

SUBJECT: Rationale and Impact of the Transfer of Funds from Schools Block to Central School Services Block

DATE: 21st January 2025

RECIPIENT: Schools Forum

SUMMARY:

1. Schools Forum have requested a rationale and accountability measure for the impact of the transfer of £0.220M from the Schools Block to the Central School Services Block to consider the continuation of this transfer.

BACKGROUND

2. The Central School Services Block (CSSB) was set up following the discontinuation of the Education Services Grant (ESG). The retained funding is to support the Local Authority's (LA) statutory duties for all schools.
3. The CSSB provides funding for Local Authorities to carry out central functions on behalf of maintained schools and academies, comprising two distinct elements:
 - Historic commitments – DSG MASH Contribution (Preventative Social Care) is a historic commitment. The EFSA have reduced funding for historic commitments each year since 2021/22 by 20%.
 - Ongoing responsibilities – these include School Admissions, National Copyright Licences and Statutory Regulatory duties, including Education Welfare and Attendance.
4. Due to reductions in the CSSB funding, starting in 2022, Schools Forum agreed to a block transfer from the Schools Block to ensure that Local Authority Education Services remained at the same level.
5. The arrangements for this transfer from 2022-2024 were as follows:

Year	Reduction in CSSB Funding - Year	Reduction in CSSB Funding Cumulative	Amount Transferred from Schools Block
2022/23	£0.103M	£0.103M	£0.103M
2023/24	£0.083M	£0.186M	£0.186M
2024/25	£0.050M	£0.236M	£0.220M

6. Although there has been an increased to the CSSB allocation this year, this is due to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) confirmation that the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant (TPAG), the Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant (TPECG) 2024, and the recently announced Core Schools

Budget Grant (CSBG) will all be rolled into the schools NFF for 2025/26 and thus will not be paid as a separate grant.

7. The 2025/26 CSSB fund is showing a 4% reduction from the 2024/25 fund.
8. The cumulative reduction to the CSSB fund from 2022 is now £0.316M.

While previous transfers from the Schools Block have increased year on year to address the increasing cumulative reduction, the Local Authority is not requested an increase to the request of the amount to be transferred from the amount transferred in the 2024/25 financial year. Instead a transfer of the same amount of £0.220M is being requested. This is 70% of the cumulative funding reduction.

9. Transfers of up to 0.5% from the Schools Block to other Designated School Grant blocks are permitted with Schools Forum approval.

The requested 0.220M transfer equates to a transfer of 0.11%.

LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION SERVICES REDESIGN

10. Schools Forum minutes reflect that initial transfers from the Schools Block to the CSSB were to ensure the Local Authority did not need to reduce the services offered to schools in light of reductions to the CSSB. The minutes note a significant contribution from the Local Authority general fund to further support the delivery of key functions.
11. The transfer from the Schools Block to the CSSB made for the 2024/25 was agreed on the basis of schools being in agreement with the direction of travel in Education Services redesign by the Local Authority undertaken in 2024.

The redesign at this time needed to be undertaken to resolve an overspend in the Education Services budget.

12. The redesign came into operation in June 2024, however as key roles were not recruited to, an interim structure was agreed with plans to undertake a further redesign better organised to meeting the needs of schools and address forecasted cost pressures existing in the structure.

The second redesign process was undertaken in the Autumn Term of 2024 to meet the priorities of the service and address the forecasted budget pressures.

13. Options were presented to Headteacher and Principal delegates, elected to represent groups of school.

This group unanimously supported the proposed redesign that opened for consultation on 7th January 2025.

14. The proposed redesigned Education Service has been crafted to allow the Local Authority to both meet its statutory duties and to be responsive to the needs and priorities of schools, as determined by both internal review and stakeholder engagement.

The agreed areas of specific focus for the Local Authority Education Service are:

- Improving educational outcomes, including the insurance of appropriate pathways for children and young people, rather than a focus simply on academic results.
 - Improving educational engagement, including improving school attendance
 - Improving the response to increasing behaviour-presenting need, to reduce suspension and exclusion.
15. The proposed redesign has been designed with the 0.220M transfer included, on the basis of the continuity principle of this transfer being to avoid a reduction in services delivered.

