

Contents	Page
1. Background	3
2. Coronavirus (Covid-19) and School Attendance	4
3. Notification of children who are missing out on education	5
4. Children Missing Education	5
5. Children not attending regularly	6
5.1. School Assurance	6
5.2 Pupils not attending regularly	7
6. Fixed Penalty Notices	8
7. Prosecutions	8
8. Children on Reduced Timetables	8
9. Children who are Electively Home Educated	9
Appendix 1	
Graphs and Key Messages	12
Data for 2020/21 academic year	

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 has 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.

A parent has a right to home educate their child as an alternative to sending them to school. The education provided must be full time, efficient and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

Whilst most children attend school regularly or are being provided a suitable education elsewhere, there are some who, for many reasons are not receiving a full time education or are unable to attend. The groups of children who are referred to in this report are:

- **Children missing education (CME)**
children who are not on roll of a school
- **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 (**FPN**) 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

During the pandemic schools were asked to voluntarily complete a weekly attendance return to the DfE which was then shared with the local authority allowing it to consider school attendance data against national for primary, secondary, children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and children with a social worker. Based on the returns, Lincolnshire had an average attendance rate of 89% compared with 86% nationally. Lincolnshire also had a higher attendance rate for children with an EHCP (86% compared with 82% nationally) and children with a social worker (86% compare with 82% nationally). This positive picture was a result of the collaboration between SEND and the Social Care Teams to ensure that children were safe and well during lockdown and offering support back into school where required. The SEND team contacted all children with an EHCP twice during the year to speak to parents and offer support, which was well received by the families. This high level of collaboration and processing of concerns meant a swift response to need enabling the local authority to maintain a level of support resulting in higher attendance at school.

Following the return of children to school in March, attendance began to return to some normality as school attendance was deemed compulsory, however schools were far more flexible in their approach to non-attendance as they continued to encourage those who were still anxious about the pandemic to return to school. The local authority implemented new processes to support schools with their attendance.

1. The introduction of the Emotionally Based School Anxiety (EBSA) pathway. This pathway recognises children who cannot physically attend school due to anxiety or other mental health issues and guides school on what steps to take to allow children to access the support they need whilst still engaging with education. This pathway was shared with schools in the summer term 2021 and has been implemented during the Autumn term 2021.
2. Supporting children back into school through Early Help. This process is to support children who have not attended a school for a significant period of time and are therefore unlikely to successfully attend under the legal enforcement of a School Attendance Order. The reintegration back into school, with the support of an Early Help

worker was agreed in Spring 2021, with implementation planned over the 2021/22 academic year.

3. The extension of the role of the Virtual Head. Following the government's guidance in June 2021, there has been an agreement that additional support through Caring2Learn will be offered to schools to improve the education and attendance of children with a social worker.

The full benefit of these new processes will hopefully be seen in the academic year 2021/22.

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

All schools must 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 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 can therefore more easily 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 (CME)

All schools must use the notification survey to report a child as missing education to the local authority. Other authority's agencies that wish to report a child missing education refer directly to the CME team.

There were 1529 children logged as CME in 2020/21, a 25% increase in CME compared with the previous year but just 4.7% increase on 2018/19 as numbers return to pre-Covid levels of reporting. A significant number reported by schools, from out of county or from School Admissions are not logged as the children are immediately found in education and therefore

there is no need to record. In total 81% of all children reported as CME in 2020/21 were found in education and 11% remain open.

Boston has a higher share of the reported CME due to the high number of EAL (English as an additional language) families who may have returned to their home country and not notified the school (21%). Overall, the average time a case was open to CME was 55 days, and 38% of the cases were transferred on to a Safeguarding and Education Welfare Officer for further investigation. Of the 1529 children logged as CME, 110 were children who were previously electively home educated, this is 69% higher than the previous year. Most of these children will now have either returned to school or have received support with reintegration with the potential of issuing a School Attendance Order if there continues to be non-engagement.

