

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee- 4th March 2016

Progress of the Attendance Working Group

Recommendation/s

1. That the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee review progress on the implementation of the Staffordshire Attendance Priorities – Improving Participation and Attendance in our Schools and Settings: Our Principles and Priorities for 2015-2017.
2. Members are asked to scrutinise the Autumn and Spring Terms Attendance report 2014/2015 (see Appendix A).
3. Members plan further updates and reviews at the end of March 2017 to fall in line with the release of the verified attendance data from the DfE and Autumn 2018 to review progress against the success that the priorities seek to deliver.

Report of Cllr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

4. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee is being updated on the progress and impact that the Priorities for Improving Participation and Attendance in our Schools and Settings: Our Principles and Priorities for 2015-2017 to see what impact it is having in Staffordshire. The Committee undertook scrutiny of the proposed approach in their meeting 4th September 2015.

Report

Background and Context

5. As the national expectations with regard to school attendance get more demanding, it is increasingly important for all the partners to understand their roles and responsibilities and the contribution they can make to ensure that together we achieve the new national target of 90% attendance for all children and young people. Staffordshire County Council is committed to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities for improving attendance and reducing exclusions through working in partnership with parents, schools, Families First, our strategic partner Entrust and other stakeholders and service providers. By working together, we will ensure that all Staffordshire children and young people and all those who are enrolled at a Staffordshire school or setting have good attendance and are not excluded, as this will enable all children and young people to enjoy and achieve to their full potential.

6. The Attendance Working Group was created to review the Local Authority's current working arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose. This enables the Local Authority to deliver and maintain a high standard in our quality of services for admissions, attendance, participation, progression and achievement for the children of Staffordshire. The group are responsible for taking forward Staffordshire's priorities to ensure that all children and young people attend their school or setting so that they can achieve their potential.
7. The membership of the Attendance Working Group has representation across Staffordshire County Council, Families First and Entrust meet on a monthly basis.
8. The priorities for "Improving Participation and Attendance in our Schools and Settings: Our Principles and Priorities for 2015-2017" have been developed, presented and communicated to the following groups:

Internal Engagement		External Engagement	
The Prosperous Select Committee	4 th September 2015	Cascade via e-schoolbag	21 st September 2015
SEND Strategic Partnership Group (Special school and PRU representatives)	29 th September 2015	Attendance Conference	4 th December 2015
Annual report presented to the Education Standards and Performance Board	7 th October 2015		
Children's Improvement Board	20 th October 2015		

Current Performance

9. The Priorities have also been consulted on and shared with schools, settings and other partners as follows:

By Summer 2017:	Progress to date @:
1. Early Years Participation: To maintain the take up of Think2 early education (for 15 hours a week) at or above 80% and continue to perform in the top quartile nationally for take up for 3 and 4 year olds.	Think2 take up for Autumn term 2015 was 86% so above the 80% target figure. Only East Staffordshire remains below 80% with highest take-up in Staffordshire Moorlands. Tamworth has shown the largest increase in take up since summer 2015.
2. Primary and Secondary School Attendance: Staffordshire will perform above the national average for attendance and persistent absence in primary and secondary schools and no district will perform below the national average for attendance and persistent absence rates.	Staffordshire Primary and Secondary schools have performed better than the national average for each of the last 5 years (2010/11 to 2014/15) for overall attendance (See Appendix A). Persistent Absence rates in Staffordshire in 2014/15 were better than national for both primary and secondary schools. All districts have made improvements to overall absence rates and persistent absence rates over the last 5 academic years.
3. Special School Attendance: Attendance and persistent absence rates at all Staffordshire's special schools will continue to perform well compared with the national average and better than our statistical neighbours.	The special school overall absence rate and persistent absence rates have been better than the national average for each academic year between 2010/11 and 2013/14 (latest available data).

