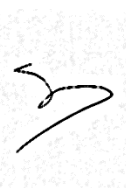


LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Persistent Absence Update	
REPORT OF Chief Executive, Camden Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 23 June 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report provides an update on Persistent Absence in Camden Schools. This update was requested by Committee Members and follows on from the Persistent Absence, Inclusion and Alternative Provision report considered by the Committee in November 2024. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents which require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Ed Magee, Attendance and Children Out of School 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG Ed.magee@camdenlearning.org.uk / 0207 974 1653	
RECOMMENDATIONS That the Committee notes the contents of the update	

Signed: 

Stephen Hall, Chief Executive, Camden Learning

Date: 9 June 2025

1. Purpose of Report

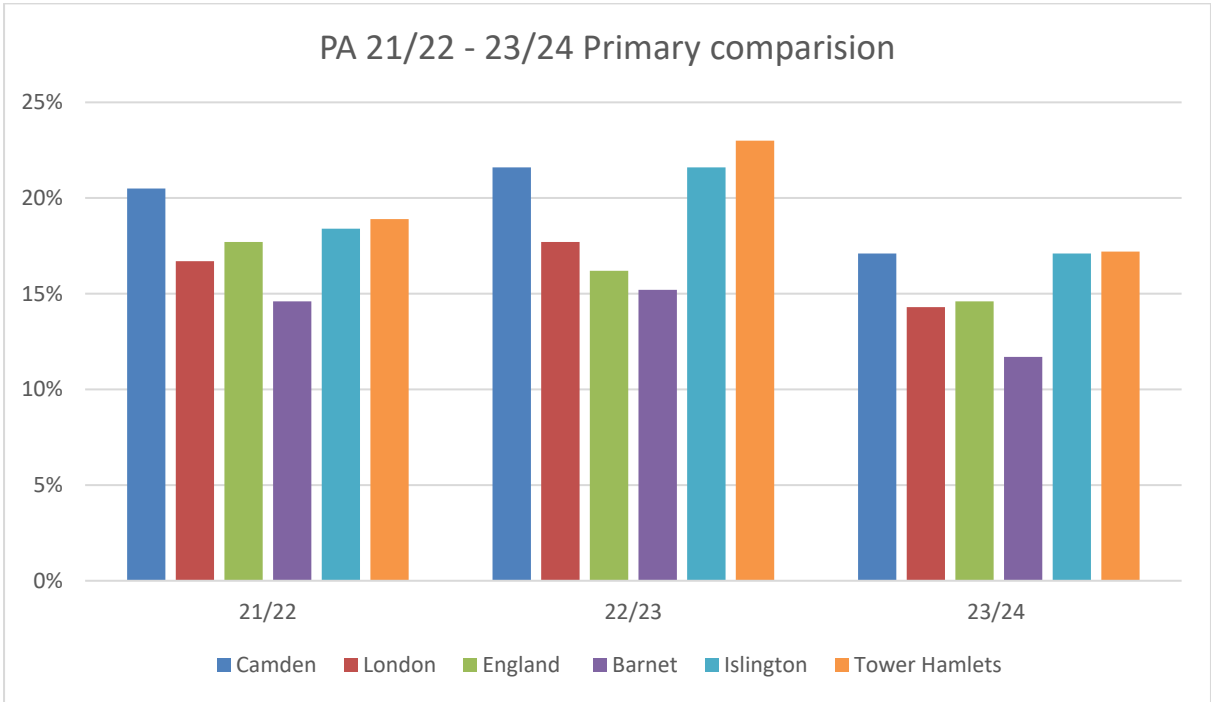
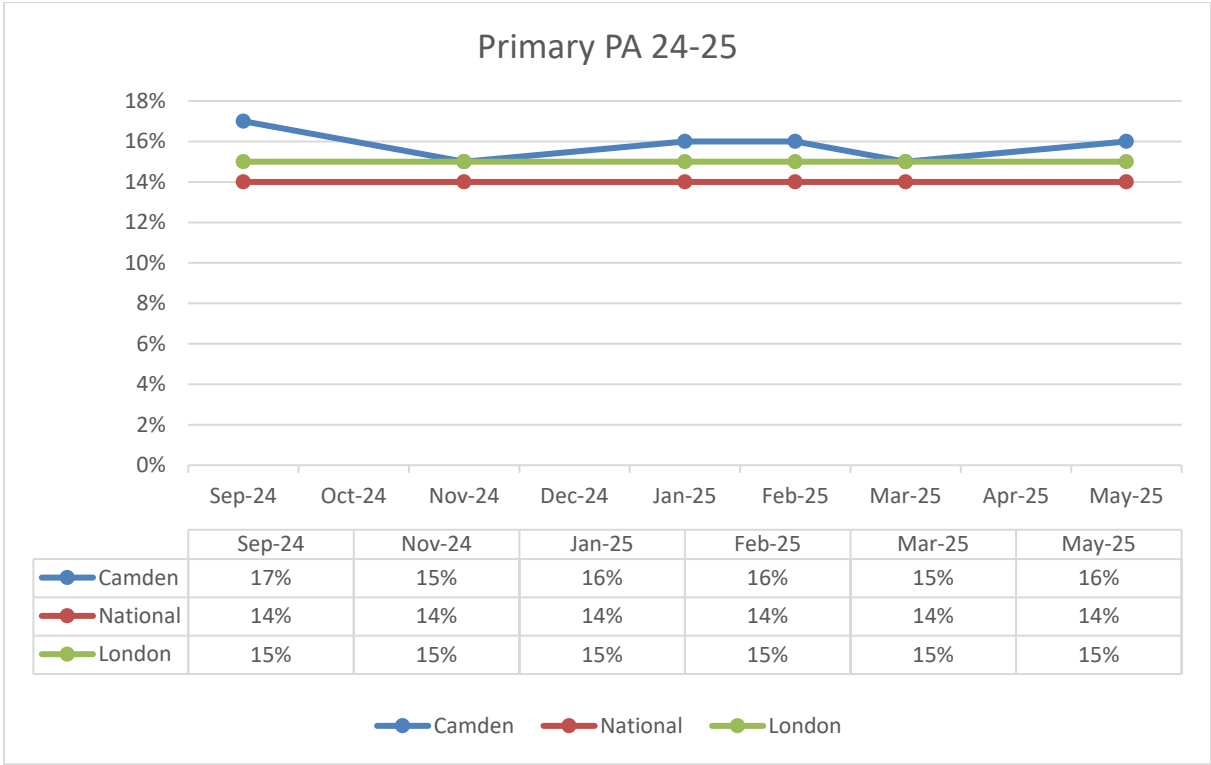
- 1.1. This report provides updated data on persistent absence levels in Camden to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee members. This update was requested by Committee Members and follows on from the [Persistent Absence, Inclusion and Alternative Provision](#) report considered by the Committee in November 2024. In recent years, school attendance has been a key priority, nationally and for Camden, and Scrutiny members have had a keen interest in following the evolution of key trends in this area.

