

## Off-Rolling Update - September 2021

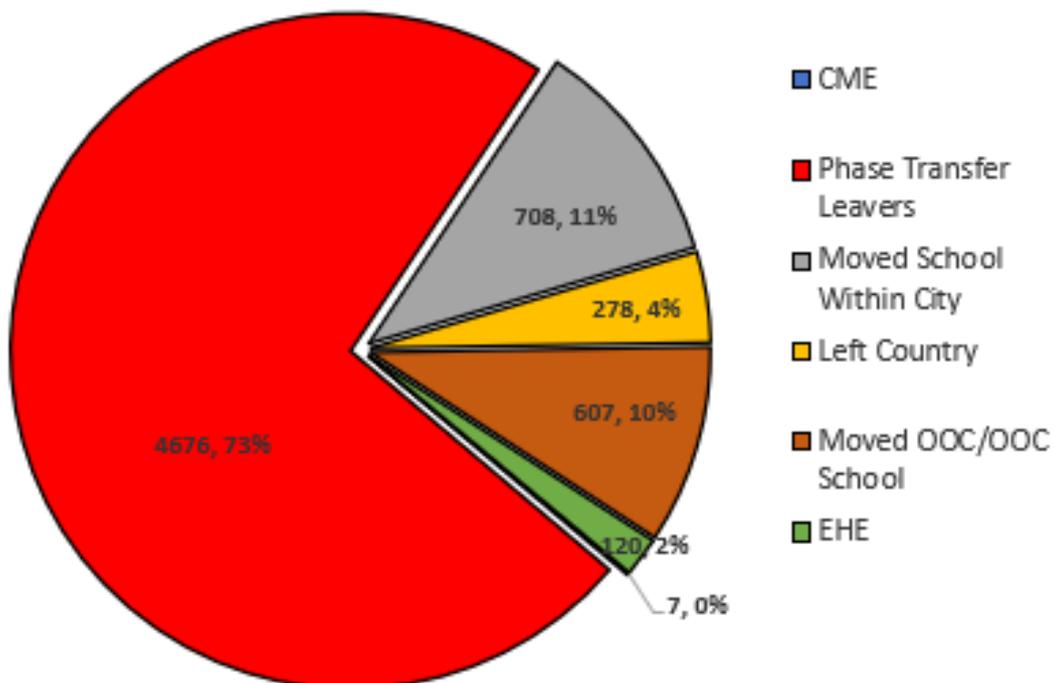
### DEFINITION

There is no legal definition of off-rolling but it is defined by Ofsted as *“The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.*

### SOUTHAMPTON RESIDENT LEAVERS FROM SOUTHAMPTON SCHOOLS IN 2021\21

The pie chart below shows that:

- 73% of our leavers last year were phase transfer leavers. This is not off-rolling.
- 4% of leavers left the country. This is not off-rolling.
- 10% of leavers left the city, or, moved to an out of city school. There is potential for off-rolling in this group.
- 11% moved within the city. There is potential for off-rolling in this group.
- 2% became electively home educated. There is potential for off-rolling in this group.
- 7 children were CME i.e. at the end of the academic year their whereabouts or forwarding destination was yet to be established or confirmed. This is normal at the end of an academic year because schools are closed by the time the data comes through so not all cases can be cleared. These children will be captured this academic year if they remain outstanding and will not slip through the net. Until reasons are established it is not possible to determine whether off-rolling could have been a factor.



## OBSTACLES TO ACCURATELY MEASURE OFF-ROLLING

- It takes place through legitimate channels e.g. pupils may be excluded lawfully, parents have the right to home educate their child if they wish to do so and parents have the right to change their child's school.
- Many of those believed to be affected (YouGov 2019 survey on behalf of Ofsted *Exploring the issue of off-rolling*) are reported to be vulnerable, sometimes causing them to be reluctant to complain, fearful of the school, or simply unaware that the actions are unlawful.
- There are a wide range of circumstances that may lead to a child leaving one setting and moving to another e.g. a house move, new school is more suitable or has a better Ofsted rating, or a place becomes available at a parental preference school.

Off-rolling can occur as a result of a series of conversations that schools have with parents, resulting in:

- The suggestion that an alternative school may be more suited to their child's particular needs, particularly in the case of SEND or vulnerable children.
- A worst case scenario being painted of their child's future if they remain at the school.
- The suggestion that an application to another school is the only way to avoid a permanent exclusion on their child's records.
- The suggestion that the best thing for their child is a fresh start.
- The suggestion that the only other option open to parents is to home educate.

If parents follow any of the above advice and exercise their right to change their child's schools, removal from roll is lawful and it is impossible for the LA to know when applications have been submitted under duress.

**Please note that none of the subsequent analysis, covering 2020/21, can precisely identify off rolling**, but it will enhance our local understanding and may be able to give possible indicators of areas of concern.

