

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 4 September 2019

**Subject:** Update on National School Absence 2017/18 and Autumn Term 2018/19, Manchester’s Provisional Absence Data for HT1-5 2018/19 and School Attendance Statutory Action

**Report of:** Director of Education

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**Summary**

This report provides an update on the school absence for the academic 2017/18 comparing Manchester’s school absence data with national. It also reports on the national absence data for the autumn term 2018/19 for primary and secondary schools and Manchester’s provisional school absence data for HT1-5 in 2018/19. The report shows overall, Manchester school attendance was better than national in 2017/18 and provisional data for 2018/19 shows that attendance and persistent absence is likely to be better than national for both primary and secondary schools. The Local Authority works in partnership with schools and uses a range of statutory powers as well as other interventions including access to Early Help to ensure that children in the City attend school regularly. Attendance of pupils with SEND remains lower than for pupils without SEND and attendance at special school continues to be lower than national. Consequently, work with both special and mainstream school to improve attendance of pupils with SEN remains a key area of focus.

**Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider and comment on the information and review the next steps within the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Improving educational outcomes will contribute to Manchester’s young people becoming happy, safe and highly skilled and have increased life chances. Improved educational outcomes will enable Manchester’s young people to contribute to the economic growth and take advantage of the job opportunities created.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city’s economic	Improving educational outcomes amongst the Manchester school population is essential for young people to gain qualifications and contribute

success	to Manchester's economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Analysis of pupil groups' attainment allows for identification of priorities with the aim of improving attainment outcomes for all children and particularly children eligible for Free School meals, disadvantaged children, children with SEND. Improving attainment outcomes will ensure all young people have the best possible opportunity to succeed.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	An improving school system will make Manchester an attractive place to live and work. Investment in modern, energy efficient and high quality education infrastructure drives reductions in carbon across the estate of schools.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Continued improvements in education will enhance the City's attractiveness to potential residents and contribute to the development of high quality neighbourhoods.

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Update on National School Absence HT1-4 2016/17 report to Young People and Children's Scrutiny Committee 5 December 2017.

## **1.0 Background**

The Department for Education (DfE) published national school absence in May 2019 for the academic year 2017/18 and the Autumn Term 2018/19. Manchester's provisional absence data for half terms 1-5 2018/19 has also been released but the national data for this academic year 2018/19 will not be published until May 2020.

## **1.1 Introduction**

School attendance in Manchester continues to be strength of the city and significant strides have been made to achieve improved levels of school attendance over the past 6 years. The majority of schools have adopted Manchester's model school attendance policy which has provided them with a robust and structured framework to work with. There is ongoing communication from the Local Authority attendance team with schools throughout the year to support them with a range of attendance matters either through direct support in school, workshops, attendance support helpline, modelling good practices to engage parents and city wide attendance conferences. Successful partnership working with the Early Help Hubs and the school attendance team has also provided schools with an invaluable resource in supporting with families that have a range of complex issues affecting their child/ren's level of attendance.

## **1.2 Summary**

Overall absence rates in Manchester's primary and secondary schools are below the national average figures for 2017/18. A pupil is deemed to be persistent absent (PA) if they have missed at least 10% of school sessions at any point in the school year. The rate of persistent absence increased across all school phases in 2017/18, however this rate of increase was reflected at a national level. Manchester's secondary schools continue to be below the national average for persistent absence (PA) but PA rate for primary schools is above the national average.

The national data for overall absence in 2017/18 for pupils in primary schools receiving SEN support is the same as the national average and for pupils in secondary schools it is below the national average. The PA rate for pupils receiving SEN support in primary schools is above the national average and for secondary schools is below the national average. The PA rate for pupils in primary school with an EHCP is below the national average, however for secondary school pupils the PA rate is above the national average.

Manchester's provisional data for half terms 1 to 5 in 2018/19 shows that overall absence has improved compared with the same period in 2017-18. In primary schools, overall absence has decreased and in secondary schools overall absence has increased in 2018-19.

Manchester's persistent absence rate for primary schools has improved for half terms 1-5 2018/19, compared with the published DfE figures for Manchester in the Autumn term 2018/19.

For secondary schools, persistent absence has increased compared with the published DfE figures for Manchester for Autumn term 2018/19 but is 0.21 percentage points below the national average.

## 2.0 Validated National Absence data 2017/18 and Autumn Term 18/19 - Overall Absence

The national data for 2017/18 shows increased absence in secondary and special schools but absence has remained the same for primary schools. However, in Manchester overall absence for all schools remains one percentage point below the national average at 4.7%, despite a one percentage point increase in 2017/18.

### 2.1 Primary and Secondary Schools

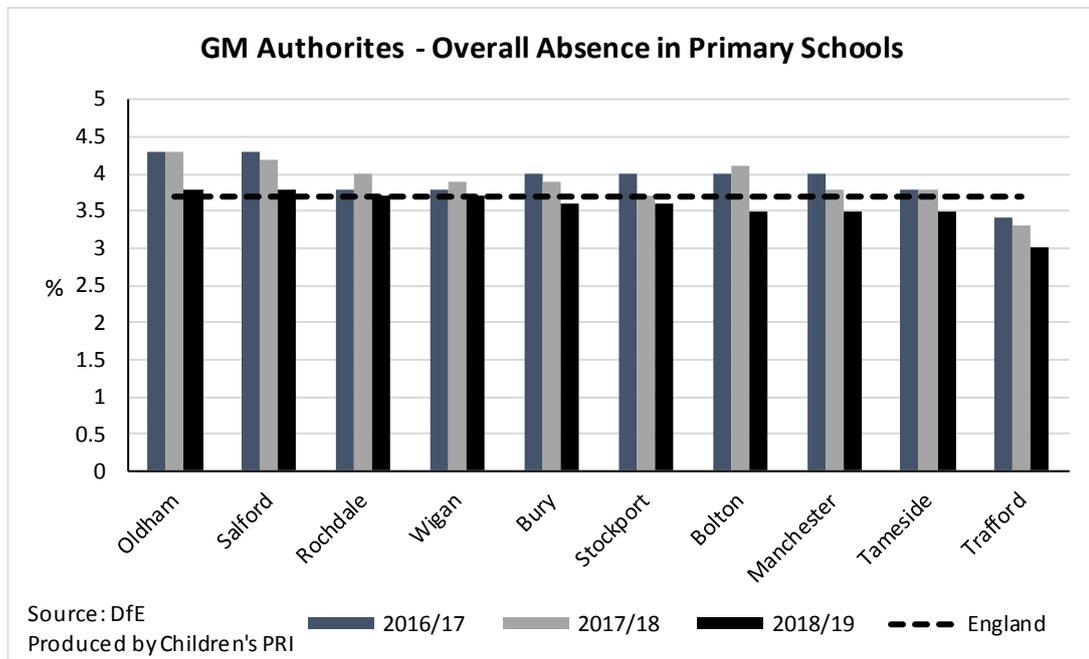
Overall absence in Manchester primary schools for 2017/18 was 4.10% and is below the national average of 4.20 %. The autumn term data for 2018/19 also shows that overall absence is 3.5%, again below the national average at 3.7%.

