

CFFLC Select Committee Questions– 2 October 2023**1 From Amy Rieley (Public)**

As part of the recovery plan, Target 1 is to reduce waiting times. Point 6 states:

"...EPs will complete EHC needs assessments in chronological order (oldest first), except for cases that are assessed as having high vulnerabilities or a safeguarding concern or are due to transfer to the next phase of their education, which are being prioritised for completion on time."

Please can you tell me:

- 1) What is the oldest case waiting for assessment?
- 2) How many children waiting are due to transfer to their next phase of education? What is the oldest case in this category still waiting assessment?
- 3) Will the allocation of school placements for specialist schools or units be delayed or allocated at the end of the timeframe to allow children with delayed EHCPs to apply?
- 4) How long after being allocated an EP do assessments take place?
- 5) Are private EP reports continuing to be accepted and can parents claim a refund for the cost? As a parent we were only told that this had been available 13th September 2023 by our case worker (despite waiting for an EP assessment since March 2023).

Response:

- 1) As of 25th September, the oldest case waiting for assessment was received by the EP team in August 2022 and is currently in progress, with an expected completion date of early October.
- 2) There are currently 414 children awaiting assessment in national curriculum years -1, 2, 6 and 11 who may require a key stage transfer in September 2024. The oldest case in this category dates back to August 2022. 123 of these cases are already allocated to EPs for completion within 6 weeks. All remaining children will have their assessment completed in time for an EHCP being issued (should this be the outcome of assessment) in time for the key stage transfer statutory deadlines. It is important to note that not all of these children will require a change of school at the end of their current key stage.
- 3) We will not delay the allocation of placements for specialist schools or units as we expect that all key stage transfer children who have delayed assessments will have their EHC needs assessment completed in time for the key stage transfer statutory deadlines.
- 4) All vulnerable children have their EP assessment completed within 6 weeks of receipt, with an average time of 4.5 weeks for on time cases completed in August. The overall average time taken to complete the EP assessment in August was 20 weeks.

- 5) Private EP reports are continuing to be accepted and parents can claim a refund for the cost for eligible reports. There is guidance available on the Local Offer website to support parents, carers and professionals to understand the conditions of the offer and the process to follow for reimbursement. In the first instance families should discuss this with their Case Officer who will liaise with the Educational Psychology service. Once the advice has been reviewed and a decision made on whether it is appropriate to use this, or if further advice is needed, the Case Officer will contact families and if agreed advise parents on the process for reimbursement.

This temporary offer has now been extended for the Autumn term so that we can continue to progress assessments. We will provide a further update about this offer towards the end of the autumn term. It is anticipated that if our recovery plans are having the impact that we have planned for then this offer will draw to a close at the end of this calendar year.

Response writers name: Tracey Sanders

Names of 2 Directors who have signed the response off: Liz Mills / Matt Ansell

2 From Fiona Davidson (Member)

Early help is acknowledged to be key to helping families cope, improving outcomes for children and families, and to managing the costs of statutory services.

- How much funding does SCC allocate to early help by comparison with OFSTED outstanding authorities such as Hertfordshire, Hampshire and Essex – as a financial amount, as a percentage of the Children’s Services budget, and the overall council budget, taking account of the relative differences in county populations?
- How does the % allocated in the Children’s Services budget of 23/24 to early help compare with the % allocated in 2018/2019?

Response:

The information requested above is unfortunately not information that we can pull together quickly or easily and will need some additional time to ensure we are comparing like for like services, as Early Help offers differ across the Country and therefore no two offers are likely to be identical or comparable. We do not have any existing benchmarking information available to provide this level of analysis for the other Councils. The Councils mentioned have been contacted and asked for the relevant information. We hope to be able to provide more information within 6 weeks, but this will depend on the time taken for a response to be received.

We can confirm the following for SCC:

The 2023/24 service budget for Early Help is £14.8m. This includes Targeted Youth Support, the grant for our D&B’s for providing the Supporting Families Programme, Family Centres and Level 2 mentoring services. This represents 5.9% of the overall CFL budget of £250.3m and 1.3% of the overall Council £1.1b.

It means we are spending £51.80 per head of 0-19 year old population per year.

To compare with 2018/19, we would need more time to get comparable figures from the previous system and discuss with the service as there was a service restructure.

Response writers name: Jo Millward

Names of 2 Directors who have signed the response off: Lucy Clements/ Matt Ansell

3 From Catherine Powell (Member)

Data published by Sky News has revealed that school suspensions have risen by one third compared to pre-pandemic levels, with the number of girls being suspended up by 59% since before the pandemic.

