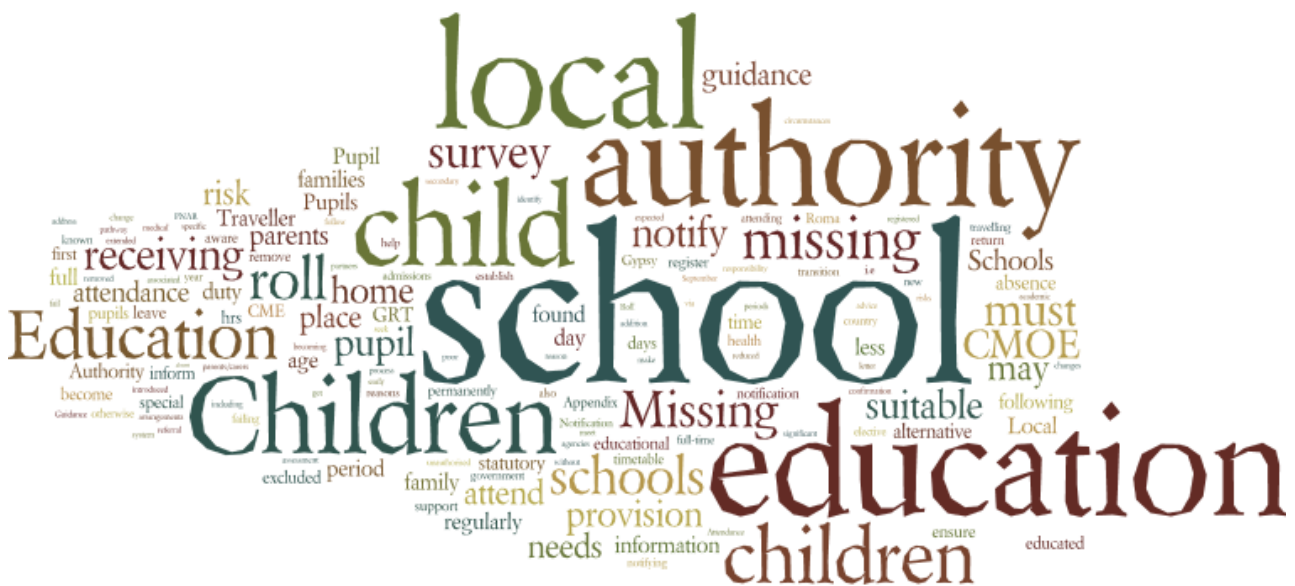


**Attendance in Schools, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education  
Annual Report 2021/22**



Author: Jill Chandar-Nair, Inclusion and Attendance Team Manager  
Service Area: Inclusion and Attendance, Education Support

1. Background	3
2. Working together to improve school attendance	3
3. School attendance/absences	4
4. Notification of children who are missing out on education	5
5. Children missing education	5
6. Pupils not attending regularly – 10 consecutive days unauthorised absence	6
7. Fixed penalty notices	6
8. Prosecutions for non-school attendance	7
9. Children on reduced timetables	7
10. Children who are electively home educated	8
11. Appendix 1 – Key messages	9

## 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. This report provides the latest Lincolnshire school attendance/absence data (Autumn 2021/Spring 2022).

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. This report provides data on the children who have been electively home educated through the 2021/22 academic year.

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. Working Together to Improve School Attendance

In March 2022, the DfE introduced a new document [Working Together to Improve Attendance](#). The guidance outlines a broader multi-agency approach stressing that improving school attendance is everyone's business. It emphasises that non-attendance is a symptom of some other issue that is presenting a barrier to a child attending full-time. The guidance clearly outlines the responsibilities

of parents, schools and the local authority in partnership with other agencies and the wider community to improve attendance across all schools including academies and independent schools. Anything below 95% attendance is considered not good enough and requires some action.

The guidance applies from September 2022 with potential for being statutory in September 2023. Lincolnshire is actively working on a strategy which will be fully implemented by September 2023.

Key areas to be included in the strategy are:

- Creation of a new Attendance Team (as required by the DfE) within the current Inclusion and Attendance service area
- Regular conversations with all schools (389), three times a year to discuss attendance, specifically of those children whose attendance is below expected.
- Further development of a multi-agency approach to addressing attendance ensuring that all service areas recognise non-attendance as a cause for concern when considering their support criteria and training needs.
- Ensure that cohorts of children, such as children with a social worker, children within the criminal justice system, children who attend special schools etc, that are nationally and locally recognised as having lower than expected attendance, are identified and supported to address the specific barriers that impact on their school attendance.
- Promotion of the importance of good attendance across the local authority; raising the awareness of the impact of poor attendance on a child's education, wellbeing and employability.

### **3. School attendance/absences**

Lincolnshire has seen many children return to school following the pandemic, however, as expected, there continues to be a gap between pre-Covid and post-Covid attendance. The most current data available as a comparison is Autumn 2021 - Spring 2022 when overall absence was 7.9% and persistent absence was 24.7% compared with national rates of 7.4% and 22.3%. The implementation of the new strategy will ensure that children will continue to be supported back to school impacting positively on the rate of attendance and returning to, and subsequently improving on, the pre-covid rates.

