

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children Services Scrutiny Panel

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

BRIEFING ON THE SCOPE - 'CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION'

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with an explanation of what is meant by the term 'children missing education' and it's the links with the risk of exclusion. It also explains what actions are being taken to improve way in which children missing education are monitored and returned to education.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The services described in this report and the improvements being made to them support the following priorities:

Priorities:

1. Protecting vulnerable children
3. Improving mental health and wellbeing

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The services described in this report and the improvements being made to them support the following outcome:

- Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
None				

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Acts implications.

5. **Supporting Information**

5a. **Definition/Legislation**

Children Missing Education CME are children of compulsory school age (5-16 years) who are:

- not registered pupils at a school and are...
- not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (EOTAS).

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.¹

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children who fall into this category.

5b. **Interpretation**

The range of situations in which a child could be considered as CME is wide ranging:

- Permanently excluded children not provided with an education within 6 days
- Routine in-year admissions who have not been offered a place within 4 weeks of application eg newly arrived OOB or immigrants
- Routine admission cases in which parents have multiple offers but have not chosen a school
- Children who have been removed from a school register without informing the LA
- Unauthorised absences which are not investigated
- Unauthorised home education
- School to school (Managed) transfers which break down
- Children who are known to have left the country but who then return 'unannounced'
- Children considered under the Fair Access Protocol, (the purpose of which is to ensure that children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible):

¹ Children missing education Statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016

- Children from the criminal justice system or Pupil Referral Units
- Children out of education for more than 2 months
- All children moving into the area without a school place
- Children of Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers
- Children who are homeless
- Children with unsupportive backgrounds, including where parents are disengaged and not taking action to provide education.
- Children who are carers
- Children without a statement or Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) who have special educational need, disabilities or medical conditions

Examples of Education otherwise than at a school EOTAS² include:

- EHE Elective Home Education
- Home Education provided as part of an package of support contained within an EHCP
- Alternative provision – commissioned by mainstream schools and provided by schools like Haybrook College

Despite there being an official definition, it is unsurprising that the term is used much more loosely in every day dialogue between schools and between schools and the LA. This makes the monitoring and identification of CME somewhat problematic.

5c. Council arrangements

The council has a range of resources available and measures in place to monitor the whereabouts of children and young people at risk of becoming CME:

- Attendance Team - responsible for supporting schools and other council services including: EHE (Elective Home Education), CME, attendance monitoring, management of warnings, fines and prosecutions for unauthorised absence, exclusions
- Pupil Tracking system - managed by the Attendance Team and published weekly:
 - Contains referrals from a wide range of agencies, eg schools, social care, police
 - Children referred are all missing education due to various reasons (see 5b above) and are therefore potentially at risk of becoming CME
 - – the referral system is intended not only to monitor children’s whereabouts but to facilitate pre-emptive action by agencies to prevent children becoming CME
- School Admissions Team – who track in year transfers, new arrivals, exclusions
- Fair Access Protocol and panels (part of Admissions Code)

² Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) includes all forms of education that takes place outside of the formal school environment.

- Monitoring, liaison, information share via a series of regular meetings eg MASH, Contextual Safeguarding, both of which are daily and involve representatives from social care, youth services, police, virtual school, Attendance et al
- Formation of special groups to deal with crises or work with specific demographic groups such as gypsies, Roma
- Littledown School and Haybrook College who provide a range of provision to ensure that children remain in education or are able to return to mainstream education following intervention:
 - Pupil Referral Unit – for excluded children - short term interventions and full time education (GCSEs)
 - Range of ‘revolving door’ intervention packages
 - Nurture groups
 - Outreach support for schools
 - Alternative provision such as vocational training in car mechanics
- Exclusions
 - Children can either be given a fixed term exclusion (FTE) or a permanent exclusion (PEX). For FTEs the child remains on the school roll and the responsibility of the school. When FTEs exceed 5 days the school is obliged to provide education eg in the form of home based work (‘6th Day Provision’).
 - For permanent exclusions, the local authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin no later than the sixth school day of the exclusion. In these cases the pupil can be referred to the PRU or they can be provided with work at home. All permanent exclusions are referred to the Fair Access Panel which tries to ensure that the child can continue in education. Permanent exclusions are considered a last resort and the focus is very much all schools, the LA and AP providers working closely together.

5d. Slough Picture

CME

The movement of children and families is very fluid and so the number of children being tracked and the number of CME varies considerably throughout the year.