There was an increase in overall absence in secondary schools in 2017/18 compared to the same period in 2016/17. Overall absence in 2016/17 was 4.9% and increased to 5.2% in 2017/18. This increase was reflected on national level and therefore Manchester's overall absence was still lower than the national average, respectively at 4.9% and 5.2%. There was also an increase in overall absence in Autumn term 2018/19 compared to the same period in 2017/18. The autumn term data for 2018/19 is 4.6% compared to 4.5% in 2017/18 but still lower than the national average at 4.9% for both these periods of time.

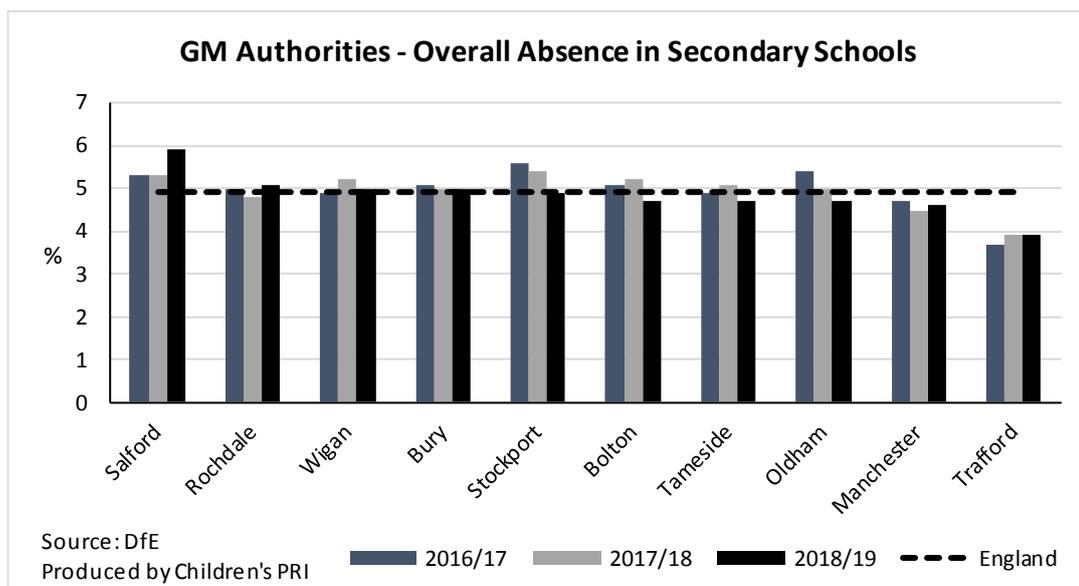
		Overall Absence					
		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2017/18 HT1-2	2018/19 HT1-2
Primary	Manchester	4.0%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	3.8%	3.5%
	England	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.2%	3.9%	3.7%
	Gap	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	-0.1%	-0.1%	-0.2%
Secondary	Manchester	5.2%	4.9%	4.9%	5.2%	4.5%	4.6%
	England	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	5.5%	5.0%	4.9%
	Gap	-0.1%	-0.3%	-0.3%	-0.3%	-0.5%	-0.3%

## 2.2 Greater Manchester Authorities

Compared with other authorities in Greater Manchester (GM), absence in Manchester primary schools is third lowest in the area, with Tameside and Trafford having lower absence rates. All GM authorities have improved their rate of absence compared with 2017/18.



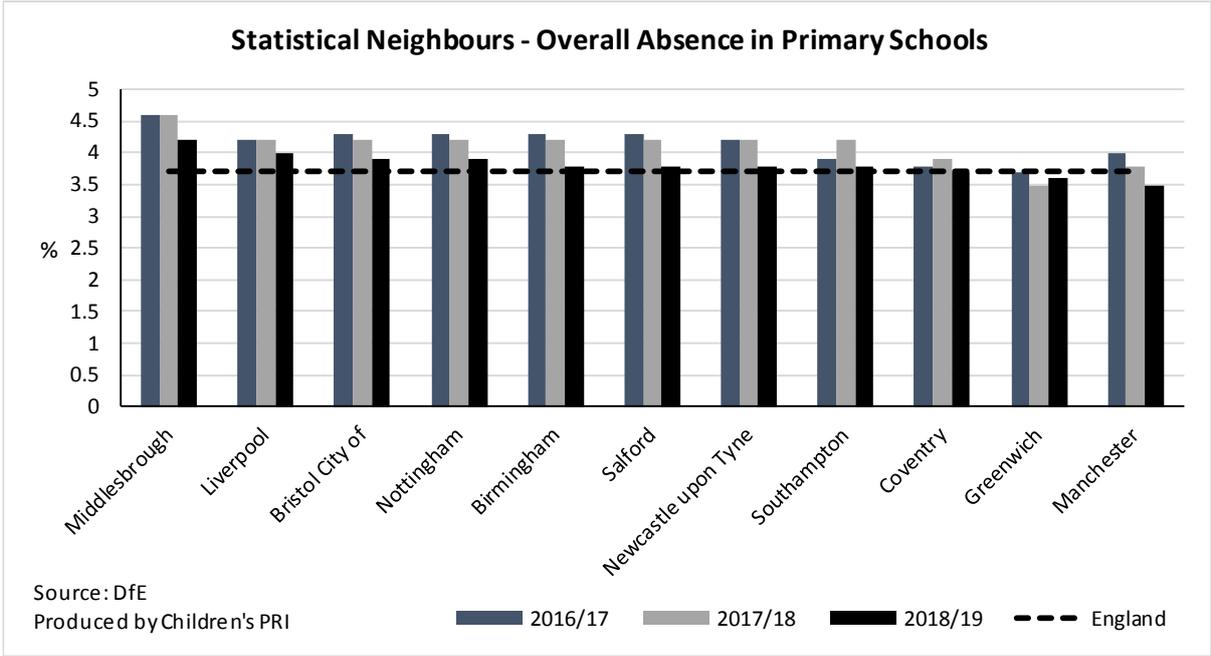
In secondary schools, Manchester has the lowest rate of overall absence amongst the ten greater Manchester authorities with only Trafford having a lower level of absence. Bolton, Manchester, Trafford are the only authorities with rates of absence below the national average in 2018/19.



