

Children and Young People Select Committee

Appreciative Inquiry of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

September 2024



Children and Young People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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Select Committee – Membership

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Councillor Barbara Inman (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ray Godwin
Councillor David Reynard
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Special thanks also to all the organisations and individuals who took part in the stakeholder engagement (Appendix 2).

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the final report of the Children and Young People Select Committee following its review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment.

We adopted an Appreciative Inquiry approach to the review as it was critical that all stakeholders had a meaningful input and were able to share their experience of what was working well and their ideas on how to build on that by agreeing on shared purpose and outcomes.

We were overwhelmed by the commitment from our schools and other organisations who took part in our stakeholder events and who shared so many experiences and ideas. We could not have completed this work without them.

Crucial also was capturing pupil and parent/ carer voice and this will continue to be important as we move forward to action.

Our heartfelt thanks are extended to all those who contributed to our work and to the Council officers involved, as without their constant input and hard work, this report would not have been possible.



Councillor Carol Clark
Chair



Councillor Barbara Inman
Vice Chair

Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents the outcomes of an appreciative inquiry (AI) into narrowing the gap in educational attainment.

1.2 The educational achievement gap has a huge impact on aspirations and opportunities and can feed into a cycle of other socioeconomic trends. Educational achievement, and its relationship with socioeconomic background, is one of the enduring issues in educational research. This makes it vital that we work together in a coherent and purposeful way to find out what approaches and strategies can be used to make a difference to the achievement of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, children on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) register or Children in Our Care (CIOC).

1.3 Based on the top challenges identified by Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools, the Select Committee decided to focus their work on two key factors impacting on educational attainment:

- Attendance
- Communication (vocabulary, oracy and literacy)

1.4 The work focused on exploring the following key questions within these strands:

Attendance

1. What are the barriers to attendance/reasons for absence?
2. How can absence be eliminated?
3. How can school provide a welcome and supportive school environment for pupils and their families?
4. How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

Communication

1. What are the reasons for low levels of communication/ language development?
2. What are the impacts of low levels of communication/ language development for our students?
3. How can low levels of communication/ language development (oracy, vocabulary be eliminated?
 - In early years
 - In primary
 - In secondary
4. How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

1.5 The overall aim of the project was to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.

1.6 This Appreciative Inquiry has accessed a range of stakeholders across Stockton in order to capture the varying needs of the different communities. Engagement has sought to bring stakeholders together to design:

- A shared vision for closing the gap
- An action plan informed by evidenced-based research to secure impact
- Interventions tailored to the current specific needs of Stockton schools and pupils most affected by the attainment gap.

- To secure multi-agency commitment to implement the action plan
- To secure multi-agency accountability for action taken and impact

1.7 Engagement has included:

- Pupil and Parent Voice Interviews – February 2024 (120 pupils; 40 parent/carers)
- Stakeholder Event on 8 March 2024 Attendance (50 attendees)
- Stakeholder Event on 22 March 2024 Communication (47 attendees)
- Stakeholder Workshop 15 May 2024 – Health (10 attendees)
- Digital survey (78 primary; 24 secondary; 146 parent/carer)
- Parent Carer Forum Surveys (feedback was sought from the 1800 members)

1.8 Stakeholders involved in this Appreciative Inquiry included senior leaders from a wide range of schools, services and agencies:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Further Education Colleges
- Pupil Referral Units
- Parent Carer Forum
- Local Authority representatives from: Safeguarding; Education; Inclusion; Health Education and Wellbeing; Early Support; Early Help; SEND; Mental Health Support; Careers; Virtual School; Attendance; Community Engagement; Legal; Culture and Libraries
- Public Health
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE): local and regional

Headline Feedback – Stakeholder Engagement

- Importance of communication and positive relationships
- Need to understand pressures on families
- Importance of partnership and community support
- Need to listen to the child’s and parent’s voice
- The importance of teaching and support tailored to the needs of the individual child
- Need to provide opportunities for social interaction and the development of speaking and listening skills
- Promote the importance of reading
- Design a curriculum meaningful for all children
- Celebrate achievement

Headline Feedback – Pupil Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Impact of caring responsibilities
- Impact of technology
- Need to manage own feelings
- Value of celebration and reward
- Value of after school clubs

Headline Feedback – Parent Carer Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Value of good transitions
- Importance of strong communication
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on behaviour
- Ambition and aspiration
- Value of multi-agency support

Conclusion

1.8 Significant efforts are being made to narrow the gap in educational attainment across schools and services within the local authority and wider services across the region, including the voluntary and charity sector. Our findings have established that sometimes these approaches are not coherently focused and may not fully meet the individual needs of our children and their families. This appreciative inquiry, through the voices of our children and their families, has been instrumental in helping to fine-tune these strategies and securing buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders to implement the actions identified. Ongoing future monitoring, analysis and evaluation will establish if these refreshed approaches strengthen the impact made.

Recommendations

That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council works collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to deliver the following shared objectives:

1. Improve attendance

Support schools to improve attendance:

- Encourage school leaders' use of the Attendance Self Evaluation Toolkit to identify what is working well, and areas which could be developed
- Promote an inclusive and relevant curriculum - where a young person wants to attend
- Work with the Team Around the School Service.
- Ensure that schools are equipped to deal with health issues.
- Identify individual barriers to attendance to better target support and intervention with specific reference to young carers

2. Forge positive relationships

Ensure that school culture proactively forges positive relationships between pupils, staff and parent/ carers:

- Promote respectful behaviours from all partners including teachers.
- Involve parents in school life.
- Extend opportunities for enhanced transition.

3. Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carer communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

4. Identify and support young carers

- Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.
- Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

5. Managing emotions

Strengthen environment and opportunities for pupils to manage emotions:

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme
- Design and delivery of courses to meet pupil need and support parents, with specific reference to:
 - managing behaviour effectively.
 - supporting mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels.
 - positive parenting skills.
- Strengthen the use of pupil voice to support development of school environments which better support them to manage their emotions.

6. Refine teaching strategies

Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.

7. Developing speaking and listening skills

- Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
- Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills

8. Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

9. Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

10. Enhance curriculum development

Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.

- Innovate a local curriculum.

11. Strengthen understanding of career pathways

Clarify pathways to careers early in school life:

- Design and delivery of courses to clarify current career pathways for pupils and parents, including vocational careers and options other than traditional routes.
- Employment & Training Hub to link with schools to notify parents of apprenticeships events.
- Promote aspirational/motivational approaches.
- Strengthen links between schools/parents/careers advisor.
- Share best practice regarding "careers" evenings/ events in primary and secondary schools.
- Invite parents into school who have unusual careers.
- Educate parents on opportunities post 16.

12. Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition.
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness.
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate.

13. Enhance skills to respond to special needs

Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

- Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools.
- Promote vocational opportunities.

14. Review behaviour policies

Review behaviour policies to ensure that they are appropriate and proportionate and that inclusion policies align with behaviour policies:

- What happens when a young person is removed from the classroom. Where do they go? What teaching takes place?

15. Embed and extend pastoral support

Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need.

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme.

16. Strengthen support for parent/carers to develop language and reading skills

Design and deliver courses and activities to develop reading and language skills.

- Promote Functional English Courses.
- Invite parents/ carers to support reading groups at primary school.
- Promote reading through free Enrichment/after school clubs.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of reading.
- Use school social media to help parents/carers learn
- Ensure materials are easy read/jargon free to involve parent/carers.
- Key messages being shared from antenatal contact.
- Work with Read Easy Charity - helping people learn to read.

17. Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

Introduction

2.1 This report presents the outcomes of an appreciative inquiry into narrowing the gap in educational attainment.

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Scrutiny Brief

2.3 Based on the top challenges identified by Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools, the Select Committee decided to focus their work on two key factors impacting on educational attainment:

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2.5 The overall aim of the project was to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.

2.6 The review has sought to:

- Improve identification of disadvantaged, CIOC and SEN pupils
- Better understand the issues around disadvantaged, CIOC and SEN pupils' educational outcomes including at very local level

- Identify what more can be done locally to tackle these issues
- Assess how well current policies, services and interventions address the issues and identify potential gaps
- Identify the changes needed to policies, services and interventions based on best practice, national recommendations, evidence base and data
- Establish what more should be done to provide support in early years, in particular to new mothers/families
- Review the effectiveness of the strategic and local approaches in place to tackle lower disadvantaged, CIOC and SEND outcomes
- Identify how the Council can, together with its partners, collectively respond to tackle the issues identified

Methodology

2.7 An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was adopted for the review. This approach promotes a positive mindset by:

- valuing strengths rather than focusing on deficiencies
- identifying what is valued and effective and building on that
- involving all the stakeholders to work together to agree solutions
- sharing the responsibility with all stakeholders for making the solutions happen

2.8 This strength-based approach values everyone and everything. AI values everyone's contribution and enables all participants to connect through identifying a shared purpose and outcome, communicating in a positive way together.

2.9 The Appreciative Inquiry has involved the following stages:

1. Discovery

- Identify strengths: What are the strengths of the current system? What are the strengths of the students, teachers, schools and communities that are successfully closing the attainment gap?
- Identify successes: What are some examples of successful efforts to close the attainment gap? What can we learn from these successes?
- Identify opportunities: What are the opportunities to close the attainment gap in the future? What resources and supports are available to help us achieve this goal?

2. Dream

- Envision an ideal future: What would the education system look like if the attainment gap were closed? What would be the benefits for students, teachers, schools, and society as a whole?
- Create a shared vision: Bring together stakeholders from all levels of the wider education and support systems to create a shared vision for closing the attainment gap.
- Develop a plan: Develop a plan for achieving the shared vision. The plan should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

3. Design

- Identify strategies: What are the strategies that will be most effective in closing the attainment gap? What are the evidence-based practices that have been shown to be successful
- Develop interventions: Develop interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of the students, teachers, and schools that are most affected by the attainment gap.
- Create a supportive environment: Create a supportive environment for all students, teachers, and schools. This includes providing adequate resources, creating a positive school climate, and fostering a culture of high expectations.

4. Destiny

- Implement the plan: Put the plan into action. This includes providing training and support for teachers, implementing the interventions, and monitoring progress.
- Celebrate successes: Celebrate successes along the way. This will help to maintain momentum and motivation.
- Make adjustments: Make adjustments to the plan as needed. This is an ongoing process that will require ongoing evaluation and feedback.

2.10 This Appreciative Inquiry has accessed a range of stakeholders across Stockton in order to capture the varying needs of the different communities. Engagement has sought to bring stakeholders together to design:

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- Parent Carer Forum
- Local Authority representatives from: Safeguarding; Education; Inclusion; Health Education and Wellbeing; Early Support; Early Help; SEND; Mental Health Support; Careers; Virtual School; Attendance; Community Engagement; Legal; Culture and Libraries
- Public Health
- VCSE: local and regional

2.13 Alongside engagement activity, scheduled Select Committee meetings were utilised to gather a range of related background information supporting the work.

2.14 A final workshop took place in September with a representative from each sector/ service to consider the emerging areas for recommendations and work with the Committee members to refine these into recommendations to influence strategy and identify tangible actions.

2.15 A follow-up session is planned with the same attendees within the next 12 months to seek feedback on actions to implement the recommendations and evaluation of their impact. The objectives will be to:

- identify and share action taken and impact across the full range of stakeholders.
- celebrate successes to maintain momentum and motivation.
- evaluate and take feedback on the current action plan.
- make adjustments to the action plan as necessary.

The Challenge

2.16 Educational disadvantage is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. Some of the key causes include:

2.17 **Socioeconomic status:** Socioeconomic status is one of the strongest predictors of educational attainment. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience a range of disadvantages that can negatively impact their education, such as:

- Limited access to resources: Low-income families may not be able to afford educational resources such as books, computers, or tutoring.
- Poorer health and nutrition: Children from low-income families are more likely to experience health problems and malnutrition, which can affect their ability to learn.
- Less stable home environments: Low-income families may be more likely to experience homelessness, eviction, or other forms of housing instability, which can disrupt a child's education.

2.18 Stockton-on-Tees already goes some way to showcasing why the socioeconomic gap does not always lead to poorer results. Unfortunately, the results although stronger than the majority of other North East regions, and above the national average, still demonstrate an education gap for disadvantaged students in the most socioeconomically deprived areas.

2.19 **Race and ethnicity:** Students from BME backgrounds are more likely to experience educational disadvantage than their white peers. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of representation: Students from BME Backgrounds may not see themselves reflected in the curriculum or in the teaching staff, which can make them feel like they don't belong in school.

2.20 While this is an area of increase, particularly in recent years with a growing refugee community as well as economic migrants filling gaps in the NHS and care system. Statistically this is still a small part of the education community and is less easy to define in terms of difference.

2.21 **Gender:** There are also gender gaps in educational attainment, with boys or girls outperforming the other group in certain subjects or at certain levels of education. For example, girls tend to outperform boys in reading and writing, while boys tend to outperform girls in maths and science. These gaps can be due to a number of factors, including:

- Gender stereotypes: Gender stereotypes can discourage girls from pursuing STEM fields and discourage boys from pursuing humanities fields.
- Teacher bias: Teachers may unconsciously hold biases that favour one gender over the other, which can affect their expectations of students and their teaching methods.
- Socialisation: Boys and girls are often socialised differently, which can affect their attitudes towards school and their academic performance.

2.22 While there are some excellent examples of schools creating STEM opportunities for girls or creatively tackling ‘girls into maths’ programmes; the divide is still marked and this will need a greater buy in from, home, school and businesses.

2.23 **Special education needs and disability:** Students with special education needs or disabilities are more likely to experience educational disadvantage than their peers without SEND. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of access to appropriate services: Students with SEND may not have access to the services and supports they need to succeed in school.
- Inclusion and accommodation: Schools may not be inclusive or accommodating of students with SEND, which can make it difficult for them to participate in the same activities as their peers.
- Teacher training: Teachers may not be adequately trained to identify and support students with SEND, which can lead to them falling behind in their studies.

2.24 Challenges in SEND funding mean that schools need to support more than many feel comfortable with. This leads to behaviour challenges and sometimes suspensions and exclusion. Linked to this poor attendance, often perceived by families to be anxiety, leads to poorer educational outcomes.

Challenges for Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools

2.25 An analysis of feedback from published pupil premium statements revealed the following top challenges for Stockton primary and secondary schools:

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PRIMARY Top Challenges		
Challenge	Number of primary schools (60)	%
1. Social & emotional wellbeing	50	83%
2. Attendance	44	73%
3. Cultural capital	42	70%
4. Reading	40	67%
5. Early language development	37	62%

This document was classified as OFFICIAL

SECONDARY Top Challenges

Challenge	Number of secondary schools (13)	%
1. Attendance	12	92%
2. Maths	10	77%
2. Behaviour for learning	10	77%
4. Aspiration/ careers	9	69%
4. Reading	9	69%

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2.26 The biggest increases since 2022-23 were:

- Attendance
- Communication – oracy
- Cultural Capital
- Impacts of the cost-of-living crisis

2.27 Based on the identified challenges, the Select Committee decided to focus their work attendance and communication (vocabulary, oracy and literacy).

2.28 The report set out at **Appendix 1** was reviewed by the Select Committee as part of its review and presents a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022 – 2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It is informed by the latest available data, some of which remains unvalidated and compared to national averages where they exist. It includes performance outcomes for:

- Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
- Performance by gender;
- Black and Minority Ethnic children;
- Children and Young People in Our Care ;
- Children with Special Needs;
- Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Focus on Attendance

2.29 School attendance plays a significant role in influencing the educational attainment gap. Research consistently demonstrates that pupils who miss more school tend to have lower academic achievement compared to their peers who attend school regularly. This holds true for students from all backgrounds, but the impact is particularly pronounced for those from disadvantaged groups.

2.30 Several factors contribute to the importance of school attendance for educational attainment. Firstly, pupils who miss school lose out on valuable learning time, potentially falling behind in their studies and facing difficulties catching up. Secondly, absenteeism can lead to disengagement from school and a loss of motivation to learn, creating a downward spiral of poor attendance and subpar academic performance. Thirdly, missing school can deprive pupils of essential social and emotional development opportunities, limiting their interactions with peers and teachers and increasing the likelihood of experiencing isolation and loneliness.

2.31 School attendance stands out as a key factor that can be effectively addressed through policy and intervention.

2.32 The reasons for absence / barriers to attending school can include:

Pastoral

- Transition points
- Lack of support on return from suspension, behaviour policies
- Isolation through absence/no sense of belonging
- Perceived lack of a pastoral offer
- Persistent and severe absence citing anxiety/ emotionally based school avoidance

School curriculum and process

- Academic curriculum
- Process driven approaches to absenteeism
- Delays in referring to support services resulting in entrenched absence

Multiagency

- Lack of specialist placements for SEND pupils
- Support services offer
- Resource/waiting times for specialist interventions

Absence can be reduced through:

Strong pastoral offer

- Welcoming, caring, a sense of belonging, feeling safe.
- Identifying the right support at the right time
- Embedding a relationship-based practise response

Range of support

- Multi-agency working – for example

2.33 Sanctions and consequences aren't strongly associated with improvements, the relationships with peers and teachers, and understanding the importance of school are strongly associated with improving attendance.

DfE Statutory Guidance: Working together to improve school attendance

2.34 The DfE published statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities on 29 February 2024 applying from 19 August 2024. The guidance sets out expectations on schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities who must have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance. All partners should work together to:

Expect - Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor - Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand - When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support - Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support - Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce - Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2.35 The Regional DfE Attendance Adviser provided an update on implementation to the Select Committee in April 2024 and reported on good progress in implementing the guidance by schools and Local Authorities.

2.36 The significant benefit of Targeting Support Meetings (having conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils) and multi-disciplinary support for families was highlighted.

Local Absence Data

2.37 In recent years, overall absence for all children and young people attending primary, secondary and special schools within Stockton-on-Tees has followed a similar trend to the regional and national average, with the overall absence of all children and young people increasing from 4.8% in 2018/ 2019 to 7.7% during the 2022/2023 academic year (compared to 7.4% nationally during 2022/23).

2.38 Since 2018, the proportion of persistent absences (children and young people missing 10% of education – equivalent to one day or more a fortnight over the academic year) has more than doubled. During the 2018/2019 academic year 10.8% of all children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees had persistent absence rates, increasing to 22% during the 2022/2023 academic year. These challenges are reflected in both the regional and national averages (a regional rate of 22.5% for 2022/2023 and a national rate of 21.2% for 2022/2023) for persistent absence, which have also doubled over the same time period.

2.39 The proportion of severe absence (children and young people missing more than 50% of education) in Stockton-on-Tees has also increased during this time period, from 1% in 2018/2019 to 2.4% in 2022/2023, a trend that follows our regional and national averages (2.3% regionally in 2022/2023 and 2% nationally in 2022/2023).

2.40 Within Stockton-on-Tees there are some groups who are more vulnerable to lower attendance and higher absence. These include:

- Children and young people of secondary school age
- Children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans
- Children and young people who are entitled to Free School Meals
- Children and young people who are in care
- Children and young people with a social worker
- Children and young people who receive multiple suspensions
- Girls (since 21/22)
- Children and young people of some ethnic minorities

Attendance Strategy

2.41 In 2023/24 an Attendance Strategy was developed. This will be finalised in Autumn 2024. This strategy has been co-produced by a range of internal and external agencies and includes pupil and parent voice. By forging stronger partnerships with each other, we are striving to make the changes necessary as a whole community to support our pupils to attend school regularly.

Priority 1 – Attendance is everyone’s business

- Workforce development
- Effective communication
- Understanding the value of good attendance
- Awareness and commitment to responsibilities

Priority 2 – We know what good attendance looks like

- Good quality and accurate data
- Targeting resources effectively
- Understanding attendance patterns and trends
- Identifying children and young people at risk of low attendance early

Priority 3 – Developing a culture of aspiration and engagement

- Working together in partnership with families
- Understanding the needs of families
- Attachment and trauma aware approaches
- Whole school approaches

Priority 4 – Supporting children and young people through transitions

- Understanding and responding to pupil needs
- Identifying support required
- Multi agency support
- Delivering timely support
- Sharing good practice

Understanding Attendance: ImpactEd Evaluation

2.42 ImpactEd who provide consultancy and research launched Understanding Attendance as a national project to help schools understand the drivers behind poor attendance in their setting. The project launched in Spring 2023 and early findings using survey data from over 30,000 young people and attendance data from over 200,000 pupils revealed the following key factors were having an impact on attendance in schools at a national level:

- Sense of school belonging as a key driver of attendance across all contexts.
- An emerging challenge of a ‘second transition’ from Year 7 to Year 8 that deserved greater attention
- Attendance drivers were intersectional. School leaders should avoid considering demographic factors in isolation. Female pupils who were eligible for Pupil Premium and had a special educational need were particularly likely to be low attending
- Awareness of sanctions and consequences wasn’t strongly linked to improved attendance. Understanding of the importance of school and relationships with peers and teachers were more strongly associated with attendance

2.43 Their recommendations centred on:

1. Pupil voice and pupil leadership
2. Developing positive whole-school culture around attendance
3. Making the most of wraparound opportunities

Stakeholder Feedback – Attendance

2.44 A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on 8 March 2024 to seek feedback on the key questions for the appreciative inquiry and work collaboratively on solutions. 50 stakeholders attended this session.

