

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 30 January 2018

Subject: Update on National School Absence Half Terms 1-4 2016/17

Report of: Director of Education

Summary

The report provides an update on school absence for Autumn and Spring terms 2016/17 following publication of national absence figures by the Department for Education in November and also provides an update on statutory action used to support schools in addressing absence.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Wards Affected: All

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Ensuring sufficient, high quality school places are available and in the right place helps to ensure all children and young people achieve their full potential through regular school attendance and are able to access the jobs and opportunities in the City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Good school attendance is important as it supports school attainment.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Regular attendance at high quality schools helps all children and young people to develop appropriate social skills, self respect and respect for others.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Access to good local schools providing a high quality education supports sustainable neighbourhoods and makes Manchester increasingly attractive as a place to work, live and bring up children.
A connected city: world class	

infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	
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Background Documents (available for inspection)

Young People and Children Scrutiny Committee –School Attendance 21st October 2014

1.0 Background

1.1 Manchester has made significant strides to improve school attendance over the past 6 years and these improvements have been sustained with Manchester's absence at national average since 2013/14. This has been achieved through work in schools, parental engagement and effective partnership working with the school attendance team. The majority of schools have adopted Manchester's model school attendance policy, which has been successful in providing schools with a robust structure and framework for addressing a range of attendance issues, including the use of statutory action.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The Department for Education has published school absence figures for the autumn and spring term during the 2016 /17 academic year.

2.2 Key Points

- Overall absence in Manchester primary schools has increased slightly, at the same rate as the national average. Absence in Manchester primaries continues to be the same as the national average (4.0%).
- Overall absence has not improved in Manchester secondary schools but they are still performing better than the national average (4.8%).
- The percentage of 10% persistent absentees has stayed the same in Manchester primary schools. In secondary schools, Manchester has increased in percentage of persistent absentees by 1.3 percentage points, but still remains above national average (12.1%).

3.0 Analysis

3.1 The rate of overall absence in primary schools has remained fairly steady in the autumn and spring terms from 2013/14 to 2016/17, both in Manchester and nationally. Absence rates in Manchester primary schools have remained the same as the national average for the last four academic years.

3.2 The percentage of pupils who are 10% persistent absentees (PA) in Manchester primary schools has stayed the same since 2015/16. The gap between Manchester and national rate of PA increased slightly by 0.1 percentage point to 0.8% as national PA decreased.

3.3 In secondary schools, overall absence continues to be lower than the national average and increased by 0.3 percentage points in 2016/17 Autumn and Spring terms. Nationally overall absence also increased by 0.2 percentage points making Manchester now 0.4 percentage points better than the national average.

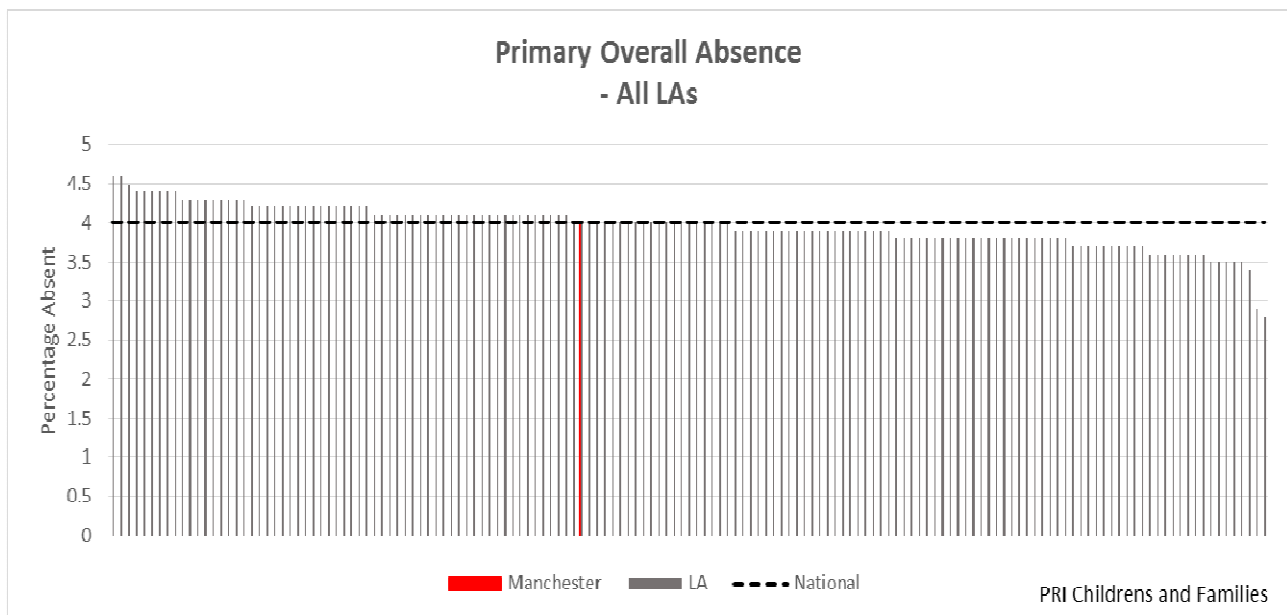
3.4 The percentage of pupils who are 10% persistent absentees in Manchester secondary schools has risen by 1.3 percentage points since the academic year 2015/16. The national average also rose by 0.5 percentage points which means that Manchester is now 0.7 percentage points better than the national average.

