

PLYMOUTH ATTENDANCE STRATEGY
2023-2026
Children's Services



FOREWORD

'Attendance is everyone's business' and a key feature of all frontline council services and partners' work so that the children and young people in the city have the highest possible school attendance. This enables them to be healthy, happy, and safe and achieve the best possible outcomes. We want all children and young people to go on to achieve their potential and to lead fulfilling lives.

Poor school attendance can impact all aspects of a child's future. Outcomes data nationally and in Plymouth shows that attendance less than 90% significantly reduces a child's chances of achieving good English and maths qualifications at GCSE; preventing them from going on to further education and higher education or into employment. Children and young people who miss school on a regular basis can become socially isolated; they can lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Children can feel like they 'don't fit in' with their peers, and this can lead to loneliness. We also know that young people who regularly miss school are at greater risk of anti-social behaviour and child exploitation and are more likely to become victims of crime.

These are not the life outcomes and experiences we want for our children in Plymouth. School is not just about academic success and attainment; it is about learning about the world, about relationships, and about discovery. It is about trying new things, making new friends, and finding a place in the world. To miss school is to miss the many, many experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have, and the quality of life that we lead.

Children who attend school regularly go on to achieve better outcomes, to live healthier, wealthier, and more enriched lives – and we want to make sure we are all doing everything that we can to make that happen for all of our children.

This attendance strategy clearly outlines what success looks like. Schools in Plymouth will be implementing consistent, graduated responses to children and young people who are not attending school regularly and on time. Individual schools will see a reduction in their overall absence figure and a reduction in their persistent absence figure. The overall attendance figure for Plymouth schools will be above 96%.

Improved school attendance will lead to improved attainment outcomes for all children and young people across the city, and more will remain in education provision, reducing the number of children and young people not in education, employment, or training. Ultimately, better attainment for all will mean more opportunities for our young people to thrive and succeed in the future.

In Plymouth, many children have excellent attendance – we need to do more to celebrate that. We know there are examples of great successes happening every day in our schools. We know that we have strong partnership arrangements in place, that working to support parents and children is crucial to really making a difference.

This attendance strategy sets out the commitment of all partners through Plymouth's 'place based plan' to ensuring that all children and young people are given the best possible start in life and that they attend school regularly.

SIGNATURES

OUR VISION FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN PLYMOUTH

Our vision is clear and focused:

“We have a duty to help our children and young people to have a Bright Future. Our vision is that children and young people in Plymouth grow up healthy and happy, safe and able to aspire and achieve; living in resilient families and communities, able to take advantage of a broad range of opportunities. Our aim is that no Plymouth child should find that their life chances are defined or limited by the circumstances of their birth or early childhood experiences. If problems emerge we will step in and seek to work effectively alongside families to improve outcomes.

We need to do this better and faster, across our local authority, schools, and health providers, community sector and statutory services, to ensure that we shift resource and focus to be able to benefit more of our children, more of the time focusing on prevention and earlier identification of need. Over time we want to be able to reduce the need for intensive crisis management for a minority. We are aspirational about tackling the corrosive root causes and impact of deprivation.”

This vision is within the context of Plymouth Children’s and Young Peoples Plan – A Bright Future 2021-26, which sets out that:

- We want Plymouth to be the best place to be a child, where communities thrive and where our families are supported to be the best they can be. Our partnership has a bold and courageous vision to deliver the best education for all our children and young people;
- To prepare our young people for independence (adulthood); and
- For our children and young people to experience the best possible health and wellbeing.

Our Commitment

- Our work is shaped by the following commitments. We will:
- Embed co-production across all aspects of our work so that parent carers and children and young people are recognised as equal partners and are fully involved in decision making;
- Work in partnership to promote transparency and consistency in decision making and delivery of support;
- Embrace new ways of working to support and enable innovative practice;
- Commit to identify and understand the challenges faced by our families;
- Commit to providing good quality services with clear and accessible information;
- Prepare young people for adult life and independence from the earliest years; and
- Ensure that moves between services or changes in provision and support across all ages are smooth, seamless and supportive.

Improving our strategy means that our children and their families in the future will say that:

- we are listened to and respected;
- our needs are understood, acknowledged, and provided for;
- our voice and views are at the heart of all decision making for our child;
- we are involved in co-production of services and support at all levels of the system;
- we have access to good quality and impartial information, advice, and support;

- we have regular communication that is tailored to specific needs;
- our needs are identified early;
- the pathways to access help are transparent and equitable;
- we have more help from a range of agencies for our children and young people on SEN Support;
- we can access a variety of short breaks and after school activities;
- the professionals that work in partnership with parents are well trained and empathetic, and work flexibly around us with a person centred approach;
- we are welcomed and included, and we are accessing education, social and leisure opportunities within our local community;
- we are no longer excluded from schools; and
- we know what to expect and when, moving from children's to adult's services; planning for adult life starts early is person-centred and aspirational.

ATTENDANCE: KEY DEFINITIONS

Overall absence is collated as the number of sessions missed out of total possible sessions of attendance.

Persistent absence is defined as pupil attendance which falls below 90%.

Severe absence is defined as pupil attendance below 50%.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor and the best opportunity for a child's learning needs to be identified and support provided. Research cited in 'Working together to improve school attendance' sets out the associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent from school) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent from school in at least 1 of the 5 years). Whilst other vulnerability factors will have been at play for some of the young people in the studies, attendance at school was highlighted as a key contributor to vulnerability.

Good attendance also correlates directly with better educational outcomes. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) have higher rates of attendance when compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. This national data is also reflected in the outcomes achieved by children and young people in Plymouth. At key stage 2:

- 64.6% of pupils who had more than 90% attendance achieved expected standard in reading, writing and maths
- 43.8% of pupils who had less than 90% attendance achieved expected standard in reading, writing and maths
- 7.1% of pupils who had less than 50% attendance achieved expected standard in reading, writing and maths

In 2022, 45.9% of KS4 pupils achieved a strong pass in English and maths.

- 58.7% of pupils who had more than 90% attendance achieved a strong pass in English and maths

- 30.7% of pupils who had less than 90% attendance achieved a strong pass in English and maths
- 3% of pupils who had less than 50% attendance achieved a strong pass in English and maths

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Attendance has been an issue of concern to the Government since 2012. The findings from the 2012 [‘Improving Attendance at School’](#) highlighted the link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had, and continues to have, an impact upon the lives of children and young people and their families. It has interrupted their development and learning and resulted in reduced opportunities for children and young people’s futures. Attending school regularly has become more challenging for some, and we know that a stable education is key to reducing the impact of the many risks that children and young people face daily.

The disruption to learning created by the closure of education providers and settings and the creation of remote learning packages was unprecedented. It is important that we work together to overcome the challenges created by the pandemic and make sure all of our children and young people are supported to return to their education and catch up on missed learning.

We know that children and young people’s emotional well-being has been affected by the lockdown periods and that, for some, feelings of isolation and reduced motivation meant returning to education was, and still is, an anxious time.

