



PAPER C

Purpose: For Decision

Committee report

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date	5 MARCH 2020
Title	ATTENDANCE UPDATE
Report of / to	STEVE CROCKER, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the attendance report is to provide information for the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services.
2. The Isle of Wight Council is committed to ensuring the highest levels of attendance at school. Improving attendance is a key island school improvement priority; it has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards achieved by schools. Furthermore, good attendance can mitigate against safeguarding concerns.
3. The attendance data for 18/19 demonstrates improvement with overall and persistent absence reducing when compared with the previous academic year. Concerns remain about the levels of Persistent Absence (PA) that are higher than national in secondary education.
4. A range of strategies are in place to promote improved attendance, including robust challenge to schools and families where attendance concerns persist.

BACKGROUND

5. This paper compares IOW attendance statistics with available national data for a similar period. There is a time lag as national data for 2018/19 will not be available until the end of March 2020.

PRINCIPLES

6. The statutory position in relation to attendance recognises its importance to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils secure positive outcomes. The government expects all schools and Local Authorities to:
 - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence

- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and, act early to address patterns of absence
- Encourage all pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

It expects parents to fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school, attend regularly.

7. There is a strong correlation between attendance and qualifications.

“High rates of attendance are closely related to success in public examinations. In schools with unsatisfactory or poor results, a strong correlation with low attendance rates is discernible” (OFSTED).

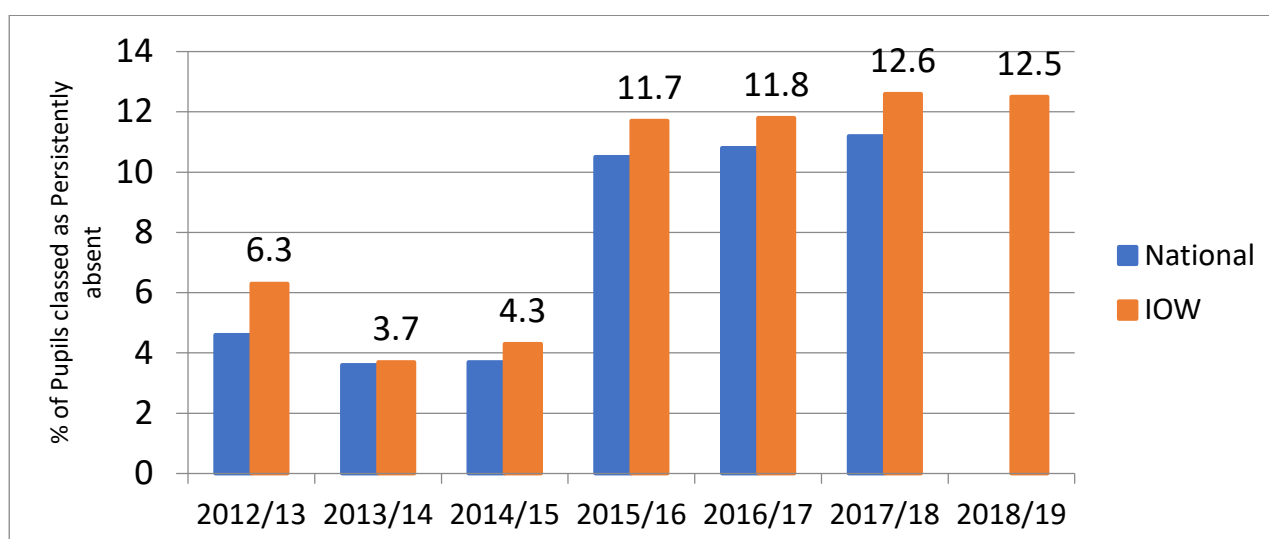
It is suggested that for every 5% of missed lessons this results in an average of one grade lower performance in Key Stage 4 examinations. Therefore, a student who is classed as a persistent absentee (i.e. absent for more than 10% of school days) will be at risk of falling behind with their studies. This increases the risk of not achieving 5 good GCSEs, including English and Mathematics, that is an entry requirement for many post-16 courses. If children attend school regularly and punctually, they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and gain the skills to enable them to participate fully in further education, training or employment.

