



## CYP Select Committee

### Lewisham Attendance and Children Missing Education

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Key decision:** No. For information only.

**Class:** Either Part 1 or Part 2.

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

**Contributors:** Ruth Griffiths, Head of Access, Inclusion and Participation

Emma Stubbington, Attendance Manager

### Outline and recommendations

#### Outline

As part of its work programme the Committee has requested a report on Lewisham's Attendance (Absence, Persistent Absence and Children Missing Education) performance indicators and outcomes. Officers produce this report annually as part of accountability and performance monitoring.

#### Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to note the significant improvement in the work programme to support and safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people by:

- Improving levels of attendance of children and young people in Lewisham schools.
- Reviewing and evaluating Lewisham processes to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with Children Missing Education in Lewisham.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the context, legal framework and position in relation to attendance (absence, persistent absence and Children Missing Education) Lewisham. It also provides an analysis of Lewisham performance indicators and the actions that the local authority and Lewisham education providers are taking to effect progress.

The Department for Education (DfE) attendance data (absence and persistence absence) shows that Lewisham is performing better than national and London.

The roles and responsibilities for the Lewisham Attendance Service are underpinned by Lewisham's Corporate Strategy 2022-26 which includes: We will continue the fantastic work of the last four years, supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham.

The Service's continued focus is on increasing primary and secondary schools' performance in all attendance measures and has been in line with the London averages which have been met for the last five years.

The Lewisham Attendance Service is also responsible for the local authority's statutory work in relation to Children Missing Education (CME).

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Select Committee is asked to note the significant improvement in the work programme to support and safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people by:
- Improving levels of attendance of children and young people in Lewisham schools and attending Lewisham Alternative Provision.
  - Reviewing and evaluating Lewisham processes to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with Children Missing Education in Lewisham.

## 3. Policy Context

### The legal framework for the attendance and Children Missing Education (CME)

#### 3.1 What are the legal requirements on local authorities in relation to school attendance?

The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- ensure every learner has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- act early to address patterns of absence;
- encourage parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly; and
- ensure all learners to be punctual to their lessons<sup>1</sup>.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

#### 3.2 The Department for Education (DfE) White Paper – Working together to improve school attendance

This year the Attendance Service has focussed on preparations for the implementation of the DfE White paper 'Working together to Improve School Attendance' due to become statutory from September 2023. The guidance prioritises school attendance by ensuring all frontline services work collaboratively to address and overcome barriers to ensure all CYP, particularly the most vulnerable return to full time education after the pandemic years.

#### 3.3 Statutory definition of a Child Missing Education

A Child Missing from Education is defined by the DfE as: "A child of compulsory school age

---

<sup>1</sup> [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

*who is not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision) and who has been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually four weeks or more)”.*

Children Missing Education statutory guidance for local authorities September 2016 states that: *“All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.”*

Children Missing Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and being not in education, employment or training (NEET) later on in life.

Under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (amended – Education and Inspections Act 2006) Lewisham implements systems to establish the identities of children of statutory school age in Lewisham, as far as it is possible to do so, who are not registered learners at a school, and are not receiving “suitable education” otherwise than at school (EOTAS).

*“Suitable education”* means efficient full-time education suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude. CME should not be confused with:

- Children who are on roll at a school but are not attending regularly; in this case the individual’s school Attendance (Welfare if needed) Officer should be involved or a referral made to the Attendance Inclusion and Participation Service;
- Children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE); and
- Children whose parents have applied for a school place and the application is being managed through the admission procedures<sup>2</sup>.

## **4. Background – school attendance**

### **4.1 Importance of regular school attendance**

Ensuring all children and young people (CYP) fulfil their potential requires regular school attendance to benefit from the developmental opportunities offered by schools. Missed learning opportunities increases the risks of falling behind academically and socially. Educational outcomes for CYP who have low levels of attendance are adversely affected as they are less likely to achieve during their school career and more likely to become NEET (neither in education, employment, or training) following compulsory education.

Nationally CYP who attend school regularly and punctually are less likely to be at risk, both in terms of engaging in anti-social behaviour and in terms of their own health, safety, and welfare. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their CYP attend school regularly and punctually for them to obtain the most benefit from the opportunities available to them.

CYP in Lewisham come from diverse backgrounds and a range of life experiences. Most attend school regularly and on time and leave as young adults well equipped to enter further education, employment, or training (EET) and can contribute significantly to society. For a small minority, school is the only place of physical as well as emotional safety and may be the most secure aspect of their lives. The link between irregular school attendance and poor academic achievement and limited life outcomes has been established and well researched.

### **4.2 Attendance and Persistent Absence (PA) - national and Lewisham context**

---

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/921405/20170831\\_Exclusion\\_Stat\\_guide\\_Web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/921405/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guide_Web_version.pdf)

**Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Pupil absence data for primary, secondary, and special schools along with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) are collected termly via the Department for Education (DfE) School Census data collection return and published in a Statistical First Release (SFR). Full-year attendance data for special schools is collected annually at the Autumn School Census

The DfE published verified Attendance and PA data for the first term of the academic year 2022-23. Lewisham continues to have better total attendance and lower PA than both the National and Inner London averages in all the areas.

School type	National attendance %	Inner London (IL) attendance %	Lewisham Attendance %	National PA %	IL PA %	Lewisham PA %	Comments for Lewisham
<b>Total</b>	92.48	92.82	93.46	24.18	23.77	21.09	Better than both
<b>Primary</b>	93.61	93.3	94.22	20.89	23.33	18.87	Better than both
<b>Secondary</b>	91.21	92.48	92.63	27.44	23.57	23.27	Better than both
<b>Special</b>	86.62	86.09	87.94	40.90	43.51	39.64	Better than both

#### 4.3 DfE published attendance and PA data for the full academic year 2021-22

Full attendance and PA data for 2021-22 was the first full school year where schools were unable to X code COVID illnesses. As such there is a marked drop in attendance from the previous academic year. Lewisham was still the highest attended inner London Borough.