## PRO-ACTIVE STRATEGIES IN PLACE

- Reported or suspected cases or off-rolling are challenged directly with Headteachers.
- The Schools Monitoring Group takes a 360° view of all schools in the city and categorises them against the level of concern, LA support/oversight needed. Pupil turbulence forms part of this process.
- The CME Officer gatekeeps removal from roll to ensure that every removal from roll is compliant with relevant legislation.
- We raise concerns with schools who have a high number of EHE (Electively Home Education) leavers.
- School Improvement Officers request during annual visits information for pupils having left the school to be home educated and general turbulence data.
- Off-rolling is covered at DSL training for schools.
- Our EHE literature and EHE page on the council website reinforces that a school cannot request or advise parents to de-register their child to electively home educated.

- The SCC Practitioner Guidance Document– Educational Neglect (May 2021) includes a specific focus on off-rolling.
- Our local EHE process holds schools to account for engaging with parents at the first mention of EHE and requires them to offer a discussion to parents. The purpose for these discussions includes the exploration of any issues that could be resolved and to ensure that the parent has not been pressurised in any way to withdraw their child from school.
- The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook addresses off-rolling under the leadership and management judgement *“Leaders aim to ensure that all pupils successfully complete their programmes of study. They provide the support for staff to make this possible. They create an inclusive culture and do not allow gaming or off-rolling.”*
- Our EHE guidance for schools states that for all pupils with an EHCP, schools should notify the SEND Case Officer immediately to call an early Annual Review at the first mention of EHE to ensure that:
  - A review can take place of the needs of the child.
  - A baseline can be established against which progress can be measured at the next annual review.
  - Parents can explain how they will ensure they will meet the needs of the child as written in the EHCP, but also how they will meet their wider duty under s7 of the Education Act 1996.
  - The school can be satisfied that off-rolling is not a factor where the parent feels they are left with no option other than EHE because of a lack of support for their child’s needs.
- The Education Welfare Service work directly with families and mediate between schools and families to try and remove barriers to attendance and hopefully maintain placements.
- A working group of Educational Psychologists has been set up to look at Emotionally Based School Avoidance policy and practices.
- We have a well-embedded Fair Access Protocol which identifies school places for pupils who meet the criteria.
- We have an Inclusion Officer for Pupils with medical needs whose role is to facilitate/promote provision for pupils with medical needs and to provide advice and support to schools to help them maintain placements.
- Our managed moves protocol is in place to support pupils who are in need of a fresh start at a new school, whilst protecting their enrolment status at their current school.
- A local authority ‘School Causing Concern’ group meets to discuss issues raised by professionals and to agree actions.
- We work with schools to problem solve through officer support and inclusion panels, in situations where children display challenging or complex behaviours.
- When making an on-line application for a school place via the Citizen Portal parents are asked to provide the reason for their application, enabling us to monitor reasons of particular concern.

## INCLUSION SERVICES - SPECIFIC OFF-ROLLING CASES DURING 2020/21

### Removing a non-attender from roll following a house move

One sibling was able to be offered an alternative place at an infant school close to their new address and transferred successfully in July. The older child was not immediately offered a place at the

corresponding junior school close to their new address and stopped attending their current school. The Headteacher therefore removed the older child from roll with a reason of EHE.

- A part of our Inclusion Services process we contacted the school to request the appropriate EHE paperwork and discovered that this was not an EHE withdrawal. The parent had not expressed an intention to EHE. The Headteacher felt that removal from roll was a better option for the parents than being issued with a fine for non-attendance at school so just provided EHE as a reason. He also felt that the new junior school could and should have enrolled this child prior to the summer holidays to prevent non-attendance.
- The parent had been advised that her older child needed to continue attending but refused to comply.
- The CME Officer advised the Headteacher to reinstate the pupil because removal from roll had been unlawful. This advice was complied with.
- The child subsequently successfully transferred to their new junior school in September.

This was felt to be off-rolling because removal from roll was unlawful and because this action benefitted the school because it impacted in a positive way on their attendance figures.

### **Two EHE withdrawals from the same education provider**

These cases were alerted to the Cross Phase advisor for school improvement and lead for safeguarding in education settings because:

- Neither student was offered a referral to Early Help despite both pupils displaying challenging and disruptive behaviours
- Despite meeting with pastoral staff neither parent was offered outside agency support, such as Springwell, EP or Early Help.
- In one of the cases the pupil was working with the SENCO but there was no evidence of an application for EHCP, despite the parent requesting this. There was also no evidence of additional support being provided from the SEN budget.
- One parent met with the Deputy Head, where she discussed EHE and alleges that she was told that this would be a good option to keep her child safe.
- One parent reported that the lack of pastoral care was the main reason for her decision to EHE and she felt that the provider did little to support her child's mental health.
- Neither parent wanted to EHE - they both wanted support from the school, which they both felt was wanting.

These cases were felt to be off-rolling because the parents were left feeling that they had no alternative other than to EHE their children and these outcomes benefitted the education provider rather than the pupils.