2.45 A list of stakeholders is attached at **Appendix 2** and all comments recorded from group discussions are reproduced at **Appendix 3**.

2.46 Key themes from the workshop discussions are set out below:

What are the barriers to attendance/ reasons for absence?

- Emotional Health
- Attitudes to School
- Cost of Living/ Poverty
- Pressures at Home
- School Organisational Issues
- Communication
- Bullying
- Health Conditions – evidence not required
- SEND

How can absence be eliminated?

- Communication and Engagement
- Relevant School Offer
- Understanding and Flexibility
- Practical Help and Support
- Partnership working – whole school/ parent/community approach

How can school provide a welcome and supportive environment for pupils and their families?

- Welcoming staff
- Good communication and relationships
- Language considerations
- School /Community Links
- Positive Culture – rewards for good behaviour and attendance
- Individual Support

How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

- Good communication
- Positive Culture
- Collaborative Working
- Events
- Building relationships with families and pupils

Focus on Communication

2.47 Early Language Development and Communication have been highlighted as a challenge within our schools. Both these challenges impact vocabulary development, oracy and literacy. As a result, pupils may find it more difficult to articulate their feelings which can result in more challenging behaviour.

2.48 The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with

adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

2.49 The size of a child's vocabulary is the best predictor of success on future tests:

- children with a poor vocabulary at five are four times more likely to struggle with reading in adulthood and three times more likely to have mental health issues.
- If a child is never read to, they will have heard about 4662 words by the age of 5. Even being read to once a week increases that to 63,570 words.
- Reading – right across the curriculum, and at home – is the key to improving vocabulary development.

2.50 If children and young people do not gain the skills to communicate effectively, this impacts:

- Directly on their ability to achieve and participate at school
- Directly and indirectly, it impacts on their ability to get or hold down a job
- Directly and indirectly, it impacts on their ability to make appropriate choices for themselves and their families
- Indirectly, it contributes to the likelihood that they will die younger.

Stakeholder Workshop - Communication

2.51 A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on 22 March 2024 to seek feedback on the key questions for the appreciative inquiry and work collaboratively on solutions. 47 stakeholders attended this session.

2.52 A list of stakeholders is attached at **Appendix 2** and all comments recorded from group discussions are reproduced at **Appendix 3**.

2.53 Key themes from the workshop discussions are set out below:

What are the reasons for low level communication/ language development?

- Reading
- Changing mealtimes
- Family/ parental role
- Technology / Social Media
- Work and Caring Commitments
- Interaction and Socialising
- Resources
- SEND
- Lack of services/ community support

What are the impacts of low level communication/ language development for our students?

- Emotional and mental health issues
- Lower attainment and prospects
- Relationship and Communication Issues
- Poor health outcomes
- Additional pressure on school and agencies

How can low levels of communication/ language development be eliminated?

- Changing the curriculum
- Collaborative/ multi agency working
- Community Input
- Supporting parents
- Building understanding and relationships
- Improved monitoring of child development
- Early intervention

How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

- Clarity of roles
- Improved communication
- Funding
- Positive relationships with employers
- Flexible working
- Local curriculum, local context, local need
- Outward Facing Culture

Headline Feedback – Stakeholder Engagement

- Importance of communication and positive relationships
- Need to understand pressures on families
- Importance of partnership and community support
- Need to listen to the child's and parent's voice
- The importance of teaching and support tailored to the needs of the individual child
- Need to provide opportunities for social interaction and the development of speaking and listening skills
- Promote the importance of reading
- Design a curriculum meaningful for all children
- Celebrate achievement

Lived Experience

Pupil Voice

2.54 Pupil voice was captured in two ways: firstly by face to face group meetings in schools. Approximately 120 pupils were involved in face to face meetings from 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools from Reception to Year 11.

2.55 Pupils targeted for pupil voice were selected by the schools because they were at risk of disengaging from education; either because their attendance was low and/ or previously they had been suspended from school.

2.56 The second method of capturing pupil was via a digital questionnaire. Three questionnaires were created with multiple choice replies and was sent out to all schools, HAF providers, Youth Providers, SBC Early Help and Social Care Teams to support the response

2.57 78 primary responses were received (88% from Myton Park; 94% answered No to free school meals) and 24 secondary responses were received (42% from Hartwell School; 29% answered No to free school meals).

2.58 The questions asked were the same for each pupil voice meeting and similar questions were asked via the digital questionnaire. The questions and responses are set out at **Appendix 4**.

Key themes from Pupil Voice

- Some pupils believed teaching strategies could be refined to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage listening and strengthen understanding.
- Many pupils reported that staff who forged a positive relationship with pupils were more effective teachers. Those members of staff who had less positive relationships with pupils were less likely to engage them.
- As a result of pupil voice meetings, more young carers were identified.
- Some pupils stated that the curriculum did not engage them and would welcome more opportunities which they believed were more relevant for future employment such as development of retail, business and finance skills.
- A small but significant minority of pupils recognised that self-regulating their behaviour was a challenge and requested more opportunities in school to manage their emotions. For example access to a punch bag, kick-boxing or boxing.
- Many pupils did not engage with school clubs during lunchtime or after school, as they believed the offer did not match their needs or interests. Examples of the activities requested included: kick boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Some pupils requested more opportunities to celebrate achievements. Although these opportunities were in place in school they asked for even more of them.
- Several pupils noted that it wasn't clear to them how the curriculum would help them to secure employment and wanted clearer pathways to careers earlier on in their school journey.
- Distraction at school was cited as the main thing getting in the way of learning at primary and secondary. At primary, tiredness and hunger were the next reasons given. At secondary, anxiety and relationship with the teacher were cited with social media highlighted as a distraction at home
- At both primary and secondary, pupils felt that school did not provide the activities they were interested in
- At both primary and secondary pupils had positive aspirations for their future learning and employment

Headline Feedback – Pupil Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Impact of caring responsibilities
- Impact of technology
- Need to manage own feelings
- Value of celebration and reward
- Value of after school clubs

Parent/ Carer Voice

2.59 Parent/carer voice was captured in two ways: firstly by face to face group meetings in schools. Approximately 40 parent/ carers were involved in face to face meetings from 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools; the age of their children ranged from Reception to Year 11.

2.60 Many (but not all) parent/ carers targeted for parent/ carer voice were selected by each of the schools because their children were at risk of disengaging from education; either because their attendance was low and/ or previously they had been suspended from school.

2.61 The second method of capturing parent/ carer voice was via a digital questionnaire with multiple choice and was sent out to all schools, HAF providers, Youth Providers, SBC Early Help and Social Care Teams to support the response.

2.62 146 responses were received (10% from highest primary – Durham Lane; 8% from highest secondary – Outwood Bishopsgarth; 69% answered No to free school meals).

2.62 Finally, the Stockton Parent Carer Forum sought views from their 1800 members.

2.63 The questions asked were the same for each pupil voice meeting and similar questions were asked via the digital questionnaire and Parent/ Carer Forum questionnaire. The questions and responses for the digital survey are set out at **Appendix 5** and the questions and responses for the Parent Carer Forum questionnaire are set out **Appendix 6**.

Key themes from Parent/Carer Voice

- Many parents believed they did not have the skills to support their children's needs at home for the following:
 - to manage behaviour effectively
 - to support mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels
 - to develop language skills
- Some parents reported they didn't fully understand the range of career pathways available for their child
- Challenges regarding communication were a recurring theme between the school and parent/ carers and vice versa
- Parents highlighted the importance of individually tailored, practical and one to one learning
- Parents also commented that distractions at school and relationships with teachers sometimes got in the way of learning; home pressures and lack of time to help with school work were also highlighted

Key Themes from the Parent Carer Forum Questionnaire

How does your child learn best?

Calm environment, in a variety of ways - hands on, visually, practical, one to one and recognising that each child is an individual

What gets in the way of learning?

Noise, staff absence, large classes, poor behaviour, pressure, anxiety, needs not being met

What does a good school day look like for you?

Happy to go to school, no meltdowns, engaging

What does a bad school day look like for you?

Anxiety / refusing to attend, disruption, lack of understanding, meltdowns

What is your ambition for your child?

Survive education, happy and fulfilled, to thrive and enjoy learning

How do you link with the school? Does it work? And how could it improve?

Mixed experiences, a lot of communication by phone, email, positive references to class dojo, facebook groups, school needs to listen to parents more

How could attendance be improved?

Meeting need, removing barriers, help with anxiety and counselling, more flexibility, positive feedback, tailored support, not just focusing on the academic, listen to parents, more understanding and support

How could communications skills in children be improved?

Access to speech and language therapists, visual and practical learning, advice to parents on methods and skills, recognising technology as a communication vehicle, meeting individual needs, kindness and respect, make learning fun, more SALT visits

Parent Carer Forum - Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Survey

2.64 Parent Carer Forum feedback from their EBSA survey is reproduced at **Appendix 7**. This reveals that many parents/ carers feel that there is limited support from school with most parents having to find help themselves. There were also mixed responses about the support received and a recognition that there needed to be more understanding, awareness and support in general.

Headline Feedback – Parent Carer Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Value of good transitions
- Importance of strong communication
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on behaviour
- Ambition and aspiration
- Value of multi-agency support

Conclusion

2.65 Significant efforts are being made to narrow the gap in educational attainment across schools and services within the local authority and wider services across the region, including the voluntary and charity sector. Our findings have established that sometimes these approaches are not coherently focused and may not fully meet the individual needs of our children and their families. This appreciative inquiry, through the voices of our children and their families, has been instrumental in helping to fine-tune these strategies and securing buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders to implement the actions identified. Ongoing future monitoring, analysis and evaluation will establish if these refreshed approaches strengthen the impact made.

Recommendations

That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council works collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to deliver the following shared objectives:

1. Improve attendance

Support schools to improve attendance:

- Encourage school leaders' use of the Attendance Self Evaluation Toolkit to identify what is working well, and areas which could be developed
- Promote an inclusive and relevant curriculum - where a young person wants to attend
- Work with the Team Around the School Service.
- Ensure that schools are equipped to deal with health issues.
- Identify individual barriers to attendance to better target support and intervention with specific reference to young carers

2. Forge positive relationships

Ensure that school culture proactively forges positive relationships between pupils, staff and parent/ carers:

- Promote respectful behaviours from all partners including teachers.
- Involve parents in school life.
- Extend opportunities for enhanced transition.

3. Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carer communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

4. Identify and support young carers

- Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.
- Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

5. Managing emotions

Strengthen environment and opportunities for pupils to manage emotions:

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme
- Design and delivery of courses to meet pupil need and support parents, with specific reference to:
 - managing behaviour effectively.
 - supporting mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels.
 - positive parenting skills.
- Strengthen the use of pupil voice to support development of school environments which better support them to manage their emotions.

6. Refine teaching strategies

Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.

7. Developing speaking and listening skills

- Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
- Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills

8. Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

9. Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

10. Enhance curriculum development

Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.

- Innovate a local curriculum.

11. Strengthen understanding of career pathways

Clarify pathways to careers early in school life:

- Design and delivery of courses to clarify current career pathways for pupils and parents, including vocational careers and options other than traditional routes.
- Employment & Training Hub to link with schools to notify parents of apprenticeships events.
- Promote aspirational/motivational approaches.
- Strengthen links between schools/parents/careers advisor.
- Share best practice regarding "careers" evenings/ events in primary and secondary schools.
- Invite parents into school who have unusual careers.
- Educate parents on opportunities post 16.

12. Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition.
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness.
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate.

13. Enhance skills to respond to special needs

Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

- Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools.
- Promote vocational opportunities.

14. Review behaviour policies

Review behaviour policies to ensure that they are appropriate and proportionate and that inclusion policies align with behaviour policies:

- What happens when a young person is removed from the classroom. Where do they go? What teaching takes place?

15. Embed and extend pastoral support

Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need.

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme.

16. Strengthen support for parent/carers to develop language and reading skills

Design and deliver courses and activities to develop reading and language skills.

- Promote Functional English Courses.
- Invite parents/ carers to support reading groups at primary school.
- Promote reading through free Enrichment/after school clubs.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of reading.
- Use school social media to help parents/carers learn
- Ensure materials are easy read/jargon free to involve parent/carers.
- Key messages being shared from antenatal contact.
- Work with Read Easy Charity - helping people learn to read.

17. Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

Glossary

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
CIOC	Children in Our Care
CPP	Child Protection Plan
EBSA	Emotionally Based School Avoidance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

CABINET REPORT

Children & Young People
Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2022 – 2023 FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS



AGENDA ITEM
REPORT TO CABINET
15 FEBRUARY 2024
REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Children & Young People - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2022 – 2023 FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

The annual report on standards for vulnerable groups across the borough enables Cabinet to monitor standards and achievement and to evaluate the impact of local authority monitoring, challenge, intervention, and support.

SUMMARY

This report presents a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022 – 2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It is informed by the latest available data, some of which remains unvalidated and compared to national averages where they exist. It includes performance outcomes for:

1. Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
2. Performance by gender;
3. Black and Minority Ethnic children;
4. Children and Young People in Our Care ;
5. Children with Special Needs;
6. Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The annual report on standards for vulnerable groups across the borough enables Cabinet to monitor standards and achievement and to evaluate the impact of local authority monitoring, challenge, intervention, and support.

Recommendations

- Cabinet to note and comment as appropriate on standards and achievement across the Borough for vulnerable groups of children.
- Cabinet to note the strong overall performance of Stockton schools at both primary and secondary phases.
- Cabinet to work undertaken to further reduce educational attainment gap.

DETAIL

1. In Stockton in 2023:

- a. 9,196 of Stockton's 29,268 pupils, who are considered for Pupil Premium, are classified as disadvantaged, this is 31.4% of the cohort. **This is 4.7% higher than the national average of 26.7% (Bibliography - 1).**
- b. 26.8% of pupils in primary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). **This is 2.8% higher than the national average of 24% (2).**
- c. 26.5% of pupils in secondary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). **This is 3.8% higher than the national average of 22.7% (2).**
- d. 1.37% pupils are identified as Children in Our Care (CIOC). **This is 0.66% higher than the national average of 0.71%.**
- e. 4,028 of Stockton's 32,300 pupils are classified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support provision, this is 12.5% of the cohort. **This is 0.5% lower than the national average of 13% (1).**
- f. 1,399 of Stockton's 32,300 pupils are classified as having SEN Education Health and Care Plan provision (EHCP), this is 4.3% of the cohort. **This is 0.1% higher than the national average of 4.2% (1).**
- g. 7.5% of pupils in primary schools have a first language other than English. **This is 14.5% lower than the national average of 22% (1).**
- h. 7.0% of pupils in secondary schools have a first language other than English. **This is 11.1% lower than the national average of 22% (1).**
- i. **12% of pupils in North East are identified as long-term disadvantaged**(3). The highest percentage is in London (15%). Long-term disadvantage varies considerably across the country.
- j. Disadvantaged pupils tend to do worse than their better-off peers.
- k. Those who are disadvantaged for the longest time do worst of all.
- l. 2020/21 data (4) evidences **37.3% of children in Stockton are living in poverty**, compared to 27% in the UK. This is an increase of 11.8% points since 2014/15, compared to a UK decrease of 2% points for the same period.

DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

2. Disadvantaged Pupils in this report are defined as those in receipt of Free School Meals for the last 6 years, subject to Pupil Premium funding.

3. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. 2023 Stockton DS (Glossary Appendix 1) pupil attainment has improved compared to Stockton 2022 in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 Writing
 - b. The attainment of DS pupils in Stockton is higher than the national average for DS pupils in 7 of the 13 benchmarks across primary and secondary phases.
 - c. The Stockton 2023 DS/ National NDS gap is closing most in Early Years, compared to 2022.
 - d. All Stockton 2023 NDS primary attainment outcomes are above national average
 - e. Secondary KS4 DS (4+EM) and DS Early Years Good Level of Development ranked second against North East regional benchmarks.
 - f. Both NDS KS1 Reading and Maths at the Expected level or above ranked first against North East Regional benchmarks.
4. All the following approaches have supported these improvements:
 - a. A relentless focus on closing the educational attainment gap in all our networks including:
 - Headteacher networks
 - English Leader Networks
 - Maths Leader Network
 - Closing the Gap Clusters
 - Equalities Networks
 - Early Years Networks
 - Library Service.
 - Network CPD is fine-tuned to include evidence -based strategies, interventions and resources which impact positively.
 - b. Robust challenge and support to strengthen the impact on pupil outcomes via school adviser Monitoring and Evaluation Reviews and Local Development Partner visits.
 - c. Bespoke design of training programmes to support schools in reducing barriers to achievement, including Improving Educational Outcomes 5-7 programme.
 - d. Comprehensive identification of challenges which impact pupils' educational achievement for all schools across Stockton, then matching training to this need.

5. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. The Stockton 2023 DS/ NDS gap is widening compared to Stockton 2022 DS/NDS gap in most areas across primary and secondary phases.
- b. Only about 4 in 10 DS pupils at the end of KS1 have developed the reading, writing and maths knowledge and skills they need for KS2.
- c. DS KS1 attainment and KS2 progress and attainment in Reading, is a high priority.
- d. These schools largely serve more complex communities with higher percentages of pupils who are disadvantaged, SEN, English as an Additional Language or have public health and/ or social care involvement (Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection). Many pupils thus have multiple vulnerabilities. Teacher recruitment/ retention and highly mobile pupil populations are also a challenge in these schools.

GENDER

6. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. The attainment of boys in Stockton improved in 2023 compared to 2022, particularly in KS1 reading and KS2 writing.
- b. The attainment of boys in Stockton improved in 8 of the 13 benchmarks across all key phases compared to 2022.
- c. The boy/ girl gap within Stockton is closing compared to Stockton 2022 in almost all KS2 and KS4 measures.
- d. The outcomes of boys in Stockton compares favourably against national measures in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 and KS4 attainment.
- e. The outcomes of girls in Stockton compares favourably against national measures in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 (other than in Reading) at the Expected Level and KS4 attainment.
- f. The Stockton boy/ girl gap is narrower compared to the national boy/ girl gap in KS2 attainment at the Expected level, KS1-2 progress Reading and Maths and both KS4 (4+EM) and KS4 Progress 8 measures.
- g. Boys KS2 Writing at the Expected Level and above ranked first against North East regional benchmarks.
- h. Boys KS4 attainment ranked first against North East regional benchmarks
- i. Girls' attainment in Early Years and KS1 Reading and Maths at the Expected Level and above ranked first against North East regional benchmarks.

7. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT - CHALLENGES

- a. Girls reading is an area of focus in KS2. In 2023, about 1 in 4 girls at the end of KS2 had not developed the reading knowledge and skills they need for the next stage in their education.
- b. Girls KS2 Reading attainment at the Expected Level ranked eleventh against North East regional benchmarks. This is not typical in Stockton.
- c. Stockton girls KS1-2 progress is lower than national in Reading, Writing and Maths.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC CHILDREN (BME)

8. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Significant improvements for BME pupils in Early Years compared to the previous year; the BME/ WBRI gap is also closing.
- b. Both BME and WBRI groups of pupils made strong improvements in KS1 Reading compared to 2022.
- c. The 2023 BME/ WBRI gap is closing within Stockton compared to Stockton 2022 in Early Years and most KS2 measures.
- d. The Stockton 2023 BME outcomes are higher than 2023 National BME against all the benchmarks identified, other than KS1-2 progress Reading. The most positive comparison is KS4 Grade (4+EM) (+8.2%).
- e. The Stockton 2023 WBRI is higher than 2023 National WBRI against all the benchmarks identified below, other than KS1-2 progress Reading and KS4 P8(-0.11).
- f. Stockton's BME/ WBRI gap is narrower than the BME/ WBRI national gap for 5 of the 13 identified measures.