		Overall Absence						PA 10%		
		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 HT 1-4	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 HT 1-4
Primary	MCR	4.30 %	4.50 %	3.80 %	4.00 %	3.90 %	4.00%	9.30%	9.50 %	9.50%
	England	4.40 %	4.70 %	3.80 %	4.00 %	3.90 %	4.00%	8.40%	8.80 %	8.70%
	Gap	0.10 %	0.20 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00%	0.90%	0.70 %	0.80%
Secondary	MCR	6.70 %	6.00 %	5.10 %	5.10 %	4.50 %	4.80%	13.80 %	10.80 %	12.10%
	England	5.90 %	5.80 %	5.10 %	5.20 %	5.00 %	5.20%	13.80 %	12.30 %	12.80%
	Gap	0.80 %	0.20 %	0.00 %	0.10 %	0.50 %	-0.40%	0.00%	1.50 %	-0.70%

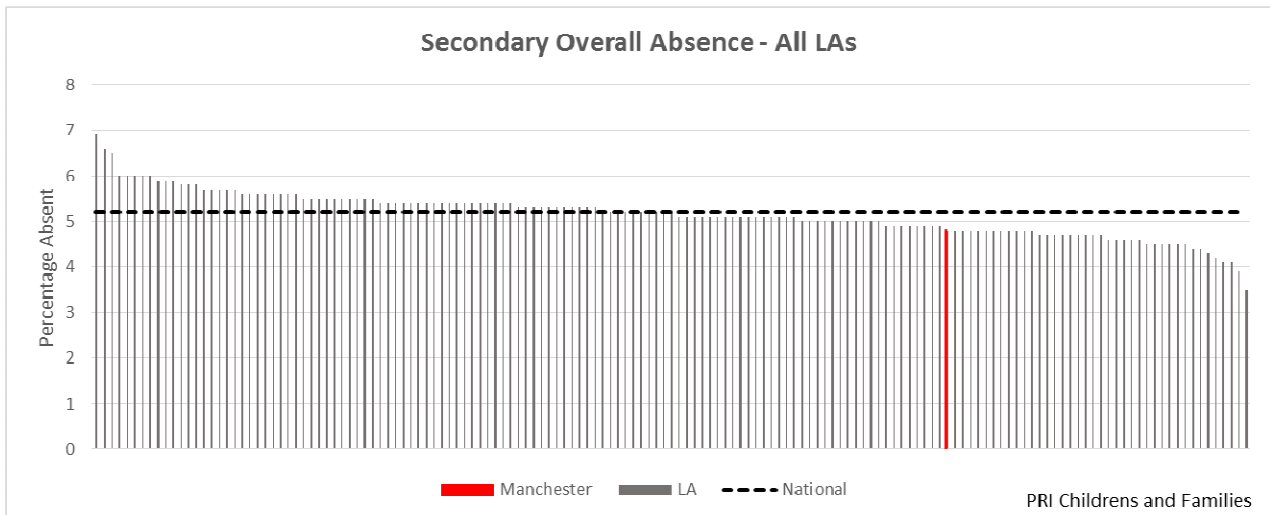
4.0 Comparisons to Other Local Authorities

Overall Absence

4.1 The following graphs show the position of Manchester relative to all other Local Authorities in England for overall and persistent absence in primary and secondary schools. In primary schools the Manchester average continues to be level with the national average and ranks 61 out of 150 authorities for lowest overall absence.

