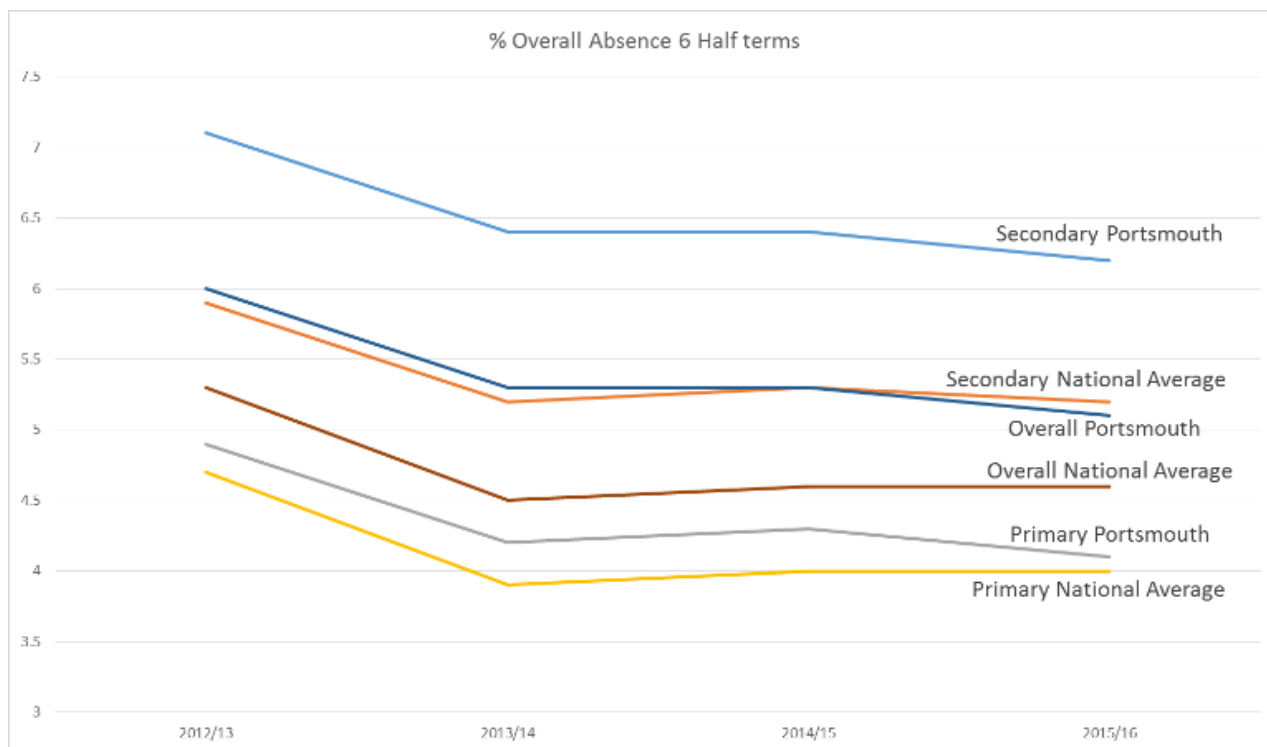


Initial Report for the Scrutiny Panel November 2017

School Attendance Overview

In recent years we have seen improvements in attendance rates in Portsmouth schools. These have been achieved through hard work by schools, parents and partners. However, the fact is that Portsmouth pupils do not attend school as regularly as their peers nationally, so there is still more work to be done.



The work needed to improve school attendance is outlined in the priorities within the strategy and is overseen by the Behaviour and Attendance Group (BAG). We must note that there is also other legislation, guidance and vulnerable groups that sit within the broad umbrella of non-attendance: those on reduced timetables and those who are not on roll of a school, classed as children missing education. Equally there are those who have elected to home educate, some of whom we may have concerns around the reasons for having elected to do so and whether education is taking place.

We know that those most likely to be absent from school in Portsmouth are white British, eligible for free school meals, those with special educational needs and have a history of absence. The main reason in Portsmouth for absence, which is mirrored nationally is health related absence. These account for approx. 60% of absences.