- g. Stockton BME outcomes rank first of the twelve North East local authorities for KS2 CRWM at the Expected level or above and KS4 Grade (4+EM).
- h. Stockton WBRI outcomes ranked first of the twelve North East local authorities in KS1 Maths at the Expected Level and above.

9. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

BME KS1-2 Reading progress is an area of focus

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE

10. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Children in Care in Stockton achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception is above the national figure for Children in Care (CiC) nationally
- b. All outcomes at Key Stage 1 are in line with or above the national figure for CiC nationally
- c. All outcomes at Key Stage 2 are well above the national figure for CiC nationally
- d. At Key Stage 4, the percentage of CIOC achieving Level 5-9 in English and Maths is above the percentage for CiC nationally. The progress 8 measure is the same for Stockton CiC and CiC nationally
- e. The data for CiC achieving Level 4-9 in English and Maths has not yet been published.
- f. At Key stage 4 (Level 5-9 in English and Maths) the gap between CIOC and all pupils nationally is variable due to the changing assessment criteria following the COVID pandemic. However, the gap in 2019 was 36.1%, the gap has narrowed this year to 30.7%.

11. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. Outcomes at GLD. Schools are reluctant to predict that children will achieve GLD at an early stage and are extremely cautious. This makes it difficult to ensure that the appropriate interventions are in place
- b. This year, progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was slightly below what we would expect however outcomes are excellent
- c. Attendance is still below pre-pandemic levels
- d. We are seeing more children struggling with the demands of school, experiencing social, emotional, and mental health difficulties.
- e. There has been a lack of educational psychologist support and we have struggled to acquire support for supply agencies

Virtual School Extended Duties for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Data available for Children in Need (CIN) and children on child protection plans (CP)

12. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Attainment and progress for CWSWs within the primary phase is typically stronger than for CWSWs nationally.
- b. CP did slightly better than CIN last year by the end of KS2 – is this due to the additional focus given by the CP process? If so, it mirrors the improved performance of CIOC last year (who performed almost as well as Stockton All pupils by the end of KS2) and suggests that an increased oversight pays dividends.

- c. Although not shown by the academic data, it is worth noting that the CWSW cohort is now much more visible due to the Vulnerable Childrens Database (VCD) and the opportunities taken this year to raise their profile. Social Care are showing a growing interest in learning more about education so that they may support CWSW better. Over the last year, we have identified and developed more opportunities for education and social care to work together, e.g., through development of CP and CIN plans.
- d. Recent work with education and social care colleagues shows that there is a clear appetite across both sectors for improving the way they work together.

13. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. CWSW still do significantly worse academically than non-CWSW (and were also significantly behind CIOC by the end of KS2).
- b. Attendance is a big issue (around 6% lower for CIN and CP than the figure for All pupils at primary; around 18% lower for CIN at secondary; around 26% lower for CP at secondary).
- c. Exclusions (both fixed term and permanent) are a big challenge. CWSW make up a disproportionate number of those suspended or permanently excluded.
- d. There appears to be a clear divide between the performance of CWSW in the primary and secondary phases. Identifying the possible reasons behind this would be complex (not least because not all factors will be school-related) but it is a challenge we should be considering.

CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS HAVING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- 14. **Overall:** In Stockton-on-Tees 16.8% of pupils have a statutory plan of SEN (EHC plan) or are receiving SEN support (previously school action and school action plus). This compares to an average of 17.3% across All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 15. **EHCPs:** Across All English authorities, the proportion of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans ranges from 1.8% to 6.6%. Stockton-on-Tees has a value of 4.3%, compared to an average of 4.4% in All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 16. **SEN Support:** For SEN support the proportion for All English authorities ranges from 5.3% to 21.8%. Stockton-on-Tees has a value of 12.5%, compared to an average of 13.0% in All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 17. **CIOC:** In Stockton-on-Tees, 25.2% of looked after children are on SEN support, compared to 26.3% in All English authorities. 27.0% of looked after children in Stockton-on-Tees have an EHC Plan, compared to 31.5% in All English authorities.
- 18. **CIN:** In All English authorities, 21.1% of Children in Need are on SEN support and 27.3% an EHC plan. In Stockton-on-Tees, 20.5% of children in need are on SEN support and 21.8% of children in need have an EHC plan.

19. **Primary Need:** In Stockton-on-Tees the most frequent primary need in **primary schools** is Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) with 33.6% of SEN pupils having this as their primary need. The second most frequent need in primary schools is Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) with 14.3% of SEN pupils having this recorded as their primary need.
20. This differs in **secondary schools** with 19.6% of SEN Students having Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) as the most frequent primary need, followed closely by SEMH with 18.9% of SEN Students having this as their primary need. In **specialist provisions** in Stockton-on-Tees this differs again with 20% of students there having MLD as their primary need followed by 19.6% with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
21. **Placement:** The majority of children with an EHCP are placed in Specialist provision (32.9%) meaning that this proportion of children will not have access to a full curriculum, therefore nor will they complete assessments in the same way that their contemporaries do. This compares with 21.9% of children with an EHCP who attend a mainstream school.
22. **Statutory Deadlines:** In Stockton-on-Tees, 95.2% were issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptional cases where LAs are allowed to exceed the 20-week time limit, compared to the All English authorities average of 55.2%. Including exceptions, 77.9% were issued within 20 weeks, compared to the All English authorities average of 52.6%. **This has placed Stockton-on-Tees in the top five councils nationally for meeting its statutory deadlines.**
23. **EHCPs - WHAT HAS WORKED WELL**
 - a. KS1 maths has increased and is now in line with national figures
 - b. KS2 Reading has increased and in line with national figures
 - c. KS2 maths has again increased and is above national figures
 - d. KS2 CRWM has increased and is in line with national figures
 - e. KS1-2 Progress in Reading has increased and is in line with national figures
 - f. KS1-2 Progress in Writing has remained the same but also remains above national figures
 - g. KS1-2 Progress in Maths has increased slightly but has remained above national figures
 - h. KS4 Grade 4+ (E+M) has increased and is above national figures
 - i. KS4 Progress 8 has increased and is now only slightly below national figures
24. All the following approaches have supported these improvements:
 - a. Caseworkers are allocated specific schools now, which means that they know their caseloads better than ever before and thus can provide greater support and challenge. Schools have been very appreciative of this change, and we will continue to build on this success. The additional gain here is that we are becoming aware sooner of children who are bubbling up the system and can put support in place faster. We have worked on developing caseworker 'ownership' of their own caseload over the year, which also links in with the new Local Area SEND Ofsted Framework, where they will meet with inspectors to discuss individual cases and face questions back from them. This work is ongoing.
 - b. This last year we have had a concerted effort to turn around Reviews in a much timelier fashion (praised by DfE who said they did not know of another LA in such a favourable position).
 - c. Greater focus on outcomes within EHCPs at each Review.

- d. We now track outcomes from EHCPs, and this informs subsequent input and involvement around reviews.

25. EHCPs - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. GLD remains consistent but below national levels
- b. KS1 Reading has fallen in line with national figures
- c. KS1 Writing remains in line with national figures
- d. KS 2 Writing remains static and slightly below national figures

26. SEN Support – WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. KS1 Reading has increased and now matches national figures
- b. KS1 Writing remains same and is in line with national figures
- c. KS1 maths has increased but is still behind national figures
- d. KS2 Reading, Writing and maths have all increased and are all above national figures
- e. KS2 CRWM is significantly above national figures
- f. KS1-2 Progress in Reading, Writing and maths have improved slightly and are in line with national figures
- g. KS4 Grade 4+ (E&M) has increased year on year and is above national figures

27. SEN Support - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

GLD has fallen slightly and the gap with national figures has increased also.

CHILDREN FROM SERVICE FAMILIES

- 28. From the DfE's Pupil Premium data based on spring 2023 schools census the total number of children from service families in Stockton was 396 pupils; 200 were registered in primary schools, 188 in secondary schools and 8 in a special school.
- 29. The number of children from service families in each primary school, including special schools, eligible for this Pupil Premium funding ranged from 0 to 17 pupils and 0 to 29 pupils for secondary schools.
- 30. According to the 2023 spring census there are 46 primary schools, 13 secondary schools and 4 special schools which have children from service families on their roll.
- 31. As cohorts in each school are very small, analysis of academic achievement and pupil need is carried out on a school-by-school basis.

32. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. We have regularly attended the Ministry of Education Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) which includes senior leadership membership from local authorities across the United Kingdom.
- b. Through this partnership a wide range of effective practice and useful resources have been signposted, then shared via our networks with school leaders and governors including:
 - o Armed Forces Covenant Duty Toolkit
 - o Thriving Lives Toolkit
 - o Family Federations links for the Army, Navy, and RAF

- CPD offers
 - Children of Service Personnel information and guidance from Oxford Local Authority
- c. In addition, we have supported MODLAP in capturing Service Children voice via promotion of the national Voice of Schools Survey across the borough.
- d. Where appropriate, school advisers challenge and support schools' leaders on the targeted support and intervention of this cohort.

33. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

34. As Children of Service Personnel cohorts are so small, securing statistically viable data is a challenge.
35. Although Closing the Gap Clusters and, when appropriate, Personal Development Networks share a variety of toolkits, resources, information and guidance, these events are not necessarily attended by the schools with higher cohorts of Children of Service Personnel on their roll.

PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

36. Context

37. The top three reasons for permanent exclusion during the academic year 2022/23 was persistent disruptive behaviour or physical abuse against adults or peers. Persistent disruptive behaviour was the biggest reason for permanent exclusion in secondary aged pupils. Physical assaults against adults was the most common reason for permanent exclusion in primary aged pupils.
38. We have continued to see permanent exclusions for a 'one off incident' where a child has breached a school's behaviour policy. Any such instances are always looked at carefully by the Local Authority and we continue to work with schools to consider alternative methods to permanent exclusion.

39. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. We have continued to have no permanent exclusions from our special schools this year.
- b. Several permanent exclusions were avoided through the vulnerable learners and placement & governance teams collaborating with schools to support, or by offering rigorous challenge at pupil disciplinary meetings for permanent exclusions.

40. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

41. Exclusions

- a. During the academic year 2022/23, Stockton received 126 permanent exclusions. 15 of these were for primary aged pupils and 111 were for secondary aged pupils.
- b. Unfortunately, this year, we have continued to see permanent exclusions of primary aged children. We continue to use our Pathway Development Centre (PDC) Model to support children in KS1 & KS2 who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of permanent exclusion and require a short-term placement within PDCs.
- c. In Stockton boys were more likely to be excluded than girls. However, we have seen a rise in the number of girls permanently excluded and at the end of the year the number of girls who were permanently excluded had risen by 50%.

- d. Stockton 2023 permanent exclusions during the academic year 2022-2023 are greater than Stockton permanent exclusions recorded during the academic year 2021-2022*.
- e. There has been an increase in exclusions both regionally and nationally, particularly in Key Stage 3. In Stockton last academic year pupils in year seven and pupils in year ten had the highest number of permanent exclusions.

42. Suspensions

- a. We have continued to see an increase in the use of suspensions within the borough since we had a full return to school at the beginning of the Autumn 2021 term.
- b. Stockton suspensions during the academic year 2022-2023 are greater than Stockton suspensions recorded during the academic year 2021-2022*.
- c. The number of days lost to learning is high and can equate to weeks, months and academic years of education lost when looking at the total.
- d. By the end of the summer term 2023 the days lost to learning in our secondary schools equate to over fifty-four academic years of learning.
- e. By the end of summer term 2023 the days lost to learning in our primary schools equate to over one and a half years of academic years of learning.

ATTENDANCE

- 43. The latest DfE published data is for autumn term 2022 and spring term 2023 combined. The information details the data for overall absence, persistent absence (more than 10% absence) and the newest category of absence known as severe absence. Severe absence is pupils who have 50% absence or more.

44. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

45. Primary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in primary schools is 5.6% and is 0.4% better than the national average of 6% absence. In comparison to local statistical data Stockton is performing better than both the regional average of 5.8% and national 6%.
- b. Persistent absence is 16% and is better than the national average of 17.3% and the regional average of 17.1%. Stockton has the lowest rate of persistent absence in the Tees Valley.
- c. Severe absence is 0.7% and is the same as the national average.

46. Secondary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in Stockton secondary schools is 9.7% ; this is better than the Tees Valley average of 10.2%
- b. Persistent absence in Stockton is 28.8%; this is better than the Tees Valley average of 29.3%.
- c. Severe absence in Stockton (3.8%) which is lower than the Tees Valley combined with 4.65% of pupils who are severe absentees.

47. Special School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Stockton special schools' overall absence is 13.1% and is marginally better than the national average of 13.2%,

- b. Persistent absence in Stockton special schools is 33.8% and is better than the national average of 39.1%. Stockton special schools perform more favourably than the regional and Tees Valley averages of 35.8% and 34.3% respectively.

48. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

Stockton has one PRU, overall absence is 40.7% which is the same as the national average 40.7% and better than the regional average of 42.9%.

49. **AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT - CHALLENGES**

50. Primary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Severe absence is 0.7%, which is higher than the regional and Tees Valley rate of 0.5%.
- b. Stockton has higher levels of severe absentees than local authorities locally and regionally combined. One hundred and twelve primary school age pupils in Stockton are severely absent having more than 50% of absence from school.

51. Secondary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in Stockton secondary schools is 9.7% and is higher than the national average of 8.7% and the regional average of 9.4%.
- b. Stockton Persistent absence of 28.8% is less favourable than both the national average of 25.2% and the regional average of 27.5%.
- c. Severe absence is 3.8% and is worse than both the national and regional levels of 3.1% and 3.6% respectively.
- d. The actual number of pupils in Stockton who fall into the severe absence category is four hundred and seventy-three secondary age pupils who have high levels of absence and missed more than half of their schooling.

52. Special School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Stockton special schools' overall absence is less favourable than the regional average of 12.8% and the Tees Valley average of 12.2%.
- b. Severe absence is 7.6% and is worse than the national, regional and Tees Valley rates of 6.1%, 6.3% and 5.9% respectively. The number of pupils in Stockton who have missed more than half of their schooling is forty-seven.

53. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. The Tees Valley combined PRU attendance average is 37.1%.
- b. Persistent absence is 96.5% and is significantly worse than the national, regional and Tees Valley averages of 81.2%, 84.4% and 84.4% respectively.
- c. Severe absence is 47.1% and is worse than the regional and Tees Valley averages of 40%, and 35.7% respectively. The number of pupils who missed more than half of their schooling in Stockton was forty-one. National data was not available.

54. WHAT WE ARE DOING TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

55. Universal

- a. More granular school level analysis of data indicates that schools serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils have tended to secure lower overall outcomes.
- b. The current Children's Services Transformation has strong potential to strengthen the targeted multi-agency support, particularly between Education, Social Care and SEN so services are more coherent and effective.
- c. A scrutiny with a focus of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment has been scoped; the scrutiny involves a robust Appreciative Inquiry. The overall aim of the project is to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.
- d. There are several schools serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils where outcomes have been more successful; these schools have been engaged to share their effective practice.
- e. Continue to identify and make visible vulnerable group cohorts.
- f. Continue to promote the need to plan strategically to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
- g. Effective practice from a range of services is shared more widely via Networks and Briefings including:
 - o Headteacher networks
 - o English Leader Networks
 - o Maths Leader Network
 - o Closing the Gap Clusters
 - o EAL and Equalities Networks
 - o Early Years Networks
 - o Personal Development Networks
 - o SENCO leadership briefings
 - o Governor Briefings
 - o Designated Teacher Termly Network Meetings
 - o Trauma Informed Practice in Stockton (TIPS) Network Meetings
- h. Networks and CPD is fine-tuned to include evidence -based strategies and interventions which impact positively on identified priorities including our Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed offer, Virtual Reality Headset training and Virtual School CPD Offer to schools, foster carers and social workers
- i. Corporate Social Responsibility Networks have been engaged aiming to recruit reading mentors from local businesses for targeted schools.
- j. The full range of challenges for our disadvantaged pupils identified by schools across the borough has been collated, analysed and shared across services.
- k. Stockton's Healthy Schools Programme multi-agency offer and accreditation is offered universally and targeted to those schools experiencing the most challenges.
- l. A comprehensive Attendance Strategy has been co-designed in collaboration with our key partners which aims to address the significant challenges we have regarding attendance. This includes promotion of more effective attendance procedures which address the barriers to attendance (rather than simply stepping through the procedures towards legal action).
- m. A strengthened, better targeted marketing and communication strategy for our training and support has been designed to share opportunities more widely across services and our schools.

56. Targeted Support and Intervention

A summary of the range of support and intervention to address these challenges is below.

a. Bespoke targeted programmes aligned to need

- Improving Educational Outcomes 5-7 with a focus on reading progress and attainment
- Leading Reading (new for 2023-24)
- 'Boost Reading' Intervention to all our CIOC in years 1 and 2 using the school led tutoring grant to fund a teacher to deliver this intervention
- Letterbox programme

b. Targeted support, monitoring and intervention

- Targeted promotion of networks, CPD and support to identified schools.
- Drop-in support for parent/ carers to ensure needs are being met early on before crisis
- Recovery premium is given directly to schools, who are using this funding to deliver individually targeted and group interventions that are monitored through the personal education plan (PEP)
- Attendance data is collected weekly and reviewed by the Virtual School fortnightly to support and challenge where necessary. There is a robust attendance procedure (detailed in the Virtual School Head Teachers Report 2022-23) that is followed and monitored.
- Weekly SENCo drop ins with key members of staff
- Virtual School monitoring cycle to identify CIOC in need of support through the Virtual School Data Dashboard and regular Virtual School meetings
- Thrive assessments
- Sensory Profiling
- GCSE English Tuition

c. Partnerships with/ between schools

- Challenge and support from our Enhanced Mainstream Supports (EMS) to other schools and settings

d. Ongoing bespoke support

- Identified via School Strategy Meetings. For example via school advisers and specialist teachers

57. COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information only; its contents cover the vulnerable group outcomes at the end of each key stage for Stockton's pupils.

58. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the report.

59. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications to the report.

60. RISK ASSESSMENT

Educational attainment is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

61. COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

This report responds to the Policy Principles in the Council Plan:

1. Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention
2. Developing strong and healthy communities
3. Creating economic prosperity.

62. CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

The details of the performance of Looked After Children will be reported to Cabinet in December when the detailed data is available.

63. CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

There has been no consultation as this report is for information only.