School Phase	Attendance and Persistent Absence Data	National (2020/21) %	National (2021/22) %	Inner London (2020/21) %	Inner London (2021/22) %	Lewisham (2020-21) %	Lewisham (2021-22) %
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Overall Attendance</b>	96.36	93.74	95.95	94.07	96.43	94.54
	<b>Persistent Absence</b>	8.78	17.70	10.31	17.27	8.61	14.74
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Overall Attendance</b>	94.51	91.01	94.79	92.96	95.10	93.05
	<b>Persistent Absence</b>	14.83	27.71	13.81	21.97	12.96	20.48
<b>Special school</b>	<b>Overall Attendance</b>	84.79	86.82	87.16	87.31	86.27	89.02
	<b>Persistent Absence</b>	48.94	40.36	39.93	40.19	45.30	36.81

Lewisham schools achieved above national and Inner London outcomes for attendance and lower PA for primary and secondary schools in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. In 2021/22

Lewisham primary schools achieved 0.08 per cent above the national average and 0.47 cent above inner London attendance figures and secondary schools achieved 2.04 per cent above national and 0.09 per cent above inner London attendance data.

PA in Lewisham was also better. In primary schools' PA was 2.96 per cent lower than national and 2.53 per cent lower than inner London data. In secondary schools' PA was 7.23 per cent lower than national and 1.49 per cent lower than inner London data.

Lewisham special schools' attendance was 2.20 per cent higher than national figures and higher than inner London by 1.71 per cent. This trend was same for persistent absence, with

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Lewisham achieving lower persistent absence figures than national figures by 3.55 per cent and lower than inner London outcomes by 3.38 per cent.

The Attendance Service collects attendance and persistent absence data half termly via a 'workbook' from those schools that trade with the service. The workbook is used to monitor current absence data to provide the school and local authority with accurate six weekly (half termly) information to enable the school to take quick action to address individual pupil absence concerns. The workbook is used to provide the school advice and recommendations based on the data information submitted. This two-way tool has been helpful to ensure swift action where needed on areas of development.

The success of data workbook has not only helped improve attendance in schools across the local authority, but it has also been highlighted by OFSTED as an excellent tool of attendance tracking and action planning most recently in recent inspections undertaken at Athelney and Elfrida primary schools in June and July 2022.

The unverified data Lewisham collects via the workbook is very close to the DfE verified data once it is released. Therefore, the Attendance Service can accurately predict and prevent concerning patterns before the six months it takes for the DfE statistical release.

#### 4.3 **Summary of national and Lewisham attendance**

In the last four years the service has risen on the Inner London league tables. The most recent verified data released by the DfE for 2021-22 ranked Lewisham first for primary attendance and third for secondary attendance.

The government launched a data platform (WONDE) in May 2022 to help local authorities collate information on school attendance and persistent absence data. However, many schools and multi-academies trusts have not signed up to WONDE and have opted not to share their data with the DfE.

In September 2022 Lewisham purchased a piece of software called StudyBugs. This application can create a link with all Lewisham's school's management information systems (MIS) allowing users of StudyBugs to view an individual school's attendance registers in real time. In addition to the attendance service accessing Studybugs, other frontline services can access information related to the children and young people they support. This is referred to later in the report.

This year approximately 80 plus per cent of schools in Lewisham signed up to use StudyBugs and it has significantly improved the access, collation and analysing of attendance data going forward. Working with schools that have subscribed provides instantaneous access to attendance and absence data at school and individual level, accessed live schools in-year vacancies and downloadable persistence and severe absence, exclusions, dual registered and off-site information.

Attendance data assists our partner services where admission, exclusions and deregistration not only affect attendance but contribute toward safeguarding concerns and impact pupil outcomes.

#### 4.4 **Lewisham Attendance Service response to DfE statutory guidance<sup>3</sup>**

The DfE guidance has set specific areas of responsibilities for local authority attendance teams that must be provided to all schools. Lewisham's responsibilities are listed below

---

<sup>3</sup> [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

## **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

alongside the Attendance Service response.

#### 4.4.1 **Communication and advice**

Local authorities must circulate clear guidance on how schools, the local authority Attendance Service and other partners should work together to provide intensive voluntary and/or formal support for individual CYP and families.

**The Attendance Service Handbook** sets out local authority expectations based on the school responsibilities. It includes common practices e.g term time holidays and follow up for persistent lateness so that families. The handbook will be ready for circulation ready in September 2023.

**The Attendance Service website** provides a one stop shop for all schools to access swift information on attendance matters including links to other services such as Children Missing Education, Early Help and MASH. It also includes practical matters such as local and national data, example policies, development plans, forms for penalty notice, advice on legal intervention and litigation submissions and links to key resources local and national guidance.

**Weekly attendance surgeries**, this academic year, allow nontraded schools to access to advice and guidance.

**Attendance Network Meetings** happen every term and invites all schools to discuss common difficulties and to share good practice. These have proved extremely useful with schools sharing their experiences of OFSTED feedback and new initiatives that have improved school attendance.

**An Attendance Service newsletter** was launched this year and all topics and themes, alongside contact details and links to other services. Schools and partner local authority are invited to provide positive stories, case studies share updated news and information regarding support and intervention.

**Annual stakeholder feedback** is collated by online survey to enable school colleague's opportunity to provide views and opinions to help shape and develop the service each year. In addition to stakeholder feedback, the attendance service monitors trends and patterns of absence throughout the year and the reasons or causes are used to develop targeted areas and pathways of early intervention support.

**Termly reports to schools** based on their attendance and persistent absence data provide the schools with advice and recommendations on how to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. The reports are produced termly (autumn, spring, and summer) and have received excellent feedback from Headteachers and senior leaders and governors.

#### 4.4.2 **Targeted support meetings**

Local authorities are expected to organise termly targeted support meetings as part of the core service available to all schools regardless of traded status. They are designed to allow the school's attendance leads and their point of contact in the local authority's Attendance Service to identify, discuss, and agree joint targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so. The targeted support meeting should include helping schools to analyse their own data, compare themselves to other schools across Lewisham and consider how they may learn from or work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends.

### **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



#### 4.4.3 **Multi-disciplinary support for families**

The DfE guidance states that local authorities should facilitate effective multi-disciplinary support for families, where barriers to attendance for a pupil or family are complex and signposting to services is not sufficient. Schools and local authorities are also specifically expected to have agreed a joint approach for all severely absent pupils. This is likely to include health, youth justice, voluntary and community sector, early help, children's social care, local safeguarding partnerships, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and housing support.

This year the Attendance Service introduced its new multi-disciplinary panel to Lewisham. The panel consists of colleagues from across Early Help, Children Social Care, Special Educational Needs, Virtual School, Safeguarding in Education and Health. Schools are invited to refer pupils who are severely absent (under 50 per cent) where prosecution is deemed inappropriate.

There was a total of 50 pupils with severe absence identified when the first meeting was held in December 2022. In July 2023, the number of pupils referred with severe absence had reduced to 17. This means 34 per cent of cases were successfully supported through the multi-disciplinary approach.