### 2.3 Statistical Neighbours

Compared with our statistical neighbours Manchester has the second lowest rate of absence in both primary and secondary schools which is extremely positive.

Compared with statistical neighbour authorities, primary absence in Manchester is the lowest. This is an improvement compared to 2016/17 and 2017/18 where Manchester was above the national average. Only Manchester and Greenwich have rates of absence below the national average.



Manchester has the second lowest level of absence in secondary school. Manchester, along with Nottingham, Birmingham and Greenwich have rates of absence that are lower than the national average.

### 3.0 Validated National School Absence 2017/18 and Autumn Term 2018/19 - Persistent Absence (PA)

In 2017/18 the percentage of persistent absence (PA) in all Manchester schools was higher than the national average by 0.1 percentage points. The percentage of PA in 2017/18 has increased in Manchester's primary schools and remains higher than the national average. In secondary schools the PA increased but still remains below the national average in 2017/18. The national data for PA in the autumn term 2018/19 for primary and secondary has improved and is better than the national average.

#### 3.1 Primary and Secondary Schools

The persistent absence rate in primary schools was 9.5% in 2017/18. This is an increase from 2016/17 of 1.10% where the figure was 9.40%. Despite this increase the rate of persistent in 2018/19 for the autumn term was 9.1 % which at this point in time is the lowest rate of PA for the past four years.

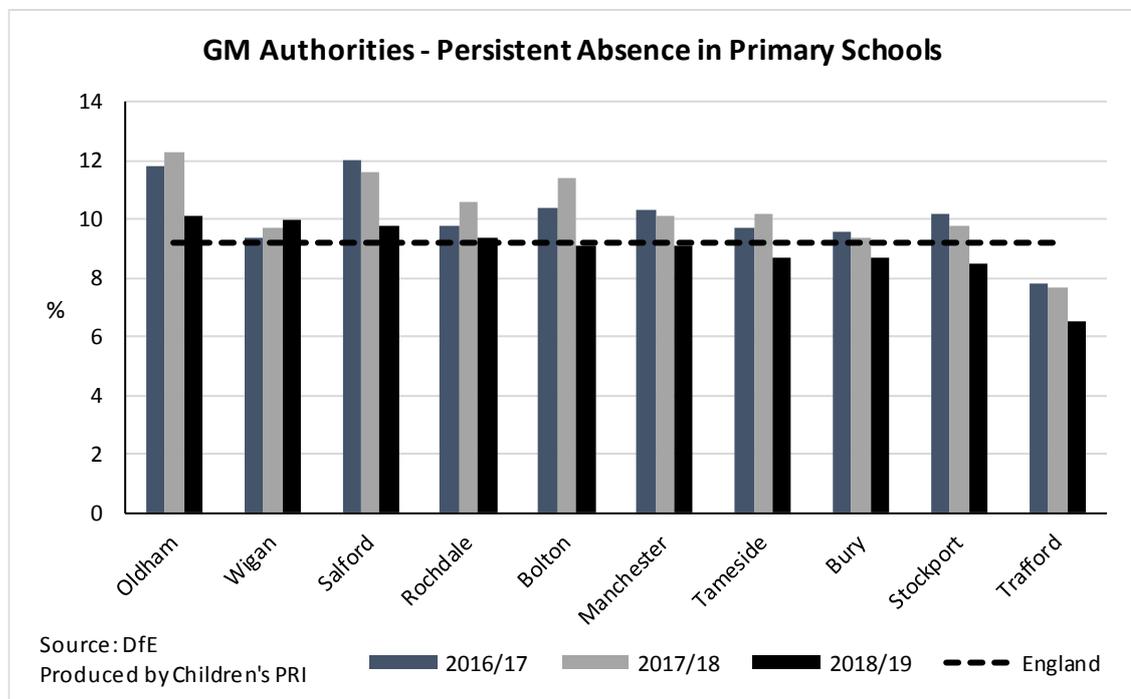
Persistent absence continues to be higher than the national average in 2017/18 of 8.70 but the gap with the national has narrowed.

In 2017/18 the rate of PA in secondary schools was 13.1%, an increase of 0.8%. Despite this increase Manchester's secondary schools' PA figures were still below the national average at 13.1% compared to the national average of 13.90%. Manchester's rate has seen a smaller increase than nationally so the gap with the national has widened to 0.8 percentage points.

