of the Children's Services monthly reporting which will allow a more thorough analysis.

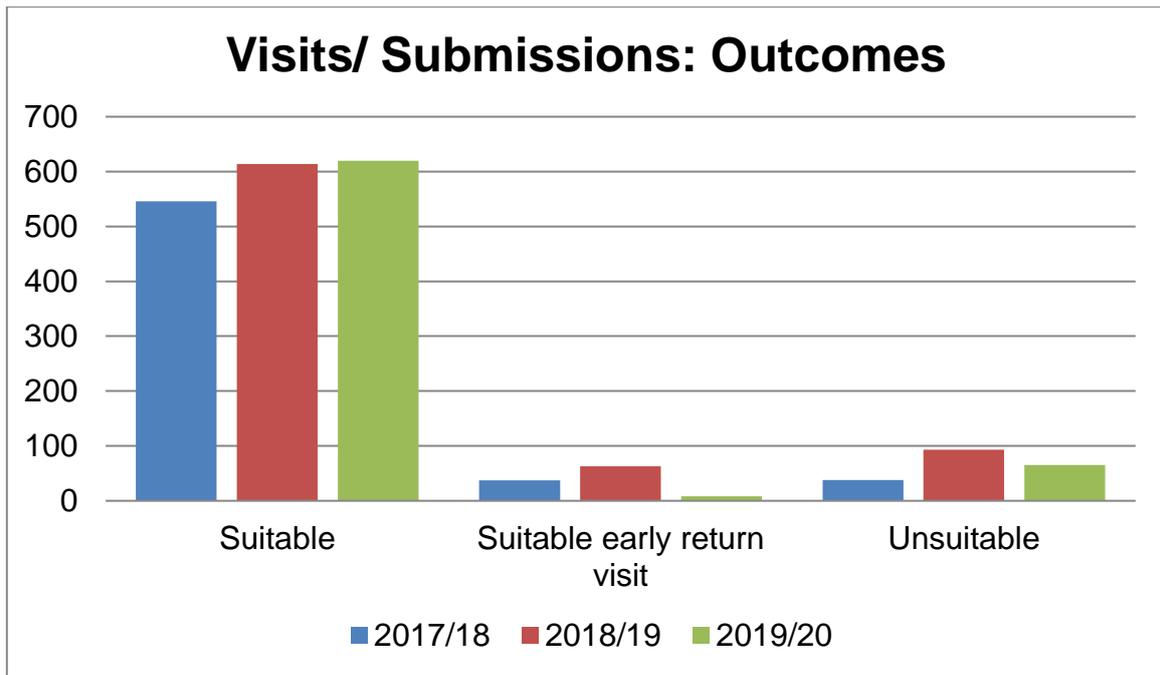
Elective Home Education



Key Messages: Number of children being Electively Home Educated continues to grow despite fewer referrals during the school closure.

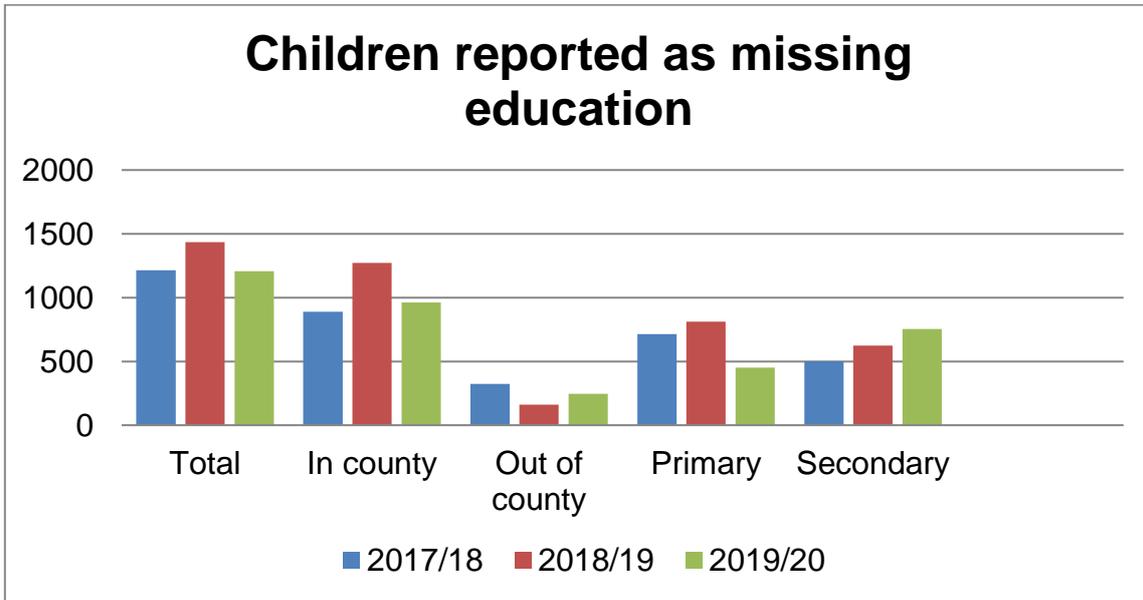


Key Messages: The lower number of visits and increase in submissions reflects the change in practice due to the pandemic. There are lower numbers of contacts overall as the process was delayed. A decrease in cancellations and failed visits reflects the lack of visits but also the improved process.