#### 4.4.4 **Severe absence**

The DfE guidance introduced the term 'severe absence' to describe children and young people with attendance below 50 per cent. The guidance states, *'if all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g., an education, health, and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect'*.

Whilst the Lewisham Attendance Service will pursue prosecution against parents where appropriate, the process of prosecution itself is not a safeguard or protection of the child. It is important to consider what school offers and provides to a child's academic, social, and emotional wellbeing and the detrimental impact on these areas of development when a child does not attend school regularly.

#### 4.4.5 **Legal intervention**

The DfE guidance places a responsibility on local authority Attendance Services to set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used. Local authority legal services are encouraged to make use of formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders and use them fairly and consistently.

This year the Attendance Service produced a new Attendance Service parent leaflet for cases where pupils' attendance is impacted by persistent or severe absence. The leaflet includes information on parental responsibility and advises them on steps to improve attendance. Where attendance is not improved, legal action is explained to as a precaution and deterrent.

The Attendance Service has produced parent guides that:

- improve parental understanding of statutory processes
- explain the attendance enforcement process when school attendance does not improve
- inform parents on the escalation process
- explain Parenting Orders and Education Supervision Orders

## **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- litigation evidence.

The Attendance Manager is the named responsible officer for Parenting Orders and Conditional Discharges on education prosecution court dispersals.

This year education prosecutions have continued to be escalated to court in keeping with the DfE guidance and local authority statutory obligations.

Academic Year	No of cases Referred to legal services	No of cases heard at court	No of fines imposed	No of Conditional Discharge	No of Parenting Orders	No of Withdrawn Cases	No of Not Guilty verdicts
2022-23	56	20	8	3	2	20	0
2021-22	34	25	7	12	1	4	1

\* 28 pending court dates

This shows an increase of 65 per cent in the number of cases referred for legal action this year. From the 56 cases escalated for consideration of prosecution:

- 36 per cent were presented to court.
- Of cases referred to court, 40 per cent received financial penalties, 15 per cent received conditional discharge, 10 per cent received parenting orders.
- 36 per cent of cases were withdrawn due to delay.

#### 4.5 Lewisham's approach to regular school attendance

The Attendance Manager has been a member and participant of the DfE white paper action group this year and has contributed toward the strategic and operational implementation and guidance issued nationally to local authorities. In addition, the Service Managers were asked by the DfE to present Lewisham's model at the national meeting of local authority Directors and senior leaders in May 2023 as an example of good practice.

The Attendance Service has continued to deliver both statutory and traded services to schools across Lewisham and neighbouring local authorities. The following table illustrates the casework completed by the attendance service this academic year that were delivered to schools who buy in to the attendance service traded offer.

Academic year	Number of referred cases	School meetings	Home visits	LA FAP (pre court meetings)	Court warning	Witness statements	Legal hearings (Magistrate Court)
2022-23	776	737	44	177	341	41	20*
2021-22	660	574	64	128	334	38	34

\*28 additional cases are currently waiting for summons to be granted

This year the attendance service referrals increased by 18 per cent. From the 776 CYP referred to the service, five per cent improved school attendance through early intervention. 95 per cent of parents were invited to attend a school attendance meeting.

From the 737 school meetings, 54 per cent of CYP improved their attendance with no further action required. 46 per cent of cases required statutory action. From the 177 pre court meetings 73 per cent of CYP improved their attendance to school and only 27 per cent were referred to court. Prosecution is the last resort and was only six per cent.

#### 4.6 Attendance team traded services with schools and academies

Working closely with schools and academies across Lewisham is essential to achieve

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



outstanding school attendance. In 2022-23 the Attendance Service launched the new style service level agreement (SLA) to schools and academies in Lewisham.

This new SLA includes a 'menu' of strategic advice, practical support and training for Headteachers, senior leaders, teachers, and support staff on the responsibility of whole school attendance and other interventions that can help schools build capacity within their own practices and policies. It also offers early intervention and resources that schools can use directly with pupils to secure the pupil voice as part of the attendance process and the creation of personalised reintegration support plans.

The new SLA has been a great success and in 2022-23 the Attendance Service not only increased the buy-in of existing schools but attracted the subscription of new schools resulting in the highest revenue accrued since the Attendance Service offered traded services. This is an excellent achievement and example of the professionalism and expertise of the attendance team who deliver the service to schools.

In 2022-23 the Lewisham Attendance Service secured SLAs with 83 per cent of mainstream schools. This includes 100% of special schools, Abbey Manor College (Alternative Provision) and two schools located in Southwark. SLAs have increased and secured revenue to the amount of 17 per cent on 2021-22. This figure includes an increase in the number of schools buying in to the traded offer and some schools increasing their existing package of support already in place.

Number of traded SLA	Lewisham schools (excluding Independent)		Primary schools	Secondary schools	Special schools (including PRU / AP)	Total revenue
2023-22	PRI 69	SEC 14	53	11	5	£ 224,140
2022-23	PRI 69	SEC 14	48	11	6	£ 192,005

#### 4.7 Sir William Boreman's Foundation

This provides funds from the proceeds of the 1684 Will of Sir William Boreman. The Drapers Company oversees these funds which acts to promote pupils' attendance and attainment specifically for those living in Lewisham and Greenwich. Lewisham's Attendance Service is responsible for the administration, accounting, and distribution of these charitable funds within the borough.

The fund is increased by application each year and was awarded a further £2,000 in June 2023. The objective of funding is to improve school attendance and attainment and the outcome of whether this aim is achieved is recorded and included in an annual report written and submitted to the Boreman Trust.

The fund is a unique opportunity for Lewisham to assist parents that are unable to fulfil their responsibility to ensure school attendance because of difficulties that can be supported through financial support. The fund is small and so gate-keeping applications by way of threshold and criteria has been essential to prevent Boreman's being used for cases of general financial hardship.

In addition, in February 2022 the DfE released new statutory guidance on school uniform. The guidance included reference to the responsibility of schools to help and support families in hardship to secure uniform. In response to this the attendance service updated the Boreman request form including a section for schools to explain why they have been unable to provide the uniform through preloved/ owned clothing or pupil premium funding to help

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

ensure applications for financial support remain appropriate.

Between September 2022 to March 2023, 42 applications for Boreman's funding were approved. 38 applications were for school uniform, associated clothing and shoes. Two applications were approved to enable children to participate in school journeys and two applications approved for parental travel expenses. The total cost for applications totalled £4,263.12.