No increase to this transfer amount has been suggested.

Should this transfer not occur, this structure would need to be significantly adjusted, which would impact the offer of services to schools against the principles of the redesign.

16. A high-level summary of the comparison between the current Education Services structure following the 2024 redesign, and the proposed redesign under consultation, alongside the case for the proposed redesign, is presented in Appendix A.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF BLOCK TRANSFERRED FUNDS: CURRENT POSITION

17. Previous transfers from the Schools Block to the CSSB had been made on the basis of allowing the Local Authority to continue service levels without reduction in what is offered to schools as a result of reduction to core CSSB funding.

This has included key statutory functions for the Local Authority, as well as delegated services.

18. The transfers made to the CSSB from the Schools Block were thus used to maintain Local Authority Education Services, in line with national policy shifts, and provide delivery of work such as:
- Education Welfare, including the preparation for increased statutory functions as of summer 2024;
 - i. This has included sign-off from the DfE Attendance advisor in preparation for the new duties, stating: *A huge thank you for all the work you have done over the last couple of years -veritable*

mountains have been moved. You have now reached a point where you are deemed to be "green" on your self-assessments and so no further individual sessions will be provided by me as a matter of course. A testament to your successes.

- ii. School Attendance Action Groups (SAAG) to connect multi-disciplinary professionals and share information and best practice.
 - iii. See attached case studies for demonstration of the impact of school attendance support (Appendix B)
- Increased oversight for potentially vulnerable groups such as Children Missing Education and EHE cohorts, ensuring reintegration to school was successful where need for this was identified;
 - i. This has included the reintegration of 18 Year 8-11 longer term EHE pupils where EHE was not sustainable for families to school in the 2023/24 academic year.
- Exclusion and reintegration work in response to rising presentation in need;
 - i. The four highest priority schools for behaviour intervention identified in the 2023/24 academic year have seen a 53% reduction in their use of suspension in this term compared to the previous term;
 - ii. There has been a 62% reduction in the number of permanent exclusions in this term compared to the previous term.
- School Improvement developments, such as moderation management, Alternative Provision quality assurance, School Improvement Partners quality assurance and curriculum intervention project work;
 - i. A key example of this work is the impact of the Writing Intervention Project that saw significant gains of 9% in the participating schools, raising Southampton's overall writing progress by 1.13%, topping all other Local Authorities by considerable margin in this measure.
- Support for pupils with medical conditions, including those not well enough to attend school;
 - i. This has included innovative practice such as the use of AV1 robots to allow pupils with medical conditions that mean they cannot physically attend school for periods of time to remain part of their school communities.
- Educational Psychology support, including the establishment of Specialist Educational Psychologists particularly supporting Care Experienced Children and Young People, Post-16 and SEMH;
 - i. Formalised links and processes with Educational Psychology support for the Youth Justice Service;
 - ii. The establishment of a Mental Health Matters forum for Senior Mental Health Leads in schools and other educational settings;
 - iii. Targeted Specialist EP work through functions such as PHIG problem solving and therapeutic intervention pilots.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF BLOCK TRANSFERRED FUNDS: FUTURE PLANNING

19. Schools Forum have requested an accountability measure to be attached to any proposal for block transfers, to be satisfied that the impact of such transfers aligns to the city's shared educational priorities.
20. To allow for appropriate oversight by Schools Forum, the Local Authority are suggesting the following application of the proposed £0.220M transfer to activity provided in the proposed redesign as follows:

Contribution to deregistration and penalty notice administration and legal representation in court proceedings	0.023
Contribution to Specialist Educational Psychology services	0.043
Contribution to strategic planning, for overall Education Service and for Education Access & Integration strategic delivery	0.045
Contribution to delivery of Education Integration activity for pupils at risk of disengagement	0.069
Contribution to strategic planning and delivery of Education Standards activity for support of curriculum, teaching and leadership development	0.040

21. The Local Authority proposes to provide regular updates to Schools Forum on the direction of travel on key priorities, with a more in-depth presentation ahead of budget determination meetings, to provide accountability to both the Central School Services Block and specifically the requested £0.220M transfer.