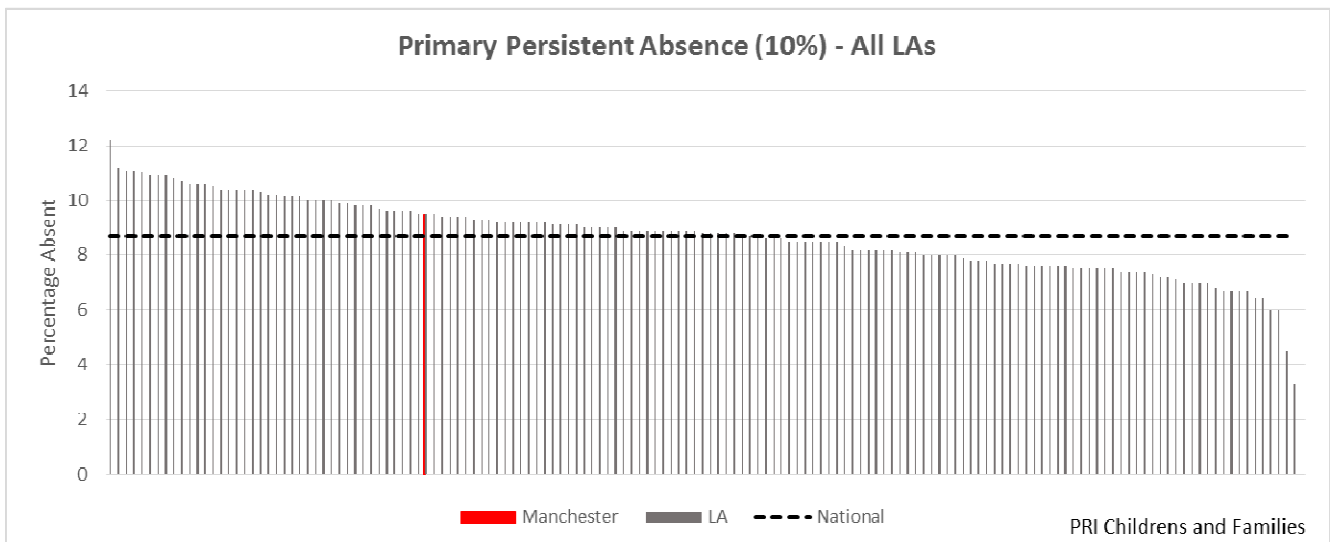


In secondary schools, the rate of absence has dropped further and is now 0.4 percentage points below the national average. Therefore Manchester now ranks 112th out of 150 local authorities for the lowest overall absence.

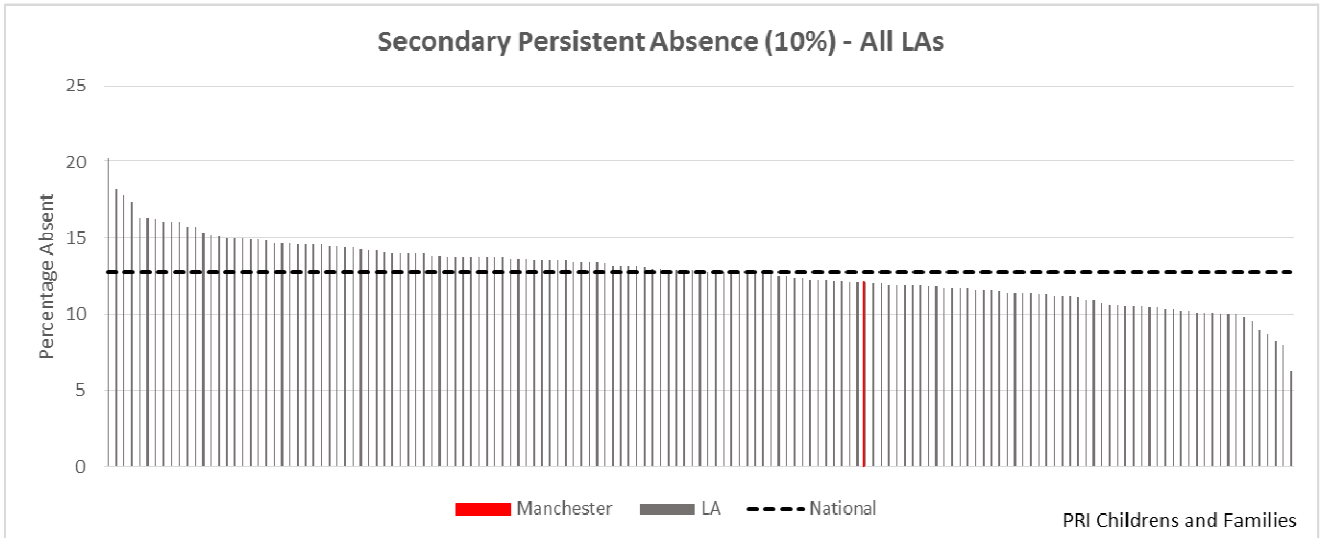


Persistent Absence (PA)

4.2 In Manchester, PA has stayed the same in primary schools and increased in secondary schools in 2016/17 Autumn and Spring terms. Primary schools saw the percentage of pupils classified as being persistently absent remain the same whilst nationally it decreased by 0.1 percentage points, widening the gap to national at 0.80%. Relative to other local authorities, Manchester now ranks 40th highest for primary PA.