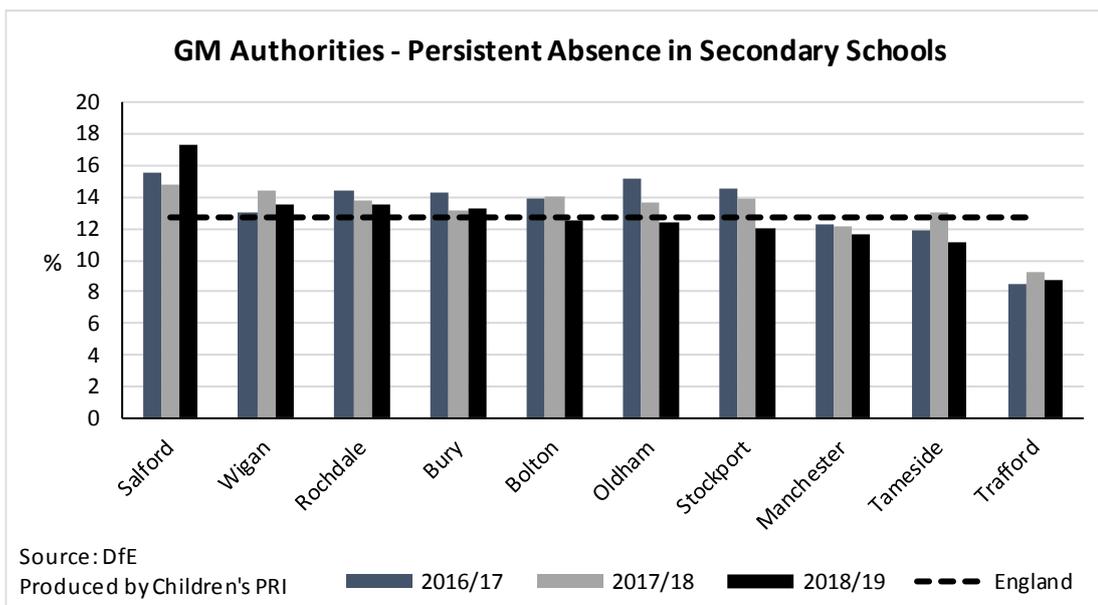
		10% Persistent Absence					
		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2017/18 HT1-2	2018/19 HT1-2
Primary	Manchester	9.3%	9.4%	9.4%	9.5%	10.1%	9.1%
	England	8.4%	8.2%	8.3%	8.7%	10.1%	9.2%
	Gap	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>
Secondary	Manchester	13.8%	12.1%	13.0%	13.1%	12.2%	11.7%
	England	13.8%	13.1%	13.5%	13.9%	13.3%	12.7%
	Gap	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>

### 3.2 Greater Manchester Authorities

At a Greater Manchester (GM) level Manchester has the sixth lowest rate of persistent absence in primary schools and the third lowest rate of absence in secondary schools. The PA rate of absence for primary schools is above the national average compared to Tameside, Stockport, Wigan and Trafford.

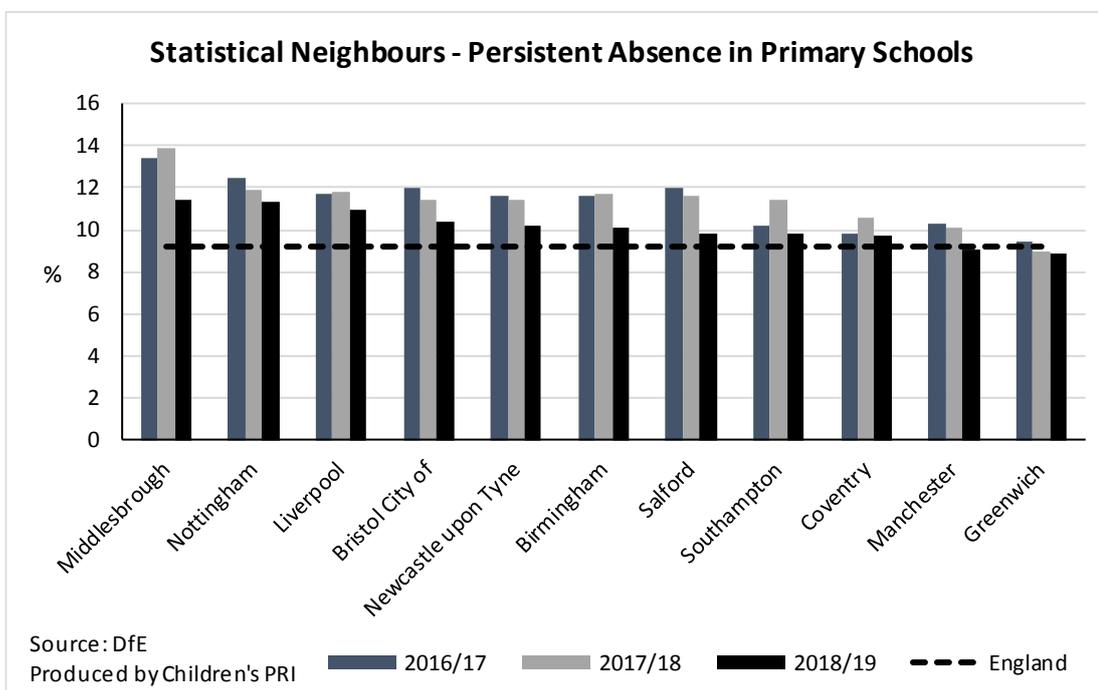


Whilst there has been an increase in the rate of PA for secondary schools Manchester has remained below the national average for the past three years.

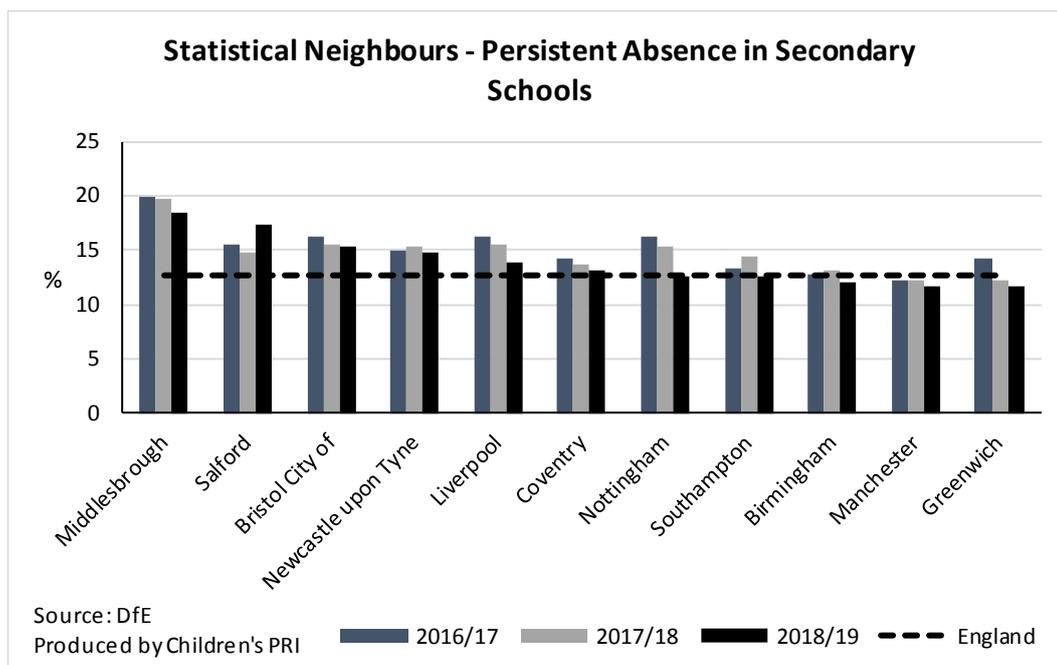


### 3.3 Statistical Neighbours

Compared with the statistical neighbour authorities, Manchester primary schools have the second lowest rate of persistent absence with only Greenwich having a lower rate. These are the only statistical neighbours to have a rate of persistent absence lower than the national average.