The impact of the pandemic upon attendance has meant unprecedented levels of persistent absence and overall absence. Recent publication of the whole year of attendance data 2020–2021 shows the following:

- Around 21.3% of possible sessions during the 2020/21 academic year were recorded as not attending in circumstances related to the coronavirus. This includes pupils self-isolating and shielding, including when a class or bubble was required to stay at home, and includes the period of national restrictions in the spring term of 2021, when 57.5% of sessions were recorded as not attending.
- A further 4.6% of sessions were recorded as absences in 2020/21, and this equates to over 58 million days of missed education.
- Around 12.1% of enrolments missed 10% or more possible sessions in the 2020/21 academic year.

Source: [Pupil Absence in Schools in England Academic Year 2020–2021](#)

In May 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) published [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (link: [Working together to improve school attendance](#)). The guidance is for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. There is an expectation that the guidance will be implemented fully from September 2023. Key messages outlined in the guidance are:

1. Attendance cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff or organisation – improving attendance is everyone’s business.
2. Absence from school can often be a symptom of wider issues a family is facing. Local authorities, schools and wider partners need to work together to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support.

3. Legal interventions should be a last resort and should only be used when they are likely to lead to a behavioural change. The guidance sets out expectations on schools, academies and local authorities.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

In Plymouth there are 80,400 (2021 census) children and young people aged under 25. In the 2021/22 academic year 40,526 were on roll at an educational setting (this includes all schools types and two maintained Early years settings with 141 children).

We have 98 schools in Plymouth - 1 All through School, 2 Nursery Schools, 3 Infant Schools, 2 Junior Schools, 64 Primary Schools, 18 Secondary Schools, 7 Special Schools and 1 Alternative Provision.

Nearly 100 different languages are spoken in schools by children of different backgrounds. Polish and Arabic are the most common, spoken by 385 and 143 children respectively.

Deprivation

The Income deprivation indicator affecting children index (IDACI) splits all areas in the country into 10 deciles. Plymouth is ranked 76th out of England's 354 local authority districts for its average deprivation and the extent of that deprivation across the city

Overall, of the 160 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Plymouth, 19 are amongst the top 10 per cent most deprived in England

The top 10 per cent SOAs (16 in total) with the worst index scores are largely clustered in the south western corner of Plymouth, and principally within the neighbourhoods of Stonehouse (St Peter and The Waterfront Ward), Devonport and Keyham (Devonport Ward), there is one 'outlier' SOA located in Efford

The 'least deprived' area of the city lies within Elburton and Dunstone neighbourhood (Plymstock Dunstone Ward)

ATTENDANCE IN PLYMOUTH

The DfE publish three pupil absence data releases: autumn term (published the following May); combined autumn and spring term release (published in October the following academic year) and the full year release (published in March the following academic year). These statistical releases are based on the national, statutory PLASC returns. The data in the following tables is taken from the DfE published attendance data (May '22).

Absence rate (autumn term 2021/22):

Phase	Plymouth	Statistical neighbour	National
All schools	8.2%	7.4%	6.9%
Primary	6.5%	6%	5.7%
Secondary	10.1%	8.8%	8.2%
Special	12.7%	12.7%	12.8%

Persistent absence rate as a percentage of the absent cohort (autumn term 2021/22)

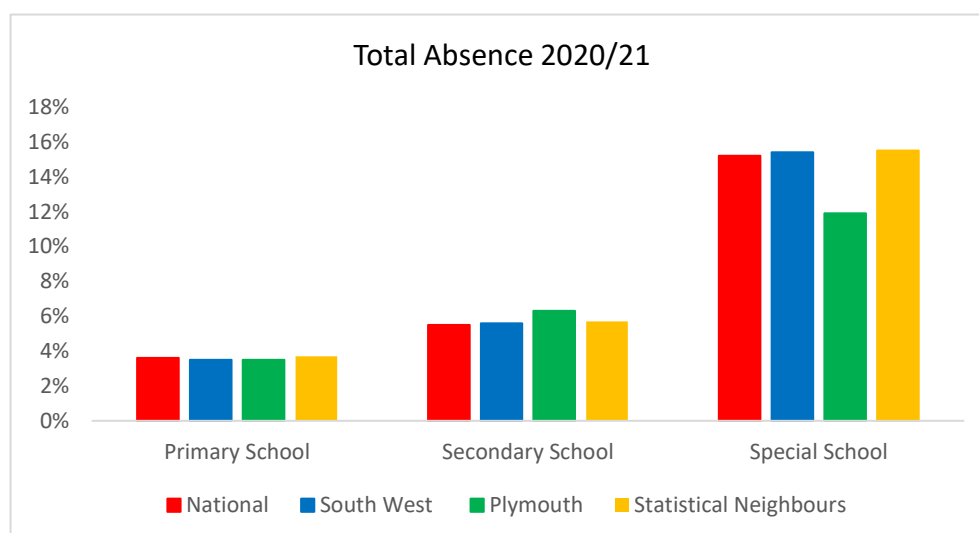
Phase	Plymouth	Statistical neighbour	National
All schools	29.8%	26.2%	23.5%
Primary	24.1%	21.4%	19.5%
Secondary	35.7%	31.2%	27.7%
Special	45.6%	39.1%	39.4%

In all categories, apart from the attendance rate in special schools, Plymouth rates of absence and persistent absence sit above the national and statistical neighbour benchmarks. It is vital that all partners and stakeholders understand the drivers of poor attendance as a means to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Total absence by phase

In 2020/21 absence was higher for children and young people in the secondary phase of education (6.3%) compared to the primary phase (3.5%). The absence rate of 3.5% for our primary aged children was below national average (3.6%), the South West (3.5%) and our statistical neighbours (3.7%). Our secondary phase absence rate of 6.3% was below the national average (5.5%), the South West (5.6%) and our statistical neighbours (5.7%). The absence rate of children and young people in our Plymouth special schools was higher than their mainstream peers at 11.9%. This was below national (15.2%), the South West (15.4%) and our statistical neighbours (15.5%). See chart 1.1 below.

Chart 1.1 – Total absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by school phase.



Total absence by pupil characteristics (See chart 1.2 below):

Both in Plymouth and nationally, the absence rate of children and young people entitled to free school meals was 7.8% compared to 3.9% for those not eligible in Plymouth and 3.7% not eligible nationally.

The absence rate for pupils within our Alternative Complementary Education (PRU) sits at 39.5%. This is above the national average (33.7%).

The absence rate of children and young people in Plymouth with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (12.8%) was lower than the national averages (13.1%).