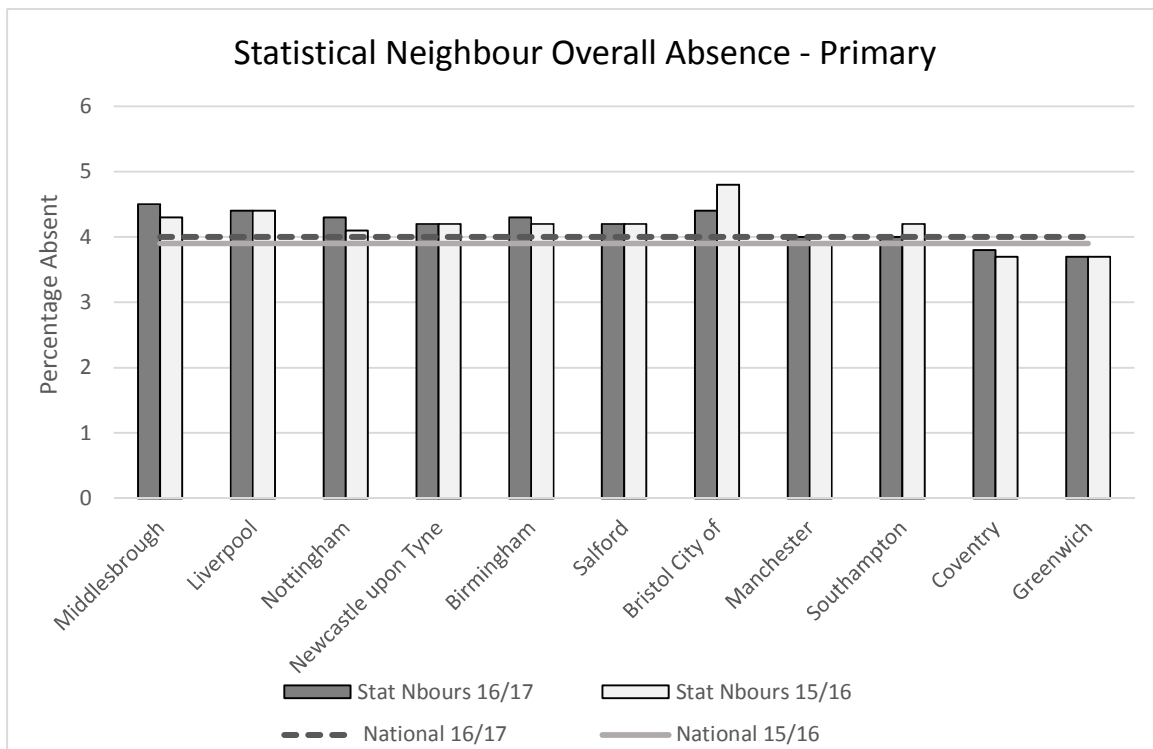
4.3 In Manchester secondary schools, the percentage of pupils classified as persistently absent has risen by 1.30 percentage points but remains lower than the national average by 0.7 percentage points. Manchester is now ranked 95th for lowest rates of PA across the 150 local authorities

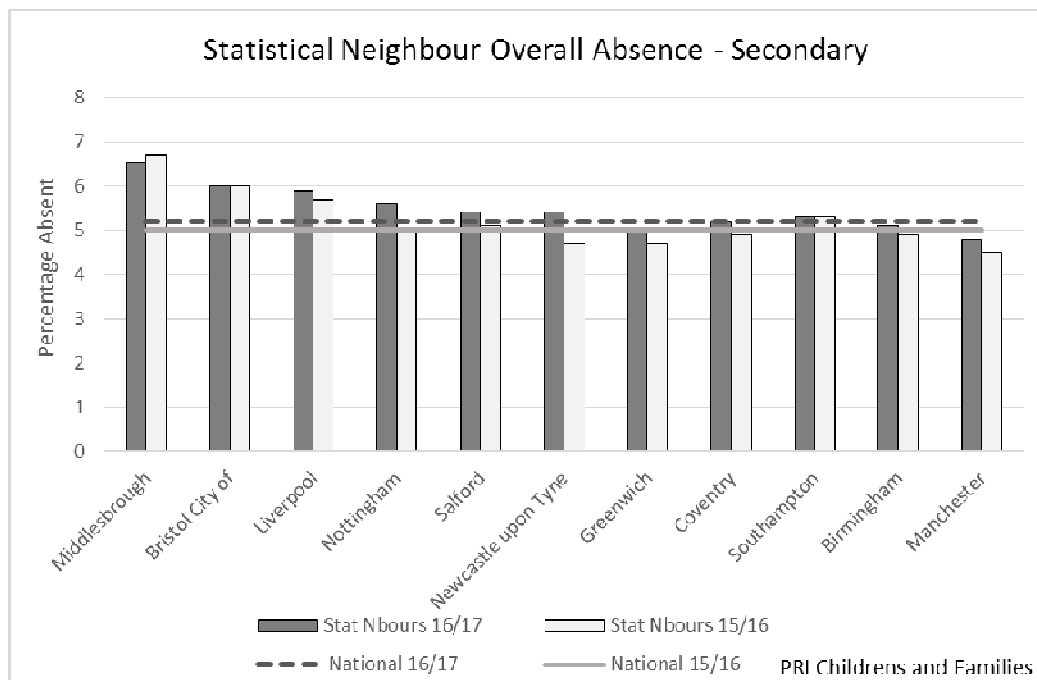


5.0 Statistical Neighbours

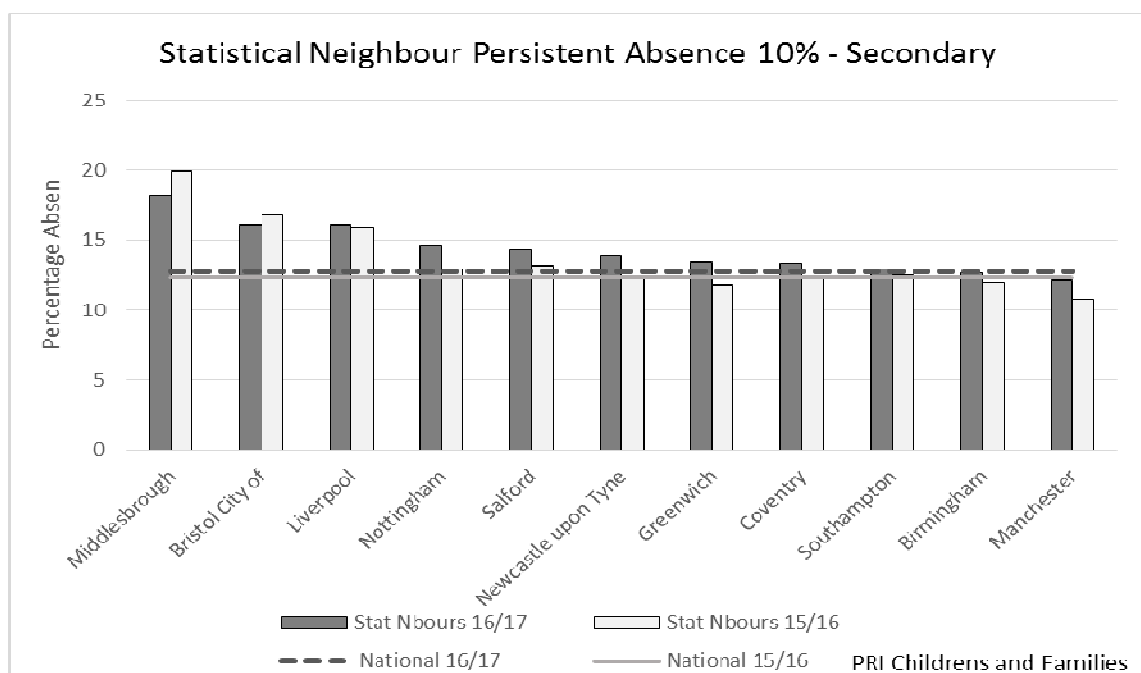
5.1 Compared with our statistical neighbours, Manchester has the joint third lowest rate of absence in primary schools (4%) and the lowest in secondary schools (4.8%). The pattern is similar for the percentage of PA pupils, with Manchester primary schools having the 4th lowest level of PA (9.5%) and secondary schools having the lowest (12.1%) amongst the statistical neighbour authorities.