8. Punctual and regular school attendance is an essential precondition of social inclusion as well as prerequisite to effective learning. The Isle of Wight Council is committed to ensuring the highest levels of attendance at school through:
 - a) Promoting the value and importance of regular school attendance
 - b) Active and meaningful partnerships with schools, parents, pupils, and other agencies and services to support good attendance
 - c) Reducing all forms of unauthorised absence, especially levels of persistent absenteeism
9. The Isle of Wight Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Children who are registered at a school but fail to attend regularly are placed at greater risk of either offending or of becoming the victims of offending by others. Attendance patterns such as a sudden or gradual change can indicate a safeguarding issue.

ATTENDANCE DATA

10. National data is not yet available for the academic year 18/19. However, Isle of Wight (IW) census data indicates that overall absence for all schools combined has reduced by 0.1% to 4.9% from 5% in 17/18.
11. Attendance in primary schools improved rapidly in 2013 following the review of procedures and adoption of a robust approach to tackling absence. This improvement has been maintained with absence and persistent absence indicators in line or better than National in subsequent years. IW census data is indicating that overall absence data for Primary remains at 4% in 2019.

12. Secondary absence increased by 0.1% both nationally and on the IOW in 2017/18 and there remains a negative gap of 0.7% compared to national rates, static for the past 3 years. National data is not yet available for the academic year 18/19 – however IW census data is indicating that overall absence data for Secondary schools is showing slight fall of 0.1% to 6.1% from 6.2% in 17/18.
13. IOW special school absence is consistently better than National with absence rate of 7.6% in 2017/18 compared to 10.2% nationally.
14. Overall, the main reasons given for absence are broadly in line with national data indicating illness (2.1%) and unauthorised absence (1.1%). These levels may indicate the robust application of school attendance policies and challenging unexplained and poor patterns of absence.
15. A pupil is identified as a Persistent Absentee (PA) if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions



PA figure changed from pupils with 15% or more absence to 10% in 15/16

16. In 2017/18, PA increased by 0.6% nationally to 11.2%. The IOW saw an overall increase of 0.8% to 12.6%. However, the closure of Sandown Bay Academy meant that a complete set of data was not available for the academic year and this may have distorted the overall figure.
17. National data is not yet available for 18/19 - however IW census data is indicating that overall Persistent Absence is broadly stable (12.5%). The trend over time continues to indicate higher than national levels of PA overall.
18. The primary schools' PA rate for 17/18 (7.9%) was 0.8% better than the national data. However, secondary PA for 17/18 was 18.4%, an increase of 1.8% on the previous academic year. Again, the closure of Sandown Bay Academy school would have had an impact on the published data. National persistent absence was 13.9% (an increase of 0.5% on the previous academic year). Special school PA is

consistently better than national. The percentage of pupils classified as persistently absent in 2017/18 was 22.5% compared to 29.6%

19. Attendance data for vulnerable sub-groups suggests that disadvantaged pupils have slightly better attendance than similar children nationally. However, children who are known to social care are more likely to have higher percentage levels of absence than their Island peer group, although numbers are small.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

20. A range of interventions are undertaken as follows to improve attendance, particularly for our most vulnerable children:
 - Guidance regarding absence management is updated and sent to schools annually
 - Annual monitoring visit to all schools is undertaken with inspection of school registers to ensure compliance
 - Education and Inclusion (EIS) have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with 27 out of 39 Primary/All Through and 5 out of 6 Secondary schools. This enhanced service works directly with schools and individual families and children to improve attendance. This service is currently under review as SLA ends in March 2021
 - A multi-agency audit took place in 2018 through LSCB to identify lessons learned in complex cases and ways forward
 - There is close working with the Virtual School to support attendance of Looked After Children
 - The School Improvement Team visits schools, reviews absence data and discusses ways to support improved attendance
 - Behaviour and Attendance Networks are held twice a year to share good practice
 - Behaviour Partnerships are held monthly with secondary schools to identify high risk students and implement strategies
 - There is close liaison with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Education Psychology (HIEP) to support individual students.
 - Parents are held to account through appropriate escalation procedures where pro-active interventions fail to improve situation. (appendix 1)

CONCLUSION

21. Generally, attendance is improving on the IW, however, there remain concerns about the attendance of vulnerable children and higher than national PA levels in secondary schools. Strategies are in place to support schools and families to promote better attendance of those most at risk.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

22. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
23. Under the Equality Act 2010 we are required to have due regard to our equality duties when making decisions, reviewing services, undertaking projects, developing and reviewing policies. This must be done at the formative stage of your proposal, not retrospectively as justification for the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

24. The committee to note the contents of the report.

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STEVE CROCKER
Director of Children's Services

PAUL BRADING
Cabinet Member for Children's Services

APPENDIX 1

Education & Inclusion Service Analysis of Activity 2018/19

Isle of Wight Profile

The Education & Inclusion Service is a part statutory / part commissioned service through a Service Level agreement with 28 primary schools, 6 secondary schools and 4 special schools (including the Island Learning Centre (PRU) and St Catherine's Independent School).