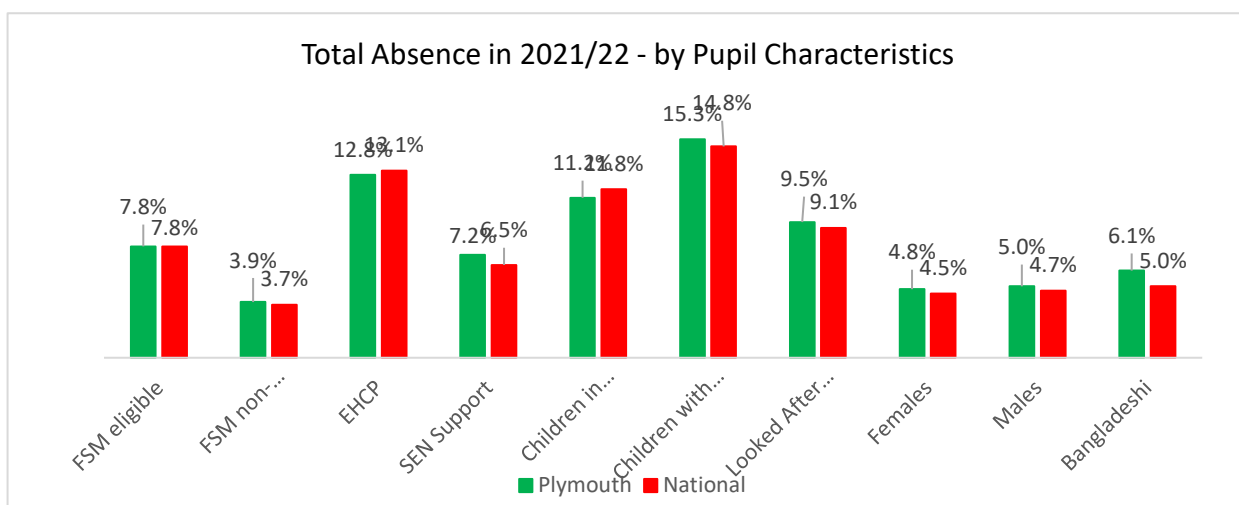
Plymouth sits above the national average for children and young people identified as SEN Support (7.2% in Plymouth compared to 6.5% nationally).

The absence rate for children in need in Plymouth (11.2%) sits below the national average (11.8%). For those children and young people with a child protection plan, Plymouth (15.3%) sits above the national average (14.8%). The total absence rates of our most vulnerable children and young people, those in care, in Plymouth (6.4%) sits above the national average (5.1%).

The absence rate for females in Plymouth (4.8%) was above the national average (4.5%) and the absence rate for males (5.0%) was above the national average (4.7%).

The absence rates for white British pupils in Plymouth (4.9%) is higher than the national average (4.6%). The absence rates for those listing ‘other ethnicity’ (4.9%) and ‘unclassified’ (6.6%) is also higher than the national averages (4.6% and 6.0% respectively).

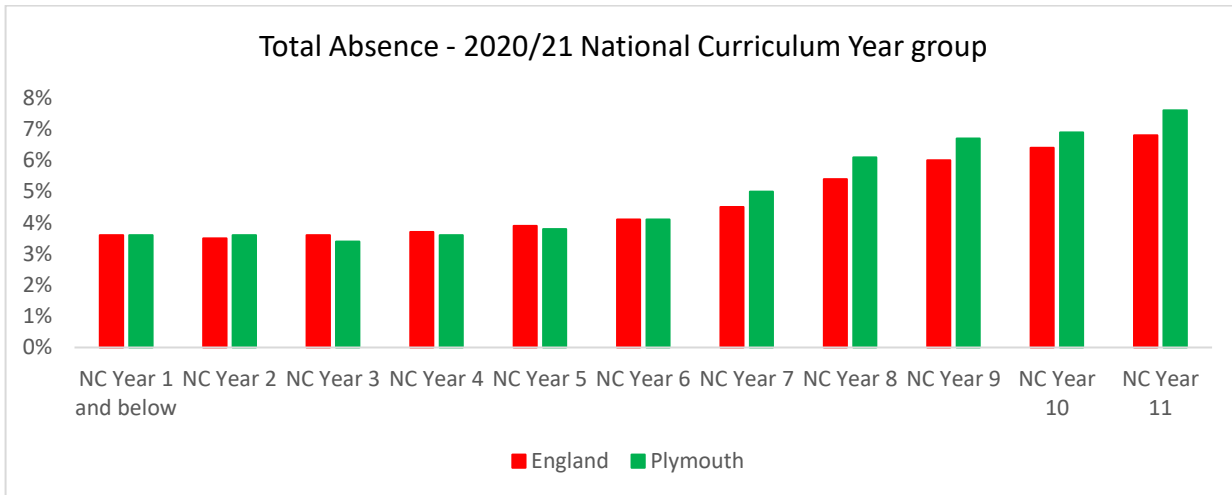
Chart 1.2 – Total absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by pupil characteristics



Total absence by year group

In the academic year 2020/21, the rate of total absence was highest in Year 11 (7.6%), followed by Year 10 (6.9%) and Year 9 (6.7%). There was a notable rise in total absence rates from Year 6 (4.1%), when Plymouth sat on par with the national average, to Year 7 (5.0%) when Plymouth sat 0.5pp above the national average. This follows national trends however the increase in Plymouth 22.0% increase is larger than the national increase of 9.8% and so transition will be a key focus in Plymouth’s attendance plan. See chart 1.3 below.

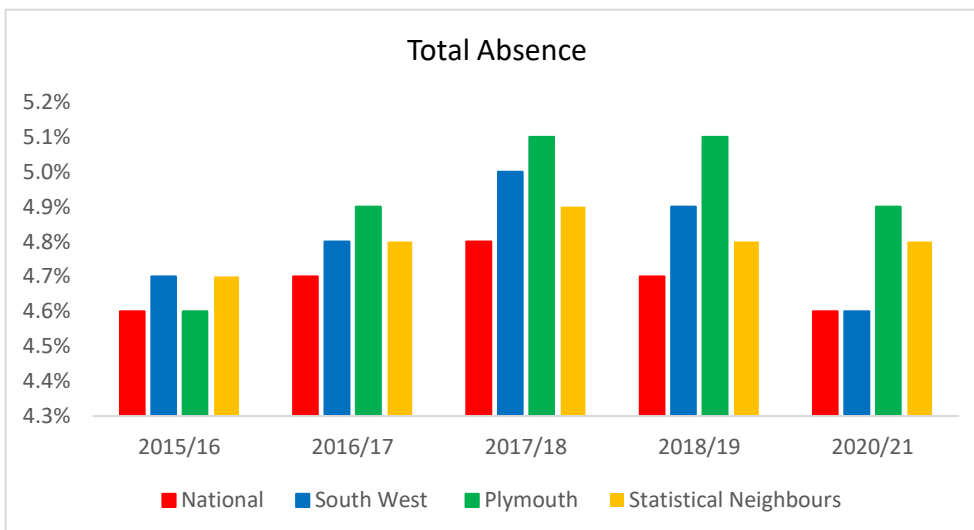
Chart 1.3 – Total absence in Plymouth 2020/21 by national curriculum year group



Total absence trend

Total absence rates improved in Plymouth from a high of 5.1% in the academic year of 2017/18 and in 2018/19 to 4.9% in 2020/21. In 2020/21 Plymouth’s absence rate was above with the national average (4.6%), South West (4.6%) and statistical neighbour (4.8%) rates. There was a decline in overall absence rates both in Plymouth (by 3.9%) and nationally (by 2.1%) following the pandemic. See chart 1.4 below.