- A. What is the percentage rise in school suspensions since the start of the pandemic in Surrey (March 2020), broken down by gender, and split between Primary / Secondary?
- B. What, if any, provision is being made for pupils at risk of suspension (rather than following suspension), for example through the use of special classes, which has proven successful elsewhere in the country?

Response:

Part A – needs to be seen in the context that schools only had to mandatorily provide details **of all suspensions as of Sep 22 – this was after the Behaviour in Schools consultation***. Prior to then, schools weren't bound by DFE to provide suspension data under 6 days mandatorily, so clearly there will have been a noticeable rise in the last academic year.

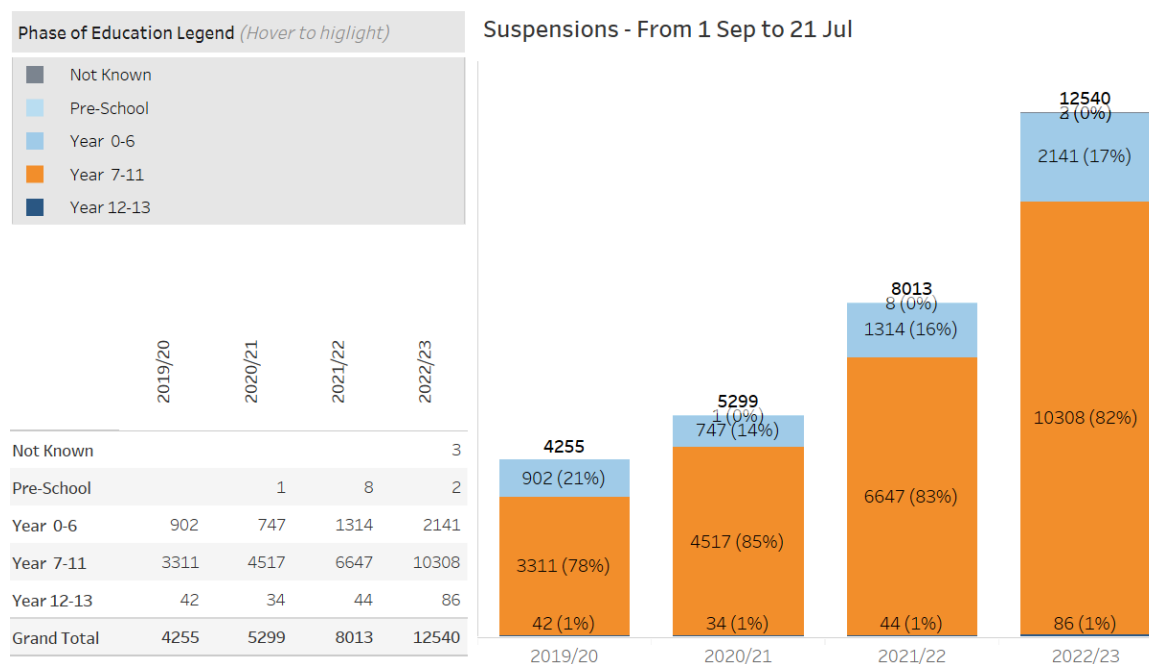
Suspension Totals (data taken from Tableau as of 21/7/23)

Year 19/20	Year 20/21	Year 21/22	Year 22/23 *
4255	5299	8013	12540
Percentage increase	25%	34%	36%

Suspensions by Gender

Academic Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total No of Suspensions	4255	5299	8013	12540
Male	3185	3839	5190	8185
Female	1070	1460	2823	4355

Suspensions by phase



Part B

Schools will be implementing their own in-house strategies to avoid suspension and permanent Exclusion (PEX), sourcing outreach and interventions from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), and outsourcing other types of Alternative Provision. Primary schools in particular buy in Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice to identify, intervene and support those children at risk of Permanent Exclusion (PEX).

The Local Authority must be informed, without delay, of all school suspensions and exclusions regardless of the length. For the majority of schools this is completed automatically via an electronic sharing of data through a system called Groupcall. Schools that have not signed up to Groupcall are expected to complete a suspension notification form (EXC1) and return it to the Local Authority without delay.

In addition, the Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice are currently piloting the ASPIRE Project in the NE of the county – which supports the transition of children from year 6 into year 7 who are at risk of exclusion.

Each respective quadrant hosts their own Surrey Alternative Learning Programme (SALP) committee where focus should be on providing early support to mitigate the risk of PEX or suspension. Additionally, we have introduced 'risk of PEX' meetings specifically for children with EHCP's where a range of Surrey County Council professionals work with PRU reps to identify students at risk and collectively use their knowledge to mitigate that risk, and in some situations find suitable alternatives.

