

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 02/18

Date: April 2018

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: Update on action taken to tackle persistent absence in schools and academies as requested by members of the Committee at its meeting on 1 August 2017.

Persistent Absence (PA) in schools and academies

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Persistent Absence (PA) is identified where a pupil or pupils miss 10 % or more of school sessions or attendance is 90% or below. The statistical information gathered includes pupils who have authorised and unauthorised absence including, illness, medical appointments, exclusions, and holidays during term time all of which have a negative impact on the data.

As an addition to census data, PA data is collected termly from a majority of schools and academies by the Performance and Intelligence Team and this information is collated and passed to the Attendance Advisory Service to schools and Academies (AASSA). This information is a strong indicator and raises possible concerns relating to absence and provides the team with data which can be shared with the schools/academies to challenge both authorised and unauthorised absence until the statistical release from the Department for Education is provided which always runs two terms behind.

At the start of the academic year Attendance Advisory Practitioners visit schools and academies that purchase the service and review all absence data including PA, the procedures, and Attendance Policy and look at how improvements can be made to improve the Attendance Statistics overall. Support continues throughout the academic year and additional meetings are arranged where it is considered that the AASSA Team Manager/Team Leaders also need to challenge.

Targeted work has already taken place this academic year with positive results, including:

- Three secondary schools (with attendance concerns) have been targeted and a team around the School has been developed to look at pupils that need targeted intervention. This has improved attendance and outcomes for pupils.
- A transition programme from junior Schools has also been developed to ensure young people are better equipped to manage the change.
- The Deputy Director and the Head of Service have also developed a working group with Head Teachers and more focus will be on attendance and exclusions this year.

AASSA issue penalty notices on behalf of Medway Council for an unauthorised leave of absence where the majority of Medway schools/academies have robust Attendance Policies not authorising holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. The DfE recently published that holidays booked during term time have nationally increased during the last academic year which they consider was as a result of the Platt v Isle of Wight case.

AASSA work closely with Medway Council Admission Team, Social Care and Early Help Targeted Services to improve attendance and are working towards an area based model which will encourage greater links to access schools/academies and the community and they work closely with all agencies to improve attendance and the outcomes for pupils.