Schools are asked to complete a risk assessment when notifying the local authority of a child that is CME. A Red or Amber rag rating would indicate a level of safeguarding concern. 36% of the children reported as CME were given a red or amber rating, which is comparable with the previous year. However there were a significant number of children reported without a completed risk assessment therefore this percentage may be higher. Schools will be reminded of the importance of identifying risk to support the team to prioritise searches.

There is an equal spread of children reported as CME across the age range, with the exception of Year 7 showing an unusual spike; this may have been due to children not transferring as expected to their secondary school in September 2020.

5. Children not attending regularly

5.1. School Assurance

There is no annual comparable data for 2019/20 with only Autumn 2019 available. The overall absence rate in Lincolnshire for Autumn 2019 was 5.2% compared with 4.9% nationally in 2019 showing Lincolnshire as having a higher than average absence for that period. Absence rates for Lincolnshire were below national for the Autumn 2020 term at 4.5% compared with 4.7% nationally (Covid cases removed) showing a good rate of return to school.

A guidance document for schools **Managing School Attendance: Supporting pupils' return to school following Covid-19 school closure** was shared with schools prior to the September 2020 new term. This supported schools to understand the DfE position on school attendance and how to record absences and address poor attendance taking into consideration anxiety based school refusal as a growing factor.

The Inclusion and Attendance team continued to promote the Managing Attendance package of workshops, audit and advice and guidance which 140 schools purchased for 2020/21.

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 was 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.

There is no comparable data for this year as there was a period of non-school attendance due to Covid-19. From September 2020 to 29 June 2021, 468 children were entered on the survey, with 16 children entered more than once. 52 of the children reported were still not attending full time in September 2021. It is unlikely that this is the full extent of the absences due to the complexities of remote learning, coding and non-school attendance during this period.

One of the reasons children were not attending during this period was anxiety about returning to school; a number of the children reported were children with Education Health and Care Plans. Whilst we expected that the number of children returning will continue to increase throughout the next academic term, the new EBSA pathway that has been established for schools accepts that some children will need additional support to overcome

their anxiety around attending school and schools are expected to follow the ladder of intervention. If there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the school is unable to provide a suitable education whilst the child is not attending, the case will be considered for a referral to Pilgrim alternative provision.

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 that the local authority issue a penalty notice. There were 604 FPN's issued in 2020/21 with no fixed penalties being given between January 2021 and March 2021. 72% of these were issued for holidays out of term time. There were 77 cases of prosecution due to non-payment and 160 cases remained unresolved at the end of the academic year. The local authority continues to recommend that schools consider all other possible strategies to improve attendance before requesting legal action.

Lincolnshire is required to complete an annual return to the DfE as part of the Parental Responsibilities - Attendance data collection; this was reinstated for 2020/21.

7. Prosecutions for non-attendance

There were an insignificant number of prosecutions for persistent absence during 2020/21. This was due mainly to a period of non-school attendance as well as schools avoiding prosecution whilst children may still be reluctant to return. There was also a significant backlog in court availability which impacted on the chances of cases being heard within the time period required to prosecute.

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 should be for no longer than 6 weeks and be in agreement with the parents.

The Reduced Timetable protocol is available to schools and the local authority monitor the use of the notification survey, principally looking at children who are subject to a number of periods of reduced timetables and schools who frequently use this approach.

Some children who have anxiety based school refusal will not be attending school at all but will be receiving support from the school to continue their education and begin to break down the barriers to going to school. These children should be recorded as 0 hours on the reduced timetable survey with a plan of increasing this over time.