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Education related: YES

Background Papers: NO

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: ALL

Property: NONE

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY

AATI:	Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed
BME:	Black and Minority Ethnic pupils
CIN:	Children in Need
CIC:	Children in Care generally
CIOC:	Children in Our Care i.e. specifically Stockton Children in Care
CPD:	Curriculum Professional Development (staff training)
CWSW:	Children With a Social Worker
DCO:	Designated Clinical Officer
DSCO:	Designated Social Care Officer
DS:	Disadvantaged pupils
DS/ NDS gap:	The difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and those who are non-disadvantaged.
EAL:	English as an Additional Language
EHCP:	Education Health and Care Plan
FSM:	Free School Meals
FTE:	Fixed Term Exclusions/ Suspensions
GLD:	Good Level of Development
HMI:	Her Majesty's Inspector for Ofsted
KS:	Key Stage
	1. KS 1 and 2 – primary phase
	2. KS 3, 4 and 5 – secondary phase
NDS:	Non-disadvantaged pupils
PDC:	Pathway Development Centre
PEX:	Permanent Exclusion
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
VCD:	Vulnerable Children's Database
WBRI:	White British pupils
4+ EM:	GSCE English and Maths at Grade 4 or above

APPENDIX 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(1) NCER 2023

(2) Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) 2023

www.gov.uk/publications

(3) ***The long-term consequences of long-term disadvantage:***

Report to the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

Katie Beynon

Dave Thomson

October 2022

(4) ***New End Child Poverty Coalition Briefing: North East Child Poverty Commission***
July 2022

Appendix 2

Stakeholders Engaged in the Review

Acting Headteacher - Bowesfield Primary School
Acting Headteacher - Myton Park Primary School
Acting Headteacher - Rosebrook Primary
Adult Learning & Skills Manager - SBC
Alliance Psychology
Assistant Headteacher - Egglecliffe Secondary School
Assistant Headteacher - Our Lady & St Bede's
Assistant Headteacher - St Michael's Catholic Academy
AVP English - Abbey Hill Academy
Bader Primary
Bader Primary
Cafcass
CEO Vision Academy Learning Team
Children and Young Person Services
Children North East
Children's Services - Parent Support Tiny Tots
College Principal - Bede Sixth Form College
Community & Partnership Manager – SBC
Community Engagement Officer – SBC
Community Projects Manager – SBC
Corner House Youth Project
Deputy Head - Mill Lane Primary
Deputy Head, DSL and Attendance Lead - Whinstone Primary School
Deputy Headteacher - Junction Farm Primary School
Early Years Development Adviser - SBC
Early Years Training & Development Coordinator – SBC
Eastern Ravens Trust
Education Development Adviser - SBC
Education Welfare Officer – SBC
Employment & Training Hub Manager – SBC
Fairer Stockton on Tees - SBC
Fairfield Primary School
Family Action - Operational Manager & Service Leads
Family Hub Coordinators – SBC
Family Support Advisor and Deputy DSL - Bowesfield Primary
Food Banks / Baby Banks
General Adviser 0-11
HARROGATE AND DISTRICT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Head Teacher - Durham Lane Primary School
Headteacher - Bader Primary School
Headteacher - Kirklevington Primary
Headteacher - Layfield Primary School
Headteacher - Levendale Primary
Headteacher - The Links Primary School
Headteacher - Whitehouse Primary

Ingleby Mill Primary School
Interim Director of Children's Services
Lead Solicitor – SBC
Learning Disability & Mental Health Service Manger – SBC
Libraries Development Officer – SBC
Management Trainee - NGDP
Mental Health Support Team
NHS North East & North Cumbria
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Parent Carer Forum
Personal Development Lead - Bede Sixth Form College
Primary Senior Leader - Whinstone Primary School
Public Health Consultant – SBC
Public Health Registrar – SBC
Roseberry Primary School
Safeguarding & Welfare Lead - Whitehouse Primary
SEND IASS Officer
Service Lead - Early Support and Projects
Service Lead - School Inclusion & Vulnerable Learning
Service Lead - Virtual School/HeadTeacher
Service Lead Education 0-11
Service Lead Education and Wellbeing
Solicitor for Children's Services
St. Patrick's Catholic College
Strategic Lead - SEND
Teacher - St John the Baptist Primary School
Team Manager - Inclusion & Vulnerable Learners - SBC
Team Manager - School Support – SBC
Team Manager - SEN Support and Assessments – SBC
Team Manger – Careers – SBC
Tees Active
TVMS Manager
Vice Principal - King Edwin School
Welfare Lead - St John the Baptist Primary School

Appendix 3

Stakeholder Feedback

Attendance

What are the barriers to attendance/ reasons for absence?

- Communication
- parent wellbeing
- poor home routines
- parent/carer relationship
- young carer
- parent view of school /past experiences
- parents don't value education
- anxiety parent/child
- bullying
- child struggling academically
- Parental mental health
- parental lack of value on education
- caring responsibilities
- attachment anxiety
- SEND emotional barriers
- SEND learning environment
- bullying
- cost of living/poverty
- are parents properly signposted?
- relationships with pupils/staff and parents/staff
- rigid applications of policies
- delays/waiting lists for interventions
- illness/medical
- extended visits abroad
- impact of covid
- home issues
- parental motivation
- means of getting to school
- distance from school
- weather
- relocation to other Las (children in temp accommodation)
- SEMH issues
- avoidance (PE)
- change staff
- sleeping issues
- homework day
- school trips
- location e.g. farming rural communities
- events in religious calendar
- anxiety - general/situational/all encompassing
- caring responsibilities
- Anxiety specifically about the pressure of academic work

- recent teacher tapp survey - 50% of HTs said there had been a huge rise in absence driven by disputes with school
- generational unemployment
- sensory overwhelm
- clothing - sensory issues, cost, cleaning of uniform
- criminal exploitation
- do schools/staff understand the lived experience of their pupils?
- not valuing education (Friday's absence) (parents)
- parental influence
- SEND
- Health
- attachment
- limited capacity of small schools - recognised a little in DFE guidance but not in Stockton's attendance processes e.g. home visits can be a massive challenge for small schools and a barrier to positive relationships
- Shame
- affordability - period poverty
- affordability - bus fare
- affordability - uniform
- other responsibilities - young carer
- changes in the family
- tiredness / hungry
- if going to be late
- no incentives - parent at home/work
- structure
- curriculum
- holiday costs
- covid response "I passed"
- parent apathy
- parental mental health
- EBSA
- practical barriers/chaotic lifestyle
- work - pressure supporting family
- work - pattern, nightshifts
- motivation - organisational skills
- reward timely
- trauma/family
- problems at home
- transport issues - lack of free travel
- transport issues - pressure on families
- transport issues - safety concerns
- start/finishing times (traffic/delays)
- period poverty - high demand at food pantries etc
- school uniform/hygiene - cleaning issues (lack of products to wash clothes/uniform)
- lack of food (going without breakfast) (food poverty)

- good solid foundations in parenting skills and accessible support, available in a timely manner
- stronger relationships between and incl home & school. Built on respect, love and mutual aims. Relationship based approaches working 'with' and providing high support along with high challenge
- periods
- physical health - parent or child
- mental health - parent or child
- poverty
- care responsibilities of child for others in the home
- parents own experience of school
- transport
- bullying
- CSE/CCE/Neglect/physical abuse
- separated parents/parental conflict
- lack of equipment
- lack of prep for secondary school
- navigating the requirements of school
- fair access panel - pupils placed without support (with complex needs)
- FAP - sharing of difficult pupils across all schools
- SEN (or perceived SEN issues)
- Lack of engagement from parents
- Lack of SEN places
- Anxiety (waiting for CAMHS support or non-engagement & cases closed)
- Thresholds for referrals - attendance/social care/CIN
- parents lack of concern about absence
- alignment of holidays
- inconsistently of implementation of fines for leave of absences across schools
- Children as carers
- mental health - adults/children
- holidays - penalty notices do not work!
- parents views on the value of education
- covid - huge effect!!
- societies view of mental health
- schools are a step shop! Educators!! Not social care
- lack of funding given to schools to address attendance
- lack of parental support
- governments campaign - improving attendance is a joke!
- staffing - recruitment/support staff really difficult
- workload of educators - lack of time for TLC
- time poor parents lack of parental contact with children to nurture
- blur education/health
- weather
- mood

- school don't ask for evidence long term conditions - used as a potential excuse
- emotional wellbeing
- lack of routines/boundaries
- bullying
- breakdown between home & school
- parental experience
- parental anxieties regarding health conditions
- young carers
- school's ability to meet the children's need (SEND)
- lack of access
- digital - lack of face to face contact
- children with long term illnesses/automatic given leave of absence without medical evidence
- chaotic home life/not enough sleep/food
- looking after parents
- barriers to getting into nursery because of SEND. School not able to meet child's needs. High need funding difficult to meet criteria. Number of children with complex needs is increasing significantly
- secondary schools - worse for attendance for children with complex needs
- difficult for parents to cope with children with complex needs
- Children with medical condition automatically get authorised absence with no medical evidence needed i.e., Asthma, Diabetes. This makes it easier for the parents to keep children absent from school.
- Emotional wellbeing and anxiety – Impact of covid.
- Boundaries and routines are not always in place within the home, this can also include primary school children as they are sometimes expected to make their own way to school.
- There can be problems for parents when trying to contact the schools to report an absence.
- Children with additional needs/SEND – not all school have the facilities to cater for their needs.
- Bullying and friendship groups can have an impact on a children's emotional wellbeing.
- Breakdown of relationships between parents/carers/professionals.
- English is not always a first language for some children and parents are left unable to read information given from school.
- Travel can have an impact on absence as some children live outside of school area and some parents do not have transport to able to take their children to school.
- If children are late for school can cause anxiety.
- Some parents may not have had a good experience of school so therefore they do not value education.
- Weather permitting will deter some children from attending school.
- Some parents maybe anxious if the child has a medical condition that the school cannot manage.

- Health needs may not have been met, some children may have hospital appointments and will be absent from school the whole day rather than send and collect.
- Discussion around their home life, a child maybe worrying what is going on.

How can absence be eliminated?

- breakfast club
- school offer
- communication
- reasonable adjustments
- the night support
- communication at transition
- praise the parents
- raise the profile of school
- consider language when communicating with parents
- understanding reason on case by case basis
- implement support plan - engagement - suitability - review
- communication
- identify the trends/theories in absence
- taking time to understand
- integrated/collaborative approach
- identifying support needs early for school holidays
- reasonable adjustments
- building relationships
- talking - parent voice/child voice
- noticing patterns
- multi-agency approach
- team around the family
- clear expectations
- consistency - with adjustments when needed
- inclusivity
- looking at the bigger picture
- clear communication - planning in advance - calendar of events
- education parents on attendance
- knowing where to go to for support
- understanding pupil's home situation's
- communicate with external agencies
- annual programme/training for VCSE on what we're able to offer
- campaign from Stockton that supports schools to raise priority of attendance - including holidays
- flowchart of support available to schools
- proactive work rather than reactive support for schools
- flexible policies
- individualized approach
- more support
- alternative education

- better relationship with parents/carers
- minimise/eliminate
- pastoral systems/culture
- proactive engagement
- easier access to services
- tailoring approach/personalised
- whole staff approach
- communication with families
- making pre-loved uniforms more accessible
- reaching 'quiet' families - reluctant or busy parents and carers
- wider sharing of food provision leaflet (Catalyst newsletters, health schools)
- building relationships with children/schools
- good start to the day. Greeting at the beginning of the day
- reasonable adjustments - more often! Bespoke
- beginning earlier support under 5's
- what if we didn't count absence
- smaller secondary schools
- alignment of school holidays
- more specialist provision
- more provision for anxious pupils (support in mainstream)
- support for pupils - improvement in access to engaging activities...
spoofs access/youth clubs - so every child has access
- agencies engaging earlier to collate support pupils & parents
- early years support - from 2 years
- better working between agencies
- consistent support - step up - step down
- engagement with parents
- money/budget
- cheaper holidays - government should fine the holiday companies for excessive charges
- understanding the lived experience of the child T/TA to have time
- CPD
- changing mindset
- public health
- have illnesses/lack of appropriate intervention - antibiotics
- open and honest
- partnership working
- whole school parent/community approach
- schools excluding children could give messages that it is okay to miss school
- be child focussed
- not possible
- too many barriers to attendance for some families - parents may have complex needs and attendance is not a priority
- attitude to lateness/absence doesn't encourage attendance
- shop insisting on correct uniform
- needs pathway back to school

- early intervention to prevent absence
- whole school approach
- enhanced curriculum/alternative
- better working relationship with parents over bullying/cyber bullying
- Be open and honest, partnership working with all professionals and parent/carers.
- Support and educate parents on the importance of attending school and the value of education.
- Whole school/ parent community approach about the importance of school.
- If the child has a health appointment to take the shortest time possible and return to school afterwards.
- Adhering to policy and procedures that are in place and make sure that parents understand and to send regular key messages to remind parents.
- Support parents/carers/children/young people to make them feel more inclusive.
- Breaking down barriers to improve communication.
- Have a key person in school for the parent/CYP to link in with.
- Parents/carer need to understand the difference in GCSE/SATS grades attendance can make.

How can school provide a welcome and supportive environment for pupils and their families?

- events/open dates
- various methods of communication
- staff visibility
- conversations & relationships
- friendly front of house staff
- relationship practice
- first point of contact to be well trounced & supportive
- communication strategy with children and parents and internally in schools
- right person at the night time involved with the child
- focus on successes
- focussed peer support
- involvement of voluntary sector
- reasonable adjustments
- knowing the families
- use of family support worker
- first point of contact to be well trounced & supportive
- contact when going well as for issues
- open-door policy - build a school community
- less formal events - coffee mornings
- use of translators (EAL)
- representation models for all
- key people on the gate morning
- good staff support for wellbeing
- meet & greets

- staff out 10 mins early
- open opportunities for conversations
- reasonable adjustments
- swift response's
- good planning (timetables)
- good communication
- accessibility e.g. parents evening, leaving siblings at home?
- build relationship with pupils and parents/carers at transaction
- work with communities ABCD
- whole school approach - restorative practice
- customer first staff training - reception / meet & greet staff
- finding common ground - flexible, language
- welcoming staff
- child approach
- improving parental engagement
- having a wellbeing recognition of emotionally based causes
- understanding the demographic
- positive communications using a range of media
- increasing links with outside community - who are community leaders or leader amongst parents/carers who can help
- ask how wider family are coping/managing at parents evening
- re-evaluating school policies - detentions/behaviour
- recognising different social needs - e.g. introverts (children express emotions in different ways)
- friendly welcome & time to talk to pupils - how has morning been?
Etc
- greeting as the first opportunity each day
- reasonable adjustments
- better transition into secondary
- use of first names
- consistent staff to build relationships
- know the pupils and the families (background) for key pupils
- open door policy
- staff who are happy, valued and enjoy their job
- wellbeing of staff
- time to listen
- ethos, culture and the staff - effective leadership
- outward facing school
- great office staff
- surveys
- involving all stakeholders
- focus on extended families
- effective communication with staff, children and parents
- culture of understanding extended communities
- restorative approach
- promotion of resilience 'it's life!'
- emotional support not very accessible particularly in secondary schools

- breakfast clubs
- getting to know every family personally
- have a dialogue with parents and children find out needs and expectations
- Public Health nurse would previously attend multi agency meetings in school with professionals for children/young people who have poor attendance. Parent would be invited to these meetings.
- PHN previously invited parents into school or complete or offer a Health Needs assessment to assure all health needs and emotional needs are being met.
- Improving relationship and understanding of the importance of education.
- Continuing rewards for good attendance and behaviour.
- Whole school launch of the importance of attendance.

How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

- family days
- communication
- positive behaviour policy
- trust
- praise
- schools offering support
- being respectful to all
- individual approach
- consistency
- collaborative approach/working together
- better communication between all involved
- strength based approach
- listening/hearing each other - allowing pupils and parents to speak
- be reasonable with expectations
- active listening
- building trust
- support and signposting to other agencies, networking
- information sharing - triangulation
- time
- ensure personalisation
- use of social media - Facebook, communication
- communicating in advance - key dates
- parent role models
- regular voice - reflection and actions
- more open door welcoming events
- respectful communication - changing terminology - I notice/I wonder/I imagine
- whole school culture's - approaches need to be the same... negative conversations
- building relationships
- PSA's - in schools - whole schools cultures
- schools being more open to different ways of working

- working together
- "would this be good enough for my child?"
- child first approach
- mutual respect
- building positive relationships
- positive experiences/visits to schools
- calls to parents to praise
- working with approach
- communication - homeschooling or exclusion should be last resort
- parents/carers meeting - signposting, providing information
- increased partnership working - schools, agencies, councillors
- breaking down barriers with Academy Trusts
- Pupil voice
- mutual trust, balance and respect
- use of first names
- building connections before content
- coffee mornings linking more with parents - lunch meals with parents
- child dev training across school staff
- respect that parents are the experts in their own lives
- EPEC - empowering parents, empowering communities
- improve communication - distinguish staff between pastoral & behaviour
- sympathise, empathise... not tolerate
- inclusivity
- support school staff - manageable workloads
- face to face meetings - taf/cin meetings online not effective
- consistency in staff
- clear expectations for pupils/parent
- what will happen if
- transition - primary schools feeding accurate information prior to transition. Challenge behaviour and attendance in primary so pupils are aware of expectations in secondary
- CPD
- Community - at all levels
- effective communication
- events
- understanding lived experiences
- curriculum
- sharing vision, ethos, culture & mission statement regularly with all stakeholders
- more in school activities for parents
- cultural event for BAME families
- cooking events
- opportunities for parents to volunteer parents as mentors - helping other parents
- Gain the voice of the child and ask why they are not attending.
- School app for attendance example is the study bug.

- Open and honest partnership working with professionals/parents/carers/CYP.
- Involve the CYP in the planned meeting so that they feel supported.
- Key member of staff who the parent/carer/CYP feel comfortable.
- Regular meetings if there is any concerns regarding absence.
- School can support with transport if needed.
- Events and celebrations for good attendance.
- Involve parents/carers and update any key information.
- Young people's focus group.
- Staff training on attendance.
- Share examples of good practice from other schools and areas.
- Make school attendance a priority.
- Contact with CYP at risk and offer further support.

Communication

What are the reasons for low level communication/ language development?

- lack of interaction/engagement between parents and children (technology takes over)
- lower expectations (parents not doing as much developmental work incl. practical e.g. toileting)
- covid/lack of socialising
- changed ways of living/shift of culture
- missed/delayed health visitor and 2 year checks
- younger mobile phone use more acceptable
- dedicated family meal times less common - traditional communication
- decline in bedtime stories - traditional communication
- decline in traditional communication
- parent capacity - single parent with multiple children / working patterns
- parents with disabilities, LD or physical
- caring responsibilities
- time/ability
- 2 parent working family - long hours limits interaction
- family dinners are less prevalent
- multiple disadvantage
- first 1000 days
- pre-natal/preparing for parenthood
- online/screen time
- focussed face time with parents
- resources - physical and financial
- poverty
- school curriculum - reading/story time
- homework clubs - free vs paid
- limited talking in the home - language development
- limited talking in the home - interactions (purposeful)
- limited talking in the home - facial expressions

- COVID - learning gaps, lack of socialisation / limited interaction
- COVID - varying levels of parental involvement and/or resources (e.g. books)
- COVID - disproportionate impact on some children / gap
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - demand on services - not able to meet needs
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - long waiting lists
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - speech and language support
- Growing expectation from mainstream schools to meet need with increasing numbers/complexity of SEND - impact on progress
- Mobile phones
- lack of interaction
- role models
- too much choice - apps/Netflix
- silo viewing - no family time
- front loaded series
- family pressures - working parents
- family pressures - financial
- own space
- SEN need - s/l needs
- SEN needs - lack of comprehension
- change of family dynamic - 2 parents need to work
- change of family dynamic - working from home but not interacting with child
- rise of social media - reduce concentration span
- rise of social media - limit general knowledge and communication
- role model - what does family communication look like
- class size - opportunities to be creative
- technology
- time constraints
- lack of opportunities
- knowledge of parents/carers communication
- English not 1st language
- SEND
- poverty
- parental understanding of the importance of C&L and their role within this remit
- lack of cultural capital and experiences that aid in language development/transport limitations
- limitations in quality parental interactions with children/technology can be a barrier to this interaction/SEMH
- lack of modelling of high level vocabulary
- financial crisis /time pressures of working /"time poverty"
- time poor parents
- lack of services
- lack of family support

- front facing pushchairs
- technology
- lack of modelling
- demographic
- specific needs
- finances - experiences
- community links available
- eating together as a family - no TV no phone
- technology
- COVID - body language/masks/socialisation
- reading - books - involves other avenues e.g. news articles/sports reports
- cultural - online shopping/banking modern parents have reduced communication opportunities
- homeworking - isolation - continues into family life
- playing out - safety impedes this
- mental health - practice face to face communication
- "only" children - peer socialisation - may be good at talking to adults
- transgender - anxiety/fear of bullying
- more emphasis on physical activity - families communicating with children - not always on phones
- reading to children
- need parental engagement - parents who have low language skills themselves - need to engage in help. Difficult to get commitment of parents to engage in sickness
- lost elements of monitoring child development - health visitors - paired down service
- digital offer
- interaction (limited)
- attention (short)
- parental understanding
- parents confidence
- parental relationship with their child
- parent s reading skills
- non English speaking household - available of suitable resources

What are the impacts of low level communication/ language development for our students?