The service is made up of Inclusion Manager, a Team Leader, 4 Education & Inclusion Officers, 4 Education & Inclusion Assistants and 2 Education & Inclusion Support Assistants

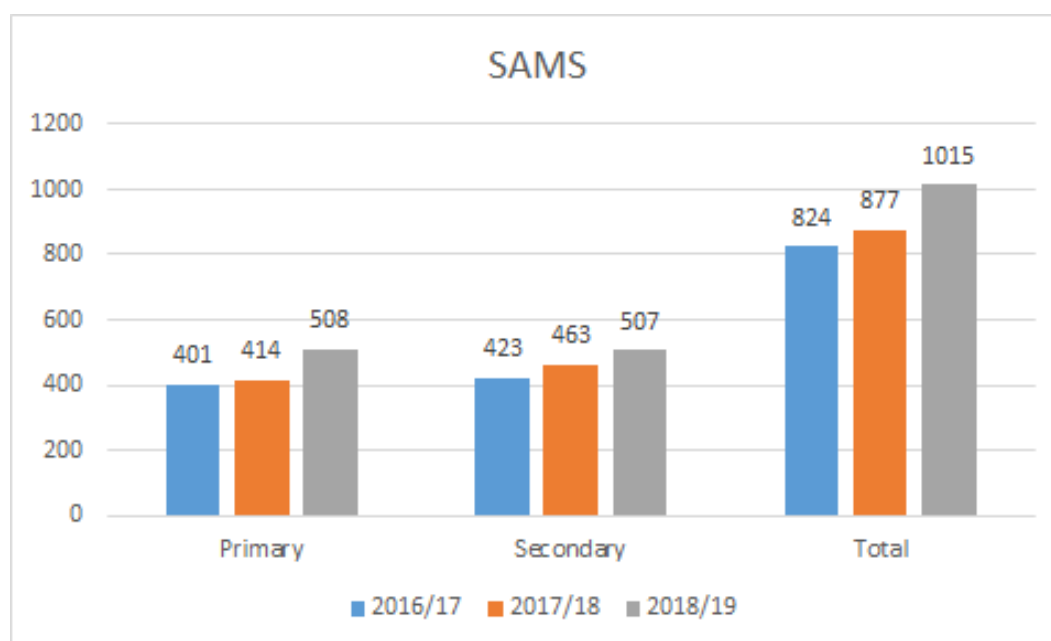
The primary function of the service is to improve and sustain attendance of every student in the commissioned schools contributing to positive whole school attendance. In addition, the service also supports with behaviour intervention through reducing the number of students who are excluded through early intervention.

The service also completes the statutory duties of the Local Authority in respect of enforcement of non-school attendance. The service also deals with Children Missing from Education (CMEs).