Details on the accountability and success measures for the services proposed in the Education Services redesign are provided in Appendix A, as part of the redesign rationale.

The Local Authority propose to provide both a narrative as to services delivered, including case studies where this is appropriate, for both statutory and non-statutory services. Further to this, a comprehensive data analysis will be provided to interrogate the impact of services and how these are being prioritised.

Any projected underspend or overspend, the narrative behind this, and any mitigation being undertaken will also be communicated to Schools Forum.

RISKS OF TRANSFER NOT BEING AGREED

22. Should Schools Forum not agree to the proposed £0.220M transfer from the Schools Block to the Central School Services Block, there would need to be an amendment to the proposed redesign and the service plan to be delivered under it.
23. To avoid the creation of additional cost pressures incurred through any redundancy processes, vacant roles would be prioritised for removal to make

the £0.220M reduction. This would also remove an element of the risk of funding positions through a presumption of transfers between blocks, which can only be agreed annually.

While the specific details of this process would be determined by the nature of the agreement to the transfer, whether the transfer is not agreed altogether, or a reduced amount is agreed, it is likely that that following changes would be made to the proposed redesign:

The removal of the vacant strategic Director of Education post	0.126
Reduction to legal support, notably legal representation	0.016
Reduction to Education Access services, including navigation of deregistered pupils and CME and EHE support	0.036
Reduction to Education Integration services, including Attendance Support, Exclusion & Reintegration and Pupils with Medical Conditions	0.040

RECOMMENDATIONS

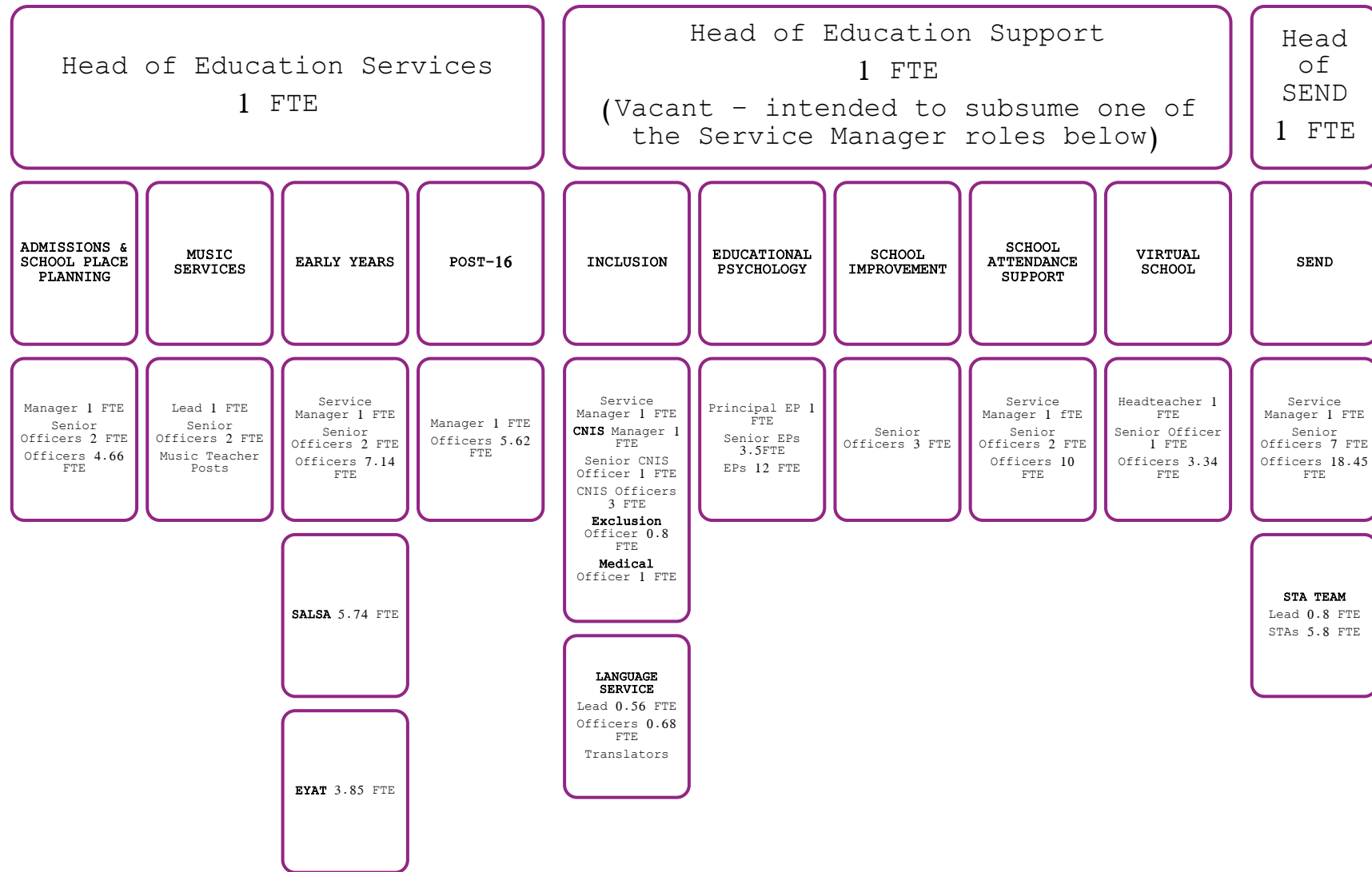
24. The recommendation of the Local Authority is for the £0.220M transfer from the Schools Block to the Central Schools Services Block be agreed by School Forum for the 2025/26 financial year.
25. While previously the value of the transfer from the Schools Block to the Central School Services Block had previously increased annually, the Local Authority is not recommending an increase to the value of the transfer from the level for the 2024/25 financial year.
26. The Local Authority is recommending that while the transfer be agreed for the 2025/26 financial year, that further investigation is given to ways that would allow the Local Authority not to be reliant on such transfers.

