

## Absence and Exclusions

### Executive Summary

There are a number of development areas for Wirral schools regarding absence and exclusions. The authorised absence for both primary and secondary schools needs to decrease. Persistent absence i.e. pupils with less than 90% attendance is a key issue for many Wirral schools.

Nationally permanent exclusions in both primary and secondary schools have increased. In Wirral there have been very few primary pupils excluded permanently. There have been an increasing number of pupils permanently excluded from Wirral secondary schools.

For the last three years the pupil referral unit (Emslie Morgan Academy) has been oversubscribed. The Local Authority has commissioned the Progress-School to provide an alternative to excluded Key Stage 3 pupils going straight to Emslie Morgan Academy. The arrangements for a fresh start for these pupils to attend another secondary school have been reconfigured, through a more robust Fair Access Panel process.

Close scrutiny of all permanent exclusions is enabling early help services determine the best opportunities to support families who need support.

### **1. Absence**

The Department for Education stipulates that all maintained schools are required to provide two possible sessions per day, morning and afternoon, to all pupils. The length of each session, break and the school day is determined by the school's governing body. Schools must meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils. If a school is prevented from meeting for one or more sessions because of an unavoidable event, it should find a practical way of holding extra sessions. However, if it cannot find a practical way of doing this then it is not required to make up the lost sessions. Academy and free school funding agreements state that the duration of the school day/sessions is the responsibility of the academy trust.

Schools are required to take attendance registers twice a day: once at the start of the first/morning session of each school day and once during the second/afternoon session. In their register, schools are required to record whether pupils are:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, schools have a responsibility to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Indicate in their register whether the absence is authorised by the school or unauthorised
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system which is then used to download data to the school census.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age is required to ensure that the child receive a suitable full time education to the child's ability, age, aptitude and any special education needs the child may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure of a parent to secure regular attendance of their school registered child of compulsory school age can lead to a penalty notice or prosecution.

### **1.1 Key Absence Measures**

The Department for Education monitors pupil absence levels using two key measures - overall absence rate and persistent absence (PA) rate. The key measures are calculated for pupils who are of compulsory school age i.e. aged between 5 and 15 as at the start of the academic year.

Overall absence is the aggregated total of all authorised and unauthorised absences.

**Authorised absence** is absence with permission from a headteacher or other authorised representative of the schools. This includes instances of absence for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided e.g. illness.

**Unauthorised absence** is absence without permission from the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences and arrivals after registration has closed.

**Persistent absence** is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions. The persistent absence measure was introduced in 2005/06. From the academic year 2010/11 to 2014/15 the persistent absence measure was 15%. From September 2015 it was decreased to 10%.

### **1.2 Approaches to Reduce Absenteeism**

Researcher identified the need for identifying and intervening early, monitoring progress overtime, assessing functional behaviour, and the implementation of evidence-based procedures and protocols, and of team-based approaches.

### **1.3 Absence Data Published by the Department for Education**

The Department for Education publishes termly pupil absence data via three National Statistics releases each year. These are:

- Autumn term, published in May
- Autumn and spring terms, published in October
- Full year, published in March

Only the full year absence release gives a definitive view of pupil absence. Termly publications can be affected significantly by term length and therefore findings from these releases are for indicative purposes only and the results should be treated with caution.

#### **1.4 DfE Statistical First Release 2017**

The Department for Education Statistical First Release (SF55/2017) published in October 2017 provided an analysis of absence for autumn 2016 and the spring term 2017. Nationally the overall absence rate increased from the previous year. The overall absence rate increased from 4.4 per cent of possible sessions in autumn/spring 2015/16 to 4.5 per cent in autumn/spring 2016/17.

Nationally unauthorised absence rates have increased across primary and secondary schools since last year, from 0.9 per cent in autumn/spring 2015/16 to 1.1 per cent in autumn/spring 2016/17. This is due to increased levels of unauthorised family holiday and other unauthorised absence.

Nationally persistent absentees in autumn/spring 2016/17 was 10.4 % which was slightly higher than autumn and spring 2015/16 (10.3%).

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools was the same for boys and girls (at 4.5%). Persistent absence rates were also similar for boys and girls, at 10.5% and 10.4% respectively.

Absence rates were higher for pupils who are known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. The overall absence rate for these pupils was 7%, compared to 4% for non-FSM pupils. The persistent absence rate for pupils who were eligible for FSM was more than twice the rate for pupils not eligible for FSM (21.3% and 8.3% respectively).

Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education healthcare plan (EHC) had an overall absence rate of 7.1% compared to 4.2% for those with no identified SEN. The percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan that are persistent absentees is more than two times higher than the percentage for pupils with no identified SEN.

The overall absence rate for autumn/spring 2016/17 in special schools was 9.7%. This was higher than in state-funded primary and secondary schools but was similar to the special school absence rate seen for the previous full academic year, 2015/16, which was 9.1 %. Persistent absence was also higher than in primary and secondary

schools at 28.2% and was also similar to the special school persistent absentee rate for the 2015/16 full academic year (26.9%).

## **1.5 Wirral Absence Figures**

### **Authorised Absence**

Authorised absence for primary schools in 2015/16 was 3.7% which was higher than the national average (3.1%). When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 149 out of 152. Authorised absence for secondary schools in 2015/16 was 4.2% which was higher than the national average (3.8%). When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 131 out of 152.

Absence for Children Looked After in 2015/16 was 4.3% which was higher than the national average (3.9%) When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 103 out of 152.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence for primary schools in 2015/16 was 0.9%.which was in line with the national average (0.9%). When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 57 out of 152. Unauthorised absence for secondary schools in 2015/16 was 1.2% which was in line with the national average (1.2%). When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 47 out of 152.

Unauthorised absence for Children Looked After in 2015/16 was 1.3% which was higher than the national average (1.0%) When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 116 out of 152.

### **Persistent Absence**

Persistent absence for primary schools in 2015/16 was 10.8%.which was higher than the national average (8.2%). When ranked with other local authorities 146 out of 152. Persistent absence for secondary schools in 2015/16 was 14%.which was lower than the national average (13.1%). When ranked with other local authorities 108 out of 152.

Persistent absence for Children Looked After in 2015/16 was 9.4% which was higher than the national average (9.1%) When ranked with other local authorities Wirral was 68 out of 152.

## **1.6 Wirral Primary School Attendance**

Analysis of primary school attendance during 2015/16 shows that:

- Oxton St Saviour's CE Primary School Greasby Juniors, Our Lady of Pity and Thornton Hough Primary Schools had the highest attendance.
- The primary schools with the most improved attendance were Eastway, Bidston Avenue and Mendell Primary Schools.

- Three primary schools had attendance above 97%.
- 27 primary schools had attendance at or above the national average of 96%.
- 56 primary schools had attendance above 95% compared with 58 in 2014/15.
- 14 primary schools had attendance below 94% compared with 12 primary schools in 2014/15.
- Four primary schools had attendance below 93% compared with one in 2014/15.

### **1.7 Wirral Secondary School Attendance**

- Wirral Grammar School for Girls, West Kirby Grammar School, Wirral Grammar School for Boys and Upton Hall School had the highest attendance.
- The secondary schools with the most improved attendance by comparison with 2014/15 were Woodchurch High School and St Mary's College.
- Five secondary schools had attendance above 96% compared with six in 2014/15.
- Eight secondary schools had attendance of above 95% in 2015/16 and this was also the case in the previous year.
- Ten secondary schools had attendance equal to or above the national average in 2015/16 compared with nine in the previous year.
- Seven secondary schools had attendance of below 94% in 2015/16 compared with nine in the previous year.
- Two secondary schools had attendance below 93% compared with one in 2014/15.

### **1.8 Special School Attendance**

- Orret's Meadow and Clare Mount School had the highest attendance.
- The two special schools with most improved attendance were Gilbrook and The Observatory Schools.
- Two special schools had attendance above 95% as in the previous year.
- Five special schools had below 92% attendance compared with six in the previous year.
- Four special schools had below 90% attendance as in the previous year. Of these four special schools with attendance below 90%, three were for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and one had significant numbers of students with serious health problems including terminal illnesses.

## 1.9 Autumn 2016/Spring 2017

The table below provides the Wirral data for a number of pupil groups (boys, girls, pupils in receipt of free school meals, pupils with EHC plans/statements, SEN support (K) pupils and pupils with no SEN).

	Primary			Secondary		
	Absence	Authorised	Unauthorised	Absence	Authorised	Unauthorised
Boys	4.50	3.71	0.78	5.3	4.3	1.0
National	4	3.1	0.9	5.10	3.80	1.30
Girls	4.49	3.69	0.80	5.4	4.4	1.0
National	3.9	3.0	0.9	5.20	3.80	1.30
FSM	6.9	5.3	1.6	9.5	6.5	2.9
National	5.9	4.1	1.8	8.50	5.10	3.40
EHCP & Statement	6.7	5.6	1.1	7.5	5.2	2.4
National	6.7	5.6	1.1	7.60	5.50	2.00
SEN Support (K)	6.0	4.8	1.2	7.8	5.7	2.0
National	5.3	4.0	1.3	7.50	5.10	2.40
No SEN	4.2	3.5	0.7	4.9	4.1	0.8
National	3.7	2.9	0.8	4.80	3.60	1.20

In summary, boys' and girls' authorised absence in primary and secondary schools was higher than the national average, whereas unauthorised absence was lower than the national average.

