

Summary Report on Sickness Absence In Schools Period 1/4/14 – 31/3/15

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out details of performance on sickness absences in Lewisham schools for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The data capture date was 26th May 2015. The data shows the reported sickness absence levels across Lewisham schools as a whole, as well as individual school performance data. The scope of the data is restricted to those schools that remain on the Lewisham Council payroll; schools supported by external payroll providers are not included.
- 1.2 The average number of days lost due to sickness absence for the financial year ending 31 March 2015 was **7.31 days per employee**. In the school year, ending 31st August 2014, the average number of days lost to sickness absence in schools was **7.15 days per employee**. This represents a marginal increase of 0.16 days.
- 1.3 Excluding all long term absences the average number of days lost per employee was **3.62 days**. In the school year 2013/14 this figure was 3.47 days.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Schools' Forum is asked to:
 - Note the latest monitoring data to 31 March 2015 as detailed in the appended charts and listings.
 - Suggest any further actions to be taken to manage / reduce sickness absence.

3. Context and cost

- 3.1 According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 2014 Annual Survey Report on Absence Management, public sector workers had an average 8.2 days off due to sickness absence in the year. This compares to an average of 7.4 days across the whole of the UK workforce. The median annual absence cost in public sector services is reported by the CIPD as £914 per employee in 2014; factors included in the calculation of average cost are occupational sick pay, statutory sick pay, temporary cover, additional overtime costs and lost service provision.

4. Main Findings – Lewisham Schools

4.1 Secondary Schools Performance

- 4.1.1 During the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, the average sickness absence per employee was **7.02 days**. This compares to a figure of 7.26 days in the school year September 2013 to August 2014 – this represents an improvement of 3.3%.
- 4.1.2 The reduction indicated above is attributable mainly to the improvements made at Conisborough College, Sydenham, Forest Hill and Deptford Green.
- 4.1.3 If all long term absences are excluded, the average figure reduces from 7.02 days to 3.69 days per employee in the secondary sector.
- 4.1.4 A chart showing the performance of each school, during the latest reported 12-month period, is attached.

4.2 Primary and Nursery Schools Performance

- 4.2.1 During the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, the average sickness absence per employee was **6.60 days**. This compares to a figure of 7.08 days in the school year September 2013 to August 2014 – this represents an improvement of 6.8%.
- 4.2.2 If all long term absences are excluded, the average figure reduces from 7.08 days to 3.30 days per employee in the primary and nursery school sector.
- 4.2.3 A chart showing the performance of each school during the latest reported 12-month period is attached.

4.3 Special Schools Performance

- 4.3.1 During the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, the average sickness absence per employee was **12.77 days**. This compares to a figure of 11.03 days in the previous year – and represents a 15.8% increase (deterioration) in the overall level of sickness absence.
- 4.3.2 If all long term absences are excluded, the average figure reduces from 12.77 days to 5.77 days per employee in the special school sector.
- 4.3.3 A chart showing the performance of each school during the latest reported 12-month period is attached.

5 UK workforce comparisons

The annual Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey carried out in 2014 reported the following:

- Public sector average days lost per employee – 8.2 days

- Non-profit sector average days lost per employee - 8.0 days
- Education sector average days lost per employee – 6.0 days
- Health organisations average days lost per employee – 9.6 days
- Private sector average days lost per employee – 6.6 days
- UK workforce overall average days lost per employee – 7.4 days
- **74% of Lewisham schools are below the 8.2 day public sector average indicated above.**
- **62% of Lewisham schools are below the 7.4 day UK average.**

6 Schools not on the Lewisham payroll

- 6.1 The following academies and Lewisham schools with external payroll providers are not included in the absence data in this report:

Prendergast (Vale, Hilly Fields and Ladywell Fields), Knights Academy, Tidemill Academy, Deptford Park, Sedgehill, Turnham, St Matthew Academy, Haberdashers Askes, St Augustine's.

No comparable information on absence is available for these schools.

7 Reasons for absence

The main reasons for absence during the 2014/15 financial year, which account for 68% of the total of all absences, are:

'Stress related'	12.67%	(last school year 10.3%)
'Infection'	10.95%	(last school year 12.2%)
'Musculo-skeletal'	10.21%	(last school year 12.58%)

Reasons not reported / recorded 34.5% (last year 31.6%)

8 Return to work interviews

- 8.1 Good practice guidance is offered by the Schools' HR Team through the traded service (Service Level Agreement). The experience of the Schools' HR Team is that practice is varied across the borough, however, it is recommended that return to work interviews are carried out on an *'every person, every time'* basis.
- 8.2 The 2014 CIPD absence management survey report indicates that use of 'return to work interviews' is the most common management tool used to deal with short term absence; 92% of public sector CIPD survey respondents take this approach.

Other commonly used approaches include:

- Trigger mechanisms to review attendance

- Training for line managers to deal with handling absence
- Sickness absence information given to line managers
- Leave for family circumstances (e.g. emergency care leave for dependants, compassionate leave)

9 Summary

Performance across schools overall has deteriorated marginally, by 2.2%, since the end of the 2013/14 school year.

Performance overall in primary and secondary schools has improved.

Levels of sickness absence overall in special schools has risen.

The CIPD 2014 Annual Survey Report on Absence Management gives an indication that, overall, Lewisham schools' performance compares favourably with the average absence rates drawn from the public sector organisations that contributed to the survey. The Schools' Human Resources Team will continue advise on good practice in relation to the management of sickness absence. In addition, it is recommended that school leadership continues to actively monitor and take prompt action in appropriate cases within their schools to ensure attendance levels are improved and that absence rates are reduced.

Appendices

- School x school comparison between absence data for the 2013/14 school year and the 2014/15 financial year
- All schools bar chart – quartiles 2014/15
- League table 2014/15
- Percentage breakdown of reasons for absence 2014/15

Diane Parkhouse - HR Advisory Manager

Contact on 020 8314 6291 or by email at Diane.Parkhouse@lewisham.gov.uk

Brian Collymore - Schools Team HR

Contact on 020 8314 6298 or by email at Brian.Collymore@lewisham.gov.uk