This is likely to include an increased reliance on income generation, and so appropriate balance must be given to the per-school contribution to the current transfer amount and any fees charged for services in its absence.

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Appendix A: High Level Summary of Education Services Structure 2024 and Proposed Redesign for Consultation in January 2024

Current Structure Summary:



Proposed Structure Summary:

Director of Education
1 FTE

Head of Education
1 FTE

Virtual
School
Headteacher
1 FTE

Head of
SEND
1 FTE

EDUCATION ACCESS & INTEGRATION

Service Manager 1 FTE
Team Manager 3 FTE
Senior Officers 7.8 FTE
Officers 21 FTE

EDUCATION STANDARDS

Service Manager 1 FTE
Team Manager 2 FTE
Senior Officer 2 FTE
EYAT 3.85 FTE
Music Teacher Posts

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Principal EP 1 FTE
Senior EPs 3.5FTE
EPs 12 FTE
SALSA 5.74 FTE

EARLY YEARS & FAMILY HUBS

Service Manager 1 FTE
Senior Officers 2.56 FTE
Officers 8.4 FTE
Translators
Family Hub Structure

VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Senior Officer 1 FTE
Officers 3.34 FTE

SEND

Service Manager 1 FTE
Team Manager 1 FTE
Senior Officers 5 FTE
Officers 18.45 FTE
STA Lead 0.8 FTE
STAs 5.8 FTE

Rationale for redesign and proposed delivery of services:

Rationale:

The driver for an Education Service redesign is the need to better organise services and skillsets to address the three main priorities for Education in Southampton. These are:

- Increasing attendance
- Reducing exclusion
- Improving outcomes

At present, the Education Service promotes silo working with little opportunity for need-led deployment of resource. Management structures across the services lack parity or appropriate hierarchy to separate operational and strategic work. SEND has existed outside of the main Education Service for several years, a decision that has caused significant challenge from external stakeholders such as education providers. External stakeholder value in the services provided by Southampton City Council varies too widely between services and individual officers, and there is low resilience built into the current structure.