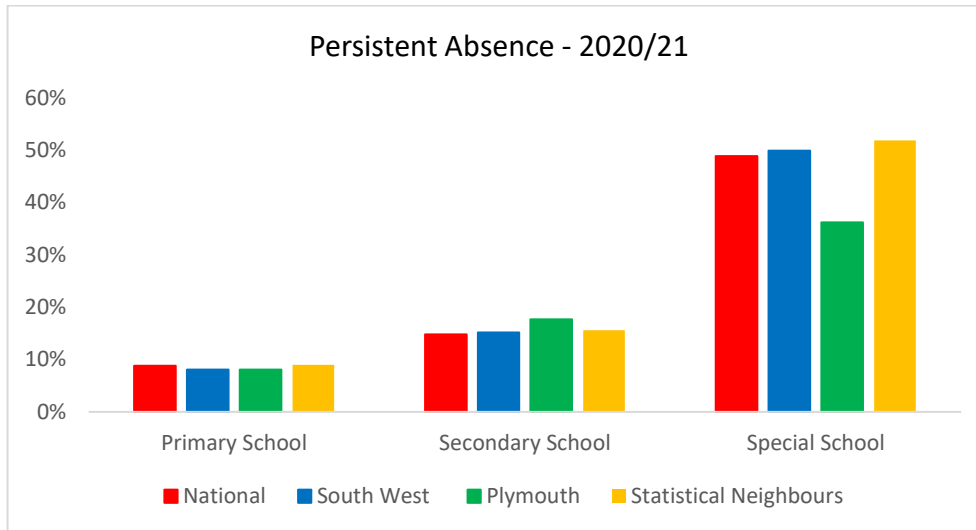
Chart 1.4 – Total Absence in Plymouth between academic years 2015/16 and 2020/21



Persistent absence by phase

The persistent absence rate of 8.1% for our primary aged children was below national average (8.8%), in line with the South West (8.1%) and below our statistical neighbours (9.0%). Our secondary phase persistent absence rate of 17.7% was above the national average (14.8%), the South West (15.2%) and our statistical neighbours (15.6%). The persistent absence rate of children and young people in our Plymouth special schools was higher than their mainstream peers at 36.2%. This was below national (48.9%), the South West (49.9%) and statistical neighbours (51.9%). See chart 1.5 below.

Chart 1.5 - Persistent absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by school phase



Persistent absence by pupil characteristics (See chart 1.6 below):

In Plymouth the persistent absence rate of children and young people entitled to free school meals was 24.7% compared to 24.4% nationally. For those not eligible in Plymouth, persistent absence rates sit at 8.8% compared to 9.3% not eligible nationally.

The persistent absence rate of children and young people in Plymouth with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (38.8%) was lower than the national average (46.2%).

Plymouth sits above the national average for children and young people identified as SEN Support (21.5% in Plymouth compared to 18.9% nationally).

The persistent absence rate for pupils within our Alternative Complementary Education (PRU) sits at 83.3%. This is above the national average (74.5%).

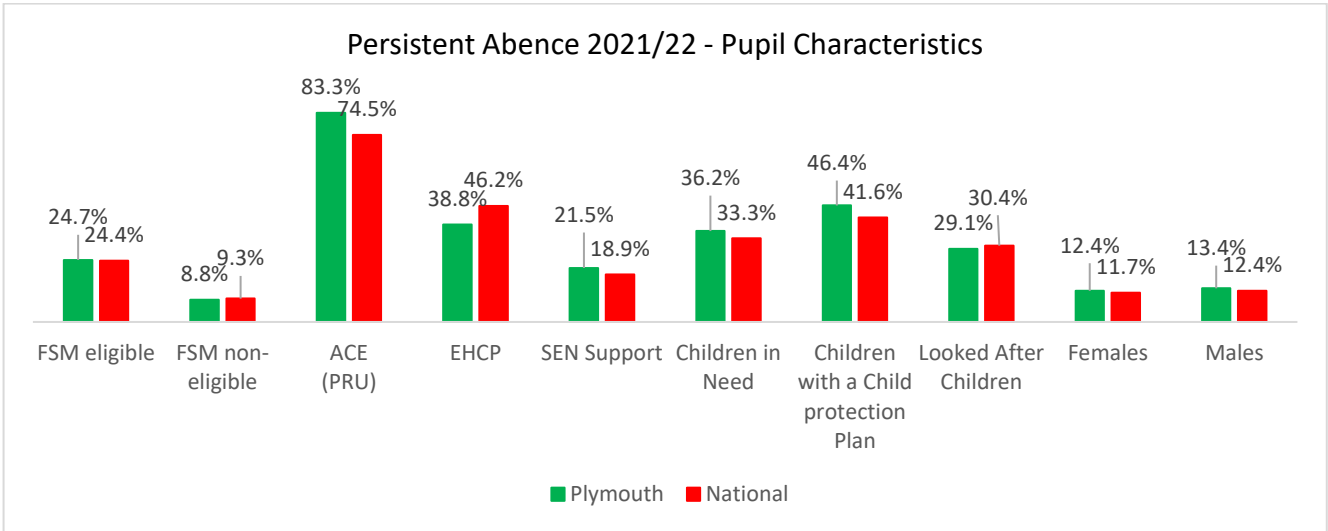
The persistent absence rate for children in need in Plymouth (36.2%) sits above the national average (33.3%). For those children and young people with a child protection plan, Plymouth (46.4%) persistent absence sits above the national average (41.6%). The persistent absence rates of our most vulnerable children and young people, those in care, in Plymouth (29.1%) sits below the national average (30.4%).

The persistent absence rate for females in Plymouth (12.4%) was above the national average (11.7%) and the persistent absence rate for males (13.4%) was above the national average (12.4%).

The persistent absence rates for white British pupils in Plymouth (13.0%) is higher than the national average (12.1%). The absence rates for those listing 'other ethnicity' (12.7%) and 'unclassified' (19.5%) is also higher than the national averages (11.6% and 18.1% respectively).

Although the cohort is small (0.5% of the Plymouth population), the persistent absence rates of Chinese pupils (4.7%) is above the national average (4.5%).

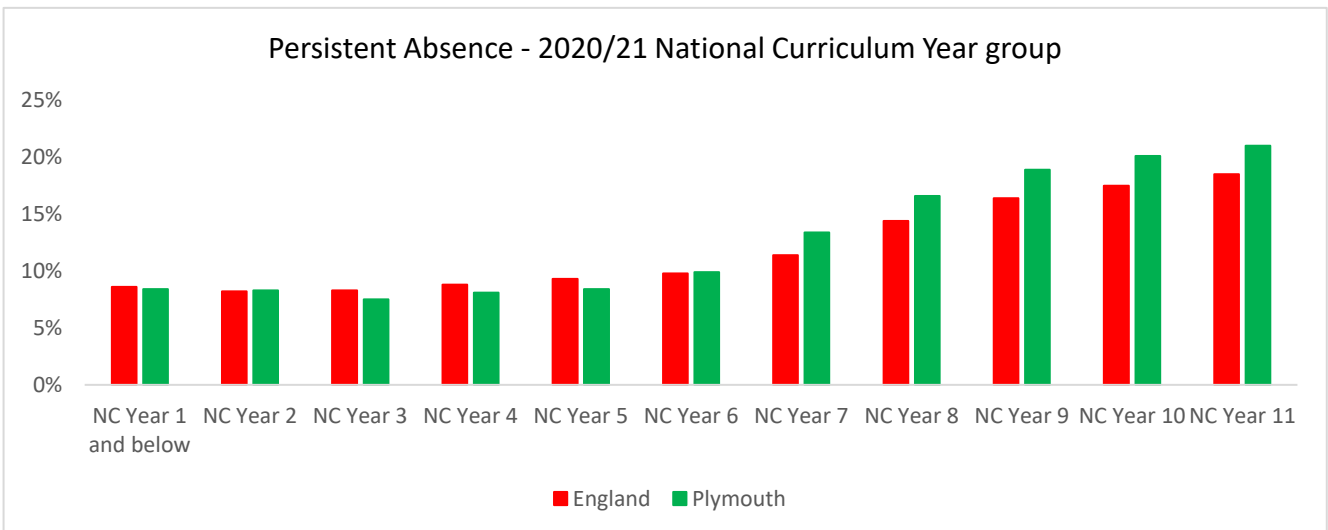
Chart 1.6 - Persistent absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by pupil characteristics



