

Will the Portfolio Holder confirm to this Committee how many children there are in Shropshire of :

Pre school age

Primary school age

Secondary school age

And confirm how these records are obtained, reviewed and checked for accuracy.

Pre school age: 14,788 (aged 0-4)

Primary school age: 23,835 (aged 5-11)

Secondary school age: 28,507 (aged 11-18)

The population information provided above is from the Office of National Statistics population estimates for Shropshire, updated in April 2021.

Locally we use a combination of datasets to track our child population.

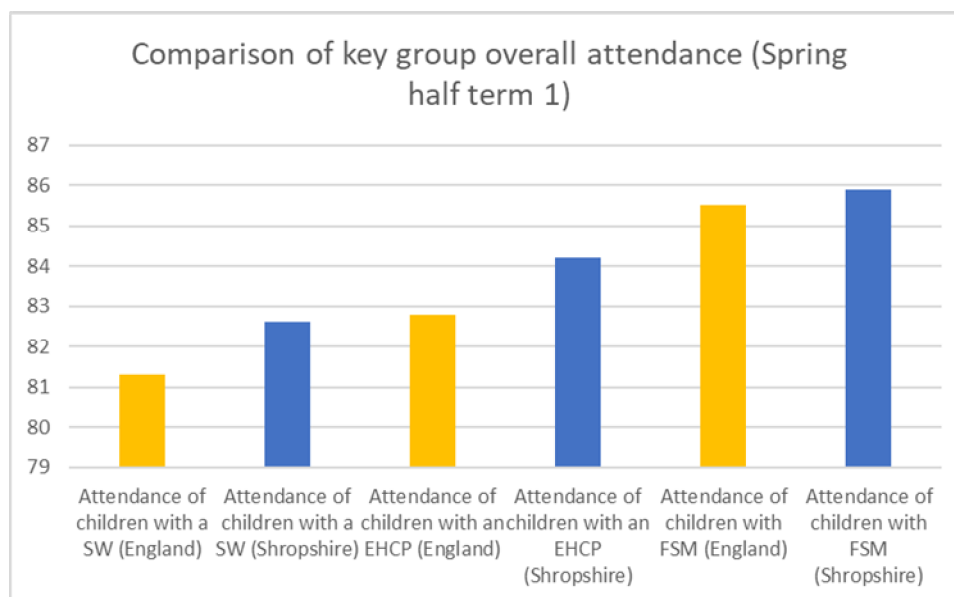
For pre-school children we are in receipt of births data on a quarterly basis along with annual GP registrations data twice yearly. Together these form the 'known children' data, which is used during the forecasting of known children for each school catchment area.

At school age the population is monitored via the school census and the Education Management System.

It should be noted that, whilst we aim to capture 100% of children in the county, there can be no guarantee of this. People moving in and out of the county may not amend their GP registrations, enrol at a new school or inform the authority of their arrangements. In these instances, professional curiosity and robust tracking arrangements, outlined in the children missing education section, are used to *identify and trace children of statutory school age who reside in Shropshire.*)

Will the Portfolio Holder also confirm how many children in Shropshire are not attending school, including those educated at home, and what support is being provided to ensure that all Shropshire children receive an education.

In the first half term of 2022 (1 January – 18 February), the national average for attendance was 88.6% with the Shropshire average for the same period being 89.1% based on the DfE attendance portal return. Week by week analysis of this data confirms that Shropshire attendance exceeded the national average in 5 out of the 6 weeks of that half term, and was above the national average for the key vulnerable groups outlined in the chart below. The average attendance in Shropshire also places Shropshire as ranked 3rd out of 11 statistical neighbours.



Whilst we are encouraged by this, particularly given the disruption faced because of the pandemic, we are working together to develop a system wide approach to securing attendance for all children and young people, at least to pre-pandemic levels and then improving further.

A team of Education Welfare Officers routinely monitor the absence rates of all children enrolled in Shropshire Schools. The team work closely with children, families and schools to support individual and whole school attendance, using a variety of interventions to secure the best outcomes for children, including a range of emotional health and well being support through education psychologists, mental health support teams and wider training opportunities.

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age (5-16) who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving education otherwise than at a school (elective home education).

Shropshire's CME register shows:

- 64 Shropshire resident children (last known address in Shropshire)
- 14 moved into Shropshire from another local authority area in the process of being placed.
- 101 confirmed as moved out of Shropshire (leaving no forwarding details)

The Education Access Service (EAS) undertakes the statutory duty to identify children who are not in receipt of education and works in close partnership with other agencies and services on behalf of the local authority. Schools are required to notify the LA of any children who are enrolled at their school and those who are removed from their school's roll, including the reason for removal. EAS has robust processes in place to track and trace children who are classed as CME, to establish they are safe and to ensure they can access a suitable education.

Currently, there are 550 children listed in Shropshire as being electively home educated (EHE), 183 primary age and 367 secondary age. The numbers had already been increasing before the covid pandemic, but we saw a 24% increase in

2020/21. This reduced by 23% in the autumn term 2021 but we are seeing a steady increase again in the Spring term 2022

The OFSTED Inspection of Local Authorities' Children's Services (ILACS) inspection report, published on 25 March 2022, said that –

“Effective tracking systems allow leaders to have oversight of those children who are missing education and those who are home educated. These systems lead to escalation to the education welfare service when elective home education is not in the children’s best interests in terms of promoting their welfare, or when children are missing. This service works closely with parents and children to ensure that children’s welfare is promoted.”