Since March 2023 19 further applications have been approved. 14 applications were for uniform items and 3 applications were for parental travel assistance, one application was for school journey and one to replace a bed (this was an exceptional circumstance) these applications totalled £1,885.34 increasing the total spend on Boreman's to £6148.46.

#### 4.8 **Statutory local authority attendance, enforcement and safeguarding for all Lewisham local authority-maintained schools and academies**

In addition to school attendance, the Service has responsibility for delivering other statutory duties on behalf Lewisham. These include the following areas:

- The investigation and implementation of statutory attendance enforcement
- The administration of Penalty Notices.
- Enforcing and licensing Child Employment and Performance.
- Tracking and preventing Children Missing from Education (**information provided in a separate report**).

##### 4.8.1 **The investigation and implementation of statutory attendance enforcement**

The Attendance Service will always attempt to work informally with families to address and overcome barriers to attendance either by direct support, advice or by sign posting and referring to support services within the local authority.

The Attendance Service regularly work in partnership with agencies including Children's Social Care, Children with Complex Needs Service, MACE (multi-agency Child Exploitation arrangements), Police and Youth Justice Service and Health professionals to ensure that children do not fall between the gaps.

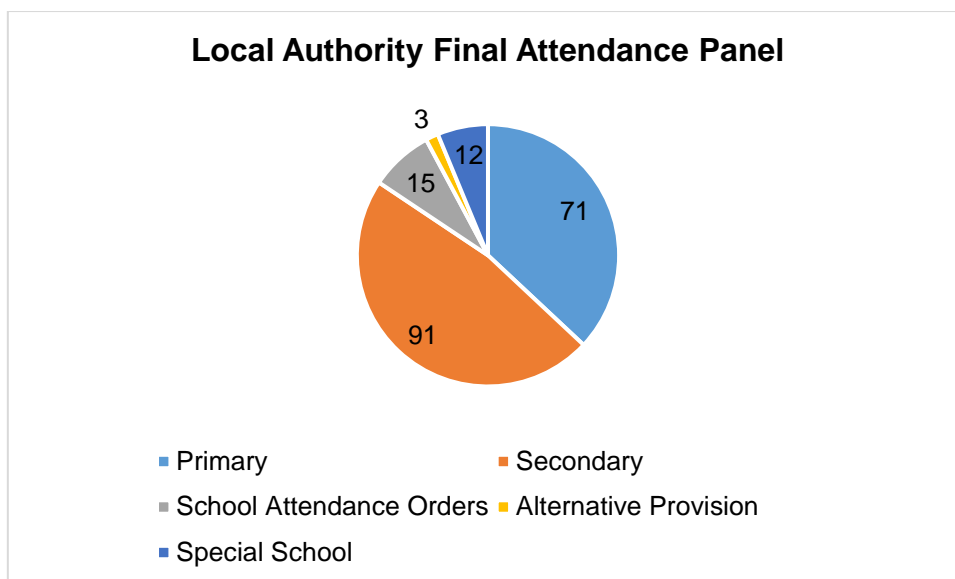
Where parents do not engage legal intervention is used to enforce school attendance. In casework following a court warning letter, a Local Authority Final Attendance Panel (LA FAP) is convened when attendance remains below national expectations. A LA FAP is the equivalent of a pre court meeting and is held when a CYP's attendance has not improved to satisfactory levels despite early intervention and statutory action being initiated.

In 2022-23 15 LA FAP were convened with parents to explore reasons for non-engagement with a school attendance order to allow opportunity for further support before escalation to prosecution was needed. The Attendance Service received 50 per cent more than 2021-22. Seven per cent of those were received from non-traded schools.

## **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



From the 192 LA FAP meetings convened this academic year, 37 per cent were requested by primary schools, 47 per cent secondary schools, 12 per cent special schools, two per cent alternative provisions and eight per cent for school attendance orders. Seven per cent of LA FAP request were made from non-traded school with 93 per cent of LA FAP meetings by traded schools as part of the attendance service enforcement process.

#### 4.8.2 The administration of Penalty Notices

Requests for penalty notices have increased by 85 per cent this year. This is a significant increase on the number issued in 2021-22. In line with increases in other areas of the attendance service, penalty notices require time to ensure quality assurance and administration is completed. The increase in demand has increased the time needed this year to address the statutory responsibility.

This year all penalty notices were paid and the total income generated for penalty notices increased by 123 per cent on the income generated last year. This is a significant increase and an area to monitor next academic year.

Academic Year	Total Number Penalty Warning	Total Number Penalty Notices	% Poor School Attendance	% Holidays in Term Time	Total Income from Penalty Notices
2022-23	55	350	24 (7%)	326 (93%)	£ 13,140.00
2021-22	118	189	43 (23%)	146 (77%)	£ 5,880.00

It is encouraging to see the use of penalty notice to address poor attendance has reduced this year. Poor school attendance is a symptom that something is wrong and requires intervention and support to address and overcome. The Attendance Service Handbook will provide advice to schools on how to challenge holidays in term time and when to apply the use of penalty notices.

#### 4.8.3 Enforcing and licensing child employment and performance

A significant improvement this year has been to reduce the timescales for performance licence applications without compromising the safeguarding element and local authority responsibility.

### Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

Although the regulations allow for “at least 21 days’ notice” many agencies assumed this to be an administrative exercise, gave significantly less notice and expected that licences would be processed sooner. The service has commenced work to enable all applications to be made electronically this year thereby streamlining the administrative process, ensuring quicker turn-around times and pressure relating volumes of applications.

The table below highlights an increase of 16 per cent in the number of requests received throughout the 2022-23 academic year.

Year	No licensing application received	No licenses processed	No licences declined	No licence exemptions	Chaperone licence renewals processed	New chaperone application processed	No DBS applications	No work permits processed
2022-23	479	479	0	12	21	30	54	23
2021-22	414	418	0	15	24	38	56	14

#### 4.9 Summary of achievements

- Lewisham school attendance consistently remains the highest against national and inner London schools according to DfE verified data achieving above national and Inner London outcomes for attendance and lower persistent absence for the first term with primary attendance ranking first against inner London schools.
- The number of traded Service Level Agreements purchased by schools and academies across the local authority increased to the highest level since traded service began in both number and cost generating revenue of £224,140.
- The number of referrals from traded schools to the Attendance Service increased by 18 per cent to 776 pupils this academic year.
- 54 per cent of CYP referred to the Attendance Service improved school attendance without the need for statutory intervention and 73 per cent of CYP improved attendance without the case escalating to legal action.
- 90 per cent of traded stakeholders regarded the Attendance Service as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ through online survey.
- 685 CYP deemed not to have a school place were identified and new educational provision and safeguard children and young people living within the London Borough of Lewisham.
- Lewisham Attendance Service was selected by the DfE to present the Lewisham model at the national meeting of local authority Directors and Senior Leaders as an example of good practice.