Persistent absence by year group

In the academic year 2020/21, the rate of persistent absence was highest in Year 11 (21.0%), followed by Year 10 (20.1%) and Year 9 (18.9%). There was a notable rise in persistent absence rates from Year 6 (9.9%) to Year 7 (13.4%). This follows national trends however the increase in Plymouth 35.4% increase is larger than the national increase of 17.5% and so transition will be a key focus in Plymouth’s attendance plan. See chart 1.9 below.

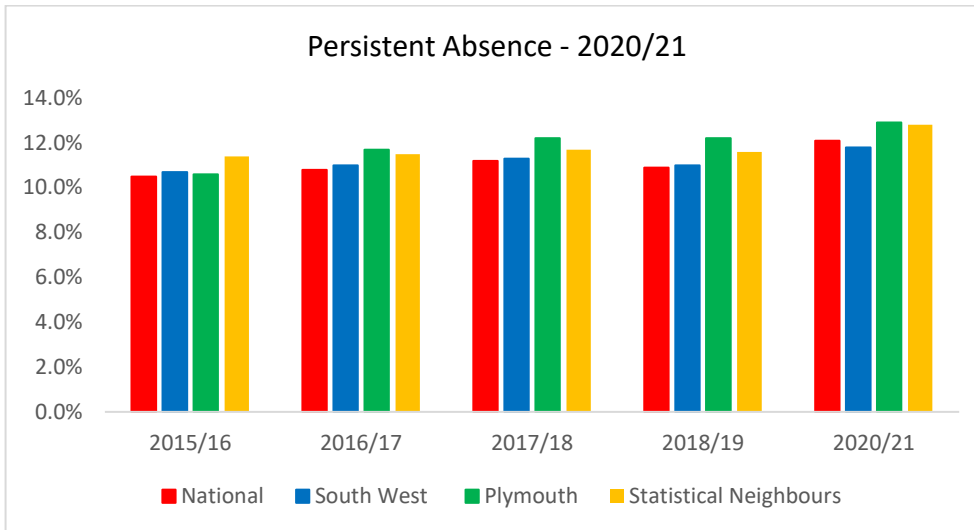
Chart 1.7 – Persistent absence in Plymouth 2020/21 by national curriculum year group



Persistent absence trend

Persistent absence in Plymouth (12.9%) was above the national (12.1%), South West (11.8%) and statistical neighbour (12.8%) averages. There was a rise in persistent absence (where a child or young person is absent for 10% or more of the time) both in Plymouth (by 5.7%) and nationally (by 11.0%) following the pandemic. See chart 1.6 below.

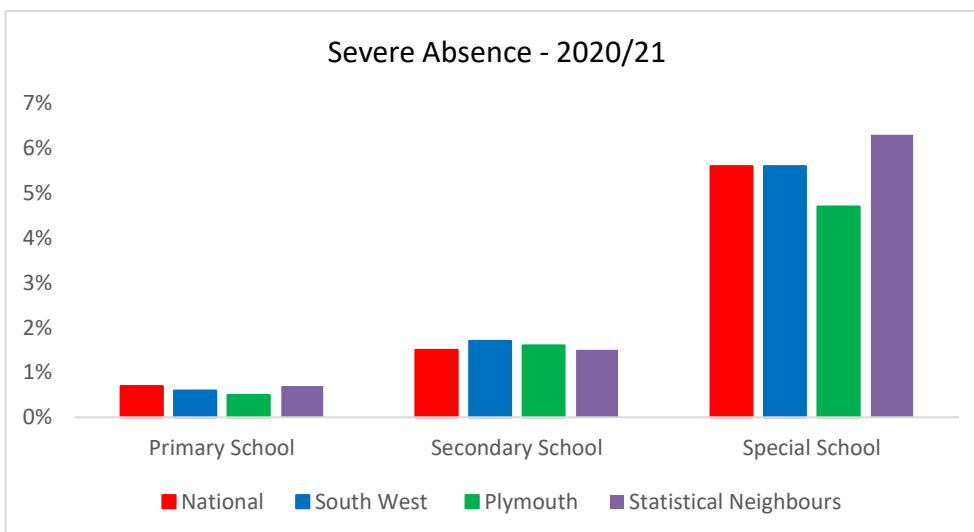
Chart 1.8 – Persistent absence in Plymouth between academic years 2015/16 and 2020/21



Severe absence by phase

The severe absence rate of 0.5% for our primary aged children was below national average (0.7%), below the South West average (0.6%) and below our statistical neighbours (0.7%). Our secondary phase severe absence rate of 1.6% was above the national average (1.5%), below the South West (1.7%) and above our statistical neighbours (1.5%). The severe absence rate of children and young people in our Plymouth special schools was higher than their mainstream peers at 4.7%. This was below national (5.6%), the South West (5.6%) and statistical neighbours (6.3%). See chart 1.11 below.

Chart 1.9 – Severe absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by school phase

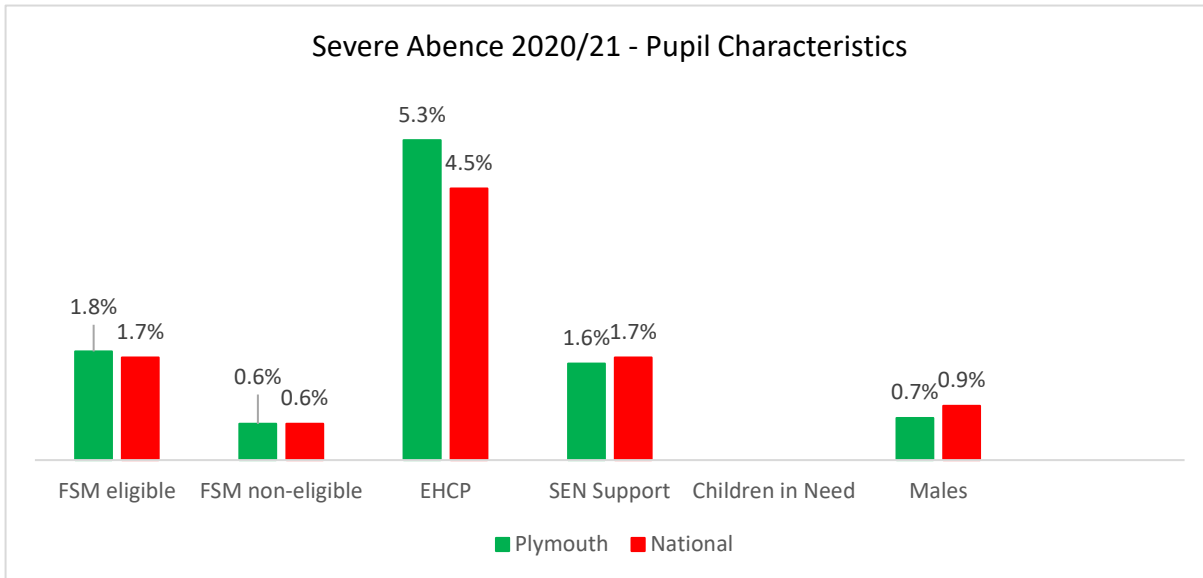


Severe absence by pupil characteristics (See chart 1.10 below):

- In Plymouth the severe absence rate of children and young people entitled to free school meals was 1.8% compared to 1.7% nationally. For those not eligible in Plymouth and nationally, severe absence rates sit at 0.6%.
- The severe absence rate for pupils within our Alternative Complementary Education (PRU) sits at 32.8%. This is above the national average (27.8%).
- The severe absence rate of children and young people in Plymouth with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (5.3%) was higher than the national average (4.5%).