	Absence rates at special schools are typically higher than mainstream schools; a contributory factor to this is the complex health needs of pupils who attend these schools.
4. Attendance of Vulnerable Groups: Attendance and persistent absence rates for all our most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people (SEND, FSM, CIN, CYPP, LAC) in our primary, secondary and special schools will be much closer to the Staffordshire average and better than equivalent rates for similar groups in those LAs which are our statistical neighbours.	FSM, boys, pupils with a Statement or EHCP, and GRT pupils have all seen improvements in absence rates between 2010/11 and 2014/15. In 2013/14 Staffordshire was ranked in the top 3 of its statistical neighbour authorities for both LAC and CIN pupil groups, for both overall absence and persistent absence.
5. Schools performing below national expectations for attendance: All schools and settings in Staffordshire to be at or above the national average rates for attendance and persistent absence.	Over half of primary and secondary schools achieved equal to or better than the national average for overall attendance in 2013/14 and 2014/15; there was also over half of schools being equal to or better than the national average for persistent absence for the same period.
6. Attendance at our Pupil Referral Units (PRUs): Attendance and persistent absence rates in all of our PRUs will be better than the national average for PRUs.	A working group has been set up with Staffordshire County Council colleagues and partner organisations to address PRU attendance. A full day workshop has been held and colleagues are working with individual PRUs to help address attendance related issues and guidance has been provided to PRUs to help the recording of pupil absence on their management information systems.
7. Post-16 Participation: The percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in education or training will be better than our statistical neighbours and the national average. The percentage of 16 – 18 year olds that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) will also be better than our statistical neighbours and the national average.	81% of 16-18 year olds were in learning in Dec 2015 (79% in Dec 2014) which is a slight increase in participation – the statistical neighbour's average has remained the same at 83%. The percentage of 16-18 NEET has dropped from 4.5% (Dec 2014) to 4.0% in Dec 2015 but this is still above the statistical neighbour's average - this was 3.9% in 2014 and 3.7% in 2015.
8. Children Missing Education (CME) and Children Missing Out On Education (CMOOE): All services will work in partnership to ensure that all children who are not in receipt of a suitable full-time education will be centrally recorded, monitored and tracked so that no child will be missing from a suitable full-time education for longer than is absolutely necessary. We will fulfil all of our statutory obligations with regard to CME and CMOOE.	The CME Team receive referrals from schools, professionals and members of the public regarding CME (whereabouts unknown) which are prioritised according to the child's vulnerability, we have recently enhanced this work by including children leaving the UK. Without a school place meetings are being held to discuss children who are known to not be in receipt of education in order to fast track these children back into appropriate provision. A CMOOE task and finish group has been set up to further progress this work stream. A pilot request to schools will be undertaken in the coming months to collect details of pupils classed as CMOOE from every school. This will enable the County Council to assess volumes of children and prioritise support to such children.
9. Permanent Exclusions: Permanent exclusion rates in primary and secondary schools will be decreasing and Staffordshire schools will be performing better than the national average. No LAC or CIN or CYPP will be permanently excluded.	Whilst permanent exclusion rates had increased in 2013/14 above the national average, this is being monitored closely as part of the work of the Attendance Working Group. The Council and partner organisations work closely with schools to ensure those pupils (including those pupils in vulnerable groups) at risk of permanent exclusions receive the appropriate support to avoid this where possible.

<p>10. Fixed Term Exclusions: We will continue to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions in our schools and ensure that our most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people (LAC, FSM, GRT, SEND, CIN, CYPP) have the early help and support they need to ensure that they are no more likely to be excluded than other children and young people</p>	<p>Staffordshire's overall fixed term exclusions rate remained below the national average in 2013/14. The Council and partner organisations continue to work closely with schools to ensure those pupils (including those pupils in vulnerable groups) receive fewer fixed term exclusions.</p>
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Attendance Working Group Progress and Actions

10. The Working Group has continued to meet regularly to lead and co-ordinate further action to support delivery and progress against the priorities.
11. Schools and settings were surveyed on the draft strategy and provided with an opportunity to respond. There was a very poor response with only three schools responding to the on-line survey. All agreed with principles 1 to 8 with one school returning a "don't know" to principle 9 and a "disagree" to principle 10.
12. The four comments consisted of:
 - a. *I agree children should be supported but children should be excluded if mainstream is not suitable*
 - b. *As long as children can continue to receive exclusions for violent behaviour*
 - c. *There needs to be more support from health teams for primary age children*
 - d. *Parents need support at home not just through schools*
13. A PRU workshop was held on the 24th September 2015 which was attended by PRU Staff, Entrust colleagues and Families First Local Support Teams. The workshop received excellent evaluations. A draft PRU admission pathway is currently under consultation with PRU Head teachers and High schools via the Chairs of the District Inclusion Partnerships – (see Appendix C – PRU Attendance Workshops Evaluations). The Local Authority supported Entrust staff regarding collation and presentation of attendance and exclusion data for the future.
14. There has been progress made in updating Local Authority Policies and Protocols during the Autumn term. This includes:
 - a. Flexi-schooling Best Practice –Aug 2015
 - b. Children Placed out of Year –November 2015
 - c. Fair Access Protocol – completed and awaiting sign off
 - d. Children who are missing education due to health/medical needs - this is in the process of being updated with the support of colleagues from Schools, Health and the LSTs
 - e. Model School Attendance Policy agreed and shared with schools and settings.
15. The Attendance Conference for Head teachers held on the 4th December 2015 saw the launch of the strategy. A number of workshops were held which received excellent feedback. There were a variety of information stands also available to provide schools