- attachment issues and sense of identity
- behaviour - due to not being able to communicate needs
- behaviour - short attention span
- lack of concentration - need quick dopamine hit
- lack of concentration - used to short inputs (videos etc)
- impacts - life changes
- impacts - relationships
- communication difficulties - lack of social skills
- communication difficulties - unable to understand body language/nuances

- communication difficulties - lower vocab level
- memory - due to lack of writing
- lower fine motor skills
- spelling and stamina in writing
- anxiety
- lower confidence - low aspirations - limited life choices into adulthood
- contextual safeguarding - organised crime/gangs
- poor school attendance/social care involvement
- high cost for statutory services
- life experiences are impacted
- ability to access the curriculum
- students less prepared for life in the wider world
- frustration - attendance
- frustration - behavioural issues
- frustration - MHWB issues - self-esteem
- frustration - MHWB issues - manifest in self-harm
- frustration - MHWB issues - low confidence - may prevent them from engaging in opportunities
- equality of access compromised
- additional pressure on schools/staff - trying to close the gap retention crisis - additional workload
- life chances potentially effected - exclusions
- life chances potentially effected - bullying - social skills less developed
- life chances potentially effected disengagement
- life chances potentially effected - impact on relationships
- attainment across curriculum
- inability to engage/concentrate at length
- lack of social interaction
- lower life expectancy
- lower attainment
- low aspiration
- quality of life and job expectations
- lack of enjoyment e.g. reading
- lack of confidence
- implications on GDP
- lack of opportunity
- lack of connection - to other people and industry
- impact on independence
- narrow choices in life
- fall behind academically
- lack of social skills
- anxiety
- embarrassment
- mental health - decline
- withdraw
- delays

- poor communication skills
- frustration which leads to conflict
- social isolation
- barrier to learning, low attainment, possible impact on future prospects
- ongoing behavioural/emotional issues
- don't necessarily have the support/expertise/funding/time to 'fix' this
- children unable to access the same curriculum as peers
- potential vulnerability/safeguarding
- in/ability to articulate own needs
- development of reasoning and understanding
- relationships
- mental health/anxiety
- aspiration
- confidence/self esteem
- restricts life chances - interviews
- lack of job readiness
- curriculum - GCSE papers = certain level of reading ability
- poor health outcomes - reading letters / appointments
- narrows opportunities
- anxiety - feeling understood or not
- anxiety - communicating when stressed
- vocational children - still exam based
- don't progress if not developing language skills - using other language skills - BSL - parity of means of communication
- impact on mental health/making friends etc. emotional health
- picking up on difficulties e.g. Dyslexia
- More likely to be a young offender
- early intervention crucial
- systemic approach - early years / junior
- late diagnosis of autism - schools need to be more proactive
- behavioural issues
- lack of awareness
- lack of confidence
- lack of life skills
- impacts on education
- friendships
- future career choices
- transition into adulthood

How can low levels of communication/ language development be eliminated?

- change prescribed curriculum - more emphasis on spoken language
- change prescribed curriculum - needs to be more flexible
- change prescribed curriculum - time to learn social skills
- shift in importance of being a parent - onus on parent
- shift in importance of being a parent - parents educated on issues in a better way

- shift in importance of being a parent - need to parent not be 'friend'
- health visitors/schools work together more closely
- increased support/input 0-5 from health visitors
- more community spaces (some school lack of pubs/community spaces) or need to book
- improved pre-natal offer to include parenting classes - peer led delivery
- stay and play/ parent/toddler groups - run in community spaces with funding support for books and toys that will develop those skills
- story sessions in libraries and community spaces - delivery where families live
- development of toy libraries
- development of games/more in community
- child poverty funds
- early years - working with parents e.g. family hubs - social support
- early years - working with parents e.g. family hubs - involvement in community
- midwife support - early intervention
- signposting to relevant agencies
- early intervention in the home
- app language rich environment
- ensure every opportunity taken to develop language e.g. I spy in the car
- collaborative structures
- building relationships and trust
- feeling safe, take a risk
- exposure to language/communication
- understand the reasons why the low levels exist
- understanding the barriers to low levels of communication
- good role models
- pre birth! Talk to bump
- baby signing classes/family hubs
- EY creating a language rich environment e.g. role model
- EY adult led open ended questions
- EY child led play
- primary/secondary - local curriculum, learning about their local town/community
- primary/secondary - time to talk!
- primary/secondary - community engagement/parents carers into schools to share
- primary/secondary - realistic expectations/aspirations
- primary/secondary - local volunteers e.g. extended family/listen to reading
- primary/secondary - raising realistic aspirations
- early identification
- better multiagency working
- more educational research on strategies to tackle this/greatest impact
- more sharing of best practice

- parenthood/new parent support. Educational outreach
- are aspects of this included in ITT
- parental engagement strategies
- is support offered as a lifelong process? Does it stop? Why?
- educational cross-phase working
- modelling
- explicit teaching
- intervention
- conversation/collaboration embedded in curriculum - progression
- high expectations
- multi agency working
- early identification of need
- In early years - sure start/church toddler groups
- In early years - free groups
- In early years - social isolation of mum
- In early years - play areas accessible to SEND
- In early years - inequalities -stay @ home / private nursery / funded places
- Primary - catering curriculum for needs of children (local)
- Primary - training volunteers to help with reading
- Primary - training for staff in different levels of communication
- Primary - training teaching assistants
- Primary - training male role models in primary
- Secondary - traffic light system to aid communication difficulties
- Secondary - local vocabulary curriculum
- teaching adults - adult vocabulary learning
- intergenerational activity?
- not able to be eliminated
- early intervention - concerning that nurseries can't offer places. Children will be Turing up at primary without language
- funding
- early years - education in antenatal period
- early years - availability of parent/child groups
- early years - signposting to resources
- early years - family hubs
- primary - smaller group activities
- primary - stronger relationships between home and school
- secondary - smaller class sizes/group sizes
- secondary - stop and read within timetable
- secondary - stronger relationships between home and school

How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

- collective understanding of clear roles - what each of us is doing
- more 'child-centred' pathways, so working towards a clear goal
- enough money for PSA and MH support/parent support
- government policy

- funding - more localised support outside school (so schools not doing everything)
- funding for schools who don't meet PP thresholds
- time
- mutual respect - there is a lack of respect for professionals
- support from media and government
- more facilitated opportunities
- not clear what each stakeholder responsible for e.g. GP providing letter around child with anxiety of what school needs to do - pressure on school businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to attend events
- businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to attend events
- businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to pick child from school
- VCSE be included on this list
- CSR work with CSR (SBC) more to build relationships with businesses and industry
- joined up events - collaboration
- looking at the skills gaps
- industries - local, national
- aspirations
- employment, training hub
- role models
- communication - move with the times
- how do parents/careers choose/prefer to comm
- does method of comm. Matter/reflect message? E.g. formal
- central office for comm? Provide consistent/prompt response?
- expect swift response
- acknowledge parental point of view and build into flexible education - support parents to support children
- reasonable adjustments and wider access to alternative genres/media (curriculum)
- more apprenticeships
- lack of opportunities post 16
- positive relationships with employers to feed children's passions
- inviting local businesses into schools
- vocational studies - cycling / animals / mechanics / hair & beauty - leads into industry and careers and increases local economy
- impartial person within schools to bridge gap between parents and education staff
- making schools available/more accessible to local communities / HAF activities, sports facilities open to community
- more funding/time allocation to do this
- flexible timings
- bringing all parties together regularly
- some informal opportunities for meeting (none threatening)
- working parties for each area of the industry
- local curriculum, local context, local need
- community groups

- incentivisation for involvement
- sharing of success/short term wins
- regular communication via a range of platforms
- community feel of school - parental engagement, parental voice
- outward facing culture
- culture of partnership
- a welcoming smile/hello/friendly face
- parent voice - two way conversation
- understanding individual family situation -don't be always punitive
- understanding individual family situation - treat parents as individuals/equal as well as children
- incentive for business/industry to get involved - can be local
- schools to ensure lines of communication are open and emails answered in a timely manner
- smaller class sizes - allowing teachers to develop better relationship with children and their parents
- volunteer readers - parents - older children
- multi agency working (signposting)
- positive updates aswell as negative updates
- work experience/career advice - primary and secondary
- exploring voice of the child (bigger emphasis)
- strengthen links between home and school so parents have a better understanding what the child will be learning

Appendix 4

Lived experiences for Pupils

- 1. How does school help you learn well?**
 - Different ways to help us learn, pictures/ visuals/ displays
 - Lots of recall
 - Trips – ideas for writing
 - Positive relationships with staff – there is no shame if we don't know something – not judgemental

- 2. Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning in school?**
 - Negative relationships with staff - Sometimes I don't feel respected
 - Talking in class – noise levels
 - Being late – sibling care
 - Internal truancy
 - Low levels of literacy
 - How does/ could school help you with this?
 - By helping us focus on what we need to learning
 - A positive relationship with the teacher – the best ones have a bit of banter - they are respectful – they listen – they manage my behaviour well – they know how to get the best out of me

- 3. Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning at home?**
 - Noise: Younger siblings falling out/ sharing a room/ wanting to play, trains going by, dogs barking, police sirens, house alarms, phone
 - Lack of sleep – use of technology, social media, particularly at weekends
 - No light – sometimes my brother turns the light off to play his game so I can't read my book
 - Chores – sometimes my mum calls me to do jobs
 - Caring responsibilities – parents – elderly relatives, pupils – with siblings
 - Lots of after school clubs
 - Gaming
 - What would help you with this?
 - A quieter place to work

- 4. What would help you stay in school more?**
 - Learning different things
 - How to handle money/ invest it
 - Key skills such as retail and business
 - More positive relationships with staff – they ask about our absence when we're off/
 - More responsibilities - being a prefect, lunchtime duties
 - Knowing more strategies to de-stress – e.g. a small room with a punch bag 'to let out my anger'
 - More fun: PE, trips, activities, lunchtime clubs, treats, activities to do during unstructured times
 - More celebration: certificates when we have done something well rewards – vouchers (Amazon/ Dominos/ Just Eat/

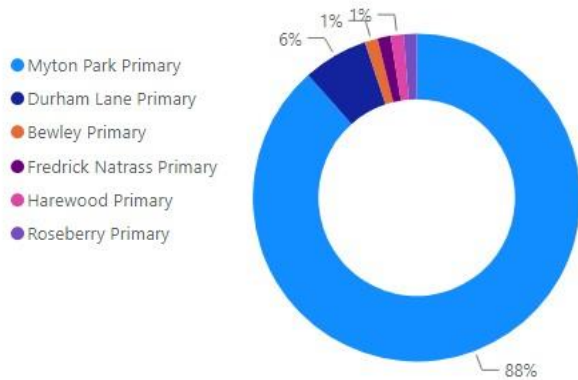
- 5. Are there any activities you would like to do in school or after school but don't happen at the moment?**
 - Boxing/ Kickboxing
 - Coding – I like computers
 - Fun things – climbing walls
 - Family events

- o Art and craft clubs
- o Cooking Clubs
- o Sports Clubs: Boxing, football, rugby, basketball, running
- o Holiday clubs
- o More engagement with Business and Industry
- o Academic clubs: Maths, (Story) Writing, English

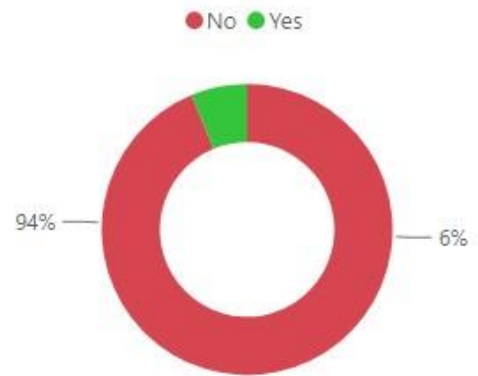
Education Survey

Primary School Responses

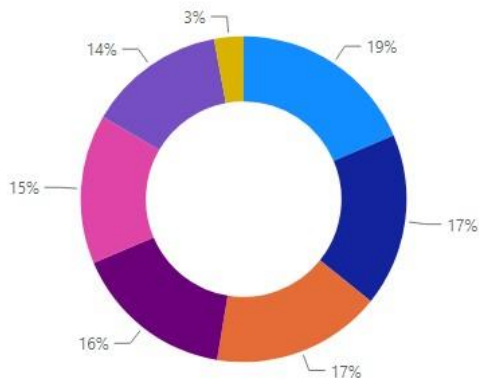
Response by School



Are you entitled to free school meals?



How does the school help you learn?



- They listen to me
- They take time to make sure I understand it
- If I don't understand they explain in other ways
- They make me feel safe
- They help me to read
- They practice my spelling
- They help me do my home work in school

Have any of these things got in the way of you learning at school?



Have any of these things got in the way of you learning at home?



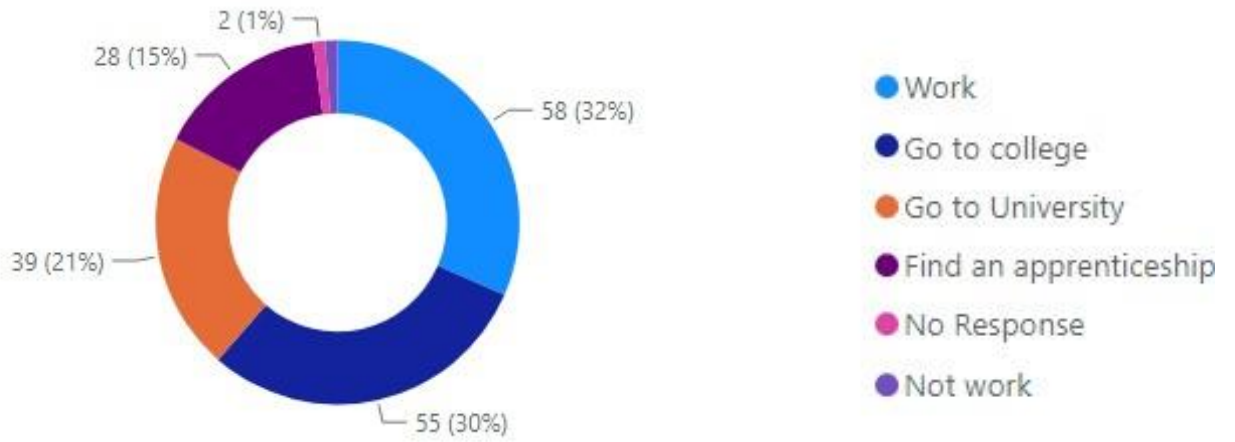
What activity would you like to do?



Why don't you do this?



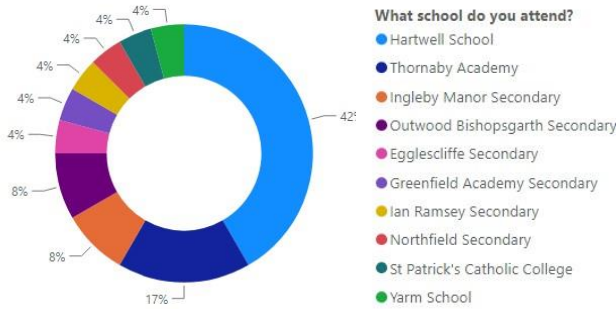
Thinking about when you are older, do you want to:



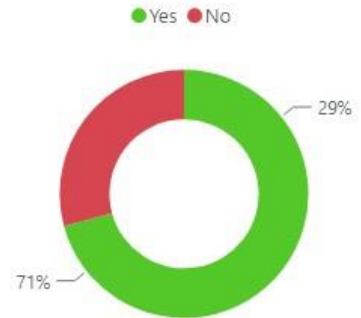
Education Survey

Secondary School Responses

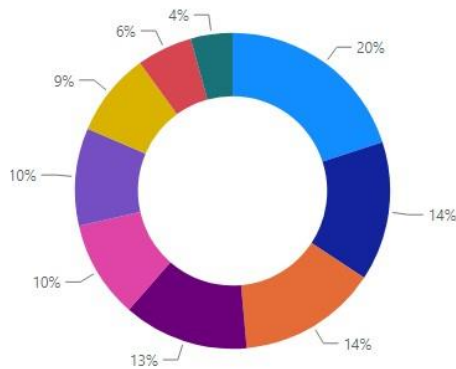
Response by school



Are you entitled to access Free School Meals

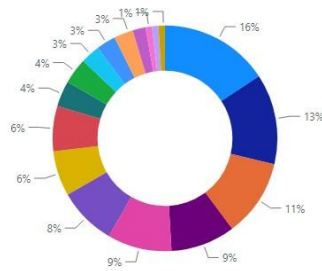


How does your school help you learn?



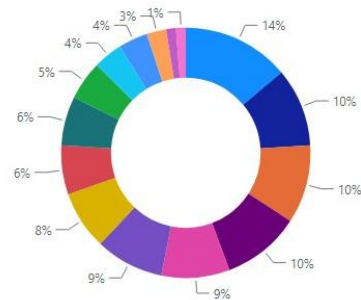
- They teach me new things
- They listen to me
- They take time to make sure I understand the work
- If I don't understand they explain in other ways
- They make me feel safe
- They motivate me to do / achieve more
- No Response
- I can stay later and use school equipment and / or space to c...
- They deal with the things I am worried about

Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning in school?



- The people in my class distract me
- Anxiety / mental health
- I am too tired to learn
- I don't like the subject or subject teacher
- Teachers don't listen / get or understand me
- I have a disability or additional learning need
- The change of teachers / classroom in each lesson
- Work is too hard
- Bullying / online bullying
- My health - physical
- I have to help look after others in my family
- Not having the correct uniform or things that I need for school

Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning at home?



- I am tired after school
- Anxiety / mental health
- I spend more time on social media (things like WhatsApp, TikTok, SnapChat, YouTube)
- I am tired before school
- I spend more time playing on games (things like PlayStations,...
- The work is too hard
- I have to help look after others in my family
- I spend more time going to activities like football, dance and ...
- The people I live with are too busy to help
- My home is too noisy

What could you do to help make this happen – in school



What could you do to help make this happen – at home?



What activity would you like to do?



Why don't you do this?



Do you plan to:



Appendix 5

Lived experiences for Parent Carers

1. How does your child learn best?

- Positive relationships with staff/ friends – praise, supported
- Calm environments – less pressure, less stress, time out quiet spaces
- Small groups
- Variety: practical activities/ play, via Apps and games, brain breaks

2. What gets in the way of their learning?

- Negative relationships with staff – teacher shouting rather than a calm voice, if it's not good he won't engage
- Negative environments– lesson is more about managing behaviours than teaching and learning, noise, distractions
- Lack of support – not enough positive feedback, teacher doesn't understand them or their individual needs
- Lack of resources – no escape, he feels overwhelmed
- Large classes
- Peer distractions
- Transitions

3. What does a 'good' school day look like for you?

- Happy - Arrive home calm and settled – continues into the evening
- No truancy
- Positive feedback and support, achievement points, good news messages, no negatives, no detentions
- Talks about learning, something has interested him
- Positive relationships with staff
- A good start to the day – get up on time, Enough sleep, no arguing over breakfast
- What does a 'bad' school day look like for you?
- Negative relationships with staff – perception teacher is getting at them, pupil has walked out of a lesson, pupil has verbally abused the teacher
- Negative feedback from school -Phone calls from school, detention, sent home
- Bad mental health – self harming, anxiety, panic attacks, lack of sleep, extremely distressed, crying, moody stressed
- Angry – verbally aggressive, withdrawn
- Refuses to attend school the next day
- Loss of hope – no point, school is worthless, won't achieve anything, won't learn anything
- A bad start to the day – getting up late

5. What is your ambition for your child?

- Happy
- High self esteem and self confidence – be better than he thinks he is
- Stay in school – go to college, Do exams - GSCSEs
- Achieves to the best of her ability
- In employment she enjoys
- Lives independently and successfully

6. How do you link with school?

- What works well?

- Regular communications: App messaging – SeeSaw/ Marvellous Me, calls and emails, teacher comments at the gate
- Events: Celebration assemblies
- Support from outside agencies
- What would be even better?
 - More support around behavioural issues, mental wellbeing,
 - Communication: between staff, pace of response, a Chat App
 - Positive feedback
 - Response to parent/ carer emails

Education Survey

Parent Carer Response

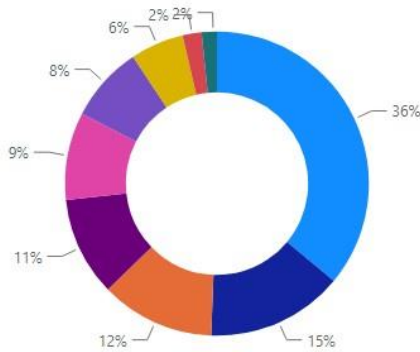
Response Rate by School



How does your child learn best?

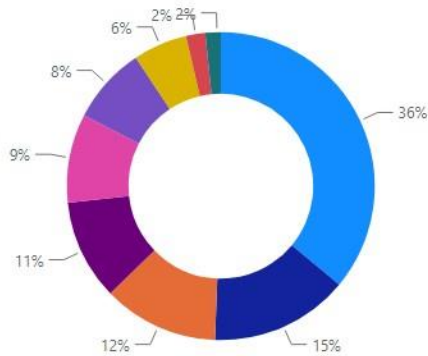


What gets in the way of their learning?