Persistent absentees (PAs) (those that were absent for 10% or more of the possible sessions) are a local and national focus (in 2015/16 the percentage of PAs was 12.8% in Portsmouth and 10.5% nationally)¹.

Portsmouth has also selected to identify a further subgroup of absentees and has termed these Chronic Non-attenders (CNAs) (those who attend school for less than 50% of the possible sessions). These are a subgroup of PAs.

¹ [Most Recent National Data for a whole academic year 2015/16](#)

In Portsmouth we encourage supportive pastoral action to be taken alongside the more punitive legal routes. Evidence shows that consistency of application in respect of the framework of legal action is supportive to early help intervention and move in tandem.

Attendance Strategy

Portsmouth has an attendance strategy (Appendix 1) which has 4 main priorities:

1. That parents meet their responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly
2. That schools have effective leadership and management of attendance in place
3. That partners provide additional needs based support that contributes to improvements in attendance.
4. That a high profile of the key attendance messages is maintained in the community

Within the strategy each of those priority areas (which were widely consulted on and endorsed by the Behaviour and Attendance Group) are expanded to explain how we are and should move forward to achieve that result.

Health Related Absence

In recognition of the need to combat absence due to health related reasons, a pilot is currently running with 11 schools to increase the amount of school nurse time and intervention.

Persistent Absentees

These are reviewed electronically with schools on a six weekly basis. This ensures that schools discharge their duty to report all irregular attenders to the LA and also provides opportunity for the LA to monitor action being taken as well as to advise of action that should be taken. In 2016/17 there were 3509 pupils reported whose attendance was below 90% (see appendix 2).

Chronic Non-attenders

There is no comparable national data available for this measure but given that there is a wealth of evidence around school as a protective factor, it is key that this group have particular focus. In recognition that it is likely to be services and agencies other than schools that can affect the most change, these are referred to the MASH to be picked up by the multi-agencies teams in each locality by assigning a key lead to each case. From this academic year, schools with refer cases in but the school attendance team will also provide a list of those identified to the MASH and Early Help locality leads each half term.

Reduced Timetables

Reducing a pupil's timetable is a strategy that a school might look to employ in order to regain success with a pupil who is displaying challenging behaviour, to reintegrate a pupil from a prolonged period of absence or for medical reasons. Portsmouth has guidance (attached at appendix 3) in place to ensure that schools assess carefully the relevance of this strategy and plan as part of this, how the pupil will progress back to full-time within the 6 week timeframe that the guidance gives as the maximum length. The current activity, data (Current Picture of those on a reduced timetable (not for medical reasons): Number of Primary aged pupils at mainstream on a reduced timetable = 13, number of Secondary aged pupil at mainstream on a reduced timetable = 12, number of pupils in special school on a reduced timetable = 40) and

recommendations are reflected in a recent report to the PSCB (Appendix 4). If we exclude those that were on reduced timetables for medical reasons in the academic year 2016/7, there were 177 pupils that at some point had their hours reduced.

Children Missing Education

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. A recent report to the PSCB outlines the current position and recommendations (attached at appendix 5). There were 172 pupils that were deemed missing at some point last academic year (2016/17) but all bar 4 were located without having to refer to the police at the point of the snapshot.

Elective Home Education

Portsmouth has a clear policy around Elective Home Education (EHE) (see appendix 6) that endeavours to be as robust as currently guidance (appendix 7) allows and makes explicit to parents the responsibilities they are taking on in electing to educate at home (see appendix 8). A recent report to the PSCB shows the trend data and a breakdown of the reasons that parents choose this option. There are currently 139 pupils who are registered with the LA as electively home educating (appendix 9).

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Portsmouth Attendance Strategy
- Appendix 2 - Percentage ranking of on track persistent absentees by each half term 2016-17
- Appendix 3 - PCC guidance on the use of reduced timetables
- Appendix 4 - Reduced timetables report to PSCB
- Appendix 5 - Children missing Education report to PSCB
- Appendix 6 - PCC guidance on elective home education
- Appendix 7 - Elective home education - guidance for local authorities
- Appendix 8 - PCC elective home education frequently asked questions
- Appendix 9 - Elective home education report to PSCB

Background information

Link to the most recent National data

[Most Recent National Data for a whole academic year 2015/16](#)