For the academic year September 2020 to July 2021 the local authority was informed of 613 children receiving a reduced timetable, with many children being entered more than once giving 936 total entries. This is for a period of 9 months as attendance at schools was not compulsory from January to March 2021. This is a similar number to the previous year when there was also a period of school closure. 146 schools used the survey; there will be some schools that have no children to enter however, considering the likelihood of children not attending full time during the pandemic, it indicates that some schools were not informing the local authority of children who were not receiving full time education during this period. This is particularly evidence in special schools and alternative provision where non-attendance due to specific needs is higher compared with mainstream schools. There will be a focus on these settings for 2021-22 to ensure that data is captured.

Mental Health/Anxiety and Behaviour were two of the main reasons given for a child being on a reduced timetable. In addition, a high number of the children were recorded as having special needs many with an EHCP.

9. Children who are electively home educated (EHE)

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 2020/2021 there were 1262 EHE children known to the local authority. This is 12% higher than the numbers for 2019/20 despite the fact that there were few notifications from January to March due to the school closure.

In Lincolnshire and nationally, home education numbers had been increasing prior to the pandemic. This was for many reasons and with more publicity being given to home education, parents have and may continue to perceive it to be a viable and even more desirable alternative to school, without understanding the complexities of providing a suitable education at home. The data in Appendix 1 shows that whilst the numbers recorded are high throughout the year, there are also a high number of starters and closed cases indicating that there is a significant amount of movement in and out of school. This suggests that the parental choice of EHE is mainly pandemic related rather than a long term desire to home educate.

The new process introduced in 2019 has enabled the local authority to reduce the period out of school by requesting an intention to educate once the child is off roll. If this is not provided, the parent is told to return the child to school and support is offered if there are any difficulties in doing this. This process was impacted by the pandemic in that it was more challenging to return a child to school during school closure and the restrictions on visiting families. However, the new process will reduce the number of children who are out of school for a significant amount of time.

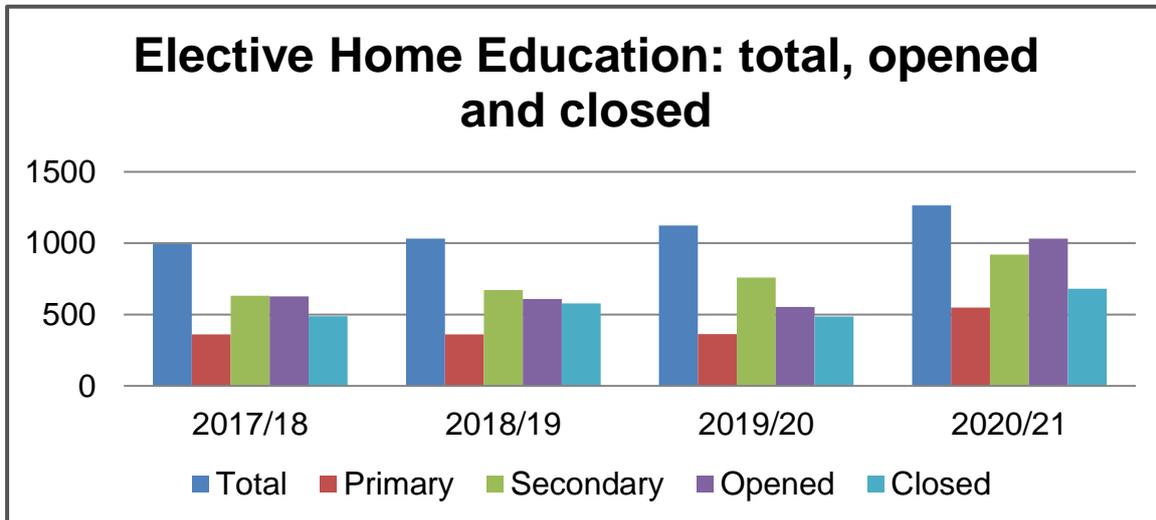
Following the pandemic, there were children who were removed to be electively home educated and have now been out of school for a significant period of time. Some of these children were vulnerable and known to social care. A Children's Services Themed Audit was carried out in May 2021, jointly between social care and education to identify good practice and areas for improvement. Following the audit, a new process is being introduced in which Early Help workers are allocated as case workers to support the reintegration of children back into mainstream education. In addition, a survey was carried out with 20 schools to

analyse the children removed to EHE between September 2020 and December 2020 which helped identify trends and concerns that schools may have about reintegration.