#### 4.10 Attendance Service priorities for 2023/24

- Ensure school attendance and persistent absence across Lewisham continues to exceed national and inner London outcomes in line with Lewisham KPIs.
- Ensure successful delivery of the attendance service to all schools, especially those new to the service this year.
- Complete the DfE Attendance Audit to ensure Lewisham is compliant with the new statutory guidance and establish action plan where audit suggests improvement should be made.
- Deliver training to Lewisham Services on the white paper to ensure all front-line services are aware of the statutory changes early in the autumn term 23-24.
- Establish timely DfE data submissions (Wonde) for schools and academies in preparation of termly meetings.

### Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- Ensure service delivery maintains high quality of professionalism with stakeholder feedback exceeding 90 per cent.
- Develop Attendance Service Development Plan using criteria from the DFE White paper to ensure compliance with expectations and to measure impact of service delivery against expected outcomes.
- Create the training menu and training programmes offered through the new SLA so that is available to schools from the start of the 2023-24 academic year.
- Review and develop the Leavers and Destination project to improve efficiency and quality of information and frequency provided from schools.

## 5. Background – Children Missing Education

- 5.1 Lewisham is committed to ensure that its CME protocol is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose in identifying and dealing with its residents who are Children Missing Education.

CME can be vulnerable and at greater risk of significant harm. The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information appropriately in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Lewisham adopts the London Good Practice Guidance for Safeguarding Children Missing from School which states that the principles should be adopted by all agencies, responsible for locating children who go missing from school. These principles include:

- The safety of the child is paramount.
- Parents are the custodians of the welfare and well-being of their children when they are not in school.
- The primary objective is for local authority and other agencies to work together to locate and return the child to a safe environment.
- Child protection procedures are triggered where there are any concerns that a child may be at risk of harm or suffering harm.
- Agency actions will link where appropriate with actions required under related protocols, such as the London Child Protection Procedures.
- Services will be put in place to ensure that when a child is found s/he receives the necessary ongoing support to enable him/her to live in a stable, safe environment and attend school.

### 5.2 Analysis of Lewisham CME referrals 2022/23

Data is captured and recorded by the CME Officer and the following analysis is taken from the whole academic year August 2022 to end of July 2023 and comparable data is also included from the previous academic year.

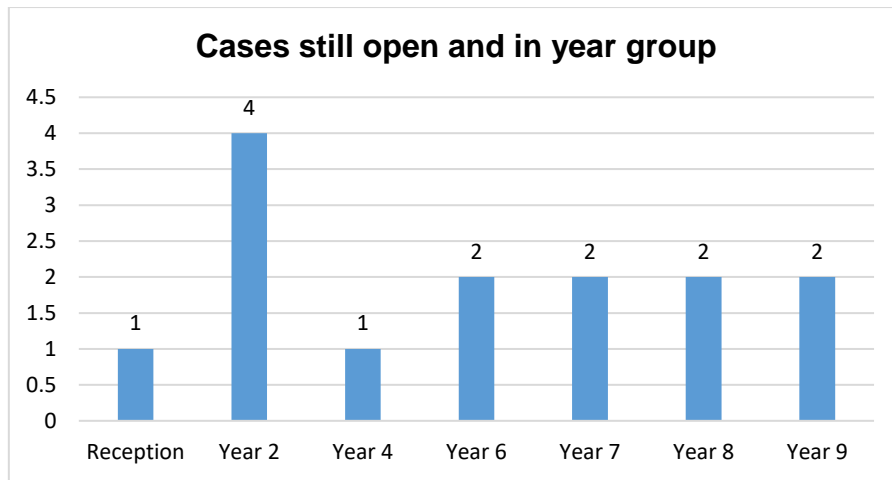
There has been a total of **231** cases referred and **217** cases closed this academic year. This leaves **14** cases remaining open at the beginning of August 2022. Last year, from August 2021 to July 2022, there were **235** referrals.

This is the lowest total of referrals in any academic year. The lower number could be due to the high levels of mobility over the past few years; together with a falling role numbers. The CME Service has also worked closer with the Admissions Service to signpost referrals before they become CME. The few cases currently open are new to Lewisham's Attendance and Admissions Services and are awaiting placement.

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



### 5.3 Closed cases

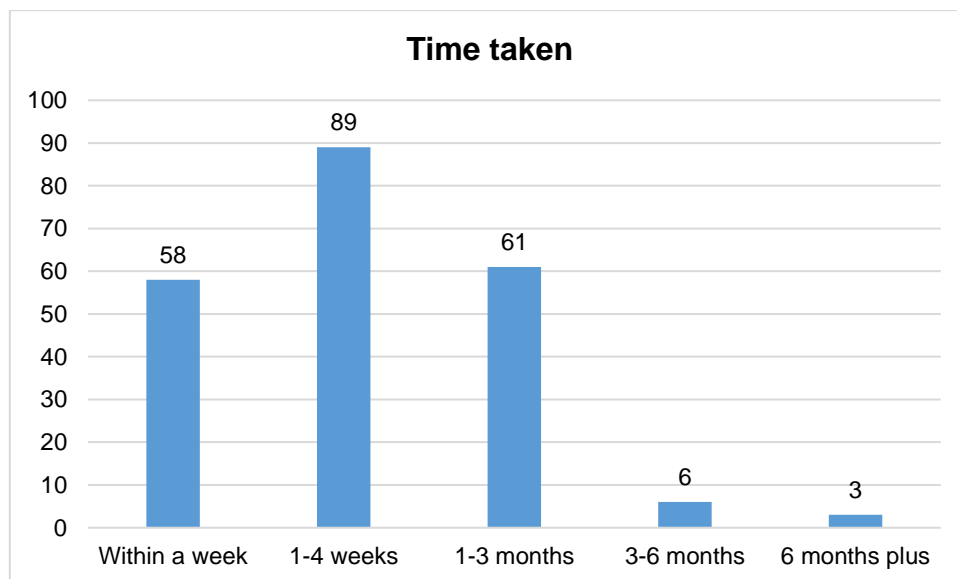
Of the **217** cases that the Attendance Service closed this year:

- **58** (27 per cent) were closed within one week. Nine per cent lower than previous year.
- A further **89** (41 per cent) were closed within a week to one month. Nine per cent higher.
- **68** per cent closure in the first month is the same as last year. But still down on the **77** per cent of cases we had in in 2018-19.