#### **4. 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 the Synergy System in 2018 allowed the local authority to improve the processing of the leaver/joiner files. Most school management information system's (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.

#### **5. Children Missing Education**

All schools must use 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. There were 1829 children logged as CME in 2021/22, a 20% increase compared with a 27% increase the previous year.

Boston has a higher share of the reported CME due to the high number of families who may have returned to their home country and not notified the school (21%). There are various reasons why a child ends up as not receiving an education. 129 children were, for example, previously electively home educated and parents had failed to provide a suitable education. At this point, the children would be returned to school either by parental will or, if necessary, using a School Attendance Order.

## 6. 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. For the academic year 2021/22, 829 children were reported as having 10 consecutive unauthorised days absence with 111 children being reported more than 3 times. It is likely that these children will come under the categories of either 'at risk of severe absence' or 'at severe absence' and will therefore be discussed at the future planned targeted school meetings held with schools. Our new draft strategy uses the following definitions:

<b>School Attendance - boundaries and description</b>	
<b>Bounday</b>	<b>Description</b>
95-100%	As expected
91-94%	At risk of persistent absence
80-90%	Persistent absence
51-79%	At risk of severe absence
<=50%	Severe absence

## 7. 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 1760 FPN's issues in 2021/22 an increase of 284% on the previous year but still only 57% of that in the year prior to the pandemic (2018/19). 91% of the fines are issued due to holidays in school time. Whilst an FPN can be issued for persistent absence, it is not seen as a successful strategy for returning the child to school long-term.

Lincolnshire is required to complete an annual return to the DFE as part of the Parental Responsibilities - Attendance data collection.

## **8. Prosecutions for non-school attendance**

Prosecutions have risen this year by 161% compared to last year, 60% of these are unpaid FPN fines. Proportionally, the number of prosecutions due to non-payment of fine has decreased which reflects the increase in payment of FPN's within the timescales. Likewise, the introduction of the new DfE guidance emphasising that a legal prosecution for non-attendance should only be considered when all other strategies have failed, has impacted on this. This has been built into our new approach predicting that the current low number of prosecutions due to persistent absence will remain.

## **9. Children on Reduced Timetables**

The legislation states that all children have a right to a full-time education which was previously defined by Ofsted as 25 hours per week. From September 2023 the DfE expect schools to provide a school week of at least 32.5 hours. If at any point in a child's education, it is deemed that they are 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 agreed 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 several periods of reduced timetables and schools who frequently use this approach.

Some children who have emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) 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. There is also an expectation that these children are on the Local authority EBSA pathway to continually review the plan and refer to the EBSA panel if there is insufficient progress.

For the academic year 2021-22, the local authority was informed of 950 children receiving a reduced timetable, with 189 children being entered more than 3 times. This was a 50% increase mainly as it is a full year compared with 9 months recorded last year. There is also an increase in the number of

schools using the notification survey. These children will be among the cohorts that are discussed at the future termly attendance meetings which will allow the local authority to question the frequency of individual children on reduced timetables.

#### **10. 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 there were 1605 EHE children known to the local authority. This is a 27% increase which is a significant increase compared to the previous two years.

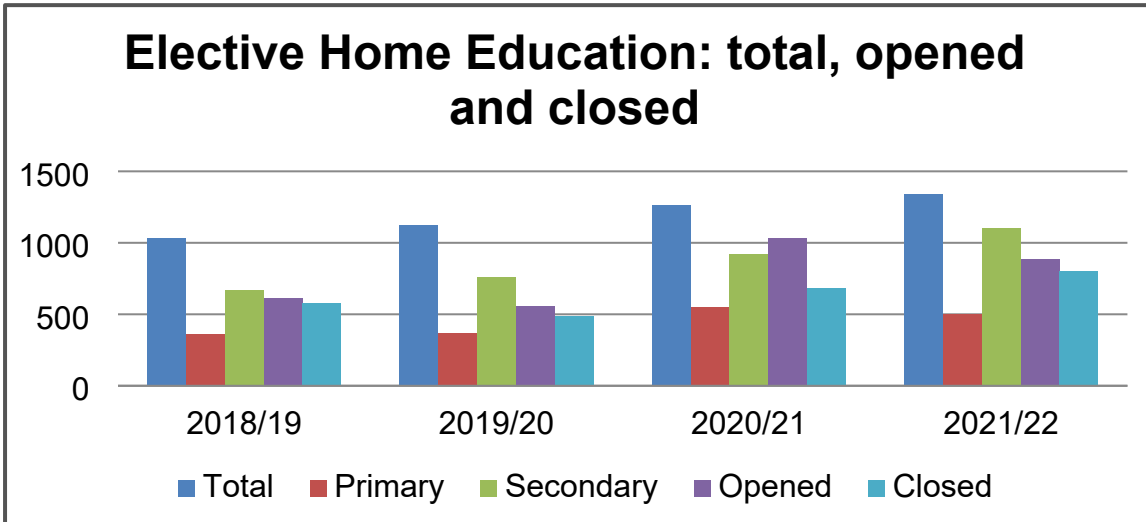
The DfE has introduced the collection of EHE and CME data from the local authority. This data is provided three times per year. It is currently a voluntary submission and will continue as such until Parliament legislates to create a statutory framework for local authority 'Children Not in School' registers.

