

EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

SCOPING DOCUMENT

A review of school attendance and part time timetables in Portsmouth

1. Background

This topic was agreed by the Scrutiny Management Panel (SMP) on 29 September 2017. Portsmouth's school attendance levels are in the bottom quarter nationally. There has been a drive to improve attendance with some success but more progress needs to be made.

2. Objectives of the inquiry

- To understand the main reasons for school absence and review the Council's strategy to improve school attendance.
- To explore how children on part time timetables are supported to resume full time attendance as early as possible and consider how to minimise the use of part time timetables.
- To investigate where we have good practice and where there is scope for improvement in relation to ensuring children attend school. Particular focus shall be given to vulnerable children, children with SEN, persistent absentees, those on part time timetables and elective home education.
- To review arrangements for ensuring that where children and young people are out of school for significant periods through reduced timetables or poor attendance, there is good multi agency risk assessment and action where necessary to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation.
- To investigate the reasons why parents are choosing to home educate their child and how their progress can be monitored and their safeguarding ensured.

3. Witnesses

- Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education
- Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director Education.
- Neil Stevenson - Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions and Reintegration Manager
- Sarah Christopher - Portsmouth Education Partnership
- School Attendance Team Leader?
- Headteachers/inclusion leads - visits to three schools to talk to them.
- Parents and pupils - including those who are home schooled
- Virtual School Head - LAC perspective

4. Timeline

- Initial meeting to agree the scoping document, receive first evidence from Director of Children's Services and agree evidence gathering programme (including proposals below)
- Panel members to visit three schools (Two members to visit an early years, two to visit a primary school and two to visit a secondary) along with Sarah Christopher/relevant PCC officer, to talk to the headteacher/inclusion leads about their attendance strategies etc. Members to then present their findings to the next meeting.
- Consultation with the Parent and Carer Forum, Portsmouth Parent Voice and the Council of Portsmouth Students
- Focus group(s) of parents/children (to include those who are home schooled and foster carers) the evidence obtained from this meeting to be fed back to the next meeting.

5. Background documents

- PCC Guidance for schools on the use of reduced timetables
- School Attendance Data
- PCC guide for home schooling.
- Pupils missing out on education Ofsted guidance (November 2013)
- Elective Home Education guidance for local authorities