- My child gets easily distracted by others
- No Response
- My child does not like their teacher
- My child's behaviour at home is poor
- My child has friendship groups that have a negative impact o...
- My child's behaviour at school is reported to be poor
- I don't think my child's teacher likes them
- My child has friendship groups that have a negative impact o...
- I do not like my child's teacher

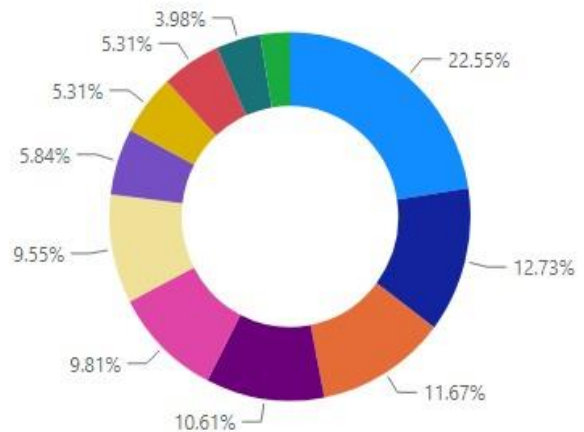
What gets in the way of their learning?



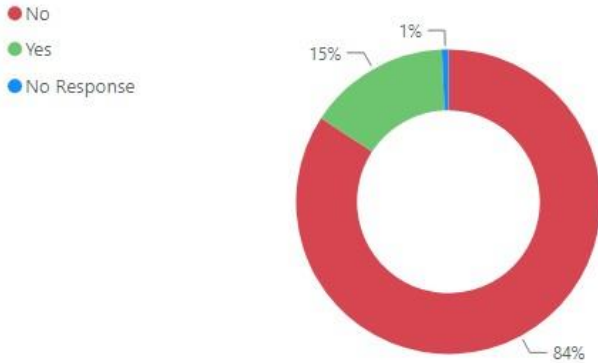
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- I do not like my child's teacher

Cost of Schooling

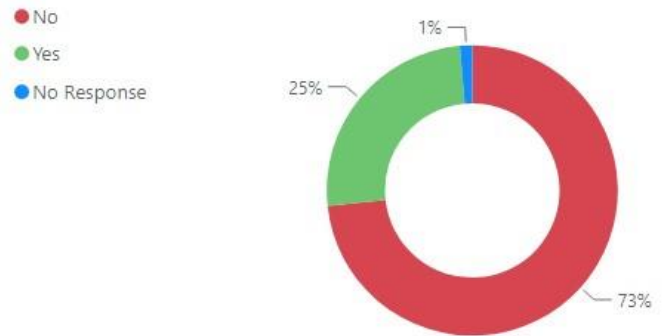
- Cost of uniform
- School meals / drinks
- Cost of school trips
- Cost of technology (including comp...
- Before and after school wrapround ...
- No Response
- Costs of voluntary donations to sch...
- Costs of materials for classes such a...
- Transport to and from school
- Cost of books and other home learn...
- Costs of general stationery and mat...



Has your child ever missed school because of one of these?



Have you ever asked for help from school with these?



Home Life:

22 % No response

20% I struggle to get my child to school/to school on time

18% There are lots of other challenges or difficult relationships at home that could get in the way of my child’s learning

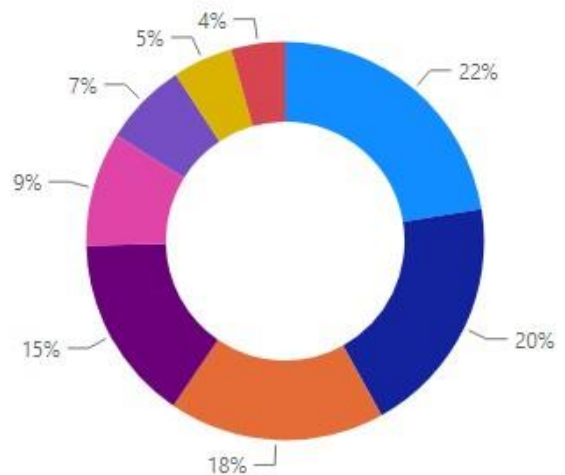
15% I struggle to find time to help with schoolwork at home

9% I struggle to get my child to complete homework because of social media or gaming at home

7% I do not know how to complete school work myself so find it hard to help my child

5% I struggle to afford items needed to help my child learn at home

4% My child does not have access to a computer or device at home



Level of Work At what time of day does your child learn best?

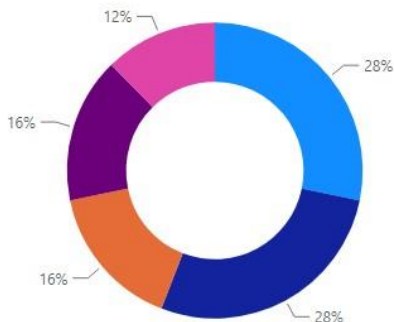
No Response

The work does not interest my child

The work my child is set is too difficult

There is too much work

The work my child is set is too easy



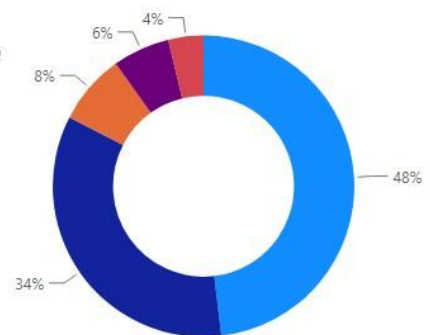
Mornings

Afternoons

After school

Weekends

No Response



Appendix 6



Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's, Children and Young People Select Committee is conducting an inquiry into how the Council, Stockton schools and colleges and other stakeholders can work together to narrow the gap in educational attainment. Based on two issues highlighted by schools, our inquiry is focusing specially on improving **attendance** and **communication skills** in children (vocabulary, oracy and literacy). The Committee's vision is to see best practice in all learning institutions and we are keen to hear all views and focus on problem solving. The Committee want to give everyone with a view the chance to contribute and will be talking to children and young people directly affected, their parents and wider family members as well as professionals. We will also be looking at best practice locally and further afield. Considerable work has been undertaken already which we intend to acknowledge and build upon. We aim to publish our findings in July and then roll out the lessons in collaboration with all schools and stakeholders.

How does your child learn best?

In a calm environment, with consistent teaching staff and following of his ehcp
 When they have a teacher that is enthusiastic about the subject
 Visually and with support 1 to 2 is currently gets at school
 in a calm setting when well regulated
 Visual
 Practically- "Hands on" learning.
 Hands on practical, doing work
 In a calm, nurturing and focused environment. It needs to be consistent and have routines.
 Staff have positive relationships and are neuro aware.
 Currently in play based sessions of small groups with things to utilise like toys or whiteboard with marker
 With practical activities in a quiet calm environment with close adult supervision
 Clear and concise information and understanding
 Variety of ways
 Pressure taken off and concentrating on Social and Emotional Mental Health.
 Practical activities
 One to one with someone who can help her
 Modeling, 1:1 support to explain any new concept.
 Visually and with a 'hands on' practical approach

She is a visual learner . In a smaller, quieter classroom
Classroom based learning or independently
In an environment which is tailored towards their needs and recognises each child is an individual.
One to one, practical, not writing lots, calm nurturing environment
In a specialist setting with small class sizes and a calm environment. They also learn best when following their own interests, doing practical activities and learning outside of the classroom.
Play
Hands on
Small groups. Plenty of rests. Positive language. Reward
Hands on movement
In small groups
With frequent movement breaks, in small classes - he's in a class of 9 so it's not overwhelmingly loud

What gets in the way of their learning?

noise, poor behaviour in class, not following his ehcp and meeting his needs
Supply Teachers!
Not understanding her emotions , over stimulating classroom , changes in school regulation and anxiety
His constriction
He is unable to currently attend school due to ESBA and unmet needs - currently on the pathway for Autism
Peers, Noise, having to do lessons they have no interest in.
Sensory need
Staff absence, cohorts/class groups not being of similar needs, staff awareness of neuro diversity and able to respond.
Large group's, too much information at one point. Too many open questions
A busy noisy environment, inadequate provision for his SEN in particular around his speech and language needs not being met
Anxiety, routine changes, unfamiliarity, environmental issues
Autism adhd
Pressure
Anxiety and having no trusted person in school
Her physical condition
Staff not trained in need and diagnoses
Noisy classrooms, being too hot, remaining still in the classroom, fatigue along with their diagnoses disabilities
Her needs not being met
Long periods of absence from school
Noise, disruptive behaviour, lack of mental health support, lack of adaptation to their needs, too many children in the class, work not suitable for their capability.

People not understanding their disability - FASD is the biggest. This includes approach, environment and content

A disruptive environment, sensory overload, unpredictability, plans or routines changing unexpectedly.

Learning disability

Other children disrupting the lesson

Not been listened to

Expected to sit still so long

their learning disability

Staff absences, large class sizes

What does a 'good' school day look like for you?

happy child, calm after school

When my child is happy to learn

Her attending school , and coming home telling me about her day

when my child achieves something new and comes home regulated and happy

My child going to a school with no anxiety

A good school day at the moment would be being able to put on their uniform and feeling able to attend school

6 hours a day, 5 days a week. Lessons in Cooking, IT, PE, Maths, English, Science, Life Skills, Financial Skills such as handling money, shopping, banking etc, BTEC hands on based studies with course work rather than exams. Support from teachers and TA's to achieve their best.

No melt down

A combination of learning, social skills and practical experiences. Consistent staffing and routines.

Dropping off without any issues and picking up without my child running past the line to come to me and not looking visibly upset

That my son engages in his learning, enjoys it and goes to school and comes out of school happy

Child going in for at least one lesson

Happy child

He stopped attending due to pressure

My daughter will go to school without me saying the attendance team will come and take you if you don't go and no meltdown on a morning

When she comes home happy and says she's had a good day, when she tells me she's learned something new

Sensory integration to enable my child is regulated so they can access education.

Being active and creative! My daughter loves to be outside in nature she finds this much more stimulating, she's relaxed and 'comes to life' outdoors . She's also very hands on and sensory so a good school day would include this type of activity.

Happy to go into school , comes home and tells me what she's learnt and what she's done and happy to continue with her day (based on new school)
Getting dressed, attending school and coming home smiling.
Enjoyed learning, suitable environment, no disruptions and despite having SEND child is supported adequately to meet their full potential.
Young person is happy to go into college and they come home calm and regulated
When my child comes out of school calm and happy.
Happy with no incidents
Quiet, no interruptions
Hasn't been punished for something she cannot help.
She comes out of school with no meltdowns
Happy, no meltdowns
Coming out regulated and calm and going in the same way too

What does a 'bad' school day look like for you?

When too many school politics get in the way of teaching children.
Phone calls telling me she has crisis during day
disruptive behaviour
Bad anxiety to the point of making himself sick and have the runs
Not sleeping the night before from school based anxiety, leading to Overload and meltdown at home, unable to leave the house to attend school
No or little support from staff, no safe person to go to within school, too noisy, overwhelming.
Full of meltdowns and self injurious behaviour
Disruption, changes to planned activities, staff absence (school plugging gaps with staff my child is not familiar with), staff not familiar with my child's EHCP and specific needs.
Gates not open at correct time so issues with regulation and going into class. Usually tears. When leaving running straight towards me with tears in their eyes wanting a cuddle
When there is too much going on, out of routine so he doesn't understand and follow what is happening. I then get told he's been disruptive at school
Child refusing to go in due to anxiety, unexpected changes. Resulting in isolation and aggression
Refusing to attend
Exploding when he comes home.
Anxiety night before school a soon as she wakes up anxiety/ meltdown effects full house manage to get her there then constant texts from her. Then she comes home to volcano effect
Come home with nothing been done such as saying don't know what I did or not having her bin changed when it's been wet all day
Staff who havnt got him, and also staff to understand some days he will have off days and needs more time on these days.
Being stuck in the classroom in the same position all day and being talked at
Wakes up crying, cry's on school run, school refusal and panic attacks about being at school (based on old school)
Refusal to get dressed or attend, no support or no learning taking place

Not able to eat due to lack of dining facilities, lack of support due to funding.
Full on refusal, emotional dysregulation sometimes self harm
When my child comes out of school unhappy and moody. When they can't speak to me
and when they explode once home.
My child injuring someone
Change, disruptive lessons, teachers shouting at the class as a whole
Meltdown, poor mental health, exhausted
She will come out overwhelmed and upset
Being sent home
We don't get a bad day

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My child injuring someone
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Meltdown, poor mental health, exhausted
She will come out overwhelmed and upset
Being sent home
We don't get a bad day

What is your ambition for your child?

to survive education without a difinitive impact on his mental health
To be happy and fulfilled in what they are doing.
To be happy and and to gain her full potential whatever that maybe
short term more academic skills
To be happy and get the same out of life everyone else gets
Being happy and being able to reach their full potential.
To have a better understand of the while around them.
To thrive
To have the same opportunities as an other pupil. To be independent and have
employment.
To be able to communicate with us and answer simple questions or ask us things
For him to be independent and get a paying job of his choosing and that he is happy with
a nice social life and wide circle of friends both with SEN and without
To develop friendships and social inclusion
To be happy and content
To be happy and build on confidence.
To be happy and healthy and try to work how to deal with anxiety and adhd
To be the best she can be and to be pushed to help her learn

To achieve his best possible outcome and lead as independent adult life as his condition allows
For her to be happy and to reach a level of independence that she is capable of (difficult to tell at this stage what this will look like) and for her to feel she belongs somewhere with some friends.
To be happy and settled
To attend school every day and continue to enjoy learning
To have an education which meets their needs, to be happy, to be able to meet their full potential
To live the life they want to live
For my child to be happy and healthy, become independent in everyday living and find something to do in the future that they will find interesting and will do happily.
Happy and healthy
Get qualifications needed for an apprenticeship
To be supported within school
For her to be happy
To survive without me
To have a small part time job if this is possible, to gain independence to

To have a small part time job if this is possible, to gain independence to

How do you link with school? Does it work? and not how could it improve?

communication is poor, they dont follow statutory guidance and never return calls or emails
Email - works because the learning manager is interested in my child.
We have class dojo which we message each other on and phonecalls to school
phone calls and messges
Email and phone and yes it works well
Child currently not in school, only link with school currently is when they come to check in on him at home. No current learning in place as school said they don't send work home as don't want to encourage children to be at home.
Phone calls. School tend to phone if there are problems or issues. Good feedback comes in chunks, a few weeks you get updates then they stop for months. Secondary specialist school my son attends doesn't use a parent/school app like primary schools do to keep parent carers informed.
I have a great working relationship with all 3 schools my children attend
Via email and conversation. Emails not always responded too without prompting. Sometimes feel concerns are brushed away. Would improve with school recognising parents views more.
Communication book let's me know what they've done in school. Sometimes I get a handover at home time depending on who is helping with the handover other times the TA just lets them run to me. An actual small handover works well to explain what did or didn't go well. Explanation of what they would like us to do outside of school to help with learning would be great so we're all on the same page with consistency as that's key for my child's development and understanding

I get a brief verbal handover when collecting him some days. I can email the SENCO and they email me. It would be helpful to have more feedback around what happens during the day, such as what activities he did, what he ate, whether there was anything that happened that I should be aware of, including things he did well.

We have daily school contact. Very happy with school

Email , phone calls - yes it works

No it doesn't work this year communication has been poor.

It is always me that's links with school, i email I don't get anything from them. Everything they promise to do they don't then Back track in meetings it's not wonder my daughter has no trusted relationship with anyone there! It could be improved if the school actually cared about my daughter it's all about attendance not about my daughter. They should be at least weekly contact with myself and they promised to do this with Katie but that's yet to happen! She hasn't had any English input for a year and no one is bothered, I can't get my head around 'every child has the right to an education' yet schools can do what they like.

We use evidence for learning or phone calls it doesn't work really as you can message them but I feel written communication works best as you can tell them how she has been and what the day looks like for them based on how she had been

School app which doesn't always work. Communication could be improved, emails would also work better, and phone calls.

Very well. She attends Abbey Hill and we've no complaints. In an ideal world the classrooms would be more open and airy and bigger to accommodate children (often with large equipment) and staff with some access to the outdoors. This is not the nature of the building though which is no fault of the staff - they make the best of what they have there we feel.

New school - class dojo, see teachers on the playground every morning and happy to stop and talk. Communication via there Facebook group. Very easy to communicate with. Old school - Very little communication, rarely see staff to be able to talk, no responsive to emails and shut you down when you finally get a chance to talk.

Email, calls. No often ignored or have to leave voicemails or emails that are not returned. School currently uses an app, but also sends general letters by post. Email would be better. Weekly newsletters. Some staff do reply to issues some do not, more continuity with communication.

Through face to face , telephone, email - it works. College are totally on board which is refreshing given secondary school provision

Via email, phonecalls and meetings. It works but I often feel like they don't listen..

Chatting on drop off and collection providing updates to each other

Email. They are very much that the school is never wrong. Listen to the parents who are dealing with the issue

School is extremely poor at listening and communicating. Make plans and not implemented. Not all staff on same page.

I try school don't want to help children who don't fit in a box

Note book and online pics, works okay

I take him & collect him so I see the TA or teachers daily and we receive daily updates in his book

From a parent carer perspective, how could attendance be improved?

By following and meeting need and allowing reasonable adjustments and getting in early rather than leaving it to get worse. Schools need to be proactive.

Stop putting barriers in the way of a child attending. Make adjustments to allow them to attend.

my child's attendance is fine

Help with anxiety and counselling services

Child is currently receiving High Intensity CBT and is unable to attend school after needs were not met in school. Unsure, at this current time how to move forward- if an EHCP may be needed and unsure if current school is the right provision for him

My son is on a reduced timetable as he can't cope and the school can't meet his needs during the lessons he has dropped. I want him back full time but we've been doing this since October 2023 with no plan in place to get him back in.

More flexible day

Acknowledging when pupils doing well and raising profile in school. Home/ school communication improvements and tailored support.

Currently no issues with attendance but being allowed to try late starts etc would probably help

My son's attendance would be improved if school didn't send him home every time he had loose stools when he does not have a sickness bug. Also he has a lot of appointments in different hospital departments so he can't always help his attendance and nor can we. He also has a poor immune system so the push for attendance from other children will always cause problems for us as a class full of sick kids makes my son much more vulnerable and likely to be off as he gets too poorly to attend

Time, acknowledgement of issues, low demands. Up to date information

More focus on helping anxiety and correct school placement

Think about the child not just the academic.

School to actually work with my daughter not just in school come and do a home visit build a relationship with her so she feels comfortable and safe in school. Who makes sure what school say they are going to put in place in an attendance meeting happens, if I as a parent didn't follow through in things I said I would do then there would be problems! My daughter's school need to understand anxiety and adhd and help make her feel comfortable, if her one friend was off she wouldn't go in as she feel like she has no one else!

If a child is ill then it should be marked as absent but if a child who has a physical disability needs to go to a hospital appointment it shouldn't be classed as a missed attendance at school

My child has multiply appointments for his needs and extra therapy another child without needs would need to attend. He needs the therapy for his development. Attendance should be scored on the times he can attend school and not penalised with a lower score because he needs medical appointments

I don't worry about my child's attendance. I'm lucky that she's not often ill and she happily attends school. If it were an issue for us I imagine a supportive approach from school and the LA would be essential in helping this improve.

Get to the route of why the child does not want to attend school. Every school is different. My daughter was attending Pentland school, screamed and cried every single day, had panic attacks about going into school, wouldn't cope once in school and full school

refusal we moved her to billingham south and she from day 1 has gone in happy and been happy on the way to school, during school day and after school. The school and the staff are the reasons why a child will or will not attend !

With better understanding of the cause, an education psychologist assessment and occupational therapist assessment. To gain knowledge on the best way school and parents can support and needs or struggles.

There is a disparity between support offered for parents in academies in comparison to LA schools. Parents should be allocated an independent key worker. Training should be provided to schools rather than putting all the onus on parents. More EMS / specialist provisions. For EBSA there is no support, for example if a pupil demonstrates challenging behaviour due to safeguarding they will be offered a place in PRU when interventions do not work. For a child who demonstrates their SEMH by withdrawing and not wanting to attend, this becomes the issue of the parents, yet both children possibly have SEMH and the families/ children are not treated equally. Monthly parental meetings with the SBC SEND team allowing them to understand the challenges endured. The lack of access and waiting times to professional assessments including educational psychologists means that families who can afford to pay privately are more likely to get support. Consider schools that have a more holistic approach including opportunities to learn practical skills or work with animals.

