

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 14 October 2024

Title: North Tyneside Attendance Policy

Portfolio(s): Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills	Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Steven Phillips
Report from Service	
Area:	Children, Young People & Learning
Responsible Officer:	Julie Firth, Director of Children's Services (0191) 643 5943
Wards affected:	All Wards

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval of the North Tyneside Attendance Policy ("the Policy"), attached at Appendix 1 of this report.

The Borough has an education system to be proud of. A strong performer regionally and nationally, this is a reflection of the hard work undertaken by head teachers and their teams, governing bodies, Elected Members, Authority staff and the fantastic children, young people and their families. This is reflected in the overall school attendance figures which are better than national and local averages.

The 'Working together to improve school attendance' (which is statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities) was first issued by the Department for Education on 6 May 2022

and was last updated in August 2024. The guidance, amongst other things, makes it clear that there should be a clear School Attendance Policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand. This guidance has formed the foundation on which the Policy has been developed. The Policy provides the clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities expected of leaders, staff, pupils and parents referred to in the guidance. A multi-disciplinary attendance working group has met to create the Policy and continues to meet to monitor the Attendance Action Plan.

Whilst overall school attendance in the Borough is higher than national average, the Authority is keen to work with partners to support parents and carers to increase attendance further and to remove barriers to good attendance in schools and settings.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the North Tyneside Attendance Policy attached to this report at Appendix 1
2. Authorise the Director of Children's Services to review the Attendance Policy at least annually and to make any amendments to the Policy after taking all steps considered appropriate, including consultation, and following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills; and
3. Agree to an amendment of the Authority's Officer Delegation Scheme as soon as reasonably practicable to reflect the authorisation given to the Director of Children's Services in recommendation 2 above.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 10 September 2024.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report relates to the following priority in the 2021-2025 Our North Tyneside Plan:

A family-friendly North Tyneside:

- We will support local schools, making sure all children have access to a high-quality education with opportunities to catch up where needed after the pandemic.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

In line with the Children and Young People's Plan 2024-2025, the Authority's vision for children and young people in North Tyneside is as follows.

"Making North Tyneside an even greater place for children and young people to thrive; where all, including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or disabled, are ready for school, ready for work and life, cared for and supported."

This builds upon the strategic vision set out within the 'Our North Tyneside Plan', with the aim of ensuring every child or young person has a safe life, a happy life, a healthy life and are achieving in life. The principles that underpin this are the voice of the child and early intervention and prevention.

The Department for Education (DfE) released 'Working together to Improve Attendance' guidance May 2022 with the aim of tackling barriers to attendance which had resulted in a decrease in overall attendance at schools and settings post pandemic. The experience of children and young people in North Tyneside is reflective of national trends; a lower overall attendance rate, an increase in Persistent Absence (90% or less) and Severe Absence (50% or less). North Tyneside has seen an increase in Unauthorised Term Time Holidays, Suspension and Permanent Exclusions along with an increase in pupils who would identify as Emotional School Based Non-Attendance (ESBNA). The Authority and its partners work closely with schools, settings and families to improve school attendance.

1.5.2 Responsibility for school attendance

Parents in England are responsible for ensuring that their child receives an appropriate full-time education. When a child is registered at school, parents are responsible for securing their child's regular attendance at school.

There are reasons why absence from school in term-time may be authorised, most commonly for pupil illness. Authorisation of absence for other reasons is a matter for each school to determine, but authorisations of absence should only be granted in exceptional circumstances. An authorisation is unlikely, for example, to be granted for a family holiday. Parents are likely to be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for the unauthorised absence of their child from school for a holiday, the non-payment of which can result in a parent being prosecuted.

The most recent final DfE attendance statistics for the complete academic year 2022/23 (data for the complete academic year 2023/24 will be released by April 2025), indicates that the absence rate for any reason nationally was 7.4%, North Tyneside was 6.8% and the North East was 7.4%. This is slightly lower than the previous academic year, 2021/22, when the national figure was 7.6%. However, it is higher than in the six years prior to the pandemic (when nationally absence ranged between 4.5% and 4.8%).

In 2022/23, nationally 21.2% of pupils were recorded as being "persistently absent", the persistent absence rate in this period in North Tyneside was 17.4% (persistent absence is defined by the DfE as missing 10% or more of possible school sessions). This equates to around 1.6 million pupils in England. Some groups of pupils are more likely to be absent or persistently absent than others. For example, in 2022/23 in England, 36.5% of free school meal eligible pupils were persistently absent compared with 15.6% of pupils that were not eligible. In North Tyneside 35% of free school meal eligible pupils were persistently absent 2022/23.

1.5.3 School attendance and attainment

Attendance in school is vital for positive achievement and attainment outcomes to enable pupils to progress to Post 16 placements. There is a strong

link between poor attendance and poor attainment. The Policy defines the legal requirements and roles of the Authority, schools, pupils, parents and carers to ensure good attendance.