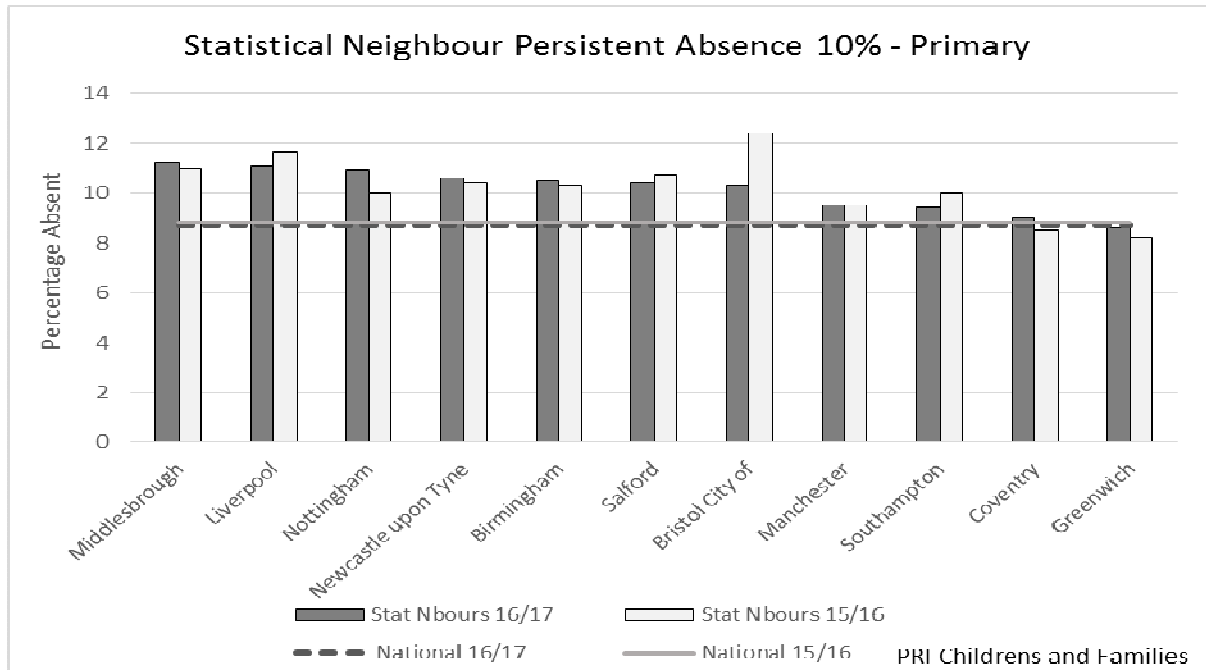
5.2 Overall Absence





5.3 Persistent Absence

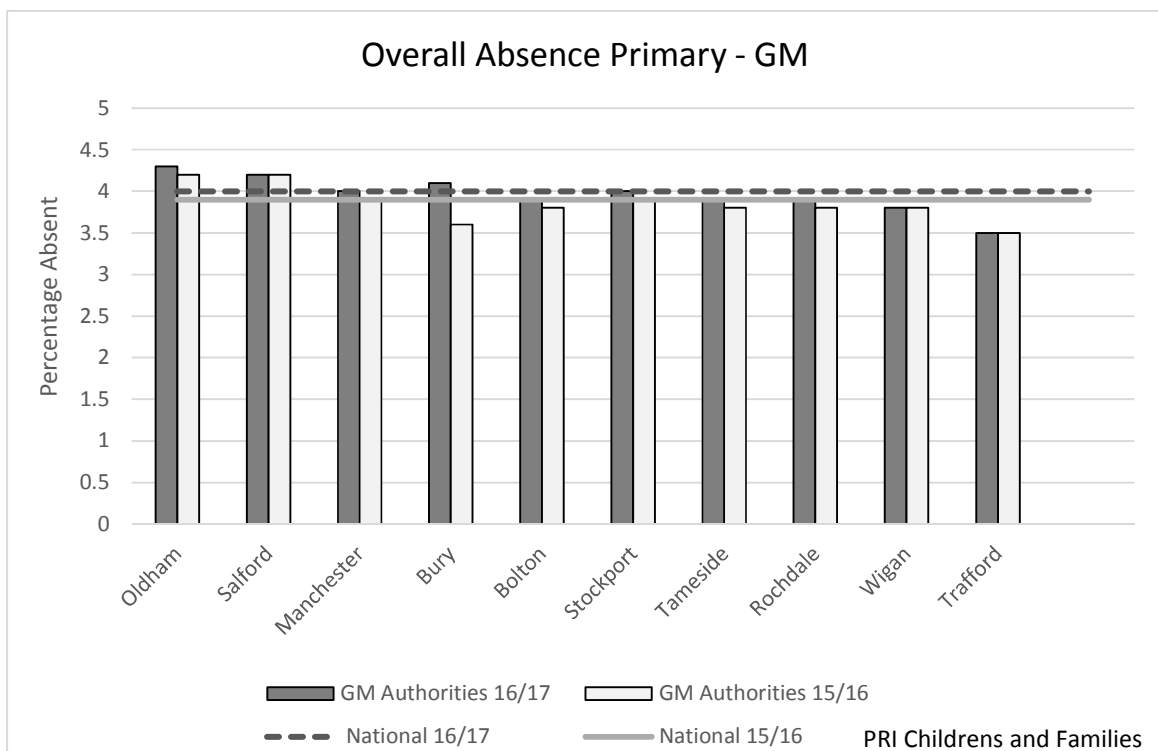


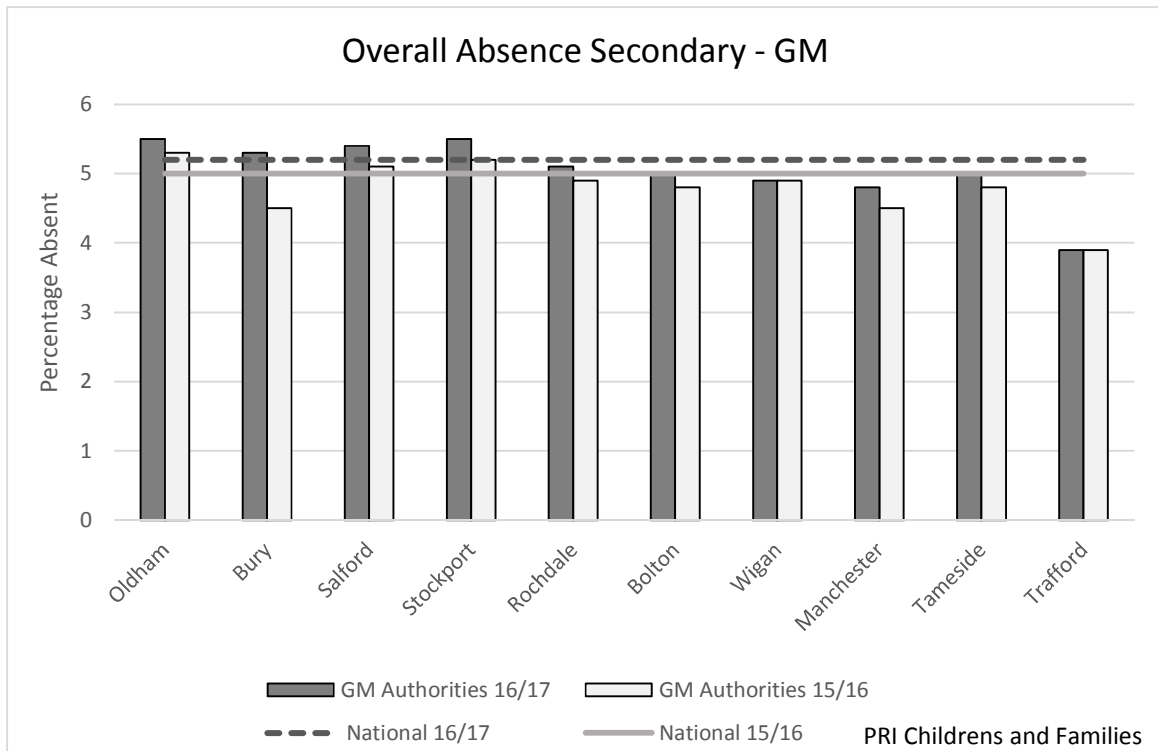


6.0 Greater Manchester

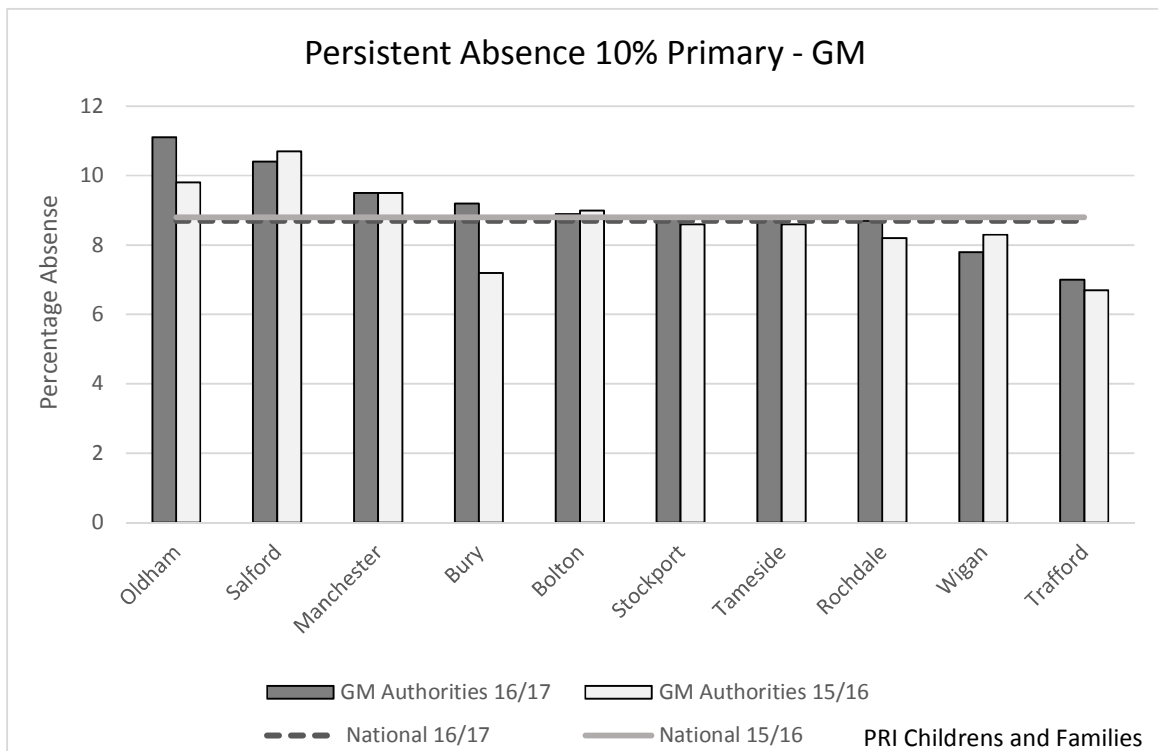
6.1 At Greater Manchester (GM) level, Manchester has the third highest percentage of overall primary absence and persistent absence, and the third lowest for overall secondary absence and persistent absence.