In 2021 Surrey commissioned Royal Holloway to complete research into exclusion from school in Surrey. Several exclusion summits involving partners and schools were held detailing the research and its findings. As a result, Surrey, alongside 8 Secondary Schools has jointly commissioned, MCR Pathways to deliver mentoring to support children at risk of exclusion from school.

Our PRUs in Surrey work closely with the Council's Area Education Teams to offer Intervention placements to children at risk of exclusion from school. The PRU will work with that child over a period to nurture a supported return to their school – advising and giving the school strategies of the individualised help that child will need to be successful.

Response writers name: Kelly Lancashire

Names of 2 Directors who have signed the response off: Liz Mills / Matt Ansell

4 From Catherine Powell (Member)

In August this year the Children's Commissioner for England reported that in 2022/23, nearly a quarter (22.3%) of all children were persistently absent. How many pupils in Surrey have been absent from school each month since the end of lockdown in March 2021, categorised by Elected to Home Educate, Children Missing Education, Access 2 Education and Severely Absent and split by primary/secondary age in each category?

Response:

Promoting school attendance and addressing persistent and severe absence is a priority in Surrey. We have developed an attendance strategy which provides a framework for continuous improvement in school attendance that contributes to good future life outcomes for all children and young people.

All schools are responsible for monitoring the attendance of their pupils and ensuring that they take appropriate action to follow up concerns relating to absences. They are expected to have a robust Attendance Policy and clear systems and processes in place for managing attendance in their schools.

In May 2022 the DfE released new guidance [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) which is due to become statutory guidance imminently. This guidance makes it clear that improving attendance is everyone's business.

Persistent absence (PA) is defined as 10% or more absence and severe absence (SA) is defined as 50% or more absence.

The data below demonstrates that Surrey have a lower % of PA and SA pupils compared to the national and SE region. Our local data suggests that PA % has reduced in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, whereas SA % has increased. We have seen an increase in the numbers of children experiencing anxiety and emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) post pandemic. A multi professional network has been established including partners from education, early help, health and the voluntary sector to develop a partnership offer to support children to return to school.

All maintained and academy schools have an allocated Inclusion Officer who acts as a 'critical friend' when providing advice, support and challenge to schools. Schools are also able to refer children to the Local Authority Inclusion Team where their own interventions have not been successful in improving attendance.

Persistent and Severe Absence

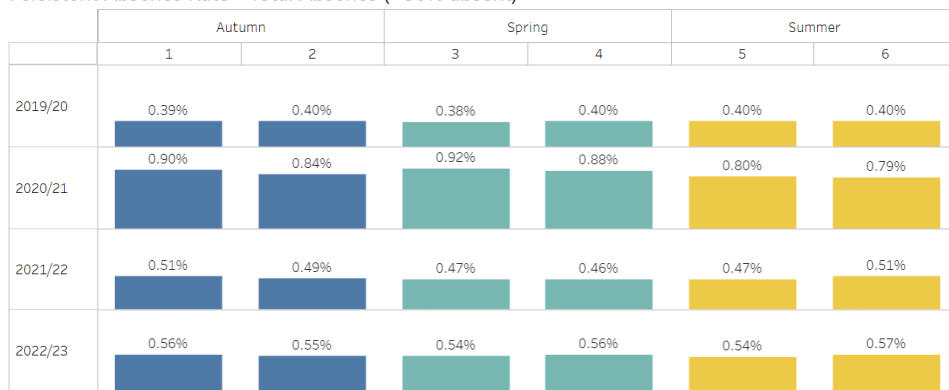
The below table is census data for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and includes numbers and percentages for both Persistent (PA) and Severely Absence (SA). Full year census data is not available for 2022/23 until March 2024 so the data added for 2022/23 is from our internal data.

		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23* Tableau data
England	Number of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	872,438	1,643,876	
	Number of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	81,652	120,623	
	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	12.1%	22.5%	
	Percentage of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	1.1%	1.7%	
South East Region	Number of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	130,432	256,791	
	Number of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	11,822	18,434	
	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	11.4%	22.0%	
	Percentage of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	1.0%	1.6%	
Surrey	Number of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	13,517	27,745	25141
	Number of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	1,235	1,895	2446
	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	9.7%	19.6%	17%
	Percentage of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	0.9%	1.3%	1.70%