The remaining **70** cases closed within the academic year:

- **61** (28 per cent) between one and three months, one per cent down on last year.
- **six** cases closed between three-six months (three per cent), this is the same as last year.
- **three** cases closed after six months. This is one per cent. The aim is zero.

The lack of consistency and cooperation from the National Boarder Force (NBF) continues to be an issue. Lewisham has recently been able to submit some checks which have been agreed by NBF for safeguarding reasons. However, the unpredictable of approvals still results in an increased length of time it can take to obtain confirmation that the child or young person is in a new school, borough or country.



### 5.4 Referrals by ethnicity

The following table shows the **231** referrals by ethnicity. This shows that 'African' and

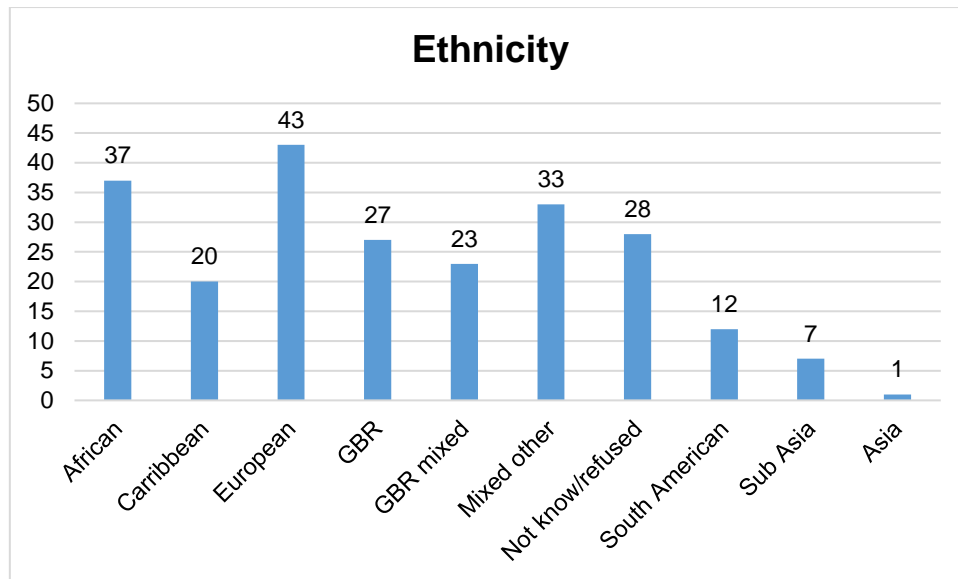
## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

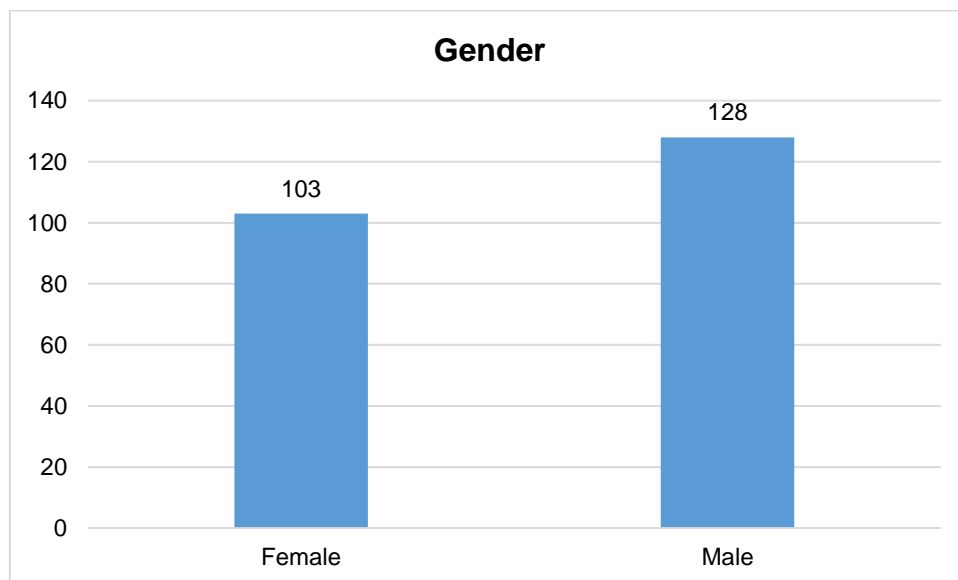


'European' backgrounds referrals are equal. The biggest increase is from "mixed other", this can be attributed to the higher number of refugees and migrants who have settled in Lewisham.



#### 5.5 Referrals by gender

The 2022/23 male/female ratio is almost identical to 2021/22, with males making (128) 56 per cent from to 57 per cent. Whereas the proportion females have risen slightly with (103) 44 per cent up from 43 per cent.



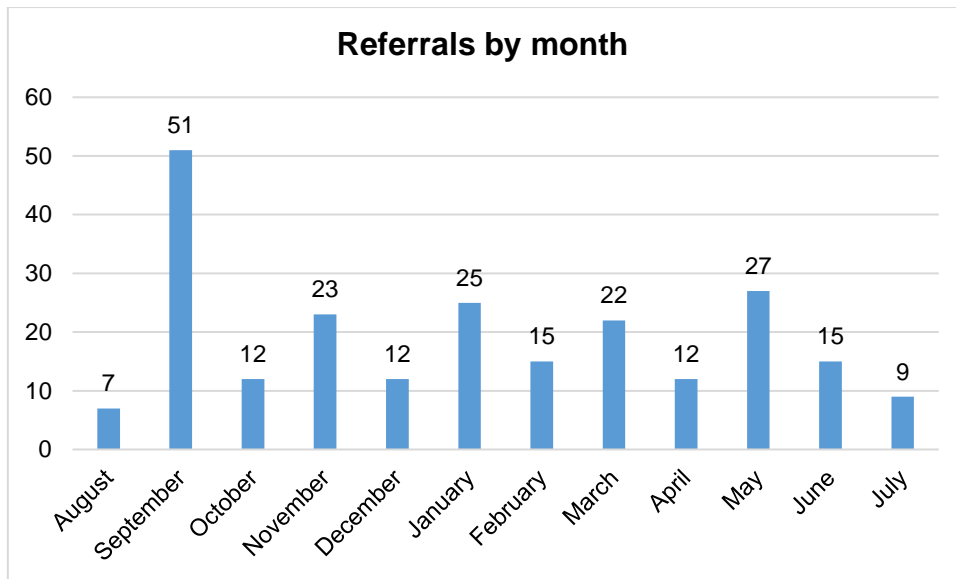
#### 5.6 Referrals by month

The data shows that the date of the referrals is similar year on year. The CME Service had **37** per cent of the referrals between September and November. This is a **one** per cent increase. However, in 2019/20 it was 34 per cent. Everything is quite similar apart from June which had a 50 per cent drop for year on year.