Under the proposed redesign, there would be significant change to several key services, as well as general management structure changes, to better align the service to its main priorities and ensure effective service delivery.

Education Access & Integration

The primary purpose of Education Access & Integration can be summarised as:

- Ensuring a sufficiency of education options from compulsory school age to Post-16
- Ensuring inclusive access to appropriate education options, including EHE
- Ensuring barriers to education access are effectively addressed, whether this manifests as attendance, exclusion or need for alternative pathways
- Ensuring appropriate commissioning of alternative provision (PRU and Hospital School)

The service would be divided into a locality-led model, rather than an 'issue'-led model, allowing for holistic work with families and schools that encourages strong working relationships and collaborative, contextually aware, solution-orientated problem solving.

Education Standards

The primary purpose of the Education Standards service can be summarised as:

- Ensuring high quality education provision across the city
- Ensuring a rich cultural offer for children and young people through musical opportunities and experience.
- Providing guidance and quality assurance of external alternative provision
- Providing overall responsibility for the delivery of moderation across the city

The Education Standards service has been designed to group a majority of services provided by teachers to ensure appropriate high-quality oversight and management.

Early Years & Family Hubs

The primary purpose of Early Years & Family Hubs can be summarised as:

- Ensuring sufficiency of Early Years placements
- Ensuring majority uptake of Early Years placements, especially amongst the most vulnerable
- Ensuring quality of Early Years provision
- Ensuring appropriate support to families to reduce risks for children
- Ensuring appropriate support and enfranchisement for families for whom English is an additional language

Appendix B – School Attendance Support Case Studies

Child A – secondary phase

- **Involvement Start Date and Primary Reason:** The involvement with Child A began on 23/02/2024, primarily due to attendance issues. Point of referral 31%. Current attendance is now 92.22% with no absence from school for 7 weeks.
- **Subject Information:** Child A is registered at a Secondary School in year 9.
- **Challenges in Engagement:** Engaging with Child A's mother proves challenging due to her reluctance to attend meetings and inconsistent communication.
- **Communication Logs:** Various communications between education welfare officers and Child A's family detail attempts to arrange meetings and address attendance issues.
- **Home Visit and Meeting Arrangements:** Efforts were made to conduct home visits and arrange meetings, often hindered by family circumstances such as the presence of Child A's brother who had additional needs.
- **Family Dynamics:** Child A's family dynamics, including her parents' separation and her brother, impact her attendance and well-being.
- **School and Home Issues:** Issues at home, such as poor living conditions and financial difficulties, as well as Child A's reluctance to attend school, are recurring themes.
- **Parental Concerns and Actions:** Both parents express concerns about Child A's well-being and attendance, leading to various actions such as involving tutors and setting up meetings with school officials.
- **Support and Interventions:** Interventions include arranging attendance-focused meetings, providing parenting support, and exploring respite care for the brother.
- **Attendance-Focused Meetings:** Initial Attendance Focused Meetings (AFM) were arranged to address Child A's attendance issues. These meetings involved both parents and school.
- **Home Visits:** Home visits were conducted to discuss actions from previous meetings and to provide support directly to the family.
- **Parenting Support:** One-on-one parenting support sessions were arranged for Child A's mother, to help her manage Child A's attendance and behaviour.
- **School Interventions:** Various school-based interventions were implemented, such as changing Child A's seating in science class, allowing her to wear ear buds in class, and providing access to the breakfast club and the Wellbeing hub.
- **Respite Care:** The possibility of respite care for Child A's brother, was explored to alleviate some of the family's stress.
- **Communication and Honesty:** Emphasis was placed on honest communication between parents and the school regarding the reasons for Child A's absences.
- **Summer Activities:** Plans were made for Child A to participate in summer activities, such as cycling to school and practicing bus routes with her brother.
- These interventions were designed to provide comprehensive support to Child A and her family, addressing both educational and personal challenges.