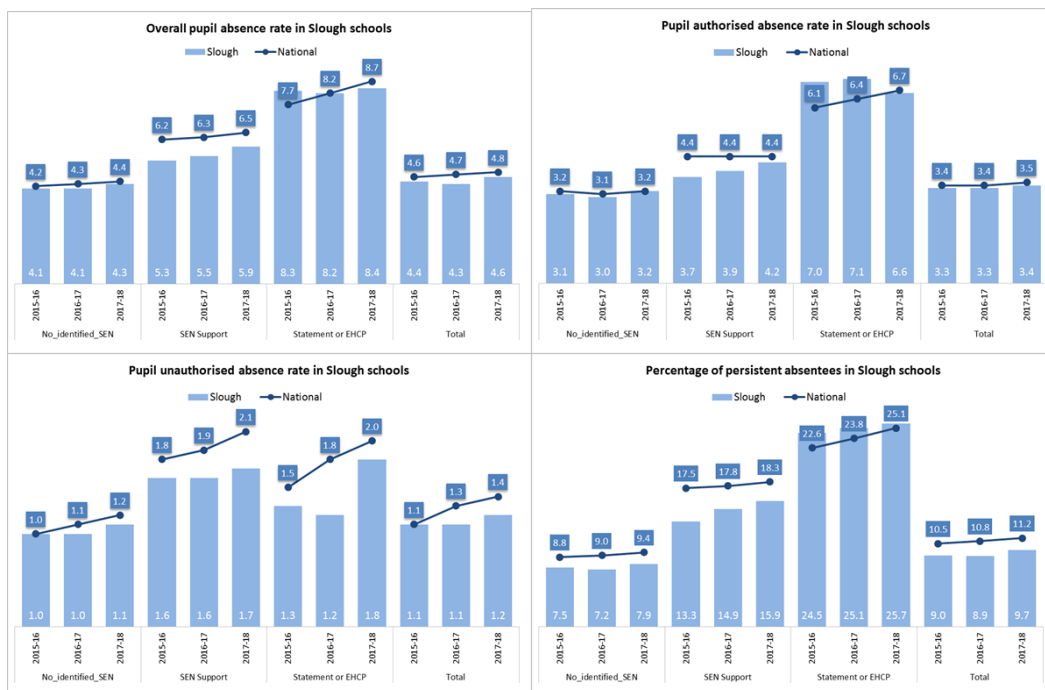
In a typical year nearly 20% of referrals are made in September, the majority being children who have left the borough and/or have moved abroad. A further peak occurs in January. Most referrals are closed within a month and do not result in a classification of CME. The vast majority of referrals are made by schools.

Over the last three academic years the average number of referrals has been 1412. The number of referrals for 2018-19 was 1412 of which 118 or 8% were classified as CME.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Referrals	1241	1584	1412	1485
				<i>Est</i>

Absence and Exclusions

Overall, the position in Slough compares favourably with national trends. Despite this, pupils with SEND remain disproportionately at risk of exclusion and recent trends suggest that the rate of exclusion is on the increase.³



5e. Areas for Development

The inter-agency working in Slough is strong and is being improved. For example, in addition to the daily Front Door meetings which manage formal referrals to social care, daily Contextual Safeguarding meetings involving the police, social care, YOT, Inclusion have now started at which intelligence on incidents involving children and young people at risk is shared and quick responses agreed.

The increases in absence rates and exclusions combined with some misunderstanding in attendance recording and procedures for off rolling, has triggered a review of all attendance related procedures and policies which will be followed by a training and awareness programme for schools and relevant council services.

The Fair Access Protocol is being reviewed by the Schools Service and is shortly to be issued to schools for consultation. In tandem with this a full review of all policies and procedures related to school attendance is being undertaken by the Inclusion Service during February which will then be followed by a training and awareness programme.

As explained above the tracking of children who may be missing education is complex but areas for improvement have been identified including, the criteria used to derive the number of CME, the classification of referrals and the improved

³ Support for SEND in Slough – Ambition and Strategy for: a system that works for everyone, December 2019

case closure procedures. Attendance data is now being migrated onto Capita One which will improve the integration of data across children's services.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

None

7. **Conclusion**

The scope of the definition of CME is very broad and the cohort of children and families is very mobile. Therefore, pupil tracking systems need to be quite sophisticated but they are only truly effective when there is integrated working between partners. The arrangements in Slough are basically sound but can and are being improved.

Children at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded are just one subset amongst many which constitute children at risk of missing education.

8. **Background Papers**

None