### Is this report easy to understand?

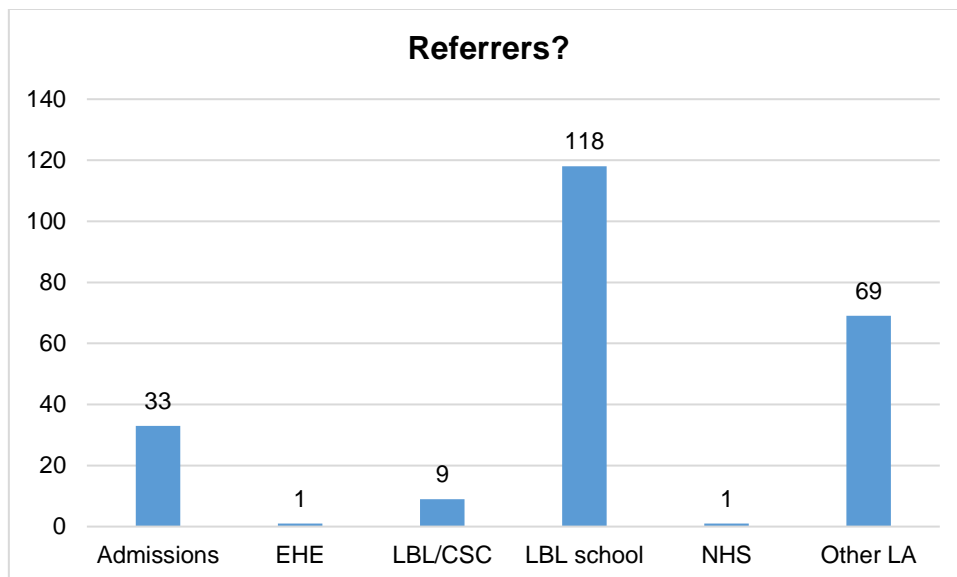
Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>



### 5.7 Who is referring?

The data shows the percentages of referrals from various agencies. The highest referrer is Lewisham Council and this includes Lewisham schools, the Admissions Service and other Lewisham departments. In total they are responsible for 66 per cent of all referrals. Other local authorities were the second highest referrer this year with 29 per cent. Lewisham has no referrals from CSC, this is due to the new Assistant Headteacher within the Virtual School establishing good links with the Attendance and Admissions Services.



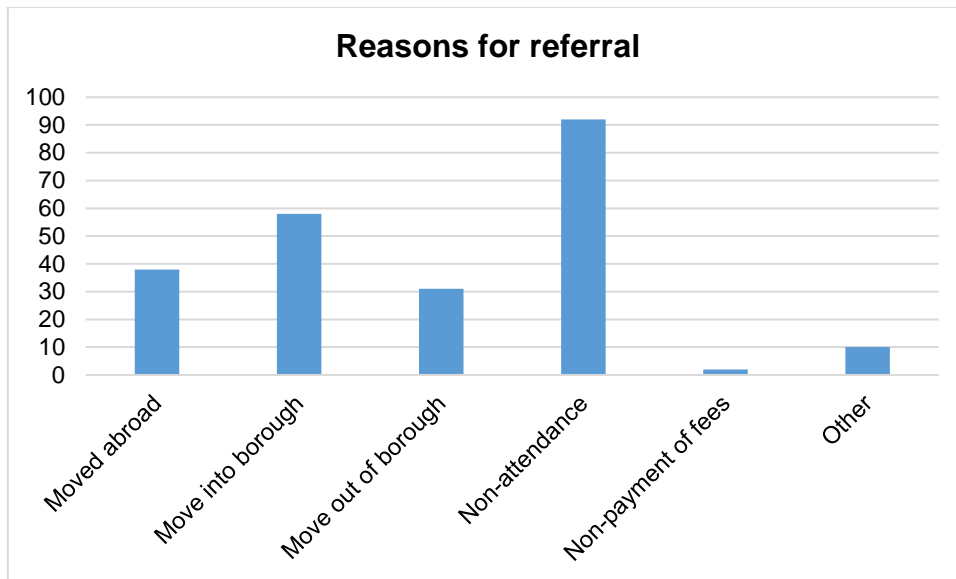
### 5.8 Reasons for referral

The data shows that the highest reason for a referral this year was due to “non-attendance” with 37 per cent, one per cent lower. The highest increase was, ‘moved into borough’ with 25 per cent. The biggest drop was for “moved out of borough”, it improved to seven per cent.

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

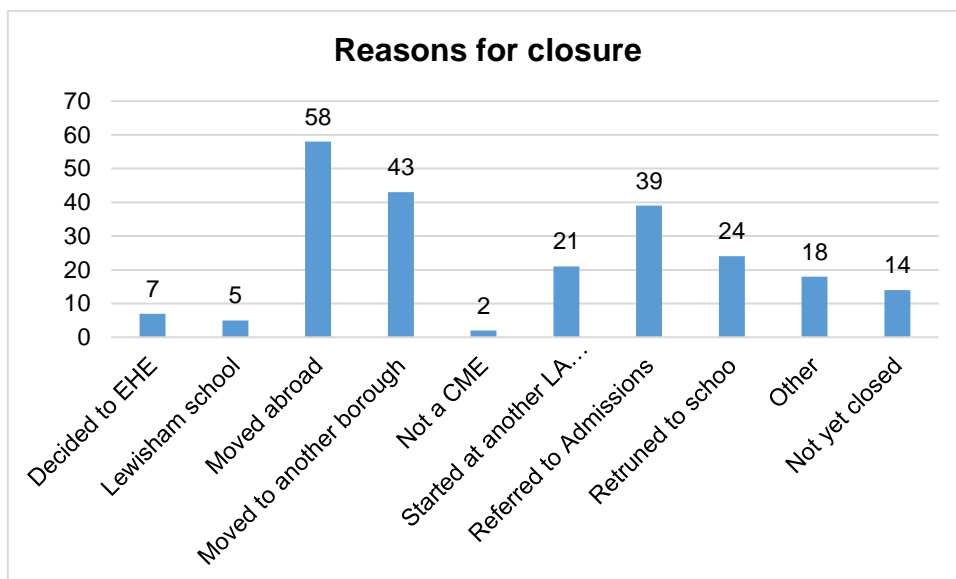


### 5.9 Reasons for closure

The data highlights the reasons for the **217** cases being closed. The highest reason confirmed is that the child or young person had moved out of the country, although confirming this information is more difficult without boarder checks. The second highest was children and young people who moved to a new local authority. This was via confirmation from another local authority or schools abroad. 46 per cent of the cases fell into this category. This is a four per cent increase from 2021/22.