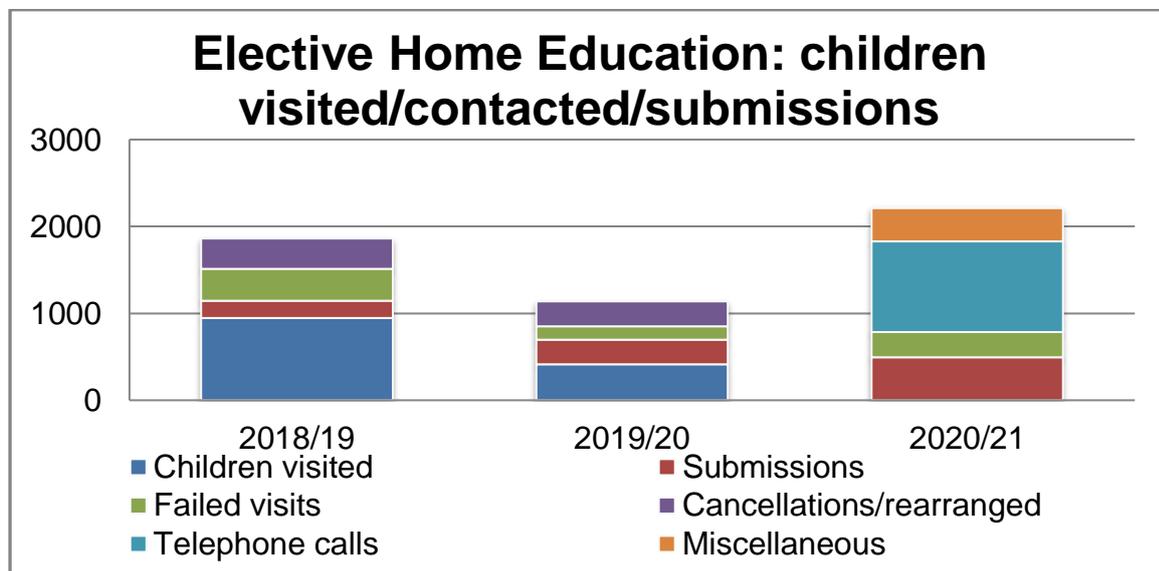
As in the previous year, 2020/21 saw periods of school closure and times when parents were very reluctant to return their child to school due to the anxiety over Covid-19. The EHE numbers reflected this. During the first term of 2020, EHE numbers rose significantly with 571 new cases between September and December 2020. Parents continued to choose to home educate their children during the period of school closure, however there was also a high number of closures as parents began to feel it was safe to return their child to school. For September 2021, numbers were remaining high but are beginning to return to the same rate of increase as experienced pre-Covid-19.

For the majority of families, EHE is a lifestyle choice; 92% of families were able to show that they were providing a suitable education for their children at home. This is based on submissions or phone calls with an Education Provision Advisor. Home visits have not resumed, however, if a parent is unable or unwilling to provide suitable or sufficient evidence, the case is passed to a Safeguarding and Education Welfare officer who is able to visit the family if required. All advisors are trained to identify safeguarding concerns and respond appropriately. The number of children in Child in Need or with Education Health and Care Plans remains steady and these children continue to be prioritised for visits if required. Whilst there is no indication that children are at increased risk due to being home educated, the reduction in home visiting means that children are unlikely to be seen and may not be seen by any other agency.