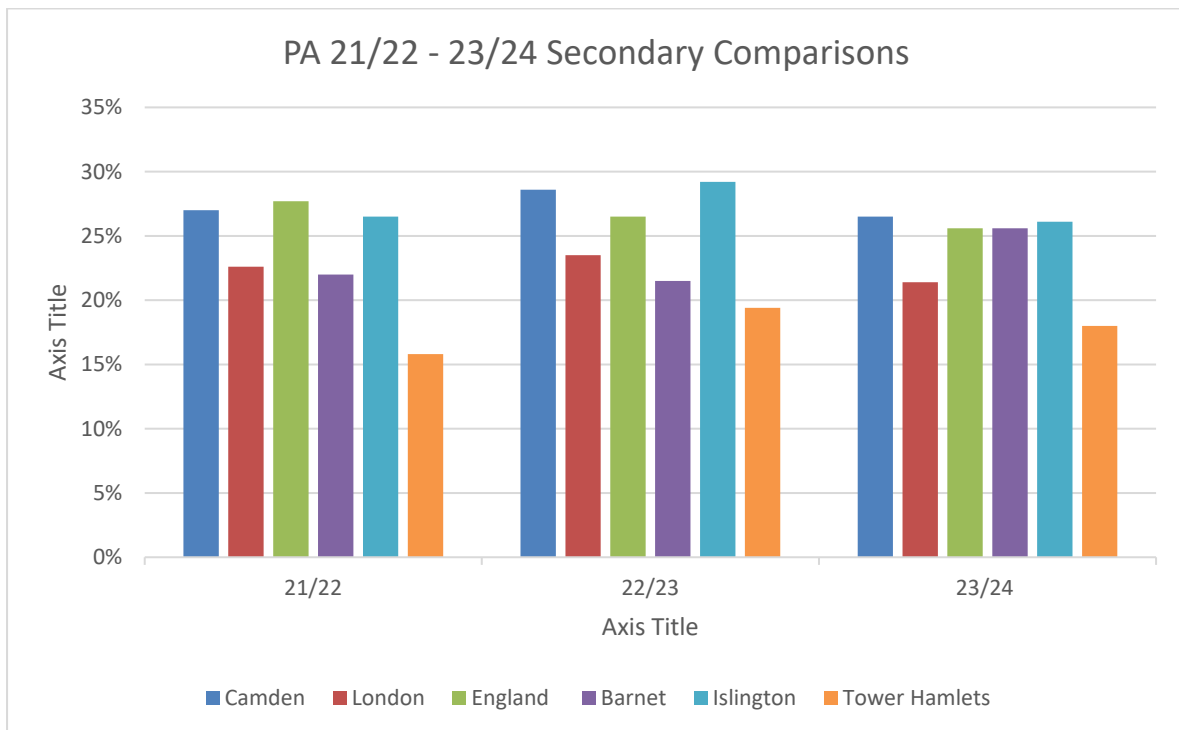
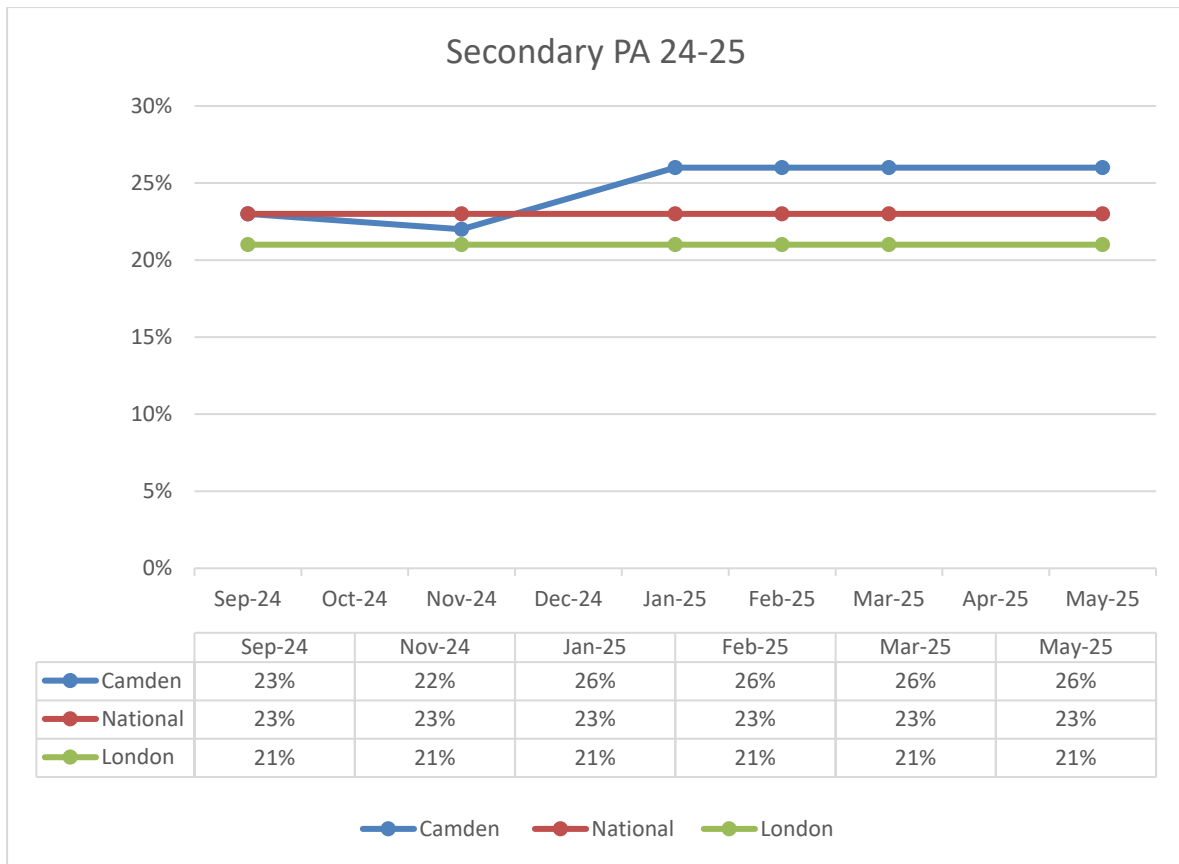
2. Introduction