Key Messages: There has been an increase in suitable visits/submissions based on the current process of requesting information, phone or video call.

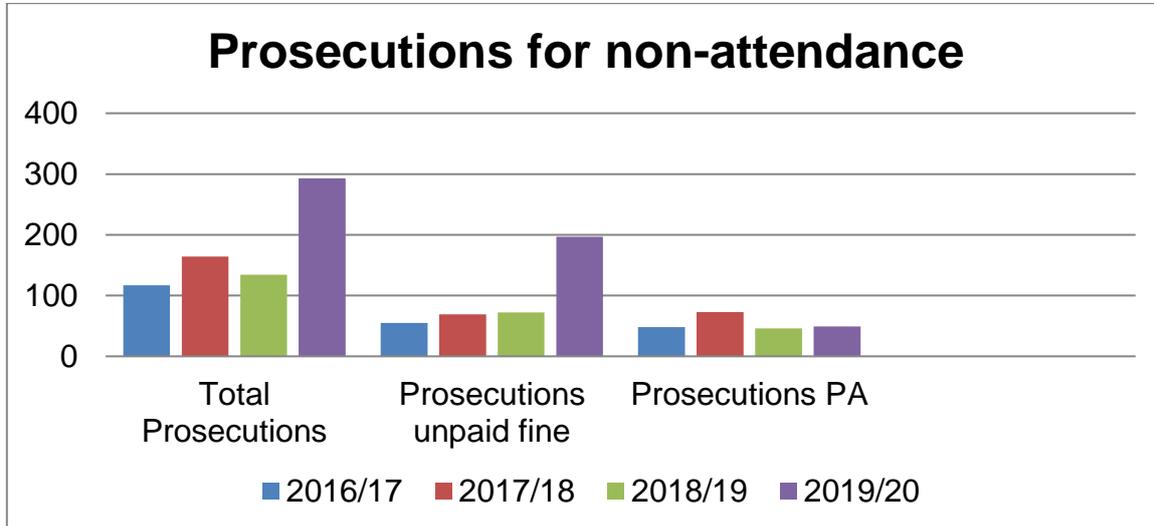
Children Missing Education



Key Messages: the number of children reported as missing this year has decreased compared with last year. Over the period March to July when attendance at school was non-compulsory, there was a drop in the reporting of CME children as can be seen in the chart below.



Children not attending regularly



Key Messages: Prosecutions due to unpaid FPN fines has increased considerably due to the introduction of the Single Justice Process. This represents only 6 months of data therefore would have been significantly higher.



Key Messages: Total Fixed Penalty Notices issued were low due to processes ceasing in March 2020. This is reflected in other categories except prosecution for non-payment due to the introduction of the Single Justice Process.

Children Electively Home Educated

Reported August 2019

School Age Group	2016/17			2017/18			2018/19		
	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total
Current number EHE	305	527	832	361	631	995	361	671	1032

Starters and Leavers	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of new starters	518	628	610
Number closed	402	488	577

EHE Advisor visits and outcomes	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number children visited	931	946 (369 failed)	-
Number families visited	800	760	413
Number of submissions reviewed	98	199	285
Number of suitable (visits and submissions)	546	614	620
Number of early returns following suitable (visits and submissions)	37	63	8
Number of unsuitable (visits and submissions)	38	93	65
Failed visits	300	369	153
Cancelled or rearranged visits	304	349	286

	Pupil	Male	Female
Reception	11	5	6
Yr 1	37	16	21
Yr 2	52	27	25
Yr 3	46	29	17
Yr 4	70	38	32
Yr 5	67	34	33
Yr 6	81	39	42
Yr 7	108	52	56
Yr 8	115	52	63
Yr 9	160	76	84
Yr 10	171	80	91
Yr 11	205	99	106

Area	2018/19	2019/20	% increase/decrease
Boston	69	82	18%
East Lindsey	269	312	16%
Lincoln	114	113	-1%
North Kesteven	134	150	12%
South Holland	141	148	5%
South Kesteven	144	158	10%
West Lindsey	161	160	-0.5%
	1032		

	CIN	Previously CIN	CP	Previously CP	TAC	Previously Early Help	EHCP	Looked After Child
2015/16	110	n/a	5	n/a	100	n/a	57	n/a
2016/17	114	n/a	9	n/a	78	n/a	57	n/a
2017/18	82	n/a	2	n/a	80	n/a	51	n/a
2018/19	74	n/a	6	n/a	61*	n/a	52	n/a
2019/20	24	274	2	72		48	73	13

*The TAC Number represents TAC External only due to a current issue with the TAC Internal Report therefore numbers may be slightly lower.