Manchester's secondary schools have the second lowest rate of persistent absence compared with their statistical neighbour authorities. Despite the fact that Greenwich has the lowest rate of PA for the Autumn term 2018/19, Manchester has consistently remained below the national average for the past three years.



#### 4.0 National School Absence 2017/18 - Pupils with Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND)

Improving the attendance of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is a key priority for Manchester. The absence rates for pupils in special schools remains higher than the national average for pupils with SEN support and for those with an EHCP. The absence data for special schools shows that absence for pupils with SEN support is above the national average - 22.40% compared to the national average of 19.90%. For pupils with an EHCP, absence in Manchester is 12.40% compared to the national average at 10.00%.

#### 4.1 Overall Absence for pupils with SEND

Pupils receiving SEN support or those who have an EHCP in Manchester and nationally have a higher rate of absence than those without SEND. The national absence rates for both of these groups, SEN and EHCP have increased over the past three years with an overall absence rate absence rate of 6.3%, across all school phases.

The national data published in 2017/18 for overall absence in primary schools in Manchester shows that pupils with SEN support is the same as the national average at 5.50% and those who have an EHCP is below the national average at 6.70% compared to 6.80%.

		Primary		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	5.40%	5.30%	5.50%
	EHCP	5.90%	6.70%	6.70%
	No SEND	3.90%	3.80%	3.80%
National	SEN Support	5.30%	5.40%	5.50%
	EHCP	6.40%	6.60%	6.80%
	No SEND	3.80%	3.80%	3.90%

For pupils in secondary school overall absence for pupils with SEN support is also lower than the national average at 7.70 % compared to the national average at 8.00%. There is, however an increase in absence for pupils with an EHCP where absence is higher than the national average at 9.50% compared to 8.20%.

		Secondary		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	7.90%	7.70%	7.70%
	EHCP	8.10%	8.50%	9.50%
	No SEND	4.50%	4.70%	4.80%
National	SEN Support	7.50%	7.70%	8.00%
	EHCP	7.30%	7.70%	8.20%
	No SEND	4.80%	5.00%	5.10%

The absence rates for pupils in special schools remains to be higher than the national average for pupils with SEN support and for those with an EHCP.

		Special		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	20.80%	22.40%	22.40%
	EHCP	10.00%	11.40%	12.40%
	No SEND			
National	SEN Support	19.40%	20.50%	19.90%
	EHCP	8.80%	9.40%	10.00%
	No SEND			

#### 4.2 Persistent Absence for pupils with SEND

In 2017/18, pupils in mainstream primary schools receiving SEN support have a PA rate of 15.20%, which is higher than the national average of 14.80%. The picture is different for pupils with an EHCP where the PA rate in Manchester is lower than the national average at 19.40% compared to the national average of 20.00%.

		Primary		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	14.90%	14.70%	15.20%
	EHCP	17.70%	18.70%	19.40%
	No SEND	7.80%	7.70%	7.90%
National	SEN Support	14.00%	14.30%	14.80%
	EHCP	18.70%	19.20%	20.00%
	No SEND	6.90%	6.90%	7.20%

This is reversed at secondary school where for pupils receiving SEN support in mainstream secondary the PA rate is 22.40% which is better than the national average of 23.60%. However, the PA rate for pupils with an EHCP attending secondary mainstream is 30.20 which is higher than the national average.

		Secondary		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	23.50%	22.90%	22.40%
	EHCP	22.90%	23.50%	30.20%
	No SEND	10.20%	11.10%	11.10%
National	SEN Support	22.40%	22.90%	23.40%
	EHCP	21.60%	22.20%	23.60%
	No SEND	11.30%	11.80%	12.20%

The PA rate for pupils attending a special school receiving SEN support is 54.80%, higher than the national average which is 52.30%. For pupils with an EHCP the PA rate in Manchester is 32.60% compared to the national average of 28.90%.

		Special		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Manchester	SEN Support	60.00%	50.00%	54.80%
	EHCP	30.60%	31.20%	32.60%
	No SEND			
National	SEN Support	50.30%	52.60%	52.30%
	EHCP	25.80%	27.50%	28.90%
	No SEND			

#### 4.3 Next Steps to improve school attendance for pupils with SEND

4.4 The attendance team held a SEND Attendance conference for all schools in June 2019. The aim of the conference was to provide schools with practical advice and resources that will support them in improving the attendance of pupils with SEND. Key speakers delivered presentations which explored the