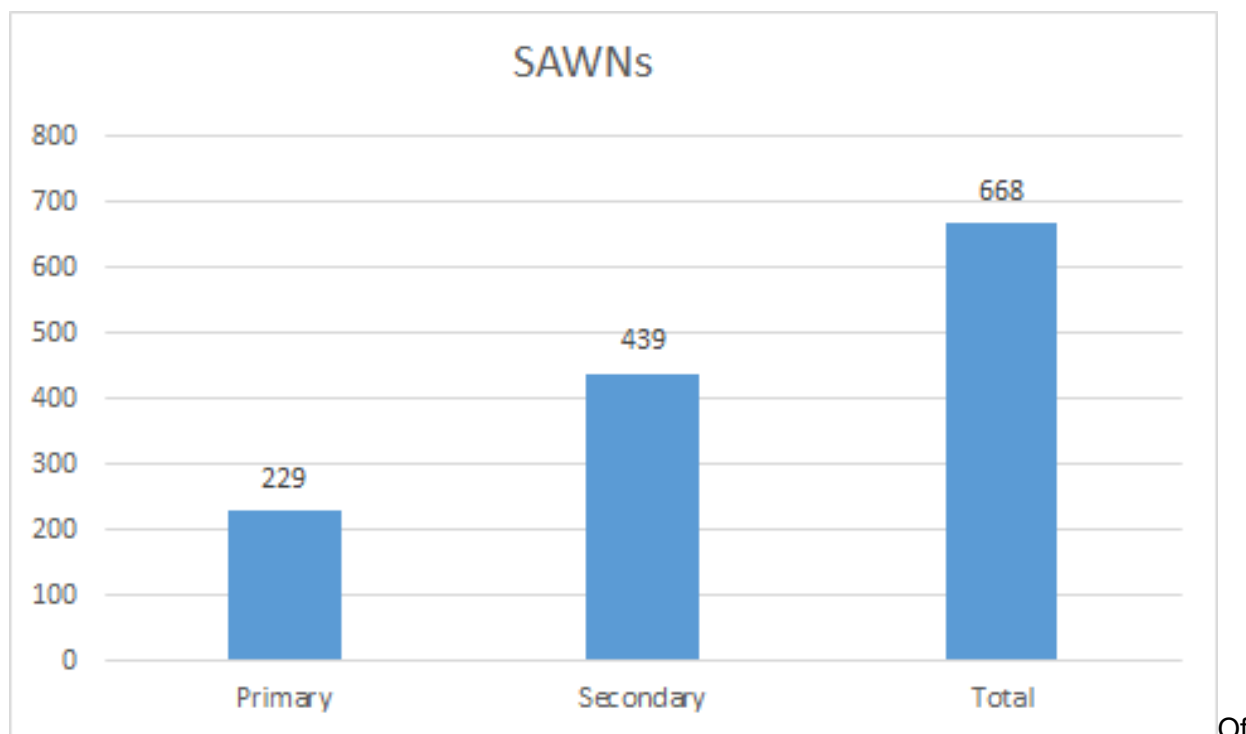
Other functions that team has include the issuing of Chaperone Licences, Performance licences and Child Work Permits

Early Intervention

In 2018/19 the service attended 1015, School Attendance Meetings (SAMs) which is a 15% increase on the previous academic year when the service attended 877. SAM's are face to face meetings with parents and where appropriate pupils (age of pupil) where poor attendance patterns are emerging. There was a 22% increase in the number of SAMs completed at Primary level compared to 9% at secondary.



In 2018/19, through the update of the Isle of Wight Councils Code of Conduct¹ the E&I service introduced a new process that involved issuing a 'School Attendance Warning Notice or SAWN' if a child of statutory school had 10 unauthorised absence sessions in a rolling 12-week period (or 120 sessions). 668 SAWNs were issued in respect of 418 children.



Of

the 418 students whose parents were issued a SAWN, 181 went on to have a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence which met the intervention for legal action.²

Targeted Intervention

If following early intervention, either through the SAM or SAWN process, attendance has not improved, then it is an expectation that a referral is completed to the service by schools.

During the academic year targeted intervention was delivered to 383 pupils – 35 cases remained open in excess of 12 months.

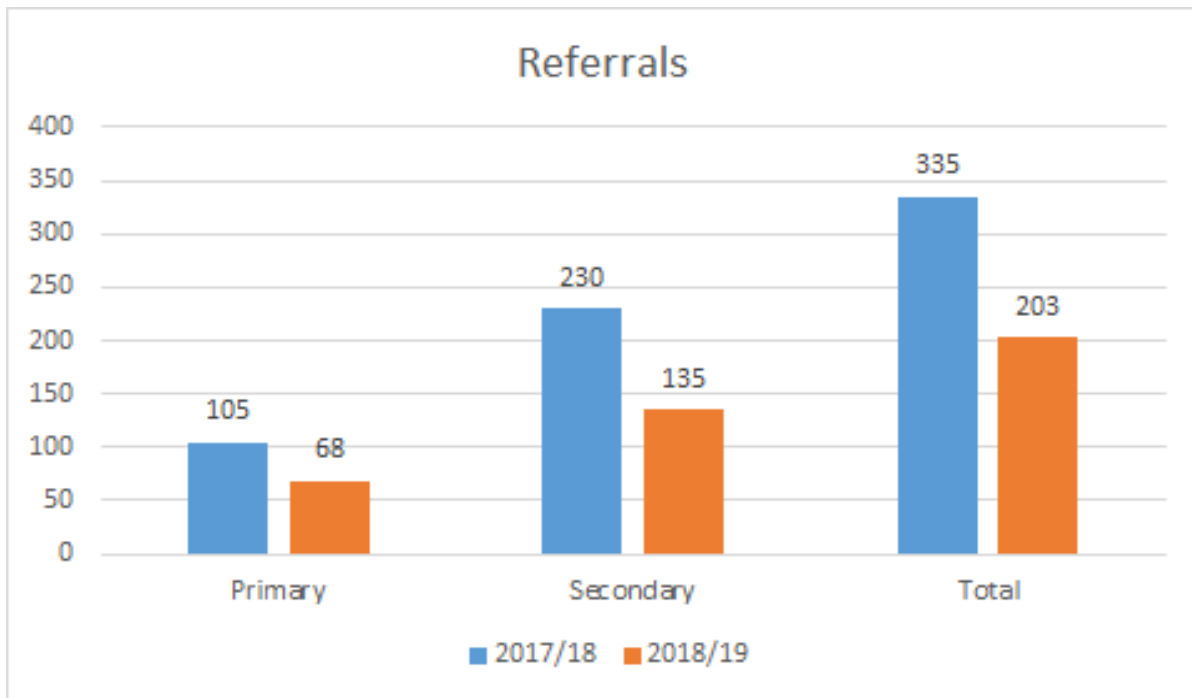
In 2018/19 there was 203 new referrals, a 31% decrease on the previous academic year.