Children Missing Education

Reported August 2020

2017/18	In County				Out of County				Total			
	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total
Primary	118	398	0	516	49	148	0	197	167	546	0	713
Secondary	84	272	18	374	26	92	9	127	110	364	27	501
Total	202	670	18	890	75	240	9	324	277	910	27	1214
%	22.70%	75.28%	2.02%		23.15%	74.07%	2.78%		22.82%	74.96%	2.22%	

	In County				Out of County				Total			
2018/19	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total
Primary	289	432	n/a	721	13	77	n/a	90	302	509	n/a	811
Secondary	159	363	29	551	13	56	3	72	172	419	32	623
Total	448	795	29	1272	26	133	3	162	474	928	32	1434
%	35.22%	62.5%	2.27%		16.04%	82.09%	1.8%		33.05%	64.71%	2.23%	
	In County				Out of County				Total			
2019/20	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total	Open	Closed	Reached School Leaving Age	Total
Primary	253	289	n/a	542	39	89	n/a	128	292	378	n/a	452
Secondary	180	210	30	420	26	90	1	117	206	300	31	755
Total	433	499	30	962	65	179	1	245	498	678	31	1207
%	45%	52%	3%		26.5%	73%	0.5%		41%	56%	3%	

CME cases logged each month													
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total
2017/2018	205	123	151	93	115	70	110	51	65	118	89	24	1214
2018/2019	193	153	156	72	124	160	110	77	115	157	123	20	1460
2019/2020	147	204	141	111	122	89	115	31	54	82	103	19	1218

Source of Referral	2019/2020	%
EHE	65	5.39%
Lincs School	670	55.51%
Out of County School	18	1.49%
Leavers Form	5	0.41%
Admissions	112	9.28%
Other LA CME Teams	247	20.46%
Other (i.e. SAO, Social Care, Anonymous Referral, etc)	90	7.46%

Reason for CME (where given)	2019/2020	
Ex EHE	21	1.74%
Moved OOC	332	27.51%
Moved out of UK	218	18.06%
Moved within Lincs	92	7.62%
Possibly EHE	0	0.00%
Moved into Lincs	277	22.95%
Unknown	109	9.03%
Proof of Address Required	58	4.81%
Other	100	8.29%

In County CME referral area	2019/2020	
Lincoln	163	13.50%
Boston	262	21.71%
North Kesteven	42	3.48%
South Kesteven	106	8.78%
South Holland	134	11.10%
East Lindsey	142	11.76%
West Lindsey	105	8.70%
OOC	253	20.96%

	Fixed Penalty Notice Summary	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1	Total FPNs issued for unauthorised absence	741	2237	3059	1600
1a	Total FPNs issued: main reason-family holiday	503	1953	2732	1139
1b	Total FPNs issued: main reason- late	0	0	0	0
1c	Total FPNs issued: main reason: other unauthorised	238	284	327	185
2	FPNs paid within 21 days	439	1435	1830	1056
3	FPNs paid within 22-28 days	5	14	23	-
4	FPNs withdrawn	42	153	93	148
4a	FPNs withdrawn as issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct	11	4	13	-
4b	FPNs withdrawn as ought not to have been issued to the named recipient	26	49	33	-
4c	FPNs withdrawn as notice appears have material errors	2	27	27	-

4d	FPNs withdrawn as after 28 day expiry, penalty is unpaid and LA do not wish to bring legal proceedings	3	73	20	-
5	Cases prosecuted following non payment	58	69	72	(396) non payment but no prosecution
6	Unresolved	196	93	84	-
7	FPNs unpaid	276	473	728	396

Pupils not attending regularly: Fixed Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Prosecutions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total Prosecutions	117	85	134	293
Prosecutions due to unpaid FPN's	55	69	72	197
Persistent absence – 1 st Prosecution	48	73	46	49
Aggravated – 2 nd Prosecution	6	12	-	-
Withdrawn	0	5	0	0
Education Supervision Orders	4	4	3	3
School Attendance Orders	2	1	13	20

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