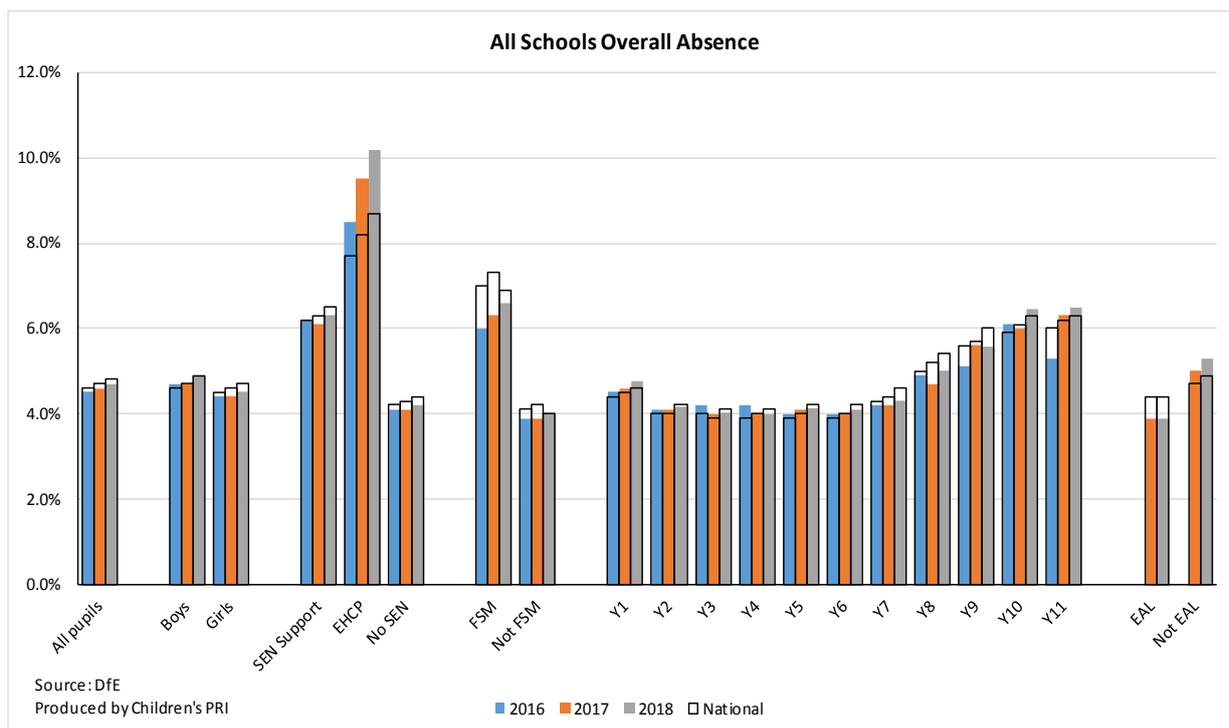
barriers pupils and families face on a daily basis in school and at home, which prevents them from achieving good and sustained attendance. The speakers shared a range of strategies/interventions to support pupils on the autistic spectrum and the characteristics and early signs of pupils at risk of NEET. Schools were also briefed on their legal obligations on off rolling pupils, pupils on part time tables, and the correct use codes to record attendance and absence.

- 4.5 The conference promoted insightful discussions between schools during the day. Schools identified that further training would be beneficial in supporting pupils with SEND, to improve attendance and most importantly to ensure that these pupils have a positive experience in school. Additional training was requested by schools for pupils with social, emotional, mental health issues (SEMH), pupils on the autistic spectrum, safeguarding, working with parents and challenging expectations for pupils with SEN. The planning for these workshops will be taking place during the summer holidays and be delivered in the autumn term.
- 4.6 A SENCO network was also held in June 2019, again with a focus on improving school attendance. The main themes from the network were that good communication is a key factor between schools and families to improve attendance. Schools were informed that it is critical to offer flexible packages of support in order to achieve improved attendance. They must also be prepared to take statutory action when all other avenues have been explored and failed. The key message being that – young people with SEND have a right to be in school.
- 4.7 All schools, including special schools where there is poor attendance have also received targeted support from the attendance team. Joint attendance panels with schools and the local authority have been conducted in many schools across the city. The panels have been held to improve the attendance for specific cohorts of pupils with persistent absence, pupils with SEND with a particular focus on social, emotional and mental health and school refusers. The presence of a local authority officer supporting these meetings, has in many cases improved the attendance of pupils, promoted positive communication and engaged parents in early help. Schools are encouraged to monitor the attendance of pupils and refer cases back to the school attendance team if attendance continues to decline. In these cases, parents are asked to attend a meeting at the town hall and are warned that statutory action may be taken.
- 4.8 The attendance team has also worked closely with special schools in modelling effective clear communication with parents in school and during home visits, writing chronologies and casework management where pupils have significant levels of absence. This work will continue in the next academic year and a template of effective and proactive questioning along with step by step guidance on improving attendance will be drawn up in partnership with schools to use.

4.9 The attendance team have modified Manchester's Model Attendance policy and produced a Disaggregated Attendance Policy for special schools. Special schools use the disaggregated register (DR) when a pupil has an EHCP and is unable to attend due to specific needs outlined in their plan. The school, in partnership with the pupil, parents and other services involved decide on an achievable level of attendance which is reviewed on a regular basis. This approach positively engages the pupil and parents in trying to achieve aspirational levels of attendance and it has proved to motivate pupils to sustain improved levels of attendance. The DR does not replace the official school register and attendance/absence is recorded in line with DfE legislation.

## **5.0 Validated National School Absence 2017/18 - Other Pupil Characteristics**

- 5.1 Other pupil characteristics published and reported on are absence rates for gender, pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), pupils whose home language is other than English (EAL) and absence rates in in year groups.
- 5.2 Boys have a higher rate of absence, compared with girls. In 2018, the rate of absence for boys in Manchester and nationally was the same at 4.9%, while the absence of Manchester girls was lower, at 4.5%, and 0.2 percentage points below girls nationally.
- 5.3 Both in Manchester and nationally, pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) have a higher rate of absence than those who are not eligible. Manchester's FSM pupils have a lower rate of absence than FSM pupils nationally by 0.2 percentage points, at 6.6%. There is no difference between the absence rates of the Manchester and national non-FSM pupils.
- 5.4 Years 2 and 3 have the best attendance rate out of the year groups at 4% and Years 10 and 11 have the highest absence at 6.5%. In general, most year groups in Manchester have a better absence rate than the national equivalent group. The exceptions to this are Years 1, 10 and 11 where the gap to national is 0.2 percentage points. The year group with the best difference is Year 7 which is 0.3 percentage points better than national.
- 5.5 Pupils whose home language is other than English (EAL) have a better rate of absence than their English speaking counterparts. The rate of absence for EAL pupils in Manchester, 3.9%, is better than the national EAL cohort by 0.5 percentage points and that for all pupils.