The reason for the decline in the number of referrals maybe down to the issuing of the SAWNs which catches students earlier and the warning is alerting parents to act promptly. However, this will require further analysis after a further academic year to see if early intervention improves attendance.

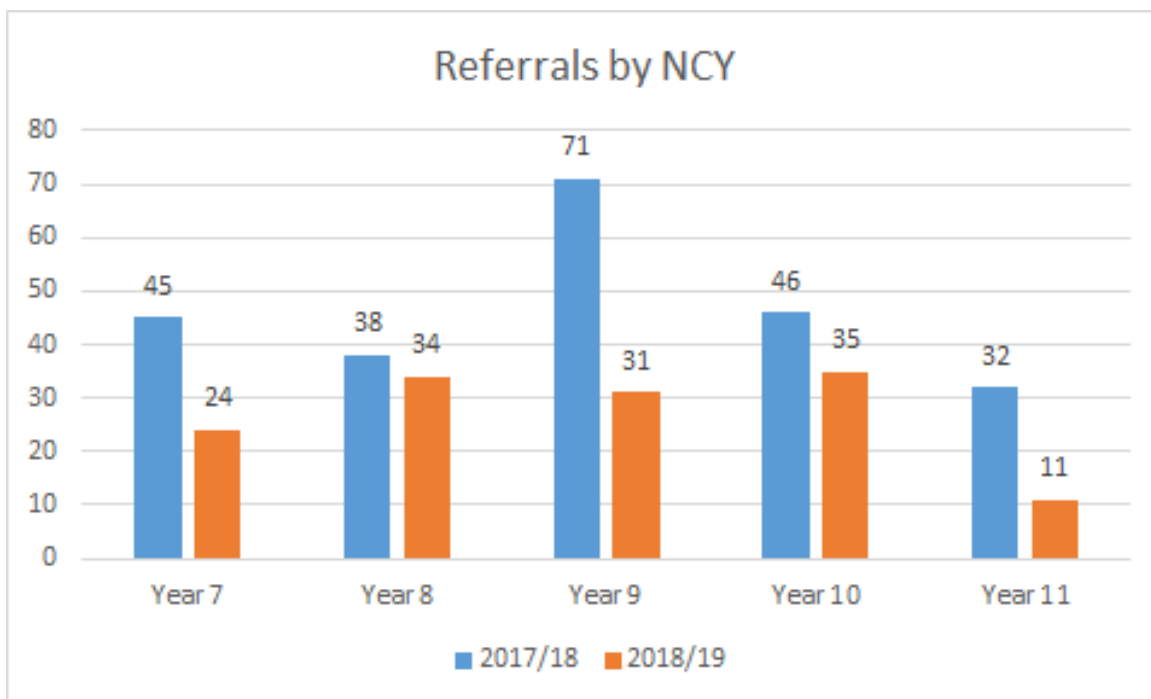
Following a referral, a home visit is undertaken, and a comprehensive holistic assessment completed, and an action plan put in place to improve attendance, this will include referrals to other agencies where appropriate.