- Plymouth sits below the national average for children and young people identified as SEN Support (1.6% in Plymouth compared to 1.7% nationally).
- The severe absence rate for females in Plymouth (0.5%) was below the national average (0.8%) and the absence rate for males (0.7%) was below the national average (0.9%).
- Although the cohort is small (0.5% of the Plymouth population), the severe absence rates of Chinese pupils (1.3%) is above the national average (0.6%).

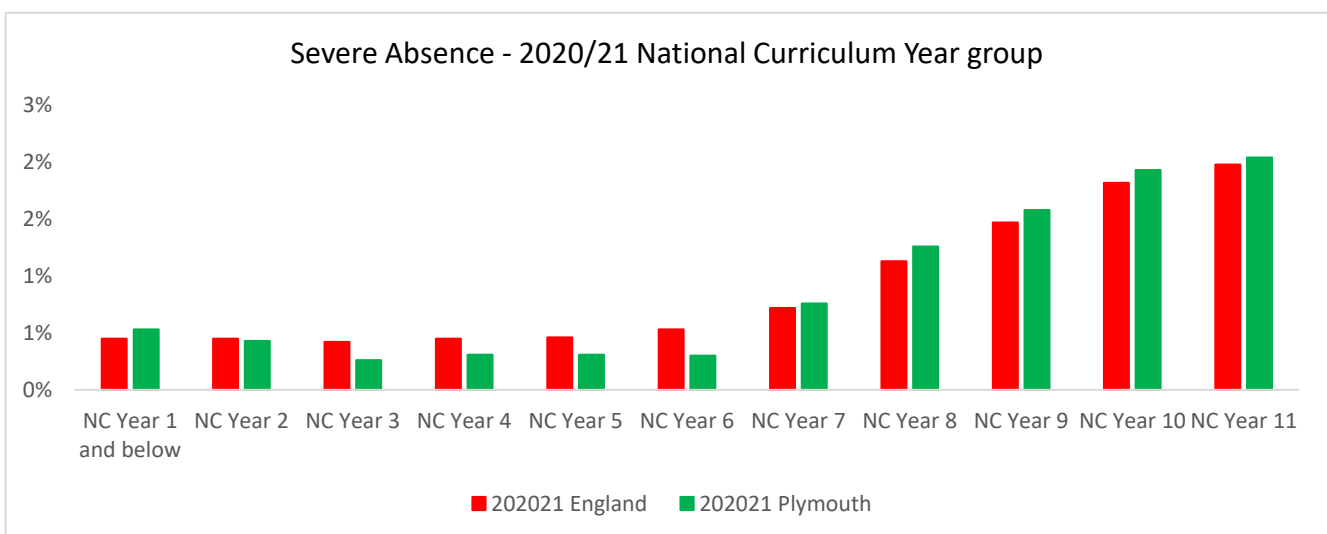
Chart I.10 – Severe absence in Plymouth in 2020/21, by pupil characteristics



Severe absence by year group

In the academic year 2020/21, the rate of severe absence was highest in Year 11 (2.0%), followed by Year 10 (1.9%) and Year 9 (1.6%). There was a significant rise in severe absence rates from Year 6 (0.3%) to Year 7 (0.8%). This follows national trends however the increase in Plymouth 166.7% increase is larger than the national increase of 40.0% and so transition will be a key focus in Plymouth’s attendance plan. See chart I.11 below.

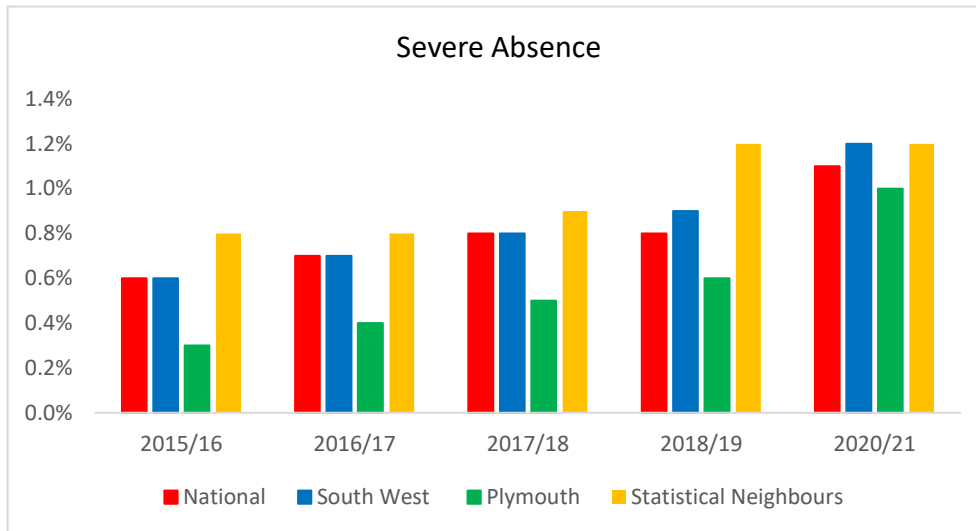
Chart I.11 – Severe absence in Plymouth 2020/21 by national curriculum year group



Severe absence trend

There was a rise in severe absence, where a child or young person is absent for more than 50% of the time, both in Plymouth (by 66.7%) and nationally (by 37.5%) following the pandemic. The severe absence rate in Plymouth in 2020/21 (1.0%) was below the national average (1.1%) and below that of the South West (1.2%) and statistical neighbours (1.2%). See chart I.10 below.

Chart I.10 - Severe absence in Plymouth between academic years 2015/16 and 2020/21



ETHNICITY AND ATTENDANCE

Table one below shows that the vast majority of pupils in England identify as white British. In Plymouth 85.6% of pupils are white British compared to 63.9% national average.