- 2.1. The report updates members on persistent absence levels in Camden schools. It sets out some key context with data trends of persistent absence over time in Camden primary and secondary schools followed by some benchmarking data with other Local Authorities. Then, it examines ongoing work to improve school attendance in Camden.

3. Context

- 3.1. Persistent absence from school is defined as the number of children that have attendance below 90%.
- 3.2. Provisional data for primary and secondary schools have lower levels of persistent absence compared to the published school census data for the last two years but remains above national comparators at both Primary and Secondary phases.
- 3.3. Provisional data shows that persistent absence in primary schools for the year to date from September 2024 to May 2025 is 16%. This is less than the published school census data for 2023/24 at 17.1% and 21.6% in 2022/23. The provisional national persistent absence rate for this year is 14% down 0.6% from 2023/24 when it was 14.6%, and 16.2% in 2022/23.
- 3.4. Provisional data shows that persistent absence in secondary schools for the year to date from September 2024 to May 2025 is 26%. This is down 0.5% from published school census date for 2023/2024 when it was 26.5% and 28.6% in 2022/23. The provisional national persistent absence rate is 23% for this year down 2.6% from 2023/24 when it was 25.6% and 26.5% in 2022/23.





PA for National and London is only available for January 2025 not month by month. (Data for councils across London is not available currently).

- 3.5. More detailed analysis of the cohorts most impacted by persistent absence were reported in November 2024, they include:
- **CYP with Special Educational Needs** - children in the school census with an education, health and care (EHC) Plan,
 - **CYP that are known to social care** - children with a record in MOSAIC, (database used for children's social care)
 - **CYP eligible for free school meals (FSM)**
 - **Young Carers**
- 3.6. Within the cohorts above, there are three further specific cohorts at particular risk of persistent absence:
- **CYP with physical health or mental health issues** – children that have a MOSAIC coding for mental/physical health needs,
 - **CYP suffering bullying** – where bullying is listed amongst children's presenting reasons on their MOSAIC record,
 - **CYP from Asian/Bangladeshi communities** – as recorded on the school census.

4. Ongoing Work to Improve School Attendance

- 4.1. School attendance has been a strategic priority for Camden since the pandemic and has been the focus of work for schools. They have been promoting the benefits of regular school attendance and working with children and families to overcome barrier to attendance. They have been supported in this endeavour with several initiatives.
- 4.2. Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA) were jointly commissioned by Camden Council and Camden Learning to work with secondary age children to produce a [school attendance video and carry out a series of pupil led workshops in secondary schools](#). The video was written and produced by pupils from five Camden secondary schools and used as part of workshops with young people over the summer holidays and in schools during the autumn term. This initiative has received positive feedback from the Department for Education.
- 4.3. Pilots we are currently undertaking:
- A personalised parental text messaging campaign with 4 schools. The pilots started in late Autumn and early indications show at least a 1% increase in attendance over a three-week period.
 - Exploring the development of a 'team around the school' approach through Family Hubs. The pilot will focus on pupils with 10-20% absence rates, where absence is persistent but not yet entrenched. A named contact at the school will meet on a fortnightly basis with named colleagues in Early Help, the Harwood Family Hub and Camden Learning's School Inclusion Team. This will help them to navigate the support available, with the aim of tackling attendance issues before they become deeper seated. A pilot is

currently being held with Primrose Hill primary school and we hope to have a second primary school on board before the end of term.

- 4.4. In April 2025 a relaunch of the [Rebuilding Bridges programme](#), which provides parent/carer support one to one and small group work for children at risk of exclusion, who are not engaging with school, displaying behaviour of concern, experiencing social isolation and/or have low engagement with universal services.
- 4.5. Termly Targeted Support meetings are held with all schools looking at issues relation to attendance and behaviour and supporting attendance leads with processes and policies to address persistent absence.
- 4.6. Parent meetings are being held in schools with School Inclusion Support Officers, Work with Family Support Officers, and Early Help staff in schools.
- 4.7. Camden Professional Partners track and discuss attendance with schools as part of their termly visits to schools.
- 4.8. Schools share good practice as part of weekly attendance update to schools and via the Attendance Strategy and Resources.
- 4.9. New national penalty notice protocol was introduced in August 2024. Threshold 10 unauthorised sessions (to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks. This is 8 sessions (4 school days) if there is an inset day or a bank holiday. The fine is £80 if paid within 21 days. £160 if paid between days 22-28 days. If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine is £160 from day one. If a parent commits a third offence in a 3-year period, the local authority will need to consider court action. If found guilty it will be shown on any future DBS checks as "failure to safeguard a child's education" There is the possibility, although rare, that the court may impose a custodial sentence for parents who knowingly removed their children from school. Fines are issued per parent per child including statutory school age children in reception. This will include all parent even if they do not live in the family home.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Levels of persistent absence have reduced across Camden schools, though remain above national benchmarks and work will continue to support schools to continue to reduce absence.

6. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

- 6.1. This report carries no direct financial implications as it is provided for information purposes only. The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted on the contents of the report and has no comments to add.

7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 7.1. The Council has a duty to have regard to the statutory guidance contained in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' published in August 2024, as do maintained schools, academies and independent schools.
- 7.2. The guidance is relevant to Local Authority attendance staff, early help lead practitioners, social workers and virtual schools head as well as statutory safeguarding partners.
- 7.3. The guidance reflects changes to the law introduced through the School Attendance (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2024 and Education (Penalty Notices)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- 7.4. The guidance expects that Local Authorities will rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance. This will include consideration of legal intervention where voluntary support options have not been successful.
- 7.5. Camden Learning's contract includes the requirement to manage the Pupil Attendance Service in accordance with the relevant statutory framework and guidance on behalf of the Council.

8. Environmental Implications

- 8.1. This report contains nothing that has an environmental impact.

REPORT ENDS