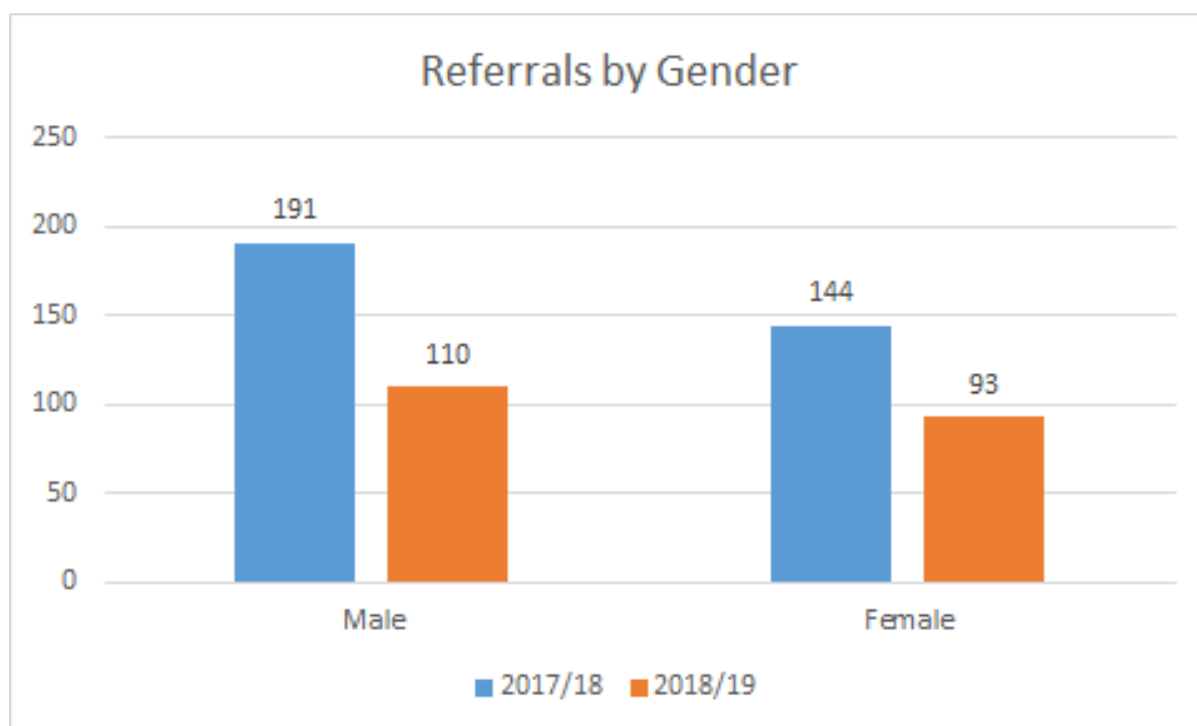
¹ Under the provisions Education (Truancy Penalty Notices) (England) 2007 (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and subsection (1) Section 23 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

² This does not include SAWNs issued in respect of Ryde Academy due to the way the data is collected.



Broken down into year groups (at secondary) the highest proportion of referrals came in Year 10, this year group represented the highest proportion of referrals in the previous academic year when they were year 9.





Closure

Over the course of the academic year 233 cases have been closed to the service, 65% due to improvement, 13% (32 children) who became electively home educated (6 have returned to school within the academic year). Other reasons for closure were medical evidence received that confirmed absence was in line with medical condition; pupils moved off Island and pupils reached the end of statutory education.

Enforcement

116 Truancy (Fixed) Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence (not including unauthorised holidays) were issued. These are used when there are odd days absence (minimum 10 sessions) on a continuing basis and attendance is 'not good enough'

3 (2 families) Education Supervision Orders – a Family Court Order used when there is a level of engagement from parents, but this is ineffective in making necessary changes. It allows plans and directions to be put in place that must be adhered to.

10 (8 Families / 2 children) Section 444(1) Prosecutions – this is a simple criminal offence where there is no statutory defence to the absences. If neither of the above apply then generally for a first time offence this is applied.

18 (13 Families* / 23 Children) (Section 444(1A) Prosecutions – known as the aggravated offence where evidence shows the parent is condoning the absences

**One parent (3 children) was prosecuted twice during the academic year*

11 School Attendance Order (SAO) warning notices were issued – these are when the LA has identified that children who are electively home educated are identified as not in receipt of a suitable education – 10 pupils returned to school at the warning stage and 1 SAO was served.