with updates and materials or service information to support their work on attendance and 73 delegates were booked onto the event. (see Appendix B – Attendance Conference)

16. Raising awareness of the priorities document and agenda policy to Governors in respect of their responsibilities through the Spring term agenda.
17. The 2014-2015 Autumn and Spring Term Attendance Report was finalised however the LAC data was excluded from this report and it was agreed the Virtual School Governing Body will review their data regarding both system collection and reporting and report back to their Spring meeting. (see Appendix A 2014/15 Autumn and Spring Terms Attendance Report)
18. A CMOOE Strategic Group has been established to provide a co-ordinated funding approach for commissioners and providers to formally discuss and influence the development of strategic planning for this vulnerable group of CYP. This will enable the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duties in respect of children missing out of education. This group has now ensured a link with the both the Strategic Overview Board – Missing and the Operational Group – Missing.

Next Steps

19. The Attendance Working Group has a series of further actions to continue working towards the delivery of our priorities. This includes the following activities for the next twelve months:
 - a. CMOOE pilot data collection from schools and relevant partners developed as a pilot
 - b. Completion and submission on behalf of SCC for CME consultation
 - c. Create a CMOOE data meeting to consider roles responsibilities and gaps in our current mapping / outcomes
 - d. Develop a pack of case studies linked to CMOOE that will provide guidance for schools parents carers and governors
 - e. Ratification of DIP protocols
 - f. Consistent data collection across all areas
 - g. Review commissioning of planned school support and partnership between Families First and Entrust
 - h. Update safeguarding policies
 - i. Ratify PRU admissions pathway
 - j. Summary at Spring Briefings to Schools Events (in development)
 - k. The Attendance Group to review TOR and membership
 - l. To follow up and further develop the CMOOE and guidance for schools
 - m. The writing of an Early Years Attendance Policy
21. The Attendance working group will continue to be focus partnership work with the Local Support Teams and Entrust in particular districts.

Link to the Council's Strategic Outcomes

22. The County Council places priority on all children having access to a good education. The right foundation in learning and skills is vital if our young people are to access good jobs and live healthier, happier and independent lives. Keeping our children safe and well, by ensuring that we have a good understanding of where they are attending school

and working together to ensure that their learning is equipping them to succeed is central to the statutory duties and corporate priorities of the County Council. Participation and attendance is therefore fundamentally linked to the delivery of strategic outcomes.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

- Attendance and Participation – Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (Item 15) 4th September 2015
- School Improvement and Attainment met in Staffordshire – Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (Item 4) 22nd January 2016

Community Impact

23. The Attendance Working Group will continue to work with the strategic priorities within the partnership. Key accountabilities will be developed within the partnership. The group will ensure appropriate commissioning and performance management arrangements are in place to ensure that the right services are delivered by the right people at the right time, and crucially, deliver improvements.
24. The Attendance working group will ensure a relentless focus on our statutory duties and identified priorities and particularly on supporting our most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people to achieve their potential. Working in partnership to ensure that all those working to improve participation and attendance and reduce exclusions have access to training, information and support to enable our collective ambitions to be achieved.

Conclusion

25. The Working Group has provided an intensive and focused means to understand and improve Staffordshire's work on attendance and participation. The group continues to meet, however, the intention is to move toward embedding the improvements in its customs and practice and this will provide a sustainable focus on local priorities.
26. The impact of the Working Group is evident in a wide range of activity and on progress toward our targets, as set out in the Priorities document. However, it will be over time that trends and sustained performance indicators give evidence of overall impact.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix A – Autumn and Spring Terms Attendance Report 2014/15
Appendix B – Attendance Conference
Appendix C – PRU Attendance Workshop Evaluations

Glossary

CIN	Child in Need
CME	Children Missing Education
CMOOE	Children Missing Out On Education
CYP	Children and Young People
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
GRT	Gypsy Roman Traveller
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disability
LAC	Looked After Children