Free school meal pupils boys' and girls' authorised absence in primary and secondary schools was higher than the national average, whereas unauthorised absence was lower than the national average.

Primary school pupils with an Education Health Care plan (EHCP) authorised absence and unauthorised absence was in line with the national average. Secondary school pupils with an Education health Care plan authorised absence was lower than the national in contrast with the unauthorised absence being higher than the national average.

Primary school pupils who are classed as SEN (K) with support authorised absence was higher than the national average whereas unauthorised absence was lower than the national average. Secondary school pupils with SEN support attendance was lower than the national average for both authorised and unauthorised attendance.

There are considerable differences in attendance across schools with attendance significantly lower in areas of high social deprivation and in schools with high levels of Free School Meals.

## 1.10 Priorities

There are a number of key priorities for schools:-

1. Increase attendance of pupils by reducing the percentage of authorised and unauthorised absence
2. Reduce the number of pupils who meet the persistent absence criteria by providing support as well as challenge to the family of these pupils

## 2.0 Exclusions

There are two types of exclusions, fixed period (suspended) and permanent (expelled). A fixed period exclusion is where a child is temporarily removed from school. The child can only be removed for up to 45 school days in one school year, even if they've changed school. A pupil can have a total of 15 days fixed term exclusions per academic term.

Permanent exclusion means a child is expelled. Only the headteacher as the authority to permanently exclude a child. The DfE guidance regarding what constitutes a reason for a child to be permanently excluded lacks clarity which can result in inconsistencies around the threshold for exclusion. When a child is permanently excluded the Local Authority must arrange full-time education from the sixth school day.

### 2.1 Permanent & Fixed Term Exclusions Data 2012/13 to Present

#### Total Number of Permanent Exclusions

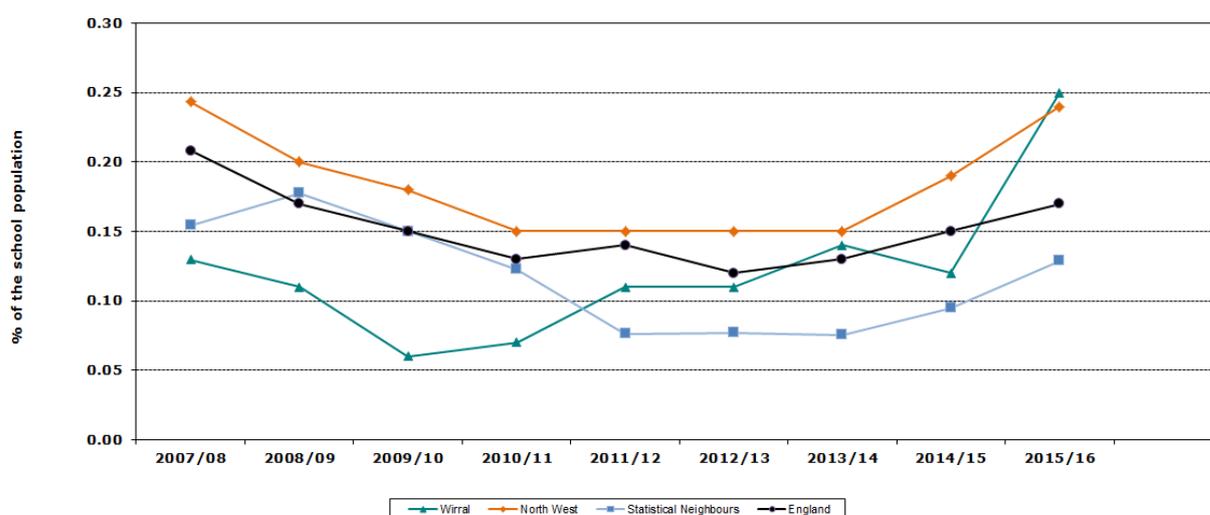
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Primary	0	2	2	2	1
Secondary	24	30	26	52	67
Special incl PRU	0	0	0	0	0

For the last five academic years the number of pupils who were permanently excluded from primary schools remains very low. There were no pupils excluded from special schools.

Of more concern is the increasing number of pupils excluded from secondary schools. During the academic 2016/17 there were 67 pupils permanently excluded. Three of these exclusions were rescinded at either the first or second stage of the appeal process. The increase in exclusions mirrors the national picture.

When with all local authorities for the academic year 2015/16 Wirral (0.25) was ranked 113/152 and was above the national average (0.12) and average for statistical neighbours (0.13).

Secondary Permanent Exclusions from school as a % of the school population



## 2.2 Number of Permanent Exclusions – Special Educational needs/Disabilities (SEND)

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Primary</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Special incl PRU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The number of SEND pupils permanently excluded in primary schools was very low. The data shows that the majority of pupils permanently excluded in the primary phase had SEND.

Approximately 50% of pupils excluded in secondary schools had SEND.

## 2.3 Number of Permanent Exclusions - EHCP or Statement

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Primary</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Special incl PRU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

A very small number of SEND pupils with an EHCP/Statement were permanently excluded in 2014/15 from mainstream secondary schools.

## 2.4 Strategy to Reduce the Number of Permanent Exclusions

The Director of Children's Services has proactively engaged with secondary school headteachers to determine the factors resulting in permanent exclusions. Where a headteacher permanently excluded 3 or more pupils in the Autumn term the headteacher was requested to attend a meeting with the Director. Headteachers were

asked to provide a chronology leading up to the exclusion as well as providing reflections as to what partners could do collectively to support these families earlier. To date 5 headteachers have met with the Director.

## 2.5 Strategy to Return Permanent Exclusions Back into Mainstream Secondary Schools

Before September 2017 all students who were permanently excluded were offered a place at the pupil referral unit, Emslie Morgan Academy. For the majority of these pupils it was difficult to transition back into a mainstream secondary school, resulting in them staying at the pupil referral unit. The result was an ever increasing number of pupils on the roll of Emslie Morgan.

From September 2017 the Local Authority commissioned Progress-Schools to deliver a 12 week programme for Key Stage 3 pupils (aged 11 to 14 years) who had been permanently excluded for the first time. The Fair Access Panel (FAP) determines the secondary school place each pupil will be offered. Towards the end of the programme transition takes place to support the pupil moving to a new school for a fresh start. From September 2017 onwards 14 Key Stage 3 pupils were permanently excluded. Five pupils who were attending Emslie Morgan Academy also successfully attended the transition programme. So far 10 pupils have successfully started at a new school. Two pupils have extended transition and 5 more pupils will be allocated a secondary school shortly.

It is much more problematic to reintegrate permanently excluded pupils in Years 10 and 11. If pupils miss too much of the GCSE course content it is difficult for them to catch up and be prepared for the external examinations. Any parent whose child attends Emslie Morgan Academy can submit an application for their child to attend a mainstream school. Taking into account all the available information the Fair Access Panel decide whether the request is appropriate as well as the proposed school. Three Year 10 pupils are now attending mainstream secondary schools.

## 2.6 Breakdown of Permanent Exclusions in Secondary Schools September 2017 Onwards Compared with September 2016 Onwards

<b>Autumn Term 2016</b>	
<b>Bebington High School</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Kingsway</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mosslands</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pensby</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Ridgeway</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SJP</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>St. Mary's</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SWHS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BPS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Weatherhead</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>

<b>Autumn Term 2017</b>	
Bebington High School	4
Mosslands	4
Prenton	3
Ridgeway	3
St. Mary's	2
BPS	4
SWHS	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>

There have been fewer schools permanently excluding pupils during the autumn term. Whilst the number of exclusions has reduced overall 5 schools have excluded more pupils during this time.

## 2.7 Fixed Term Exclusions

Below are the statistics regarding the total number of fixed term exclusions.

### Total Number of Fixed Term Exclusions

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Primary	247	237	238	236	202
Secondary	1409	1430	1135	1554	1321
Special incl PRU	97	186	117	257	250

Last academic year (2016/17) saw a decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions in secondary and special schools. Fixed term exclusions in primary schools have decreased for the last three years.

### Number of Fixed Term Exclusions - SEND (A & P & K Codes)

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Primary</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>588</b>
<b>Special incl PRU</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>84</b>

There was a decrease in the number of SEND pupils who had a fixed term exclusion in primary and secondary schools. The increase in the number of fixed term exclusions in special schools is attributable to pupils attending Emslie Morgan Academy.

### Number of Fixed Term Exclusions - EHCP or Statement

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>Primary</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Special incl PRU</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>124</b>

There were more fixed term exclusions in special schools, the majority of which were for pupils attending schools specialising in pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues. All three types of school showed a decrease from the previous academic year.