- **Professional Meetings and Updates:** Regular professional meetings are held to discuss Child A's situation, involving school staff and education welfare officers, to coordinate support efforts. The FEW has been consistent in offering parenting support, financial budgeting support and emotional support to the family.

Child B - Secondary phase

- **Involvement Initiation:** The involvement with the family of Child B began on March 16, 2023, due to concerns about school attendance. Point of referral 73%
- **Subject Information:** Child B is registered in Year 10 at a Southampton Secondary School.
- **Family and School Interactions:** Numerous communications between school representatives, the family, and medical professionals were documented, addressing various concerns and actions taken. For instance, there were discussions about the family's shop and how the children would sometimes accompany their parents to work. This was discussed with the Child Employment officer.
- **Medical Concerns:** Frequent medical issues were reported by the family, leading to consultations with healthcare providers to verify the legitimacy of these claims. The school and education welfare officers were concerned about the number of illnesses reported and the amount of time spent at the GP surgery. There were also concerns about Child B's appearance, including her looking unhappy, lack of motivation, and potentially being underweight. Attendance information shared with GP – the GP invited parent and Child B to a consultation. Confirmed to parent/Child B and professional network that her medical/illness would not prevent her from attending school on a regular basis.
- **Parental Engagement:** The parents frequently did not attend scheduled meetings, which complicated the intervention efforts. For example, the mother attended only two of the Fast Track meetings, while the father did not attend any.
- **Child's Perspective:** Child B appeared withdrawn and unhappy during interactions, raising concerns about her emotional well-being and the need for additional support. During a conversation with an education welfare officer, Child B rated her happiness at school as 7 out of 10 and at home as 8 out of 10. However, she was not forthcoming with information and seemed quiet and withdrawn.
- **Attendance Improvement:** By November 1, 2024, Child B's attendance had significantly improved to 100%, which was acknowledged as a significant improvement from the initial 73% at the point on SASS involvement.
- **Legal Considerations:** Due to prior attendance issues, legal proceedings were considered but were reconsidered after the notable improvement in attendance. The decision to close the case was discussed, and it was noted that no court papers had been submitted at that point and so it would be possible to do so.

- **Reward and Acknowledgment:** The significant improvement in attendance was outlined to the parents, and there were discussions about the school acknowledging and offering a reward to Child B.
- **Continued Monitoring:** The expectations of continued improvement were outlined, and it was emphasised that the improvement must be sustained for the service to withdraw.
- **Case Closure:** Once all actions were completed, the case was agreed to be closed and handed back to the school to support and review.

Child C – Year 5 Primary School pupil

- **Initial Involvement and Attendance Issues:** Child C's case began on February 15, 2023, due to concerns about his school attendance, which was initially at 66% and later dropped to 39% before improving to 93.75%.
- **Support and Communication:** Various professionals, including the School Attendance Support Service (SASS), social workers, and school staff, communicated frequently through emails, phone calls, and text messages to support Child C and his family.
- **Challenges and Strategies:** Child C faced challenges due to his autism, including fixation on routines and anxiety about school. Professionals suggested strategies like visual timetables, reward charts, and consistent routines to help Child C.
- **Parental Involvement:** Child C's mother was actively involved in the process, communicating with professionals, attending meetings, and implementing suggested strategies to improve Child C's attendance and well-being.
- **Professional Meetings and Reviews:** Regular meetings and reviews, including core group meetings and RCPCs, were held to discuss Child C's progress and plan further support. These meetings often involved multiple professionals and focused on various aspects of Child C's life.
- **School's Role:** Primary School played a significant role in supporting Child C, providing additional learning support, catch-up sessions, and maintaining regular communication with other professionals involved in Child C's case.
- **Health and Well-being:** Child C's health and well-being were also addressed, with referrals to CAMHS and other health services to manage his anxiety and other related issues. Professionals emphasised the importance of a healthy sleep routine and consistent attendance.
- **Positive Outcomes:** By October 2024, significant improvements were noted in Child C's attendance and overall well-being, leading to the closure of the case with SASS. Child C's mother expressed gratitude for the support received.