

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM June 2024

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 health needs. HCES delivers part of Wirral's statutory responsibility 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.

Many of the children have Emotionally Based School Avoidance.

We are an intervention not a destination.

The Service is being managed on an interim basis until the end of academic year 2025. There is a planned co-location with Joseph Paxton Centre from January 2025 followed by an amalgamation with JPC from September 2025.

There are proposed financial changes to charges for pupils who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to be discussed at this time.

2. BACKGROUND

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

- Providing a suitable education by ensuring that they make the best progress they can and access the most suitable pathway to preparation for life. This can be onsite or in their homes for children who are unable to leave their house.
- Providing sufficient hours of education in line with statutory guidance; the equivalent of full-time or for the number of hours the child's health condition allows.
- Contributing to a multiagency graduated approach for children with health needs.

2.2 The Service has been operating from to Pilgrim Street Arts Centre since July 2022. This has been a wonderful opportunity to develop multi agency working with

wider teams. A move to co locate on site with Joseph Paxton Centre is scheduled to be complete by January 2025.

3.Current Numbers/Pupils Profile

- 96 pupils currently with 36 in year 11.
- 3 primary aged pupils.
- 31 of the Pupils have an EHCP and 21 are currently under assessment.
- Girls- 35
- Boys-57
- Non-binary- 3

4 What we have to offer.

4.1 We have pastoral leads who co-ordinate ongoing multi agency work ensuring the children are moving towards their next appropriate next step and that the appropriate support/help is in place for the children and their family.

4.2 We use Hooves for Healing to help improve wellbeing amongst some of our most unwell children. We have learning mentors who can carry out sensory assessments, run sleep clinics and parenting workshops and give bespoke transition support.

4.3 We use The Zones of Regulation and Socially Thinking training which is overseen by a specialist Speech and Language Therapist We cover the core subjects in homes and onsite we provide a wider curriculum including ICT, Animal Care, Art, Woodwork, Keep Fit, Pilates.

4.4 We have an onsite SENDCO to support children with SEND.

4.5 We cover Functional skills and GCSE's and provide entries to a variety of exam boards. Pupils sit external exams on site and in their homes.
We have a Therapy dog called Jolene.

4.6 Since March 2021 the service has offered weekly Enrichment Activities which give much needed social opportunities. This was made possible by last year's agreement to transfer the Pupil Premium for all eligible pupils whilst they remain with the service. This program has been successful with up to 20 pupils per weekly enjoying trips to the cinema, Barnston Dale, the beach and many other local places. We see the most progress made by the group of pupils who attend Enrichment in terms of them re integrating back to school/college and improving their wellbeing.

5.Changes to Policy/eligibility criteria

5.1 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.

5.2 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. The admission panel meets bi-monthly.

6. Budget Position

6.1 Careful financial management has enabled the service to recruit some additional staff, deliver enrichment activities and respond to the increased demand following the pandemic. 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, we have a full time SENCO.

6.2 The weekly charges are collected termly from schools. The cost is £140 per week. Pupil Premium costs are added where appropriate.

6.3 The first 12 weeks are free the cost being absorbed by the Core Budget, which comes from the DSG/High Needs Block.

RECOMENDATIONS

The Forum discusses and agrees to the following charging alteration for pupils who have an EHCP, from September 2024 it is proposed that the 12 weeks initial period is to be disapplied when a child has an EHCP and for any additional unit funding to be transferred to HCES during the period the child is attending.

That Forum agrees the Home and Continuing Education Service continues to provide a short-term intervention for children who have medical needs which prevent them attending their own school and require the support the service offers.