For most families, EHE is a lifestyle choice; most families were able to show that they were providing a suitable education for their children at home, with a significant amount of the unsuitable provision being due to failed visits. 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 those 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.



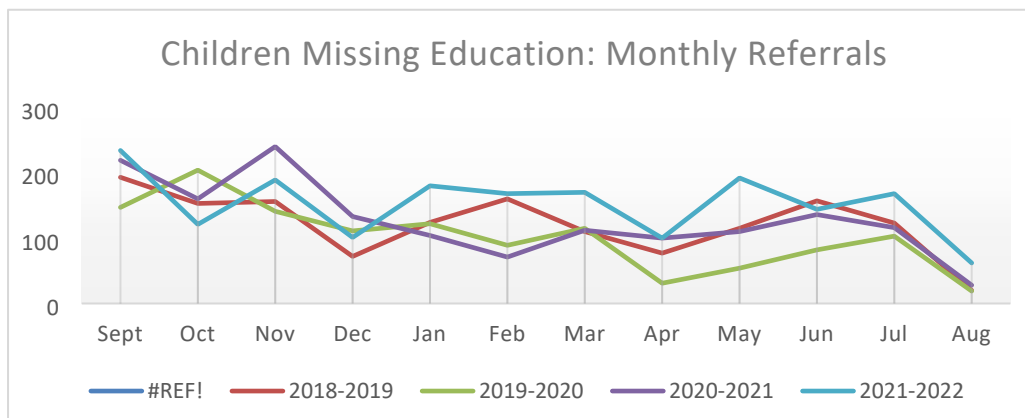
Appendix 1 – Key messages

**Elective Home Education**



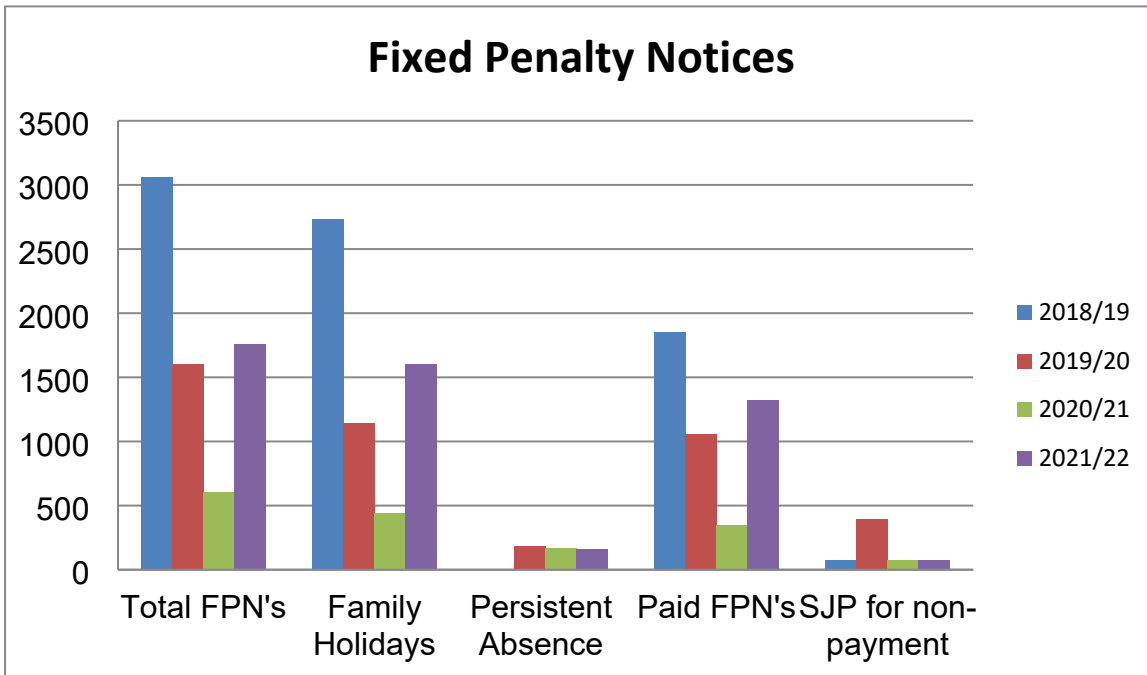
**Key Messages:** Number of children who are electively home educated is rising. The increase is mainly in the secondary sector.

**Children Missing Education**



**Key Messages:** Numbers of children continue to rise which may reflect better reporting of children by schools as well as increased mobility.

## Children not attending regularly



**Key Messages:** Number of FPN's have increased significantly as schools are more prepared to use this strategy to address absences during term time. Payments have increased resulting in progress to Single Justice Process (SJP) decreasing.