Elective Home Education

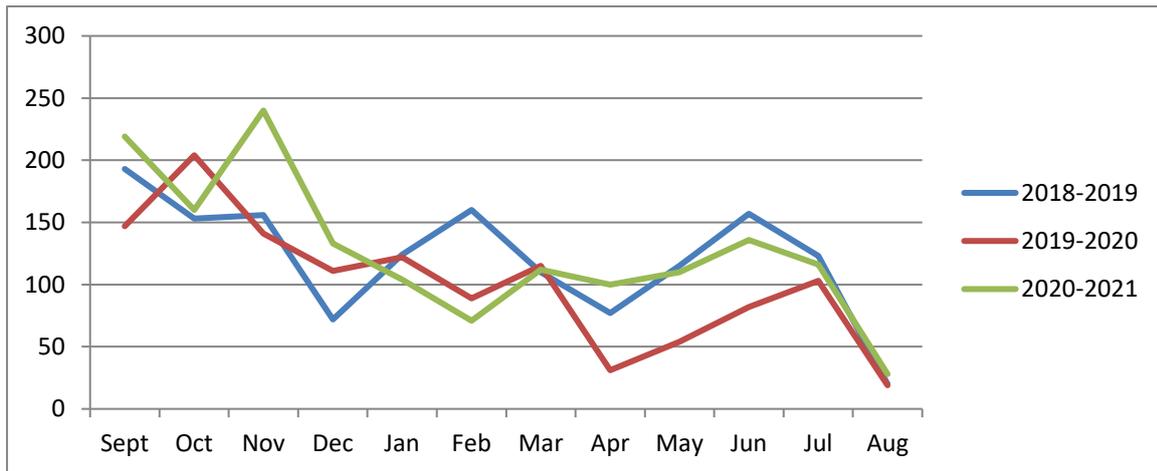


Key Messages: Number of children being Electively Home Educated is higher than previous year with significantly higher numbers opened and closed



Key Messages: Higher number of contacts due to increase in number of EHE children. No visits took place due to Covid-19. Phone calls offered as alternative with increase in submissions. Miscellaneous includes return to school, moved, rearranged, intend to submit.

Children Missing Education



Key Messages: the number of children reported as missing this year has increased compared with last year dipping during periods of school closure. The numbers have returned to those comparable to pre-Covid.

Children not attending regularly



Key Messages: Total Fixed Penalty Notices issued were low due to school closure in January until March 2021 and limited use of FPN process for non-attendance during the remainder of the year.

Children Electively Home Educated

Reported August 2021

	2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
School Age Group	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total	Pri	Sec	Total
Current number EHE	361	671	1032	364	759	1123	548	920	1262

Starters and Leavers	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of new starters	610	554	1031
Number closed	577	487	680

EHE Advisor visits and outcomes	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number children visited	931	946 (369 failed)	-	-
Number families visited	800	760	413	-
Number of written submissions reviewed	98	199	285	494
Number of submissions by phone				1044
Number of suitable (visits and submissions)	546	614	620	1138
Number of unsuitable (visits and submissions)	38	93	65	96
Failed visits	300	369	153	290

	2019/20	2020/21	%increase
Reception	11	37	36%
Yr 1	37	59	58%
Yr 2	52	65	64%
Yr 3	46	79	72%
Yr 4	70	80	13%
Yr 5	67	107	60%
Yr 6	81	121	50%
Yr 7	108	133	23%
Yr 8	115	180	57%
Yr 9	160	168	5%
Yr 10	171	232	35%
Yr 11	205	204	-0.4%

Area	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	%increase
Boston	69	82	114	39%
East Lindsey	269	312	348	12%
Lincoln	114	113	150	33%
North Kesteven	134	150	201	34%
South Holland	141	148	214	45%
South Kesteven	144	158	215	36%
West Lindsey	161	160	223	39%
	1032	1123	1465	30%

	CIN	CP	TAC	EHCP
2018/19	74	6	61	52
2018/19	24	2		73
2020/21	25	1	24	60

Total Number of Cases logged per month

Monthly Referrals													
	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
2020-2021	219	160	240	133	104	71	112	100	110	136	116	28	1529