Referred to the Admissions Service and children and young people who returned to a school after a period of unexplained time away equated to 39 per cent of closed cases.

The “other” reasons for closure dropped from 17 per cent to eight per cent. This drop is due to the complex issues people faced last year such as being caught on “red list” counties and being unable to travel have ceased. There is again a slight downtick in the number of parents who decided to electively home educate.



### 5.10 Referrals by year group

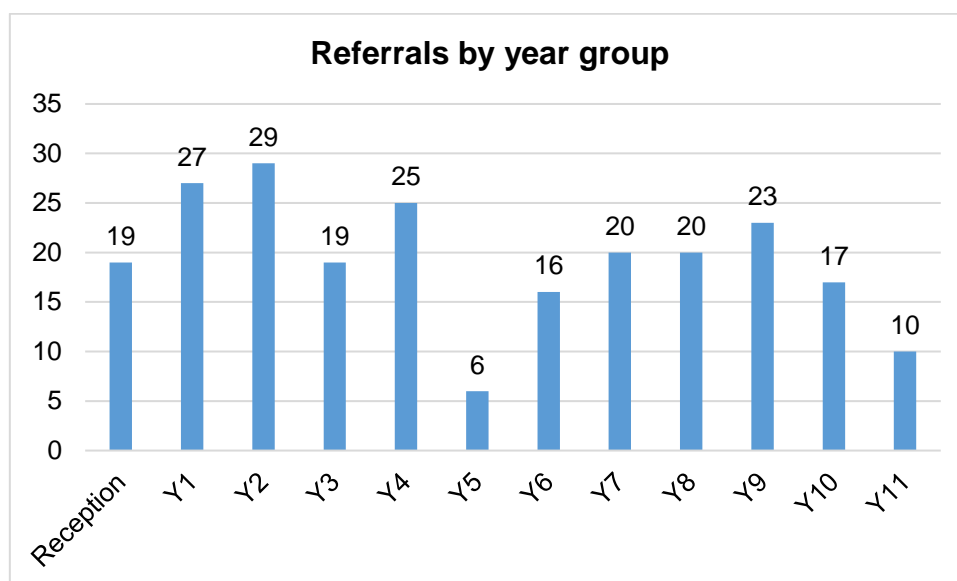
Of the **231** cases referred in 2022/23 there that apart from Year 5 most others have a

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

consistent number of referrals. Y11 is lower but this generally are due to the young person taking GCSE's. Historically Lewisham saw a higher numbers in Y7 with families not being happy about their allocated school. Due to work undertaken by the Admissions Team, this no longer seems to be the case.



#### 5.11 Summary of findings

One of the most significant findings in 2022/23 is that **55** per cent of referred cases are due to mobility. That is **127** referrals received as a family declaring that they were relocating.

The CME Service continues to reduce the time of closing cases within a three-month period, it is now at **96** per cent.

There has been a reduction in the ethnicity category "not provided". However, the service will continue to collect more specific data going forward.

The target to reduce "other" reason for referrals improved from seven per cent to four per cent. That along with the fall in "not known" ethnicity shows both the local authority and schools have better all-round communications.

In 2022/23 37 per cent of referrals are classified as 'non-attendance' and shows a steadiness with mobility in and out of the borough, and better communication between schools and families as to the reasons.

The Service has provided training to schools on the at Attendance Network meetings in 2022/23 and this will be continued into 2023/24.

Comparing the numbers of referrals from 2021/22 to 2022/23 shows changes in all areas:

- The number of referrals from the Lewisham's Admissions Team's stayed similar at 14 per cent.
- Referrals from other boroughs have stayed at approximately 30 per cent of referrals. This could be due to a continuation of a close working relationship with surrounding local authorities.
- Referrals from Lewisham schools have increased this year, from 48 to 51 per cent. This could be because of the Attendance Service is trading with more schools under an SLA, and Officers are able to identify for CME Services more readily.

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- Other inter-agency referrals have reduced as this is due to them being able to make contact with a named CME Officer who is able to answer questions quickly and effectively.
- The Service has established a working relationship with Lewisham Homes and the Virtual School (CP/CiN /LAC) that has helped the referrer understand the CME process.

#### 5.12 CME priorities for 2023/24

- Utilising the data provided by StudyBugs<sup>4</sup> so a deregistration is never missed and all children and young people taken off a school role have a destination confirmed.
- Refinement of the Children Missing Education and off-rolling guidance for schools to be presented at the joint Secondary and Primary Network Meeting.
- Provision of training to schools who are unable to make the distinction between CME and non-attendance.
- Continue work to enhance casework to meet the target of closing 50 per cent of referrals within one month and 100 per cent of cases being closed within three months.
- To continue cross borough working that is established with neighbouring boroughs to help close CME cases quicker when only “soft” intelligence is available.
- To try and establish a network of agencies that can check children and young people who have moved abroad.
- To try and broach the issue of “no border checks” with the Department for Education.

## 6. Financial implications

- 6.1 This is an information only report, as such there are no financial implications arising from this report.

## 7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The latest guidance: Working together to improve school attendance is to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, including roles and responsibilities, August 2023<sup>5</sup>.

## 8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to have due regard to equality impacts when making decisions in the exercise of their functions (Public Sector Equality Duty, PSED). In particular, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following as protected characteristics for the purpose of the PSED:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity

<sup>4</sup> Studybugs helps local authorities coordinate across all parties – school attendance team, case workers, schools, trusts, parents, even neighbouring LAs – to take early, targeted action to tackle the underlying causes of poor attendance.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

## Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- race (including ethnicity)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

## **9. Climate change and environmental implications**

9.1 There are no climate change and environmental implications.

## **10. Health and wellbeing implications**

10.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications.

## **11. Report author(s) and contact**

11.1 Ruth Griffiths, Head of Access, Inclusion and Participation ([ruth.griffiths@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.griffiths@lewisham.gov.uk))  
Emma Stubbington, Attendance Manager ([emma.stubbington@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:emma.stubbington@lewisham.gov.uk))

### **Is this report easy to understand?**

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>