Table 1: Major Ethnicities PUPIL POPULATION	Plymouth	England
White British	85.6%	63.9%
Mixed	3.3%	6.6%
Asian	1.4%	11.8%
Black	1.2%	5.8%
Chinese	0.5%	0.6%
Other Ethnicity	6.7%	9.7%
Unclassified	1.4%	1.6%

Table 2 below shows the absence rates for each of the major ethnicities compared to the national average. In Plymouth the:

- Total absence rates of white British pupils (at 4.9%) sits above the national average (4.6%).
- Persistent absence rates for white British pupils (13.0%) sits above the national average (12.1%)
- Severe absence rates of white British pupils (1.0%) sits below the national average (1.2%)

It is also worth noting that the:

- Total and persistent absence rates of those whose ethnicity is 'other' than which falls into the categories listed, is also higher than the national averages;
- For those who have not classified their ethnicity absence rates across the board are higher than the national averages; and
- The persistent and severe absence rates of our chines pupils is above the national averages.

Table 2: Major Ethnicities Absence Rates	Total Absence		Persistent Absence		Severe Absence	
	Plymouth	England	Plymouth	England	Plymouth	England
White British	4.9%	4.6%	13.0%	12.1%	1.0%	1.2%
Mixed	4.7%	5.0%	12.1%	13.7%	1.1%	1.3%
Asian	4.1%	4.7%	7.8%	11.5%	0.5%	0.7%
Black	3.4%	3.8%	5.3%	9.4%	0.6%	0.9%
Chinese	1.9%	2.1%	4.7%	4.5%	1.3%	0.6%
Other Ethnicity	4.9%	4.6%	12.7%	11.6%	0.5%	1.2%
Unclassified	6.6%	6.0%	19.5%	18.1%	3.1%	2.6%

PLYMOUTH ATTENDANCE PRIORITIES

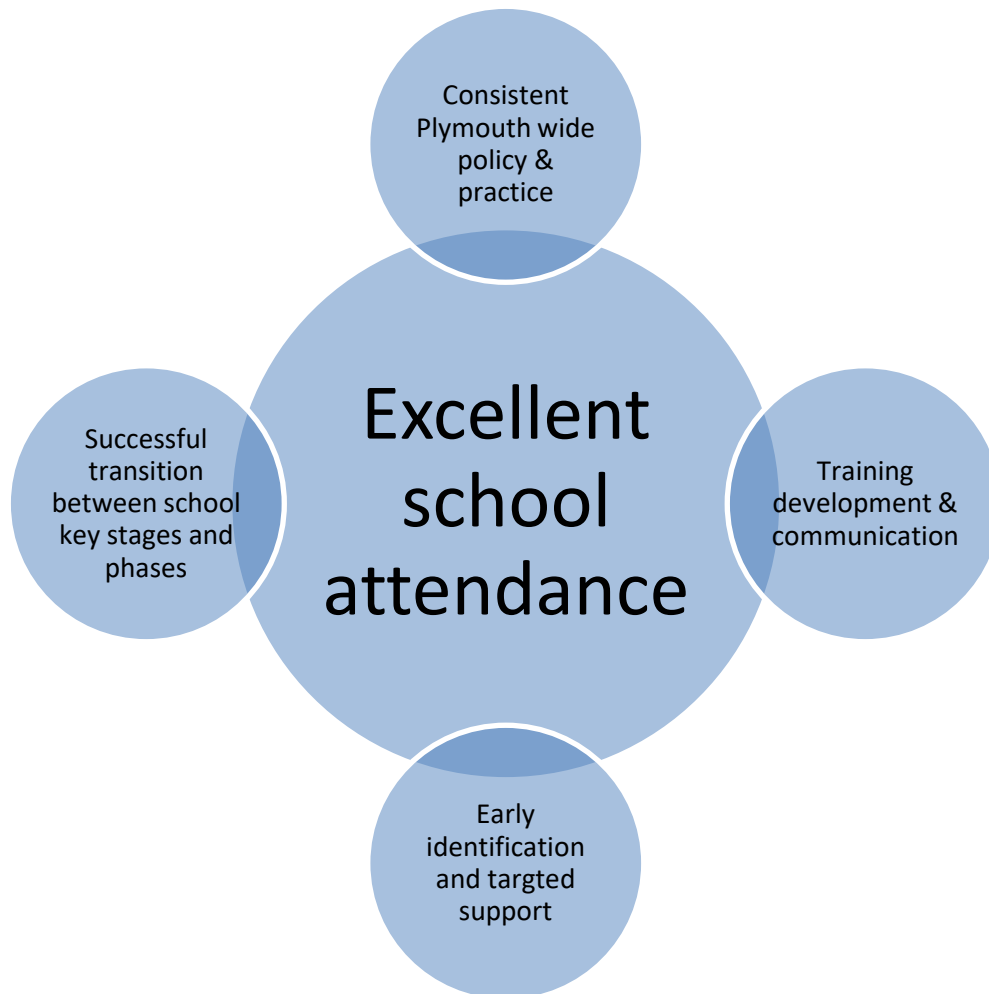
	Absent cohort	Persistently absent cohort	Severely absent cohort
SEN Support	X	X	
EHCP			X
FSM		X	X
CP plan	X	X	
CIN plan		X	
Primary to secondary transition			
Alternative provision	X	X	X
KS4	X	X	X
Year 9	X	X	X
LAC			
Year 6/7 transition		X	X

Our partnership events with schools, work with the Department for Education and the development and analysis of a robust data set has informed the key priorities for improving attendance. The priorities are:

1. Consistent Plymouth wide ambition, policy and practice
2. Knowledge sharing and communication

3. Early identification and targeted support
4. Successful transitions between school key stages and phases

These strategic priorities build on the work and progress which has taken place over the last 18 months and are designed to strengthen our understanding of promoting and securing excellent school attendance further, at pace.



PRIORITY ONE: CONSISTENT PLYMOUTH WIDE AMBITION, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Vision:

We will work with partners to ensure that attendance ambition policy and practice is applied consistently across schools and trusts in the city. In addition, securing excellent school attendance will be understood within the context of broader inclusive and ambitious practices such as an engaging curriculum, strong teaching and learning, a trauma informed behaviour policy; a commitment to reducing suspension, permanent exclusion as well as a reduction in families choosing to home educate, particularly where there are factors of vulnerability.

Outcomes:

- The Plymouth attendance policy will be embedded into practice across council services, schools, trusts and other partners
- The absence rate in Plymouth will be at least in line with the national benchmark
- The persistent absence rate of children eligible for free school meals, those known to a social worker, those with an EHC plan and those identified at SEN support are at least in line with the national benchmark
- The severe absence rate of children eligible for free school meals, those known to a social worker, those with an EHC plan and those identified at SEN support are at least in line with the national benchmark
- Absence rates for children attending alternative provision are at least in line with the national benchmark
- Robust governance systems and processes are in place to manage key local issues such as the attendance of vulnerable students and that, where appropriate, alternative delivery models are secured to meet the needs of children, families, and schools
- All schools share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners
- Each school has developed and maintained culture, policy and practice that promotes the benefits of high and ambition for attendance
- All schools accurately complete admissions and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow up when absence occurs
- All schools build strong relationships with families, seek to understand the barriers to attendance and work with families to help remove these

Priority Number	Action
PI/001	Agree, publish and circulate the 'Plymouth Attendance Policy'
PI/002	Develop a 'Plymouth Attendance and Inclusion Toolkit' so that schools leaders have appropriate advice and guidance for implementing comprehensive plans for any child falling into an absence category, subject to a reduced timetable or absent from school as a result of a health need
PI/003	An audit Children's Services quality assurance frameworks is carried out in order to ensure that school attendance features as a key theme

P1/004	Develop locality, school and trust attendance data sets in order to ensure that children who fall into an absence category, who are missing out on education or who are subject to a reduced timetable are identified at the earliest opportunity
P1/005	Attendance rates for children with an EHCP, at SEN Support and those known to a social worker are evaluated at through relevant city governance structures, for example, the SEND Strategy Board.