The needs of the children being acknowledged and supported. Stop punishing children for non attendance and stop blaming parents - majority don't allow non attendance because they can't be bothered. It's hard, really hard

If school listened to me, if they made changes that are needed and didn't just say what they thought you wanted to hear then not act on what they had promised.

Changes being made

Listen to the parents when issues are first flagged and take them seriously!

A plan in place and stuck to across whole of school.

Listen and work with parents

Dealing with challenging behaviour well

He's currently 100%

From a parent carer perspective, how could communication skills in children (vocabulary, oracy and literacy) be improved?

Access to speech and language therapists, involving parents with interventions and understanding why its important for the child- not just the school results.

See them as valued individuals

By meeting the child at there level

more concentration on academic skills i sometimes feel my child is going over stuff he already knows

More visuals and more people being educated in additional needs

Practical learning. Putting them into practice in everyday use.

More salt support within schools

Engaging families, skilling parents/carers to support/ read/ discuss either children out of school. Better links with local libraries to encourage an interest in reading.

Explanation of what to try at home and the methods used at school would be great so we can try to emulate it at home, where possible but understanding that sometimes what is done at school is enough for them for now

By having regular appointments and support from qualified speech and language therapists with the correct skills to be able to support the school staff to also work on those skills the rest of the week. This includes the skills and training to understand the barriers and learning styles in different conditions such as Down's Syndrome. To improve literacy it needs to be recognised that not all children will learn through phonics, my son does quite well with whole word reading and should be fully supported to learn this way as well

By providing time, encouragement and reassurance.

Salt involvement

Have some way to communicate through technology, this day and age this is how children communicate they all don't feel comfortable face to face. If my daughter is anxious she texts me they should be able to do similar in the school day. If they put children in classes where there are children who have all different needs rather than all in a class with the same needs

Better speech and language input, actual session with a therapist, a parent shouldn't have to do their own research and courses to explain what the communication needs of their child is. With a higher amount of children needing speech and language this is an area that should be invested in, as will help children's development and make them more likely to be able to access education and give better long term results.

Communication is a huge challenge for my daughter. She has a range of communication difficulties including delayed speech, stammer, selective mutism... we've been lucky in that her present school have an 'in house' speech and language therapist who has worked closely with us all. We've also had help from the Ed psych and the therapy dog. The therapy dog has helped immensely, I only wish this approach had been more readily accepted earlier on in her education. In terms of literacy skills I feel access to a range of 'schemes' (eg visual) would be more beneficial to the way my child learns - for example the current trend in education seems to favour a phonics approach to learning literacy skills - this doesn't particularly suit my daughter and I feel there's a gap in the market for something more suited to children like her who learn in a much more visual way.

Meeting the child's individual needs and have learning tailored for each one.

Having a trusted staff member they feel safe to communicate too and have the chance to check in with.

Increase funding for speech and language therapists, considering offering apprenticeship roles to attract more people into professional roles. Schools to work more with local libraries. Have opportunities for assessments so that children with dyslexia and other SEND are supported adequately.

If children were listened to and spoken to in a kind way. Often teachers seem to bully children and the rules and regulations such as having the wrong coloured socks on seem to take priority!

More understanding and teaching for staff

Role play, make learning fun again. Lots of learning around play and real life.

For ALL staff to be more aware of pupils' needs and an actual response back and forth with one person within school. Rather than passed pillar to post.

Actually listen look for signs such as masking etc training would be beneficial
My children are non verbal - no improvement seen
More SALT visits!

Appendix 7



When did you start to have concerns around your child/young person finding attending school difficult?

School nursery, age 3
May 2021
March 2023
Since September 23
3 years ago
When he started senior school, mainstream
When he started nursery.
Starting Secondary school
Reception
2023
In year 7
Year 4
2022
He has always struggled but still managed to attend until September 2023 when he moved up to seniors. It was too much of a big change for him and he has struggled ever since to attend
Year6
When he was in year 5
2 months into year 7, October 2022
From starting school all together
its been going on for over a year.
My child experienced EBSA 09/20-09/22. Prior to covid she had needed regular reset days due to poor mental health.
Age of 3

	2020
In primary school, around year 4	
Entering year 9	
Year 5	
Last October	
Reception	
Age 7	
At age 3	
Transitioning into secondary school.	
December 2022	
Primary school after COVID	
Year 5	
Nursery	
Primary school KS2 when independence is thrust on them age 7-8 the same time in a child's development they realise they are mortal and fears become real	
	14
Year 5	
Year 5 going into year 6 starting to refuse to attend, but had been displaying frustrated and angry behaviours (shouting, arguing and kicking car seats etc) on way home from school since y3, but displayed	
When he was four years old and started reception. He was four in June and started reception the following September.	
Around the age 6	

At the beginning of your EBSA journey – how did you get advice or support (for you and your child)?

I only recently found out about EBSA after seeking advice from SENDiass. The school then done an assessment of choosing pictures to look at if my daughter is experiencing EBSA.
Spoke with her school
Google as SEN department weren't helpful
None
The internet
I self refered into CAMHS, we started with the getting help team, who were no help and are now with the getting more help team
From school who refered to camhs
Little support, sent to gp theb camhs then turned away back to square one. 4 years later not much further forward. We have had emotional blackmail directed at anxious child weve had lies and empty promises. Very little support by any service. Discharged from arly help with no help. Discharged from alliance cause wasnt attending school for sessions. Currently paying private for therapy and assessments because we have been failed for the last 4 years.
We didn't just hounded to bring in our child and show 'tough love'

Just to persevere and get her into school
I had to request meetings with the school, the gp, I contacted Daisy chain. I retry much had to rely on my own knowledge to get support put in place.
I accessed school support and he had a few sessions with talking therapy.
We didn't, we believe that the way school handled it caused significant trauma and that experience will never leave him.he doesn't fully trust schools now due to this.
From the SPCF and SENDIASS
SENDIAS and the CPN
I didn't I had to look myself for help
I tried to speak to his teachers and asked them for assessment from a ed psych
Through the school
Wasn't much only Sendiass
From friends.
EBSA was only recognised after a EP report 26th feb 2024
All of the support came from reading, virtual parent groups and from other SEND parents.
I didnt
Myself still the same now!
There wasn't any support from school until 2024
Social Services - only when she completely stopped attending in year 9
CAHMS and the school. Post adoption support team.
School, cahms
I didn't feel we did really.When it came apparent our son was getting bullied in school we informed school.
School weren't helpful though & Camhs
Own experience as a Sen TA - nothing other
Camhs
It was difficult as school weren't supportive in the beginning. I had to get early help involved who worked with us but when they were unable to get my child into school they referred to neuro diversity triage and closed the case saying they couldn't help.
Through post adoption support
I spoke to primary to explain the issues I was having, but never got any help with getting her in. Her to do that all myself.
Got no help
I got ignored by school and it wasn't until someone seen me struggling with my daughter they offered help and advice
Both my children were EBSA at first they loved school but the pressure of KS2 was too much also they were denied support because they had no academic need, there ASD was dismissed because they were meeting expectations academically. They would come home and explode after masking all day. They couldn't be their true authentic self. Both my children used the language that they didn't feel safe! At no time was any support offered at the beginning until attendance was poor.

No advice
Parent advisor at primary
Referred back to previous parenting support and theraputic councillor working with at time around trauma
The school we initially chose for my son to attended were absolutely awful. No help or understanding, their SENCO called my son 'a problem' when in fact he is the most loving, sensitive little boy.
With difficulty, school were not prepared to referee him but we managed to get a local doctor to refer him

What did this support, if any- look /feel like?

I haven't had any feedback from the assessment, so i haven't received any support regarding this yet. When my daughter was in primary school she received counselling from Alliance due to the school referring her for anxiety which i now believe was also EBSA(had i know about it then.)
Joint funding counselling sessions from the Bungalow Project
Poor. SEN department wanted him to come in every day even with panic attacks and to try up to 4 times a day to attend
None
Support group, peer mentoring and information
My son now has a mental health nurse from CAMHS and is also medicated via the psychologist for his anxiety
School were supportive with putting plans in place and offering to come out to speak to my son. Camhs went through the autism assesment.
Threats of fines and prosecution. 9 year old child at the time told to "man up" by an EWO.
There wasn't any it was just parental blame
I don't feel I had any support
Alliance were amazing although there was a long wait. However after speaking to them they arranged to come to the house and made such a difference. School took time to support but once they understood the situation they have become better over time in accepting that he can't come to school not won't come to school.
He was introduced to the library team which has been wonderful. However outside this it can feel like people are not listening or communicating with each other. It was harder after his class tutor changed, as he was closer with his previous one. Sometimes I email about this EBSA and how pink slips impact this, and often no one responds, which makes me feel like they dont believe us. They were quick to support him recently with bullying though.
No one took the time to listen and they thought they knew best about my child.. Had they listened to me in the first place it would never have gotten that far.
Lots of reassurance for myself, advice on what to do next and how to support my son.
That very little can be done to support and we are basically left on our own due to son not being able to engage.
Not helpful
I wasn't listened to. School had their own agenda. They tried to put things in place without assessment first - this made things worse for my son.
Adjustments to her timetable, positive steps. More support within the classroom when she did attend.

Telling me over phone what can happen if I don't send him
None
Non to date, the school packed us off with an anxiety leaflet.
It was self directed and self discovered. Reading anything I could find in the subject and joining virtual support groups. There was an absence of professional support. I spent hours reaching out to services SBC, CAMHS, school, Daisy Chain, etc but it was a constant game of making phone calls and people suggesting services that were little or no help. In honesty the professional 'support' was judgemental, failed to respect the views/knowledge of parents, lacked understanding of neurodivergence.
I contacted cahms I send endless emails to school.
In 2024 I was told he could attend at lunch time. This helped until the headteacher decided he had to start going in at 10am.
Referral to CAMHS, OT, then discharged and... nothingness
The school are supportive but always mark it down as unauthorised. CAMHS couldn't really help. They put her on a Decider group.
Not alot
School looked into the bullying, and our sons head of year kept us up to date with what was happening/bullying getting dealt with.
Not helpful from school! Camhs diagnosed seperation anxiety
None existent
Early help. They were really good until they closed the case with the issue unresolved.
They give me strategies to try to get my son into school when he started to completely refuse to go in after the Easter holidays 2023
None existent
N/a
I felt and still feel very let down
Non
Occ health support and understanding from school. extra support.
Verbal advice, but situation changed daily, so had to prepare ourselves to deal with what that days events/triggers would be, I.e would go to school, reluctant, refusing, physically aggressive or upset
There was zero support. I was being called within an hour of leaving him to come and 'sort him out' and when I arrived would often find him on his own (at four years old) unsupervised and looking really sad - no wonder he didn't want to be there.
Very dismissive as if our son didn't matter. Even the doctor's referral letter stated the "the child Sat quietly for over half an hour, mother insisted there were issues" he was on his tablet playing games

Who were the key people/services that you worked with/ are working with whilst managing ESBA?

SENDias, School and on a whole of my daughter's difficulties are now working with early help, Alliance and local authority.
Work with Pastoral support in school and Alliance but this was more focused on her anxiety. The ESBA slowly got worse over time but I felt was never a concern of the school as I managed to get her in for the majority of the times
School, social prescribing, CAMHS, Early Help (School Support)
None
Educational psychologist and private psychotherapist
His nurse from CAMHS has been amazing
School.
Camhs - turned away. Early help-discharged twice. Alliance- discharged twice.
Nobody offered any support apart from Daisychain who are very understanding. They are also aware how many children are struggling
Tried to work with school but no other professionals got involved. I had some support from Id cahms who was involved with her sister.
Alliance, daisy chain, footsteps, GP, school, early help school support
No one person, as they usually just send me parenting class adverts.
No one, we did have some support from the inclusion team but never communicated what they did or why
SPCF, SENDIASS, School key worker, CAMHS
CPN, CAMHS, SENDIAS and school
Family support worker
Autism North East. Tree tops OT. Head of Alternative Provision. Sendiass and Senco
Egglescliffe school, CAMHS the LA to get and EHCP approved
Key worker not helpful, school not helpful
School Support
identified by EP then No help off anyone, iv just demanded a referral to the vulnerable learners team
The 0-19 were supportive and good at chasing up medical support. Our GP was helpful in making referrals and provided a letter for school. Other support in the form of SALT & EP to ensure she got her needs identified and the right support was paid for through independent professionals. CAMHS were awful. The level of parent blame and lack of understanding was horrendous. The best service by far was Daisy Chain and accessing an educational placement as AP and then AP at King Edwin prior to a place becoming available.
Adhd team and autism team and sen at school
CAHMS, early help support SENDIAS attended last meeting
School support, Daisy Chain, Early Help, Alliance.
CAMHS, OT, school, social workers
We haven't had any.
School head teacher
Head of year/School Senco (son is waiting for autism assessment).

Camhs
Camhs/ School senco
Camhs
Early help and CAHMS
Specialist teacher, Senco in school and post adoption support
It was school. Camhs wouldn't offer any assistance after she was referred to Maat
None
Now we're working with my daughters teacher
EHA worker, CAHMS, school
School attendance
Currently in secondary Y7, feel totally lost/no help
Therapeutic trauma councillor and school
I tried to work with the school. In the end I removed him from roll and homeschooled him.
CH:AMS

Did you find them helpful for your situation? please explain why

Yes and no. They haven't provided much support, i as a parent have had to push for most of these services myself. The school have now tried new approaches such as a part time timetable which has made improvements to her wellbeing and attendance.
They were helpful in relation to trying to help her school anxiety but not so much for the EBSA. I think it took a while for them to believe the problems we were having at home due to how she presented at school.
Social prescribing were helpful simply just by offering support to both myself and my son. School support weren't great. CAMHS couldn't help and school were useless
Yes they understood my child and there issues
She listens and gives advice
Yes. Tby were understanding and offered lots of advice
Absolutely not.
Daisychain have literally saved our child's mental health
School haven't offered much support in dealing with these issues
Alliance, Daisy chain and Footsteps have been outstanding in their support - they understood the situation immediately and tried to help in any way they could often going out of their way to help.
The courses were not autism specific, just for behaviour issues in general. I am an autism practitioner working with children, so I have access to that info. I would prefer they offered him more adjustments. He is not struggling when at home.
Unsure

I found SPCF very helpful with emotional support, advice and understanding. SENDASS gave advice on what I needed to do regarding an interim EHCP review. CAMHS were useless. School took a long while to understand what the issue was.
Helpful in saying they understand and can put referrals in however this referrals can take years to have appointments and if son can't engage then we are still in the same position with nowhere to turn.
No
School were very unhelpful until Autism North East gave a diagnosis. They then started to listen but not quickly enough. Eventually in year 10 after 6 months out of education we were supported into Alternative Provision.
Yes I have found our journey a supported one. Initially it was a long process to try and make the steps to get evidence to put to panel for and EHCP, however since October 2023 my daughter has been assessed, granted an EHCP in a specialist environment, given a placement at our parental preference school and supported through meaningful counselling at CAHMS
No
Extremely!
no, still waiting as panel is monthly,
0-19 good for chasing up medical referrals. Daisy Chain provided well-being support followed by AP in form of Ed placement to support my daughter to understand her diagnosis and to have a safe place. New school staff have been amazing at working with us and her rather than seeing us and her as the problem.
Yes gave me advice and helped me with information
Cahms long process still going on and early help say they can only give suggestions not enforce school. Sendias always helpful!
I did, but school weren't helping with the situation. They weren't consistent, and just kept telling my son that it would be me getting into trouble for him not going into school, even if we were in the office.
It is difficult to get help for a problem that started with trauma left unaddressed in primary school, which went untouched until it became out of control in secondary. When we ask for help, it needs to be immediate, whether the concern is bullying, gender identity, or neurodivergence, all of which apply in this situation
We haven't really had any support.
Yes however being told she is OK now as I am getting her to school frustrates me as I get beaten and verbally abused trying to get her there. She also attacks her younger sister on the way or takes her seat belt off so I have to stop.
In some ways.our son wanted a reduced timetable,but we were told this was very rare and under certain circumstances,which were never explained.
A little
Not really, couldn't see past behaviour
Not at all
CAHMS was for anxiety, my child had low intensity cognitive behaviour therapy, there wasn't a huge amount about school but taught my child strategies to cope outside school but could be transferable in school
Specialist teacher is nice and built good relationship with my son, gives him strategies to use when coming in but we are no further forward with increasing his time in school and his work with us is coming to an end. Senco help has been variable, most of the time I would say understanding and has tried lots of different things to help but sometimes I have felt parent blamed and judged. Post adoption support have been brilliant, giving lots of advice, contacts to reach out to, help with EHCP application. They really understand the EBSA

No. Because I managed to get her in they didn't seem to care how it took to get there.
N/a
Now and again. It can be very hit and miss
Yes - the EHA worker made everyone accountable for their actions reviewed every 6 weeks. CAHMs I think the support staff in a school should be taught the same strategies as the child so they can help them use them.
NO just came over to pick him up 2x after that nothing
The theraputic councillor was working with us as a family and child in school, not as a child or parent individually. This allowed her to see the whole picture and liase with school too. It meant that advice was tailored to our needs and school understood how we parented and our son' s needs clearer. Felt they were more willing to listen to a professional as they were quick to dismiss our input.
No.
Not---' at all, we were missed out on appts, they had no it took 5 years and the most helpful information was given in the last session

When you received support – what was the purpose of the support? Did it work?

To reduce overwhelming my daughter. The part time timetable has improved her overall attendance.
It was to help her manage her anxiety, fears in and about school. I worked to a certain point but every day she went into school scared but not as scared as before 😊
Social prescribing was to get him back socialising - no but he feels like he has another trusted adult in his life
School support to get him to go back to school - no he already had all his plans in place. They have just discharged him as there's nothing more they can offer him
School were to try and get him attending - no they couldn't provide any consistency despite promising it
CAMHS to try and deal with the mental health side of it - they couldn't help as it's an 'autistic trait' which doesn't respond to CBT
We got no support from the School whatsoever, and even when the red reports there were unable or not willing to put support in place
We had been through all the talking therapies and I knew he needed medication, he's finally on anti anxiety tablets
To ensure my son felt comfortable with the teachers and was clear who he could talk to when needed. He still struggles with attendance, however continues to be supported by school
Parent Led CBT- no
No support other than school meetings and to use 'tough love' or stop my son from doing anything like dog walks, when he should be in school. No care for his mental health just school attendance.
N/A
Alliance - CBT and exposure therapy - worked for anxiety and leaving the house but attending school still not possible. Daisy Chain - worked on understanding self attending school still not possible. Footsteps - received medication which has helped anxiety but again attending school still not possible.

<p>Early help - helped with daily challenges but attending school still not possible. School - put in high level of reasonable adjustments but still not possible to attend school</p>
<p>Introduced him to the library which helped for a while</p>
<p>Unsure.. No one explained it</p>
<p>It did work. School eventually understood, I knew what paths to follow and eventually CAMHS provided evidence for the LA to again eventually put something in place for my son.</p>
<p>Talking therapy, PT-timetable, 5 minute pass to leave early, access to SEN areas. None have helped very much. There is a lot of pressure for instance the PT timetable was put in place for 4 weeks to be reviewed at Easter. Today they informed me that even though he is still struggling and hardly attending they are increasing the time he needs to be in. This has put my son in panic mode and it feels like the few small steps he has taken have been for nothing as this will pull him back to the beginning. Also I have been requesting work for him to do so he dies but fall too far behind but they won't. So on top of the EBSA he is now really behind which adds even more to it.</p>
<p>To find out what was 'wrong' with daughter</p>
<p>The short term placement was to get him back into school. It was evident he would not manage in mainstream so it was made long term and my son has been in school everyday for about a year now.</p>
<p>We were supported through the EHCP application process by Graces mainstream school, we are also being supported through CAMHS by way of building Graces resilience and coping mechanisms through exploring polyvagal theory and the use of the book little Meerkats Big Panic. Its a new approach and I cannot recommend it and Jon Birch, who is delivering it, highly enough</p>
<p>recieved 1 day support which was promised for 6 weeks</p>
<p>Working with daughter in and outside of school</p>
<p>n/a</p>
<p>The support worked in that she was able to engage. But by the time we found and accessed support she was already traumatised and had developed tics and suicidal ideation. No amount of support was ever going to be successful at getting her back into the original placement, there had been too much damage done to her mental health.</p>
<p>To help my child in school with his learning and yes it's helping</p>
<p>CAHMS is suppose to be advanced cbt but can't see this happening the lady can never remember what has been said last time we seen her and when I asked what the plan was she said she would just talk to Katie??!! Early help school support, spoke to my daughter over a period of time and now saying will be stop working with her. It seems if school say they will do things then it just taken that that's what will happen, I have explained how I feel them been involved will put some pressure on school so could she stay open with them.</p>
<p>When he was finally 'allowed' to go in at lunch, this helped massively. My son was more complicit, he was calm, started doing homework and helping around the house. He had time to regulate before starting his school day.</p>
<p>They offered support around anxiety. It barely scratched the surface therefore it has not worked if the objective was getting the child back to school</p>
<p>We haven't had any support as such.</p>
<p>Not alot tbh.</p>
<p>Basically told that our son's attendance was getting worse,and that once it got to 80%we would start getting attendance letters...this actually happened at 82% attendance.</p>
<p>Seperation anxiety helped a little till lockdown happened</p>
<p>Short term cbt - no use, option to work in base at school - didn't work</p>
<p>For an assessment. No</p>

Currently I am under caution from the Local Authority for attendance but my caseworker is really good and seems supportive, my child is on a phased return and is attending regularly for 2 hours a day.
As above for specialist teacher. I've also been involved with CAMHS, early help, daisy chain. They listened and empathised with our situation. Offered advice but it was nothing we weren't already doing then would sign us off with no further help
To make going into school easier. Some day it did some days it didn't
EHA Worker facilitated meetings with school, IASS let me know options, CAHMS helped with children's anxiety. School facilitated a small nurture group of children struggling after covid of 5 my daughter then managed primary years.
Overall yes, but the crux of it was based on us engaging, communicating and remaining consistent with our approach.
The biggest and best support we received was when we were offered a place at a different school. They have been amazing, truly appreciating my son for who he is.
He was referred OT which he still has now

Through your ESBA journey – what made the most difference to you / your family?