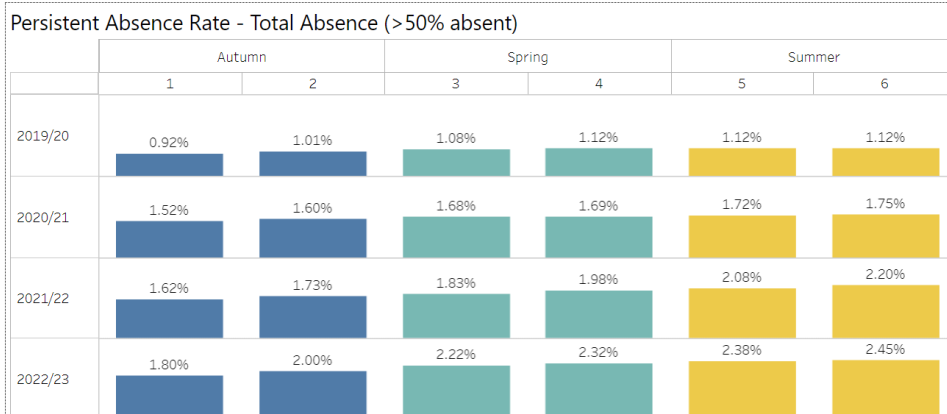
Absence and Persistent Absence data is submitted to the LA half termly by schools therefore monthly breakdown is not possible to provide. Below is a breakdown of our internal data by phase; Primary, Secondary and Special.

Primary:

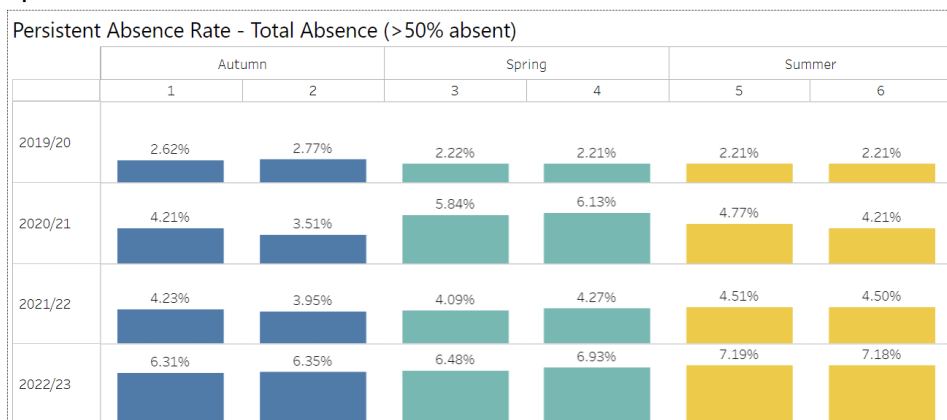
Persistent Absence Rate - Total Absence (>50% absent)



Secondary:



Special:



Children Missing Education

We define Children Missing Education (CME) as children who are of compulsory school age and are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise than at school. It is important to note that CME numbers are fluid and will not always be the same children from month to month. We monitor our CME children monthly via multi professional CME meetings to ensure actions are on track for supporting the children to return to school.

		Jan-22	60	Jan-23	64
		Feb-22	76	Feb-23	64
Mar-21	37	Mar-22	72	Mar-23	60
Apr-21	35	Apr-22	71	Apr-23	66
May-21	35	May-22	75	May-23	69
Jun-21	23	Jun-22	65	Jun-23	80
Jul-21	31	Jul-22	53	Jul-23	76
Aug-21	35	Aug-22	102	Aug-23	92
Sep-21	29	Sep-22	69		
Oct-21	31	Oct-22	60		
Nov-21	39	Nov-22	50		
Dec-21	33	Dec-22	62		

Electively Home Educated (EHE) data

We experienced a rapid and significant increase in parents deciding to withdraw their children from school to home educate during and immediately following the pandemic. This was replicated in other LAs. This trend has continued throughout 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The EHE Inclusion Officers work with families, within the parameters of the legislation, to ensure that children who are home educated are receiving an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs as per Sec. 7, Education Act 1996. If we are not satisfied parents are meeting this requirement, we support them to return the child to school.

March 21 – Dec 21

Month	Total	Primary	Secondary
March	1494	556	938
April	1556	588	968
May	1582	596	986
June	1625	616	1009
July	1654	633	1021
August	1670	632	1038
September	1384	500	884
October	1371	476	895
November	1414	479	935
December	1447	487	960

2022

Month	Total	Primary	Secondary
January	1481	503	978
February	1537	510	1027
March	1587	522	1065
April	1602	521	1081
May	1631	534	1097
June	1699	550	1149
July	1444	565	879
August	1494	588	906
September	1485	444	1041
October	1563	463	1100
November	1615	477	1138

December	1679	488	1191
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Retrospective A2E reporting is not available.

Response writers name: Mark Keiller and Kelly Lancashire

Names of 2 Directors who have signed the response off: Liz Mills / Matt Ansell

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