Source of the CME referral

Source	2020/2021		2019/2020	
EHE	110	7.19%	65	5.39%
Lincs School	848	55.46%	670	55.51%
Out of County School	4	0.26%	18	1.49%
Leavers Form	103	6.74%	5	0.41%
Admissions	118	7.72%	112	9.28%
Other LA CME Teams	226	14.78%	247	20.46%
Other (i.e. SAO, Social Care, Anonymous, etc)	120	7.85%	90	7.46%
	1529	100.00%	1207	100.00%

Reason recorded for Child being missing

Reason for CME	2020/2021		2019/2020	
Ex EHE	43	2.81%	21	1.74%
Moved OOC	445	29.10%	333	27.59%
Moved out of UK	339	22.17%	218	18.06%
Moved within Lincs	119	7.78%	92	7.62%
Possibly EHE	13	0.85%	0	0.00%
Moved into Lincs	286	18.71%	277	22.95%
Unknown	155	10.14%	108	8.95%
Proof of Address	38	2.49%	58	4.81%
Other	91	5.95%	100	8.29%
	1529	100.00%	1207	100.00%

Rating of Risk Assessment

RAG Rating	2020/2021		2019/2020	
Red	102	6.67%	89	7.37%
Amber	458	29.95%	329	27.26%
Green	176	11.51%	82	6.79%
N/A	793	51.86%	707	58.57%
	1529	100.00%	1207	100.00%

District breakdown of CME

Areas	2020/2021		2019/2020	
Lincoln	192	12.56%	163	13.50%
Boston	363	23.74%	262	21.71%
North Kesteven	82	5.36%	42	3.48%
South Kesteven	131	8.57%	106	8.78%
South Holland	224	14.65%	134	11.10%
East Lindsey	161	10.53%	142	11.76%
West Lindsey	114	7.46%	105	8.70%
N/A	262	17.14%	253	20.96%
	1529	100.00%	1207	100.00%

Year Group Breakdown

Year Group	2020/2021	
R	112	7.33%
1	144	9.42%
2	124	8.11%
3	126	8.24%
4	121	7.91%
5	125	8.18%
6	116	7.59%
7	205	13.41%
8	120	7.85%
9	136	8.89%
10	121	7.91%
11	79	5.17%
	1529	100.00%

Pupils not attending regularly: Fixed Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Fixed Penalty Notice Summary		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1	Total FPNs issued for unauthorised absence	2237	3059	1600	604
1a	Total FPNs issued: main reason-family holiday	1953	2732	1139	437
1b	Total FPNs issued: main reason- late	0	0	0	0
1c	Total FPNs issued: main reason: other unauthorised	284	327	185	167
2	FPNs paid within 21 days	1435	1830	1056	311
3	FPNs paid within 22-28 days	14	23	-	33
4	FPNs withdrawn	153	93	148	23
4a	FPNs withdrawn as issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct	4	13	-	-
4b	FPNs withdrawn as ought not to have been issued to the named recipient	49	33	-	-
4c	FPNs withdrawn as notice appears have material errors	27	27	-	-
4d	FPNs withdrawn as after 28 day expiry, penalty is unpaid and LA do not wish to bring legal proceedings	73	20	-	-
5	Cases prosecuted following non payment	69	72	(396) non payment but no prosecution	77
6	Unresolved	93	84	-	160
7	FPNs unpaid	473	728	396	

Prosecutions	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total Prosecutions	85	134	293	77
Prosecutions due to unpaid FPN's	69	72	197	77
Persistent absence – 1 st Prosecution	73	46	49	0
Aggravated – 2 nd Prosecution	12	-	-	0
Withdrawn	5	0	0	-
Education Supervision Orders	4	3	3	0
School Attendance Orders	1	13	20	0