The information about what ESBA is, provided by SENDias, I finally felt understood, felt i had information on something so many people mistake for bad behaviour and could relate so much to something for the first time.
As the input we had was focused on the anxiety and not EBSA this is hard to answer. When her EBSA did get really bad, she hit a worrying level with her mental health and as parents, we decided she was not well enough for school. With her few resources available we decided that she could not go back into the school environment. So Home education has made the most difference to her and us.
So far nothing and we're a year in. Social prescriber helps me feel less alone in it
People understanding the issues and my child
Getting the help from the getting more help team
Being listed to by school.
Pressure on family relationships and mental health
Keeping my son home and feeling safe. Constantly re assuring him that he'll not step foot back at Northfield school.
We walk so we have time to talk about day ahead and try and put positive spin on things and give support.
As a qualified and experienced SEN professional myself it has helped that I know the system and the statutory rights my child has to an education. I am always open and honest about my experience and have felt listened to and supported however I do not know whether this would be the

<p>case if I had less knowledge and felt less confident advocating for my child. Things have been put in place very quickly however I know this is not the case for others on the same situation as me.</p>
<p>Doing courses hosted by Tony Attwood on autism in teens which were accessed through my work. Him having the library as a safe space, and a wonderful member of staff there.</p>
<p>Us believing that we knew best for our child and keeping true to that</p>
<p>Understanding from services and school as to why my son was in this situation.</p>
<p>Nothing as of yet just feeling of finally being heard but at the same time feeling blamed.</p>
<p>Sendiass & this Facebook forum</p>
<p>Getting the diagnosis's which showed why my son wasn't managing. School could no longer harass us! My son's TA was our biggest support, she was amazing. Getting my son into AP.</p>
<p>The supportive nature of the school when it came to attendance. My daughter wasn't treated as a number, it was recognised that forcing her into school was not good for her mental health and ultimately we got the right outcome for her. We were protected from the LA when it came to attendance and were never made to feel that we were bad parents</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>School support worker listening to my child</p>
<p>hasn't started</p>
<p>Hearing my child. Believing her when she said she couldn't do it anymore and keeping her safe by keeping her at home. I regret forcing her to go to school in a placement that would not acknowledge or meet her needs for as long as I did. I believed the professionals, when in fact we and her were the experts. The biggest difference was Daisy Chain and finding the right placement.</p>
<p>Getting answers</p>
<p>My constant reassurance to Katie as not getting any from school!</p>
<p>The fact of having a reduced timetable made a huge difference. I am building it up so he now goes in at break time which works for us. I have told the school that this is my plan and this is what we're sticking to.</p>
<p>Occupational Therapy was extremely helpful, unfortunately it was tied to CAMHS mental health services and was withdrawn as soon as my child was deemed not clinically anxious or depressed.</p>
<p>We are on the journey. Nothing has made a difference yet!</p>
<p>Nothing I just want to give up. I honestly wonder if I will make it through each day.</p>
<p>Personally I felt completely lost, worried for our son, his education/lack of it...my own job...I will admit I had some very dark moments where I felt very alone and at a loss where to go for any help...I felt there was only our family going through this.</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>My own understanding and learning journey into ASD and behaviours through building blocks and support in the community</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>CAHMS, the therapist we had was amazing and so understanding and helpful.</p>
<p>Post adoption support, I would have felt very alone without them</p>
<p></p>
<p>Having people to listen</p>
<p>Support of friends and not feeling in it alone</p>

CAHMS - this is a mental health issue not all children fit in to the new testing constant measuring system. Children with neurodivergence definitely dont especially if they have a higher IQ. Both my children now have school based trauma and their education has been the casualty. My oldest child has PDA and it was made worse by the way we have gone from child led learning through play and discovery to constant testing and desk learning from year 1.
Just giving up as forcing made my son worse
Primary were great and supported my daughter, she managed to attend most days although late. Secondary was awful and she's now scared to go.
Being listened too and acknowledged, not dismissed.
Finding a supportive school.
Egglescliffe SENDCO and ATV

What was/is missing on your ESBA journey? If you had a magic wand- what would the support look like.

An understanding of what assessments, support and advice should take place. If parents were informed of the difficulties and best ways they can support their child it would help for all involved. To remove all the obstacles children face so that they can have the same life opportunities as every other child.
Cor! The pressure in the school environment these days is just too much. I feel that teachers/schools try their best but are too focused on targets. They do not question an individuals learning. One full time teacher and part time TA, is not enough to ensure correct learning. It feels that as long as the children get the right number correct, those answers that are incorrect don't matter. I also feel that newly qualified teachers do not understand the complexity of some children or conditions and sometimes think they know best and carry out acts that remove trust for a child.
That the school offered the support when we said he needed it, not after 7 months until he had ticked the boxes in their eyes to say he needed help
For schools and teachers to understand this is a real issue and that not all children are the same
That it took 3 years to get proper help, he's year 10 now
More help from camhs to understand the route cause and give me advice on how to support my son on a morning before school when his anxiety it at its peak.
A key worker to support my child in and out of school. A combined approach to fill the gap between home and school and build trust.
More schools catering for children with SEN, or alternative provision when they are not able. More understanding from school and the LA, not just blame
Child to be supported with sen needs at school, ie support groups/counselling. Help around friendships. To be listened to and understood on challenges she faces etc. Helping these needs would certainly make going to school less challenging on a daily basis.
A specialist provision that caters for highly able but extremely anxious pupils. Support workers need more knowledge of can't and won't. Attendance should not ever be questioned. Support needed around how parents are supposed to be caters and also work. I have had to give up work to look after

<p>my son and there is still no decisions made on what will happen in his future due to mainstream being unsuitable and specialist provision that caters for his needs being non existent.</p>
<p>For all his teachers to understand how ADHD and autism impacts his behaviour and not give him detention for talking. Having someone check in with him to check he's not bullied, and not stop just because he has a good period. For him to have the option to skip focus days, which are hard for him. To have the option to finish a few days before the end of term to reduce burn out</p>
<p>Being listen to and heard front the very start.. The cracks were there well before the breakdown of school. Intervention could have been alot quicker.</p>
<p>More support for parents. It is a very stressful situation. Your child is at breaking point and you have to fight to get the schools and professionals to listen. While you are doing this you also have a child in distress and possibly mentally unwell like my son. You have school on your back about attendance too. It is an awful situation to be in and I think more consideration about the effect on the parents needs to be given.</p>
<p>Some support for him to not be behind. Possibly online lessons, a tutor to spend some time with him or at least some work to be sent home so I can try and help him. Also support with his difficulties with school to try and enable him to reintegrate. Hopefully when they apply for an EHCP after Easter this may happen.</p>
<p>One point of contact</p>
<p>Being listened to from day 1. Getting assessments swiftly which means the correct support can be put in place sooner.</p>
<p>Early intervention, and recognition that the transition between primary and secondary school can be traumatic. Future planning when it comes to EHCP's, recognising that although the primary school setting didn't require an EHCP, the transition and secondary school environment may need regular and frequent reviews and intervention</p>
<p>EHCP upheld, support for me and him and supportive school and if that didn't work funds for education other than in school</p>
<p>No letters reminding me or child of attendance %</p>
<p>what's clearly missing is (school states Stockton dosnt have a ESBA frame work) what ever that means, which I think means the school dont know how to deal with ESBA.</p>
<p>Professionals would be professional. They would see behaviour as communication. They would seek to understand what is driving the behaviour. They would stop acting outside of their expertise. Teachers not acting a parenting experts. Support that hears the voice of the child and respects parents as experts. Professionals are quick to blame the child or the parents. There is a lack of professional reflection and seeking to learn from their mistakes. Plus really good quality training on neurodivergence (autism, ADHD, AuDHD, DCD, dyslexia, Tourette's, etc) and mental health. Moving away from the narrative that children are naughty and its attendance at any cost.</p>
<p>More support to understand my daughter, things always seem to be 6 weeks then that's it. Schools to have more understanding, I'm the one always chasing school about how to engage her more. I get ignored a lot - out of sight out of mind! The main thing missing is a child centre approach right now we are doing not what is right for my daughter but right for attendance figures. If I had a wand someone from school would come and visit Katie at home get to know her so she has at least one trusted person in school, someone to actually give her the time of day from school. Reassurance for parent who are trying with every being in there body to get their child to school, not at the end of every letter mentions legal matters but saying oh we're not at that stage yet!</p>
<p>I would like the school to be more understanding of his needs, and not put it down to his behaviour.</p>
<p>I'm not a professional, but I would suppose if the notes show a child has a history of school based trauma, gender identity issues, is struggling to attend school and has a relevant neurological diagnosis, it's not illogical to include a psychologist</p>
<p>Flexible schooling. More understanding from teachers.</p>

Support help empathy understanding. The ability to school at home so I am not beaten on a morning.
Our son could have accessed school through a reduced timetable...we would have someone to sound off to and not felt threatened over school attendance, fines etc. Access to help and advice when we needed it...since found a group on Facebook that is all about school avoidance.
Not sure
Understanding each child is unique and won't fit in a box regardless of diagnosis. Support when a child is struggling and looking beyond the behaviours is an absolute must!
Ongoing support for my child in school to manage their issues
I had to fight for every bit of help, school were quite dismissive at first. If there was a designated person or an online school that my child could attend and still learn as my child has now missed 2 years of education.
Mainstream schools to take notice and make changes earlier on before it gets to the point of EBSA. No effort made to provide my son an education whilst he has been at home, option of home tutoring, online learning. Easier access to EHCP and specialist schools/AP. Everything is fight
Help to unpick why she struggles with going to school so much
Understanding of the child and how this has massive impact on their health. Also to stop fining people if children can't attend school
The support my daughter clearly needs and not being told they can't see anything when they clearly can as they've put things in places. I just want her to be happy going into school
More outdoor learning KS1 & 2, regulation breaks never take a child's playtime away! Work with parents take away console/tv time. Children need that time to regulate. Help those struggling with independence we all develop differently stop punishing children for forgetting items, wrong shoes, wrong haircut, not reading enough, struggling at spelling. Schools to listen to parents who are saying my child is exploding at the end of the day! Small nurture groups for those children struggling and a safe person they can take to in school if they are finding it difficult. CAHMS to teach support staff techniques to help with anxiety
One to one support
People in secondary who are there to support and help. Guidance teams are not actually welfare/counsellors but just head of years who have no idea about autism/sensory processing etc. Some of the things we have been told to do are highly offensive/laughable!! My daughter wants to attend and wants to learn but struggles. My child is highly functioning so is basically told to get on with it.
School being more understanding. We talked a lot about barriers and behaviours leading up to refusing to go, but they dismissed a lot as our son presented as ok in school (masking). It was not until professional reports we commissioned and trauma therapist, before they got more on board, however it was still a battle.
One to one or at least one to three support to be there on a morning and as a point of contact for both me and my child during the day. Until they were comfortable attending school. Also no pressure on attendance - receiving 'red notices' when the school know we are doing all we can to eliminate the issue is not helpful.
The correct diagnosis for my son, and any support that can help him move into his next stage in life

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No thank you :)					
As said, my daughter never really received intervention for EBSA, this term was only used towards the end of her being at school yet I had clearly stated how hard each day was to get her in and we did this for nearly 3 years. The affect on her has been massive.					
Schools need to start and trust parents instincts rather than referring to tick box system and a generic timeline					
Staff / teachers need training					
I do feel that it's very difficult to get services such as camhs involved.					
I feel the support needed does not exist.					
I'm now being took down the legal route, as I refuse to allow my son to attend. We are awaiting Tribunal next month in hope we can gain Specialist Provision or EOTAS. The LA drag this out as long as possible to not have to give funding					
Still not enough sen support within schools to make children feel safe and supported to actually make them want to go to school.					
Thank you for exploring this it's one of the most difficult issues in our family ATM.					
The stress and pressure on famillies is incomprehensible.. We lost income/jobs/our whole life changed and we lost our beautiful little boy as it broke him.. He's getting there now but it was horrible.. We were in crisis and no one did anything.. Its unfortunate that this hasn't changed					
It would also help massively if services communicated with you properly. Having to chase the LA, school and Camhs is also sole destroying at such a difficult time.					
There needs to be more help and support for both the child and parent regarding EBSA and the threat from school that they are taking you to court for prosecution should not be allowed especially when the parent is constantly keeping in touch, working with the school and trying everything they possibly can.					
Schools need to be more invested and understanding					
I think if a family is forced into private assessments just to get the right support for their child, they should be reimbursed and given a formal apology due to the distress caused to them over many years. It's just not good enough.					
Yes the council that threatened prosecution said their councils support education other than in school but our council said they don't					
Schools need to be more sympathetic to children who suffer from school avoidance.					

<p>Schools are too slow to spot ESBA or those likely to fail to attend, my situation is SEN legal tests weren't followed this delayed pre-emptive action and now iv a child on the edge of school attendance failure of which the best the school can offer is parent courses rather than looking as push pull factors, soft landings and extra support, then when support is recommend via EP its back (school and LA) arguing who funds it, mean the child becomes less engaged and the LA and public purse end up being hit harder as the issue has escalated.</p>	
<p>My daughter and many like her will carry the trauma of her secondary education with her for the rest of her life. She was perceived as a naughty child, rather than a child with difficulties. Secondary school were obsessed with the behaviour and refused to see the reasons for her behaviour. As a girl on the ASD pathway she didn't fit their profile of what autism looks like. Once I heard her voice and stopped sending her to school she slowly started to recover. But everything was a battle. Accessing CANHS, a battle. Getting and EHCP, a battle. Getting the right placement for her, a battle. It damaged my mental health and had a huge impact on our family and my other daughter. Please remember that education is a lifelong journey, GCSE's have no time limit. But if we damage our children's mental health, it's not easy to repair and they and their families will live with that forever.</p>	
<p>If my child was in school and so anxious to come home school would be concerned. Nobody seems to be concerned at how anxious going to school makes my daughter and I have to force her there everyday. Her mental health is at rock bottom and everyday I have to force her into school. I keep being told a reduced timetable can't last forever yet no one is supporting to increase hours it's always me suggesting! Ide also be happy to speak with use of you require any more information.</p>	
<p>ESBA needs to be recognised and plans should be put in place according to each child's needs. Instead of being threatened with an attendance officers and fines. Schools are all about numbers and attendance and its disgusting that all children with issues are just swept to the side and forgotten about.</p>	
<p>Parents are exhausted. This part? The professionals ought to be coming to us, reassuring us they've got it in hand. Not the other way around.</p>	
<p>If my child reacted. Like this towards coming home she would of been put in foster care and there would have been serious concerns. Why can't services just believe parents.</p>	
<p>Our son has so far accessed school every day this term,which is a major achievement for him...but I know he struggles with so many aspects of school life and it hangs over us as a family that he could start refusing again...I've learnt a lot about myself during this time,I've learnt by staying calm,listening to our son,doing the school routine on a morning in a way that keeps him calm and in control works...At the moment...and keeping a count down to the school holidays...and praising every thing he does to constantly boost his confidence 😊</p>	
<p>So many children are being failed by our education system which needs a huge overhaul. Children who are not diagnosed are left in limbo and can't access specialist schools yet can't cope in mainstream. There needs to be more Sen training for teachers and a better understanding of the nervous system within the school environment also.</p>	
<p>School to support my child, without a diagnosis no one is willing to help</p>	
<p>The local authority will not allow my child to have any time off without a Dr's or pharmacist note, which I found is impossible to get. I find this very stressful and worrying as it is me that will be punished.</p>	
<p>It's a very lonely and stressful fight. The system is more damaging to our young people causing severe mental health issues</p>	

The only reason my 14 year old is attending any kind of school is because she needs regulation to keep her in school. She is highly anxious and autistic. The LA put a package in place that was really working. Then it became a financial decision to take away. I know a compromise was made for this year. However I can say without the animal care regulations she will be a full time refuser she has many health issues, and her neurodiversity makes it so hard for her to cope with the school day even specialist. She is having exposure therapy from CAHMS as she is that anxious of people and the outside world. Animal therapy has been the ONLY thing my child has connected with. She has expressed from an early age this is her chosen carer path as animals are more predictable than humans.					
No spaces in other specialist schools so she's stuck in mainstream in massive schools unless we home school, which I don't want to do but I'm on the verge as our family is falling apart, everyday is a nightmare filled with stress and anxiety and I don't know how much longer we can hold it together. School don't see this part and just look at a number of attendance. Parents are behind the scenes desperately trying to get their kids to school not just letting them stay at home laid around because it's an easy option. We want them to be in a school that makes them feel safe, heard and happy.					
This is a real issue which should be given the credit it deserves. All this marketing about 'improving attendance in schools' is fine but there are real exceptions to this rule and it is more triggering/stressful for parents doing their absolute best.					
WE WERE SO LET DOWN BY CHAMS, they wasted so much of our child's life. We had the most backward way, she made us attention her parenting with material I remember from my psychology courses and that was some time. The whole program was about a 1/4 of the training I have had.					

When did you start to have concerns around your child/young person finding attending school difficult?

School nursery, age 3	
May 2021	
March 2023	
Since September 23	
3 years ago	
When he started senior school, mainstream	
When he started nursery.	
Starting Secondary school	
Reception	
	2023
In year 7	
Year 4	

	2022
He has always struggled but still managed to attend until September 2023 when he moved up to seniors. It was too much of a big change for him and he has struggled ever since to attend	
Year6	
When he was in year 5	
2 months into year 7, October 2022	
From starting school all together	
its been going on for over a year.	
My child experienced EBSA 09/20-09/22. Prior to covid she had needed regular reset days due to poor mental health.	
Age of 3	
	2020
In primary school, around year 4	
Entering year 9	
Year 5	
Last October	
Reception	
Age 7	
At age 3	
Transitioning into secondary school.	
December 2022	
Primary school after COVID	
Year 5	
Nursery	
Primary school KS2 when independence is thrust on them age 7-8 the same time in a child's development they realise they are mortal and fears become real	
	14
Year 5	
Year 5 going into year 6 starting to refuse to attend, but had been displaying frustrated and angry behaviours (shouting, arguing and kicking car seats etc) on way home from school since y3, but displayed	
When he was four years old and started reception. He was four in June and started reception the following September.	
Around the age 6	

Is your child/ young person

On a part time timetable but often has days/weeks she does not attend.
Just started Home Education
Not attending
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
On a PT timetable currently but still not attending.
Alternate provision
in school full time
Not attending
Removed after being threatened with prosecution
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school part time
in school part time
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
Just started an apprenticeship
in school full time
Phased return
1/2 an hour a day if lucky but not doing work when in

in school full time
Not attending
in school full time
Abbey hill with Daisy chain barn 2 sessions
Not attending
In school but recent attendance is 37%
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time