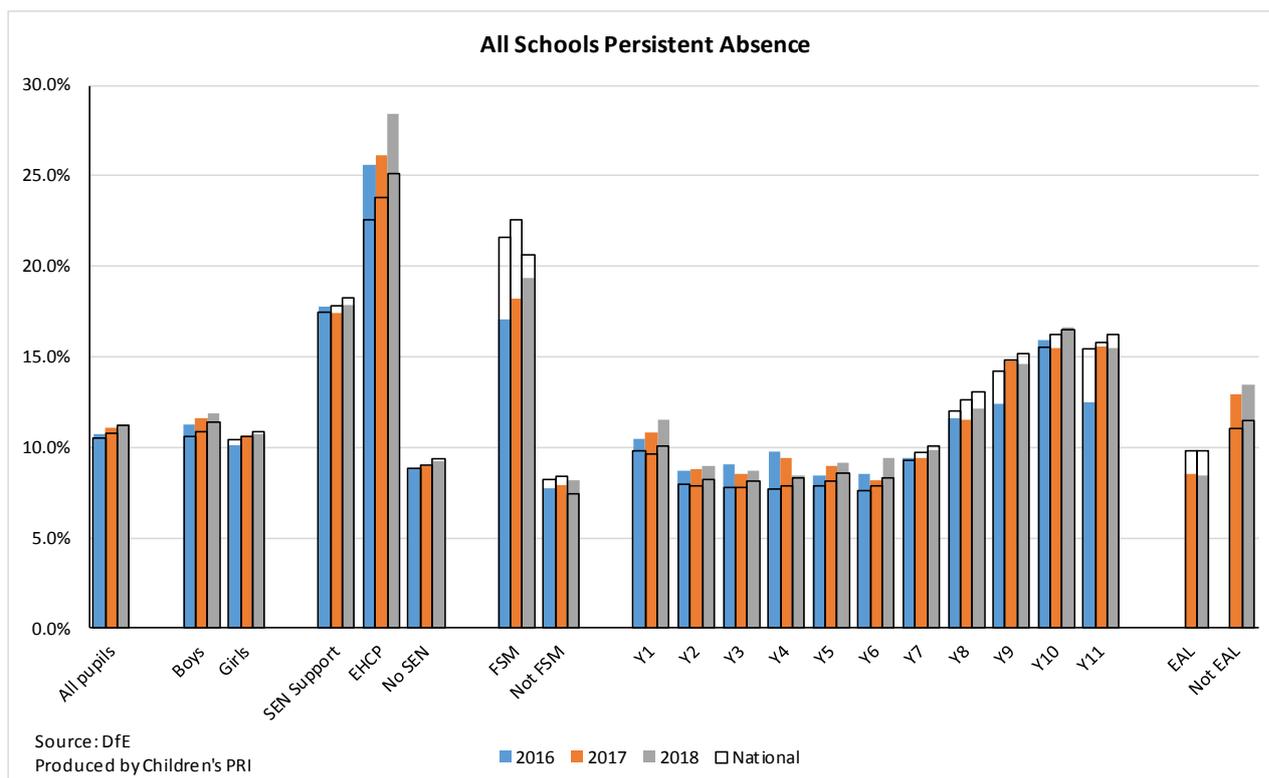
## 5.6 Persistent Absence and pupil characteristics

5.7 The rate of persistent absence for boys in Manchester is higher than for girls, 11.9% compared with 10.7%. This mirrors the national picture, but Manchester's girls have a lower rate of PA than national (10.9%) while the PA rate for Manchester's boys is higher than national (11.4%).

5.8 The rate of PA for Manchester's pupils eligible for FSM, at 19.4%, is 1.2 percentage points better than the national cohort of 20.6%, although the gap has narrowed since 2017. In 2017, the rate for PA for pupils not eligible for FSM in Manchester was below the national average, at 7.9%, compared with 8.4%. This reversed in 2018 with the Manchester rate of 8.14% for non FSM pupils being 0.74 percentage points higher than the national average of 7.4%.

5.9 Year 10 has the highest rate of PA out of the Manchester year groups, with 16.6%, followed by Year 11 with 15.5% and Year 9 with 14.6%. Year 4 had the lowest PA rate with 8.5%. The rate of PA for all the secondary year groups is better than the national average, except Year 10, while the rate of PA for the primary phase year groups are all higher than the national. The biggest gaps to national are for Years 1 and 6 with 1.38 and 1.08 percentage points respectively.

5.10 EAL pupils in Manchester have a better rate of PA (8.4%) than those whose home language is English (13.5%), and EAL pupils nationally (9.8%).



## 6.0 Manchester Provisional Absence Data Half Term 1-5 2018/19

The data below covers absence rates in Manchester schools in half terms 1-5 for the academic year 2018/19. This data is provisional and cannot yet be compared to national. National data will be released in May 2020.

### 6.1 Overall Absence

Manchester's provisional overall absence in primary schools for HT1-5 shows a 0.12 percentage point improvement over DfE released results for HT1-2 18/19 for Manchester and is 0.22 percentage points below the national average for the same period in the previous year.

For secondary schools, the provisional overall absence for HT1-5 has gone up by 0.5 percentage points compared with the DfE released figures for HT1-2 18/19 for Manchester and is level with the national average for the same period the previous year.

		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	HT1-2 2018/19	HT 1-5 2018/19
<b>Primary</b>	Manchester	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	3.8%	3.68%
	England	4.0%	4.0%	4.2%	3.9%	
	<b>Gap</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	
<b>Secondary</b>	Manchester	4.9%	5.1%	5.2%	4.5%	5.00%
	England	5.2%	5.4%	5.5%	5.0%	
	<b>Gap</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>	

## 6.2 Persistent Absence

Manchester's persistent absence rate for primary schools has improved by 0.45 percentage points for HT1-5 2018/19, compared with the published DfE figures for Manchester for HT1-2 2018/19. It is better than the national average for the same period the previous year by 0.55 percentage points.

For secondary schools, persistent absence has increased by 0.79 percentage points, compared with the published DfE figures for Manchester for HT1-2 2018/19 and is 0.21 percentage points below the national average based on the data from the previous year.

		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	HT 1-2 2018/19	HT 1-5 18/19
<b>Primary</b>	Manchester	9.4%	9.4%	9.5%	9.1%	8.65%
	England	8.2%	8.3%	8.7%	9.2%	
	<b>Gap</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	
<b>Secondary</b>	Manchester	12.1%	13.0%	13.1%	11.7%	12.49%
	England	13.1%	13.5%	13.9%	12.7%	
	<b>Gap</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	

## 7.0 School Attendance Statutory Action

7.1 In Manchester statutory action is successfully used as an intervention to improve rates of absence. 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). The type of statutory action taken is dependent on the level of absence and number of past offences committed which can result in the issue of a penalty notice, prosecution or a formal caution.