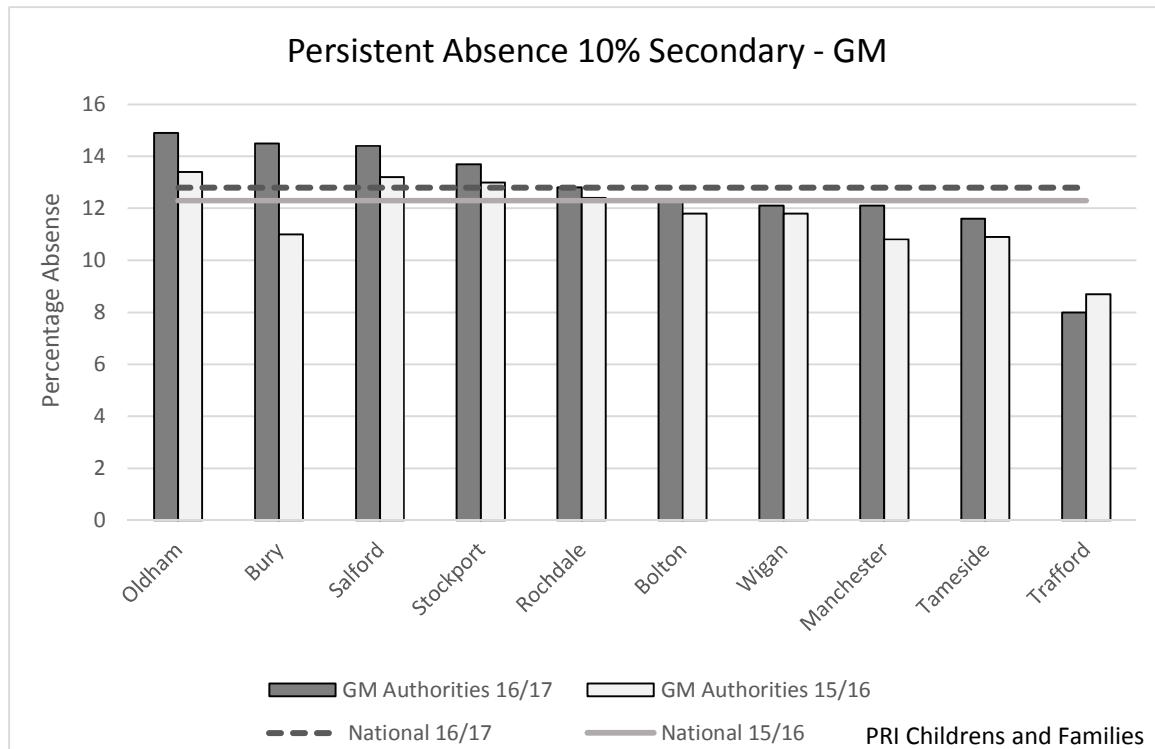
6.2 Overall Absence





6.3 Persistent Absence





7.0 Statutory Action

7.1 The school attendance team has a robust electronic process in place where schools can request statutory action for unauthorised absence starting from 5 sessions of absence (2.5 days). This can result in the issue of a penalty notice, prosecution or a formal caution.

7.2 There has been an increase in statutory action requests from schools in the last 2 years. The majority of schools now request statutory action, which demonstrates how schools are challenging absence and this has impacted on the sustained reduction in absence seen across the city.

Penalty Notices

7.3 The figures below show the increase in penalty notices issued over the last 5 years but there was a decline in 2016/17, which is perceived to be due to the 'Platt vs Isle of Wight' case which eventually went to the Supreme Court and was upheld in April 2017.

12/13 - 1050
 13/14 - 1911
 14/15 - 3570
 15/16 - 4540
 16/17 - 3089
 17/18 - 1400 to date

Direct Court Cases

7.4 Numbers of cases heard in court related to school absence for 2016/17 was 592. This number has reduced since 2013/14 as a result of schools intervening earlier to address school absence.

12/13 - 504
13/14 - 733
14/15 - 676
15/16 - 586
16/17 - 592

7.5 In April 2016, a new process was introduced for schools submitting a case for a direct prosecution. Schools are now required to demonstrate the support and actions they have taken before a case for prosecution is authorised. If the evidence provided by schools fits the criteria for a prosecution parents are invited to attend a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) meeting. Based on the information and evidence provided at PACE one of the following decisions are made:

- Schools are informed to continue with a case for prosecution
- A formal caution will be offered to the parent
- An agreement is made with the school for the parent to enter/engage with a early help assessment
- The case is returned to the school as more evidence is required

7.6 If an early help assessment is agreed an officer in the early help hub will work closely with the school and parent to support improved attendance. This is monitored for 6 weeks and if there is no engagement the case will proceed to court.

7.7 From September 2016 to August 2017 274 PACE notifications were requested by schools. From these:

- 94 proceeded to prosecution
- 15 entered into an early help assessment
- 21 received a penalty notice
- 36 received a warning letter
- 27 cases were withdrawn
- 14 cases are still pending- awaiting further evidence
- 53 PACE interviews are pending
- 14 formal cautions were offered

8.0 Conclusion and next steps

8.1 School attendance in Manchester continues to compare well nationally and with other Local Authorities. However, schools in Manchester working in partnership with the Local Authority and others are committed to continuing to improve school attendance. To support schools to continue to improve attendance the Local Authority will:

- Continue to deliver training to schools on an annual basis as well as termly attendance clinics;
- Take action with schools where there are anomalies in registration practices and where there is the inappropriate use of coding;
- Monitor schools use of part time timetables for pupils and take action where necessary;
- Offer schools an attendance audit to support them in improving systems and processes to reduce absence;
- Offer training on the Manchester Attendance Model to schools where there are new staff responsible for attendance;
- Continue to embed the processes that support the early help offer prior to taking statutory action;
- Identify schools where absence is below the national average and offer bespoke support and advice.