PRIORITY TWO: TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Vision:

Improving attendance will be everyone's business. All professionals will have access to the training and development they need to drive up rates of attendance in Plymouth schools. Children, young people, families, communities and professionals will understand the importance of school attendance to children's well-being and outcomes. The voices of our children, young people and families are through a restorative strength-based approach to communication.

Outcomes:

- City level plans, for example, the 'Place Based plan' and SEND Strategy include attendance within strategic priorities
- School and trust level plans, for example, pupil premium strategies include attendance within strategic priorities
- The drivers of declining school attendance at key transition points are understood and plans developed to mitigate risk factors
- Professionals working across the full range of services, for example, health, education and the police will have engaged with a range of professional development opportunities relating to good school attendance
- Professionals working across the full range of services understand how individual barriers to attendance, such as emotionally based school non-attendance, impact on attendance as well as strategies to support re-engagement
- Children who fall into an absence category are supported to re-engage with education through a range of opportunities that broaden horizons and foster aspiration, for example, a tailored work experience programme at KS4
- Children and families will understand the importance of good school attendance in relation to life chances, social development and safety
- All schools regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance.

Priority Number	Action
P2/001	Establish an annual multi-agency Plymouth attendance conference
P2/002	Agree, publish and circulate a multi-agency Plymouth Attendance Charter
P2/003	Attendance updates are included in Plymouth's education bulletin.

P2/004	Establish termly locality networks for designated school senior leaders in order to embed and share best practice
P2/005	Establish a three-tiered attendance training programme across schools, and multi-agency partners to embed policy and practice: Universal (for all frontline staff) Enhanced (for staff whose role is more closely linked to attendance) Specific (for those staff whose role specifically includes attendance).
P2/006	Develop and deliver training to school staff in leadership roles that relate to cohorts impacted disproportionately by low school attendance, for example, SENCOs, designated teachers and designated safeguarding leads
P2/007	Design and deliver a city-wide media campaign that promotes the importance of good school attendance
P2/008	Carry out a city-wide audit in order to map the opportunities that support children and families to engage with education
P2/009	Develop resources and training to support early years providers to encourage good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's educational journey

PRIORITY THREE: EARLY IDENTIFICATION LEADS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Vision:

Across Plymouth there is a commitment to identifying children and young people at risk of poor attendance at the earliest point so that evidence based, targeted interventions can be put in place to tackle absence before it becomes entrenched.

Outcomes:

- Attendance data sets result in timely and targeted action at individual, school trust and city levels
- Where needed, families receive a single assessment, plan, and a single lead practitioner
- Quality assurance audits demonstrate that children at risk of poor attendance are identified at the earliest point
- Quality assurance audits demonstrate that single and multi-agency working leads to improved attendance outcomes for children with specific needs, for example, emotionally based school non-attendance, young carers and speech and language needs
- Parental contracts to support improvement in attendance are used consistently as a mechanism to improve attendance rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices
- A coordinated approach from all partners ensures that significant factors affecting pupil absence are understood and acted upon
- For those children with an EHC plan, school attendance is reported through the annual review process

- City-wide coordination and intervention for children and young people with attendance below 20% secures individual improvement in attendance and also informs the development of city-wide working practices
- A multi-agency approach through localities ensures that children and families get help from the right person or service at the right time: attendance is not just seen as a school-based issue

Priority Number	Action
P1/001	Develop and embed a quality assurance processes that evaluates the impact of planning and support for children who fall into an absence category
P2/002	Develop and embed an attendance data dashboard for schools and trusts
P3/004	Establish training and development opportunities with multi-agency partners in order to develop professional practice for supporting children with specific needs, for example EBSA, speech and language.
P3/005	Work in partnership with NHS Plymouth to roll out Mental Health Support Teams in all Schools across Plymouth to meet the needs of children and young people presenting with mild to moderate mental health needs.
P3/006	Work with Young Carers Forum to improve identification of our young carers in Plymouth and the support they receive in relation to school attendance.
P3/007	Establish a model of practice for multi-agency locality working that defines the sets out principles for individual assessment and planning
P3/008	Practice guidance in relation to early help and social care is reviewed to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to the management of poor attendance

PRIORITY FOUR: CONSISTENT APPROACH TO TRANSITION

Vision:

We will ensure that transitions between phases and stages of education are strength-based and supportive. All trusts and schools will provide a warm welcome to all children, young people and their families; building strong and trusting relationships with them so that they have a sense of belonging.

Within transitions there is a robust focus on children and young people who may be at risk of poor attendance, such as children with a social worker and young carers.

Outcomes:

- The number of children subject to reduced timetables is reduced by 50% in both primary and secondary phases
- The number of children in the secondary phase who are withdrawn to home education is reduced by 70%
- The number of children missing out on education in the secondary phase is reduced by 50%

- Schools and early years settings share information so that packages of support that respond to individual needs can be put into place
- Processes for pre- and post-16 are joined up so that opportunities to ensure sustained attendance after transition from Year 11 are maximised

Priority Number	Action
P4/001	The transition strand of Plymouth's place-based plan is implemented fully and evaluated so that all children receive a tailored approach to transition
P4/002	A transition data set at city, trust and school level is developed so that the impact of strategies can be evaluated
P4/003	Plymouth's enhanced transition guidance is refreshed to include strategies and support for children with barriers to school attendance
P4/004	Transition planning for children with SEND, children known to a social worker and looked after children is reviewed in order to ensure that school attendance is a specific focus
P4/005	Plymouth's Graduated Approach to inclusion is refreshed to include strategies and support for children with barriers to school attendance
P5/006	Information about children with early indicators of vulnerability to persistent or severe absence is shared in a consistent and timely manner

HOW WE WILL MAKE SURE THIS IS DELIVERED

The progress of this strategy will be reviewed at the Plymouth Education Board and the Strategic Education Group. A quarterly progress report detailing evidence and impact of action points will be presented for each of the priority areas. This information will be presented by the Strategic Lead for attendance within Plymouth and the lead for the Place Based plan. Progress will be reported in November, April and July.

An attendance performance dashboard will be created which will focus on quantitative measures such as overall city attendance rates by absence category, rates of suspension, permanent exclusion and withdrawals to elective home education.

Evidence

All partners who have engaged in shaping strategies and services should be able to see their work within whatever is produced or undertaken. This includes detailing the contributions in service specifications, policies and procedures.

Evaluate

We will gather feedback to ensure that all stakeholders feel that their voices have been heard and that they have been able to make a difference to city planning. This will take the form of an Annual Conversation survey and a focus group for attendance.

Audit

We will also ensure that there is a clear audit trail of impact through the Multi-Agency Quality assurance processes for SEND and children's services.

REFERENCES

[Working together to improve school attendance \(DfE, September 2022\)](#)

[Plymouth's Local Offer](#)

[Plymouth's Graduated Approach to Inclusion](#)

[Plymouth Supporting School Attendance resources](#)