On average, pupils with higher absences over key stage 4 (year ten to year eleven) had lower GCSE attainment in 2019. This is the most recent DfE data on the link between absence and attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve grades 9-4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019, had an absence rate of 8.8%, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved grade 4 in both subjects, and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 5 or above.

Pupils who were persistently or severely absent (who missed more than 10% and 50% respectively of possible school sessions) had lower average attainment. 35.6% of persistently absent pupils, and just 11.3% of severely absent pupils achieved grades 9-4 in English and maths (compared to 67.6% of all pupils).

A high level of suspension and or Permanent Exclusion also impacts negatively on attendance and attainment of pupils.

Aligned to the Authority's vision for education in the Borough, the Policy focuses on working collaboratively to remove barriers for all pupils to achieve good attendance, 95% or above.

The Authority's purpose and passion is to work together with children and young people, their families, schools, school leaders, further and higher education, childcare providers, training providers and wider networks and partners to continue to develop professional learning and to raise standards and to ensure that this happens. Legal responsibilities for school attendance for each stakeholder is listed in the policy. Targeted school support meetings between school leaders and Authority officers rigorously assess pupil level data to ensure effective plans are in place to remove barriers to education, this is a multi-agency approach.

The Policy has been developed with guidance from the DfE link officer in collaboration with the following educational specialists and services.

- Early Help
- Education North Tyneside
- Educational Psychologists
- HIVE
- Moorbridge Alternative Education Provision
- Parent Carer Forum
- Safeguarding and Children's Services
- Schools
- SEND Support Service

Progress has been shared with the Family Friendly Sub Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee, Special Educational Need and Disabled (SEND) Strategic Board and Headteacher Collaboration.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet accepts the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2.

Option 2

Cabinet does not accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended to enable Education North Tyneside and partners to work collaboratively to remove barriers to positive attendance to ensure that all children and young people can have access to a high-class education in order to achieve their full potential.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: North Tyneside Attendance Policy 2024

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

1.9 Contact officers:

Julie Firth, Director Children's Services, Children, Young People and Learning
(0191) 643 5943

Lisa Ramshaw, Head of Service Education and Inclusion, tel. 0784 446547

Vicky Wark, Improvement Manager, Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding,
tel. (0191) 643 4965

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/ information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-education-act-2011-equalities-impact-assessment>
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
4. [Recommendations | Social, emotional and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education | Guidance | NICE](#)
5. [Ambition for Education Cabinet Report 18 September 2023](#)
6. [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan](#)

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The delivery of the Attendance policy has a limited impact on the financial implications of specific decisions and the revenue and capital resources the Authority has available.

2.2 Legal

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Authority to secure efficient primary, secondary and further education provision in the Borough. The Act also requires the Authority to ensure that its functions are exercised in such a way that promotes high educational standards, ensures fair access of opportunity to education and training, and promotes the fulfilment of the learning potential of the children and young people in the Borough.

It is the legal responsibility of every parent by virtue of section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

If a parent, without reasonable justification, fails to secure the regular attendance of a child at a school at which the child is a registered pupil they commit an offence under 444 of the Education Act 1996. This means that as a last resort a parent may be prosecuted by the Authority for failure to secure their child's regular attendance at school.

The Policy which Cabinet is being asked to approve sets out the strategies and interventions that will be in place to assist parents, teachers and leaders to work together to secure, as far as possible, the regular attendance at school of children without the need for the Authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute a parent for the non-attendance at school of their child.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

2.3.1.1 Consultation has been undertaken with service managers within the following services.

- Early Help
- Education North Tyneside
- Educational Psychologists
- HIVE
- SEND Support Team
- Safeguarding and Children's Services

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

2.3.2.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the following stakeholders.

- Education Partnership Board
- The Authority has consulted with Headteachers and Schools
- Moorbridge Alternative Education Provision
- Parent Carer Forum

2.4 Human rights

The adoption of the Strategy will help to promote Article 2 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which is the right to education.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken on the policy detailed in this report. This is attached at Appendix 2. While the majority of impacts on protected groups will be positive, mitigations have been identified regarding any potential negative impacts and these will be addressed during policy implementation.

2.6 Risk management

The implementation of the Policy will address the risk of children and young people in North Tyneside being out of education and not achieving their full potential.

2.7 Crime and disorder

Department for Education and Ministry of Justice research analysed by the Centre for Social Justice found that persistently absent pupils are more than three times likely to commit an offence by the time they attain 17 years of age than pupils fully attending school.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no specific environment or sustainability implications arising from this report.

PART 3 – SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Director(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Interim Director
of Corporate Strategy
and Customer Service X