

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Home and Continuing Education Service is an Alternative Provision for Children and Young people who are unable to attend school due to health needs. HCES delivers part of Wirral's statutory responsibility/ duty to provide a suitable education for children who cannot attend school because of their medical needs. The great majority of pupils suffer with poor mental rather than physical health and many have both.

This report summarises the aim of the service and highlights some proposed financial changes, the current venue and the eligibility criteria. It references the effect of Covid-19 on the referral rate and demographic of pupils.

The Service is being managed on an interim basis until the end of this academic year. (31st August)

2. BACKGROUND

The Home and Continuing Education Service is an Alternative for children whose health creates a barrier to education. It does this by:

- Providing a suitable education for the children of Wirral who have medical needs that prevent them from attending school by ensuring that they make the best educational progress they can and access the most suitable pathway to preparation for life.
- Providing sufficient hours of continuing education in line with statutory guidance; the equivalent of full-time or for the number of hours the child's health condition allows. "Full-time education" is not defined in law, but it should equate to what the pupil would normally have in school.
- Developing a multiagency graduated response for children with health needs.
- Since March 2021 the service offers Enrichment Activities every Thursday afternoon. This was made possible by last years agreement to transfer the Pupil Premium for eligible year 11 pupils. This paper proposes that the Pupil Premium for all aged pupils is transferred to HCES whilst the pupils are not attending their school.

3. Changes of Venue

The Service moved from being on site at Hilbre High School in September 2021 to Fishers Lane in Pensby and are currently operating from to Pilgrim Street Arts Centre since July 2022.

4. The Effects of Covid-19/school closures on the Service

The school closures initially led to a decline in the number of referrals to the service. Since September/October 2022 the referral rate has climbed with an average 2/3 requests for service per week. The number of referrals from pupils in year 7 and 8 has increased with the narrative that transition to secondary school alongside the closures was just too difficult alongside the mental health challenges some pupils faced.

There are 92 pupils currently receiving teaching with 40 in year 11.
There are 2 primary aged pupils.

5. Changes to Policy/eligibility criteria

In January 2020 there was a Local Government Ombudsman directive regarding the Eligibility Criteria for HCES. Previously School referrals had to be supported by medical support from a consultant or senior CAMHS practitioner. Following the directive this has been widened to include other medical teams to avoid delays. GP supportive information will be accepted as an interim measure whilst more specific medical evidence becomes available.

6. Budget Position

Careful financial management has enabled the service to recruit some additional staff, deliver Enrichment Activities and respond to the increased demand following the pandemic. The cost of more pupils being on site rather than in their homes has led to a need for more on-site staff and an additional Learning Mentor. Given the amount of pupils who are undergoing EHC assessment whilst they are with HCES (currently 22) we have a full time SENCO.

In June 2022 School Forum agreed change to the funding of year 11 by moving to the weekly charging system for all year 11 pupils rather than transfer of AWPU in year 11. This has happened and it is more straight forward. I would just like to reconfirm with schools that for Year 11 the weekly charges begin from Day 1.

The weekly charges of £125 are collected termly and attendance figures emailed to schools on a Friday. Schools and parents receive 3 reports per year.

It is proposed that the weekly charge be increased to £140 from April 2023, in line with 23/24 Basic Entitlement funding for the Year 11, to cover the increase in teachers salaries and increase in travel costs.

PUPIL PREMIUM (PP)

PP has really made a difference to the service and our children. The monies have been used for various activities from rock climbing, bowling, and laser quest to name just a

few. The numbers attending Enrichment is growing all the time. The benefits to the children both socially and emotionally are huge.

For the pupils who is eligible to the PP funding, it is proposed that from April 23 the PP will be transferred over to Wirral Home and Continuing Education Service for all pupils, not just those in Year 11, for the period that a pupil is using the service.

7. SEND Review

The SEND review has called for a reformed and integrated role for alternative provision within Local and National SEND landscape. This will create a springboard for improvement and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Forum note the report.

Transfer of Pupil Premium where appropriate for all pupils - the PP will return to the school when/if the pupil returns.

Increase of the weekly charge from £125 to £140 per week for Year 11 pupils

If the Forum wishes to express any views in relation to this increase, they are invited to inform the Local Authority.

Julie Hudson