7.2 The majority of schools use statutory action and there has been a significant increase in statutory action requests from schools in the last 2 years. The aim of statutory action is always to secure regular attendance for the pupil and not as a punitive measure to punish parents.

7.3 Schools requesting statutory action for parents, has in many cases been a catalyst to improved communication with school and/or engagement in early help. It is important to note that cases presented to the Magistrates for prosecution are cases where there has been a consistent and persistent lack of engagement/communication from the parent/s with school, early help and other support agencies. This eventually leads poor and persistent patterns of absence leaving the authority no other choice other than to take legal action.

## 7.4 Penalty Notices

7.5 The data below shows the number of penalty notices issued over the past 4 years. The decline in 2016/17 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. The majority of schools now request penalty notices which has

contributed to the continuous improvement in absence rates. In addition to this it also demonstrates that schools have clear and consistent processes and systems in place and take prompt action when patterns of unauthorised absence start occurring.

	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18</b>	<b>18/19</b>
<b>Penalty Notices Issued</b>	4540	3089	4032	7098
<b>Unpaid Penalty Court Cases</b>	250	773	900	666

## **7.6 Cautions**

7.7 In September 2017 an additional level of intervention was introduced to the statutory action process for unpaid penalty notices. Where a penalty notice remained unpaid parents are given an option to sign a formal caution rather than the case going forward for a prosecution. By signing the caution parents are admitting that an offence has been committed in relation to the unauthorised absence of their child. The caution will apply for any other child/ren where unauthorised absence has occurred. Further unauthorised action after a caution has been signed may result in the case being escalated for prosecution. If a caution is not signed the case is submitted to legal services for a prosecution. The data below shows the number of cautions issued for this academic year.

	<b>18/19</b>
<b>Cautions Offered</b>	1064
<b>Cautions Signed</b>	398
<b>Cautions Not Signed Penalty Notice Court Case</b>	666

## **7.8 Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Notifications and Early Help**

7.9 Where unauthorised absence remains to be persistent schools can request a PACE notification. This is a request to conduct a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) interview for the parent/s, providing them with the opportunity to discuss any issues they have in relation to their child/rens unauthorised absence.

7.10 Prior to September 2018 schools submitted a full court case to the school attendance team and a PACE was conducted based on the evidence provided and a decision was made after PACE whether to submit to legal for a prosecution. This process changed in September 2018 and the attendance team have been working closely with the early help hubs to ensure that parents have been provided with every opportunity to access support in order to improve the attendance of their child/rens and also to address other issues that are impacting on the family as a whole.

7.11 The early help attendance officers conduct a series of visits/meetings with the school and other services and encourage parents to engage in an early help assessment (EHA). Parents who do not engage in early help are referred back to the attendance team where a PACE interview is conducted and if appropriate the case is prepared for prosecution.

7.12 The partnership working with the attendance team and the early help hubs has been extremely successful in improving attendance and engaging parents in early help assessments. The table below shows a significant reduction in the number of direct prosecutions demonstrating the impact of the early help strategy.

	16/17	17/18	18/19
<b>Direct Court Case Prosecutions</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PACE Notifications</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>472</b>

7.13 From September 2018 only five cases have been submitted to legal services for prosecution demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions from the early help hubs. From the 524 PACE notifications received from schools the outcomes have fallen into one of the following categories outlined below.

7.14 From the 472 PACE notifications:

- 323 attended a PACE interview and of these:
  - 203 were returned to school as attendance had significantly improved since the request for PACE and/or where appropriate parent/s agreed to engage in early help.
  - 32 did not attend PACE and the case is being prepared for prosecution.
  - 5 cases are with legal services.
  - 83 signed a caution at PACE and the case did not proceed to prosecution.
- 149 cases were referred to early the early help hubs and did not attend PACE.
  - 70 cases attendance had improved and no further was taken/ case returned to school for further monitoring.
  - 79 cases are still live cases with early help.

### 7.15 School Attendance Orders

7.16 The attendance team issue school attendance orders to parents when a parent/s fail to register their child of compulsory school age at an allocated school. Once statutory action has been instigated parents are given 45 days to register their child/ren at the allocated school. A home visit is conducted by the attendance officers in the early help hubs where there has been no communication from letters sent. This has proved to be successful in supporting parents to register their child at school and also signpost parents where there are complex family issues.

7.17 From September 2018 to the end of July 2019, a total of 678 referrals were received from admissions to instigate the statutory action process. The current data shows the following:

- 678 referrals from admissions.
- 641 school attendance notifications issued.

- 558 cases either resulted being registered in school, emigrated, moved to another local authority, tracked as whereabouts unknown.
- 120 are currently active – 36 school notification, 61 school attendance order, 13 in the PACE process, 10 cases with legal services.

## **8.0 Key Priorities**

Manchester City Council are committed to continued improvement of attendance outcomes. There are a number of key priorities outlined below that will be addressed in 2019/20.

- Plan and deliver workshops on SEND and attendance with a focus on pupils with SEMH and school refusers.
- Develop special school attendance networks to support improved attendance with a continued focus on pupils with SEND.
- Monitor the use of part time timetables for pupils and appropriate action where necessary.
- Analyse off rolling data to ensure that schools are following the correct processes before removing a pupil from the school roll.

### **8.1 Actions to Support Continued Improvement of School Attendance**

- Continue to embed the processes that support the early help offer prior to taking statutory action;
- Measure the impact of early help intervention for all cases referred to school attendance where this is offered as an alternative to prosecution;
- Continue to deliver training to schools on an annual basis as well as termly attendance clinics;
- Continue to provide targeted support to schools with declining attendance patterns in order to reduce absence; and
- Regularly review processes to ensure that they provide schools with support required to improve attendance.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

9.1 Promoting school attendance continues to be priority for the City. Overall, Manchester school attendance was better than national in 2017/18 and provisional data for 2018/19 shows that attendance and persistent absence is likely to be better than national for both primary and secondary schools. The Local Authority works in partnership with schools and uses its statutory powers as well as a range of other interventions including access to Early Help to ensure that children in the City attend school regularly. Attendance of pupils with SEND remains lower than for pupils without SEND and attendance at special school continues to be lower than national. Consequently, work with both special and mainstream school to improve attendance of pupils with SEN remains a key area of focus.