

**Title of meeting:** CFE Cabinet Member Decision Meeting

**Subject:** Improving school attendance and reducing exclusions - focus on relational practice

**Date:** 29 July 2022

**Report by:** Mike Stoneman, Deputy Director, Education

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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## **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet Member approval for a three year commitment from the DSG carry forward in order to support a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost at school through non-attendance, suspensions (previously known as fixed term exclusions) or reduced timetables. This follows endorsement by Schools Forum on 13 July 2022.
- 1.2 Specifically, it is seeking support for a city-wide relational practice programme, a whole-school approach that has the potential to transform this agenda, building on previous work to implement restorative practice in schools, excellent evidence-based practice in the city and Wave One of the Relational Practice programme that commenced in Autumn 2021 and which has so far involved up to 17 schools

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education approve:
  - a. the commitment of £530,000 from the DSG carry forward as outlined in Section 4 of the report to Schools Forum (Appendix 1), in order to support the implementation of the strategy to improve school attendance and reduce suspensions, and specifically support a city-wide relational practice programme; and
  - b. a disapplication request to the Secretary of State

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 A city-wide strategy to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions was approved by the PEP Strategic Board last year and sets out a renewed collective effort on reducing time lost from school as a result of non-attendance, suspension/exclusion or reduced timetables, set against the background of the learning loss that so many of our children and young people have experienced throughout the pandemic. It also responds to the relatively high levels of exclusion and absence seen historically across Portsmouth schools when compared to similar LA areas.
- 3.2 The strategy builds on several years of work and a range of initiatives, many of which will continue to be delivered under this strategy. However, this strategy takes a whole system strategic approach to tackling school absence and suspensions, a major strand of which is around relational practice, building on previous work to support restorative practice in schools and making this central to a school's culture and ethos.
- 3.3 Schools have been invited to participate in 'Waves' of implementation over the next 3 years, with the ambition of running at least 3 Waves during this period. 17 of our 61 schools have been involved in Wave 1 of the Relational Practice Programme which commenced in Autumn 2021, and many more have indicated a willingness to join in future waves, with Wave 2 scheduled for January 2023.
- 3.4 An overview of the support to schools in Wave One, and testimonies from participating schools, are included in the report to Schools Forum (Appendix 1)
- 3.5 The ambition is to develop and build a city-wide whole school relational culture and ethos, establishing practices that become "the way we do things in Portsmouth". The plan includes developing leadership within schools and across the PEP, establishing networks and developing CPD packages support and resources as required. Once embedded, with a clear underlying ethos, the ongoing maintenance of relational practice should be sustainable through school-to-school support.
- 3.6 The Cabinet Member is being asked to approve a commitment of £530,000 for three calendar years, commencing January 2023, from the DSG carry forward, to support at least 3 more waves in 2023, 2024 and 2025, as well as some continued support for those schools that have been involved in Wave 1 and for those that will be involved in future waves. A breakdown of the costs is given in section 4 of the report to Schools Forum (Appendix 1).

#### **4. Reasons for the recommendations**

- 4.1 Portsmouth needs to make a step change in how we address educational inclusion in terms of improving attendance, reducing suspensions and supporting the wider wellbeing for children and young people. Relational Practice in schools, as seen across the country, and specifically seen locally in Trafalgar School, offers us this opportunity to make that step change and move Portsmouth from the bottom decile nationally for educational inclusion.
- 4.2 Testimonials from three of the schools involved in Wave 1 highlight the early benefits and support for the programme are included in the report to Schools Forum (Appendix 1) **and** there is clear evidence from other local authority areas and in some schools in Portsmouth that a commitment to relational practice and a whole school and system approach, can lead to transformational results in terms of improvements to school attendance, reduction in suspensions and a reduction on the demand in Children's Social Care.

#### **5. Integrated impact assessment**

- 5.1 The implementation of the strategy and the Relational Practice programme will not have a negative impact on any of the areas of equality and diversity, community safety, regeneration, culture, environment or public space.
- 5.2 The implementation will in fact improve inclusion and ensure more children receive full time education giving them the possible opportunity to succeed.

#### **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The Schools Forum is a statutory body which must be consulted on the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Final decisions however on the funding distributed to schools, proposed spends on central services and the High Needs budget are matters to be determined by Cabinet and Council, having taken into account the responses from the Schools Forum. For the purposes of this particular initiative, an application will be required to the Secretary of State, should the decision be taken to proceed.
- 6.2 The proposals for the initiative will assist Portsmouth schools and the Local Authority in meeting their statutory duties around safeguarding, inclusion, engagement, attainment and achievement.

## **7. Director of Finance's comments**

- 7.1 The financial comments are contained within the body of report to Schools Forum (Appendix 1)

Signed by: Sarah Daly, Director of Children, Families and Education

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1:** Report to Schools Forum on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### **Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

.....  
Signed by: