

Education and Learning Update Report

Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Recommendation: That DEF note the report.

This report contains the essential updates on attendance and exclusions within all Devon schools and a commentary on the statutory update to the national guidance on working to improve attendance (DfE guidance 2024).

The two previous reports contained school outcomes data for Devon schools which are published in October / November annually and rest on nationally validated data from the previous academic year's test scores. These reports have been shared twice before for this group and so are not repeated here. However, Ofsted have been active in the county in the current academic year and this report contains an update on their findings.

Attendance: The DfE published a non-statutory document called 'Working Together to Improve Attendance in March 2022. It has since been republished and updated (March 2024) and will become statutory in September 2024. The Department for Education have issued revised interim guidance up to the 18th August 2024 and then a fresh set of expectations from 19th August 2024. The Local Authority is well placed to respond to the new requirements, but a further look at team deployment is now planned. In essence, DCC will expect all schools to sign up and share data with the DfE portal which will give live time data analysis, adopt a fresh strategy, and implement all aspects of the (soon to be statutory) attendance guidance. There are also some technical changes to the coding schools use when recording the reasons for any absence. The link to the updated version is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance> .

The documents set out expectations for schools (whether academies or maintained) and for governors, multi academy trusts and Local Authorities. In addition to the refreshed guidance the DfE have also issued a communications plan for families ('Moments Matter' – this has already been shared with our schools) and updated the penalty notice thresholds (the latter being potentially contentious as it relates to the level of fines for term time holidays).

Devon has a pattern of attendance that, although having improved since 2022, remains below national averages and also marginally below most large shire counties. Apart from the obvious impact on pupil outcomes, this is also a significant safeguarding concern. The guidance makes clear this is not a 'schools only' issue but rather a multi-agency one.

There are also wider implications for all this. The DfE guidance page also references the views of the National Children's Commissioner. She is independent of the DfE itself but has made several recommendations – none of which are obliged to be taken up by DfE or schools – but which will resonate in the coming months. These are printed below for information but with a caveat – these are NOT yet policy but will inform the next phase. There are cost implications for both schools and Local Authorities. This list goes well beyond what is in the soon to be statutory expectations. The recommendations include.

- Introduce family liaison officers for all schools and train up existing officers.
- Introduce a register of all unregistered alternative provision with clear minimum standards and mechanisms for quality assurance.
- Issue guidance for schools about how to create internal alternative provision.
- All schools should publish a mental health and wellbeing policy online.
- Mental health first training for all teachers to spot the early signs of common mental health issues.
- Expedite the rollout of mental health support teams to all children by 2025.
- Make counsellors available to every school.
- Assign key workers to children on CAMHS waiting lists and those receiving support but disengaging from school.
- Update the early career framework with training on SEND.
- Give LAs and MATs powers to open special schools in addition to the current free school wave.
- Make LAs with an average EHCP waiting time over 20 weeks to publish a plan to reduce it.
- Ofsted should look at how schools deregister children as part of inspecting safeguarding.
- Make LAs admissions authorities for all schools.
- Introduce a child not in school register and a consistent unique identifier for all children.
- Train social workers in 'educational neglect' and treat regular school attendance as a key outcome for children with history absenteeism.
- Give virtual school heads powers to direct admissions for children in need.
- Ban home education for any child with a social worker who has been identified as at risk of harm in the home or where home education would expose them to additional harms.
- Ofsted should revise its SEND inspector framework to include attendance as an evaluation criterion.
- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission should conduct a joint targeted area inspection on school attendance and children missing education.

1. Key Performance Indicators for attendance, exclusions, EHE and CME

Attendance

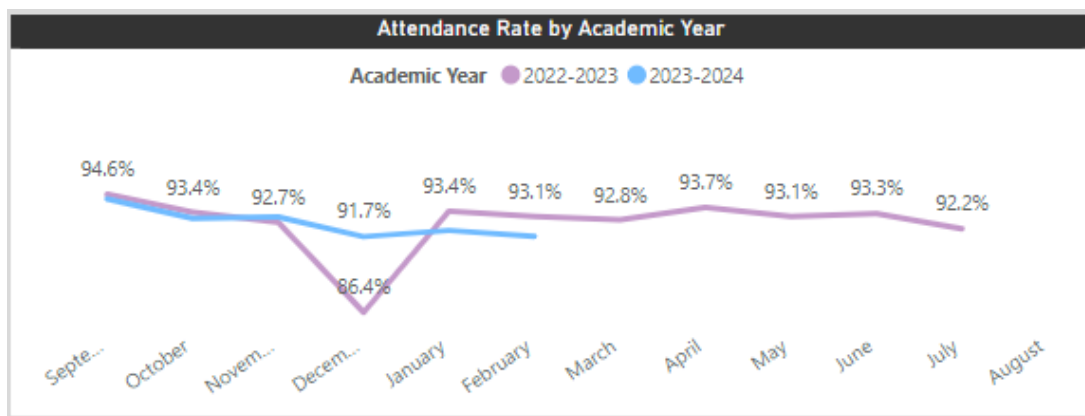
		2021/22 – Autumn/Spring Terms Combined*	2022/23 – Autumn/Spring Combined*	2023-2024 – (27/02/2024)**
Total	% Attendance	91.4	92.2	92.6
	% Authorised Absence	7.1	5.9	5.4
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.5	1.9	2.0
	% Persistent Absence	26.8	22.1	20.0
Primary	% Attendance	93.2	94.2	94.8
	% Authorised Absence	6.0	4.9	4.2
	% Unauthorised Absence	0.8	0.9	1.0
	% Persistent Absence	20.2	15.8	14.0
Secondary/ All Through	% Attendance	89.6	89.6	89.8
	% Authorised Absence	8.3	7.2	6.9
	% Unauthorised Absence	2.3	3.2	3.3
	% Persistent Absence	34.7	29.6	28.0
SEN Support (K)	% Attendance	85	83.5	88.7
	% Authorised Absence	10.6	10.2	7.7
	% Unauthorised Absence	4.4	6.3	3.6
	% Persistent Absence	47.1	44.8	31.0
SEN (E)	% Attendance	83.1	82.1	85.6
	% Authorised Absence	12.6	11.6	10.1

	% Unauthorised Absence	4.3	6.3	4.3
	% Persistent Absence	47.2	44.7	37.0
FSM	% Attendance	87.5	87.3	87.5
	% Authorised Absence	9.1	8.4	8.0
	% Unauthorised Absence	3.4	4.3	4.5
	% Persistent Absence	43.8	40.8	37.0
CiN	% Attendance	DfE Data Not Available	DfE Data Not Available	76.1
	% Authorised Absence			12.6
	% Unauthorised Absence			11.3
	% Persistent Absence			55.0
CP	% Attendance	DfE Data Not Available	DfE Data Not Available	75.8
	% Authorised Absence			11.3
	% Unauthorised Absence			12.9
	% Persistent Absence			58.0
LAC	% Attendance	DfE Data Not Available	DfE Data Not Available	87.8
	% Authorised Absence			7.9
	% Unauthorised Absence			4.3
	% Persistent Absence			31.0
Male	% Attendance	91.3	92.3	92.8

	% Authorised Absence	6.9	5.9	5.4
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.4	1.8	1.9
	% Persistent Absence	26.0	21.6	19.0
Female	% Attendance	91.3	92.0	92.5
	% Authorised Absence	7.2	6.0	5.5
	% Unauthorised Absence	1.5	2.0	2.0
	% Persistent Absence	27.6	22.0	20.0

* [Data Source - DfE](#)

** Data Source (Devon County Council Local Data supplied from Devon Schools)



Overall attendance

- Overall absence rates have fallen slightly in the last year, both in Devon and nationally. Devon's absence rate for the combined Autumn & Spring 2022/23 terms was 7.8%, slightly higher than national and statistical neighbours' averages (7.3% and 7.5%). **Local data up to 27/2/2024 shows an absence rate of 7.4%.**
- Primary schools have the lowest overall absence rates, followed by secondary and then special schools. Devon primary and special schools have lower absence rates than nationally, whilst secondary schools have higher absence rates. **Local data up to 27/2/24 shows a 5% difference in the rate of attendance between primaries and secondaries.**

Persistent Absenteeism (missed 10% or more sessions)

- Whilst persistent absentee rates fell in the last year, one in five pupils still miss 10% or more sessions. Devon has slightly higher rates than nationally, regionally, and statistical neighbours. Rates are lowest in primary schools and highest in special schools. This is

also reflected nationally. **Local data up to 27/2/24 shows this is currently at 20% a decrease from previous.**

- 40.8% of Devon Free School Meal pupils were persistently absent compared to 35.7% nationally. **Local data shows this is current at only 37% up to 27/2/24.**

Severely Absent (missed 50% or more sessions)

- Severely absentee rates rose in the last year. Devon has higher rates than nationally, regionally, and statistical neighbours. Primary schools have the lowest rates in Devon with secondary schools having the highest rates. This differs nationally where special schools have the highest rates.

Exclusions:

Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions Year on Year (Equivalent Week):

Academic Year	Number of Pupils Permanently Excluded	Number of Suspensions
2023/2024	93	11004
2022/2023	102	9261

Figures don't include PEX or Suspensions from non-Devon schools. 2022/03 data extracted on 01/03/2024.

2022/23 Figures to Date (Number of permanent exclusions and suspensions):

Key Stage	Permanent Exclusions	Suspensions
Found		23
KS1	5	294
KS2	13	674
KS3	46	5783
KS4	29	4230
KS5	0	0
Grand Total	93	11004

Permanent Exclusions*

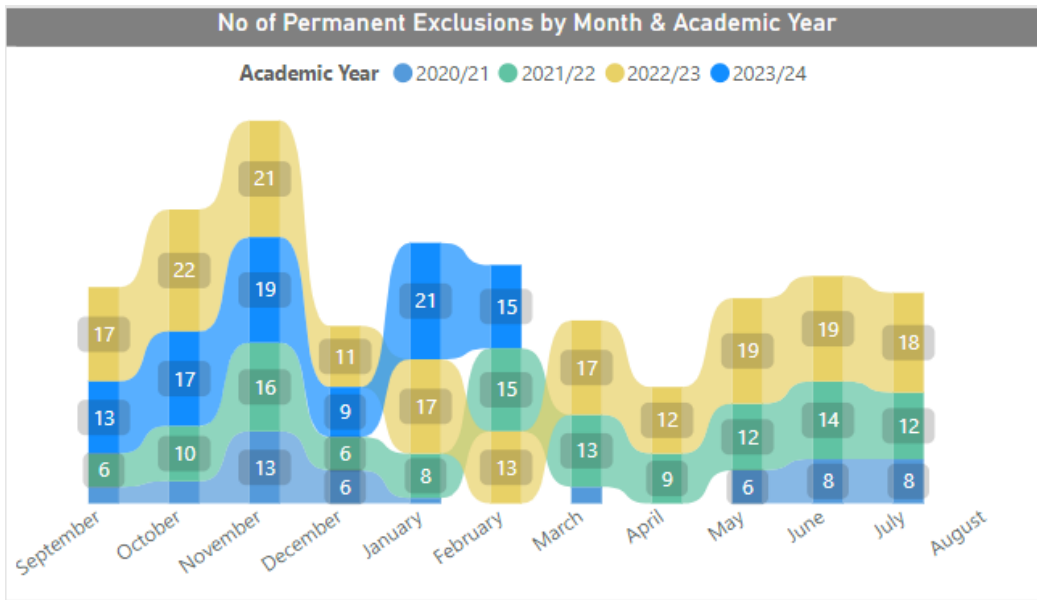
	2021/22		2022/23		2023-2024 to 27/2/24*	
	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort
Total	95	0.10%	181	0.19%	109	0.12%
Primary Age	18	0.03%	21	0.04%	20	0.04%
Secondary Age	77	0.20%	160	0.42%	89	0.23%
SEN (E+ K)	72	0.38%	127	0.66%	73	0.38%
SEN Support (K)	64	0.45%	100	0.70%	50	0.35%
SEN (E)	8	0.16%	27	0.55%	23	0.47%
LAC**	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.11%
Male	63	0.13%	124	0.26%	80	0.17%
Female	32	0.07%	57	0.12%	29	0.06%

* Data Source (Devon County Council Local Data supplied from Devon Schools)

** Students who are in care to Devon County Council

Exclusions

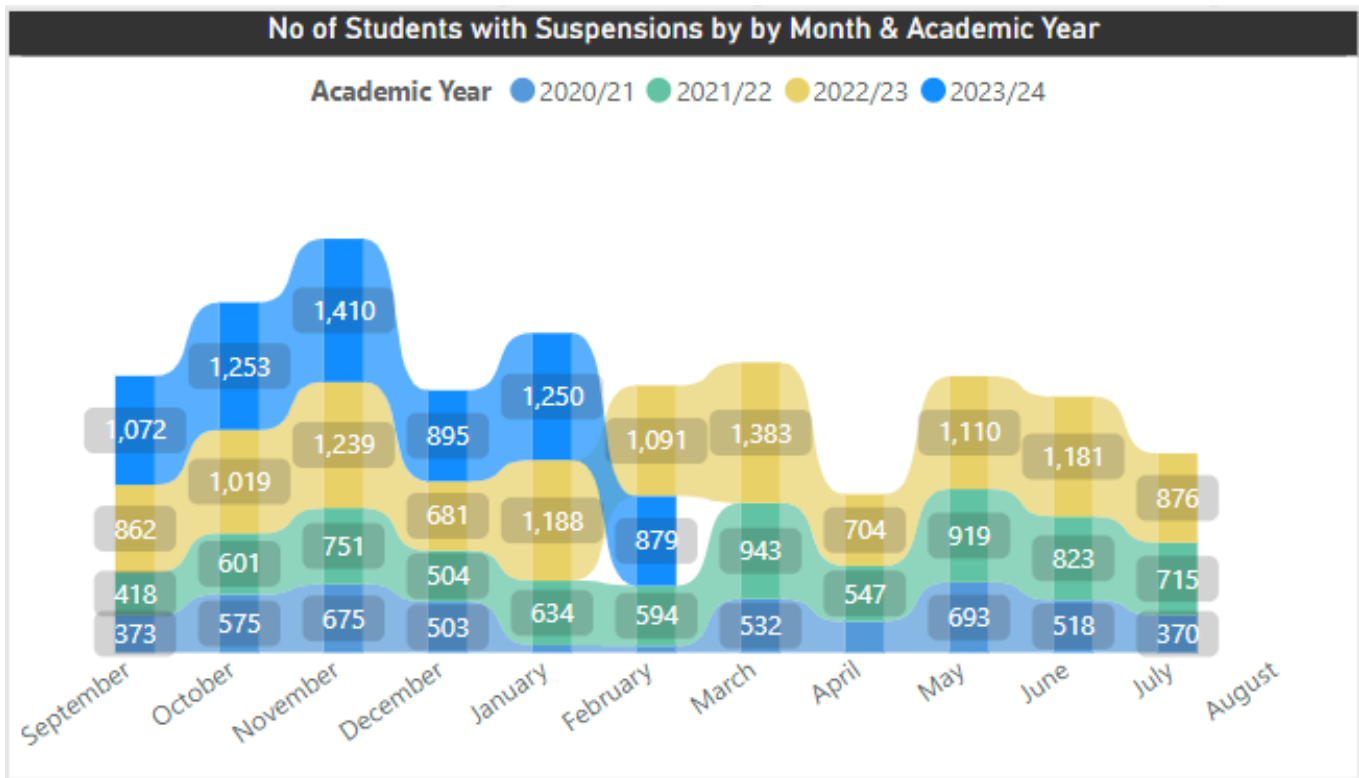
- Permanent exclusions rose by 58% in the last academic year (2022-23), with an additional 66 children excluded.
- Local data up to 27/2/2024 shows 109 children having been excluded, so if exclusions continue at this rate the overall figure will be higher than last year. Analysis is underway to further establish which schools are major contributors to this rise, what times of year students are being excluded, which year groups or cohorts and for what reasons.
- Pupils eligible for FSM and those with SEN Support have seen the greatest increases in permanent exclusions and suspensions. These pupils also have the highest rates of permanent exclusions. Pupils eligible for FSM are five times more likely to have a permanent exclusion than those not eligible.
- Pupils with SEN Support are nearly nine times more likely to have a permanent exclusion than those with no SEN (0.69% exclusion rate compared to 0.07% for pupils with no SEN). Pupils with an EHCP are nearly seven times more likely when compared to pupils with no SEN (0.53% compared to 0.07%).



Suspensions (Number of Students)

	2021/22		2022/23		2023-2024 to 27/2/24*	
	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort	Number	% of cohort
Total	3263	3.48%	4411	4.70%	3380	3.60%
Primary Age	420	0.75%	555	0.99%	443	0.79%
Secondary Age	2843	7.49%	3856	10.16%	2917	7.69%
SEN (E+ K)	1666	8.70%	2291	11.96%	1885	9.84%
SEN Support (K)	1186	8.32%	1728	12.13%	1463	10.27%
SEN (E)	480	9.78%	563	11.47%	438	8.92%
LAC**	111	12.28%	113	12.50%	70	7.74%
Male	2139	4.45%	2820	5.87%	2133	4.44%
Female	1124	2.46%	1591	3.48%	1247	2.73%

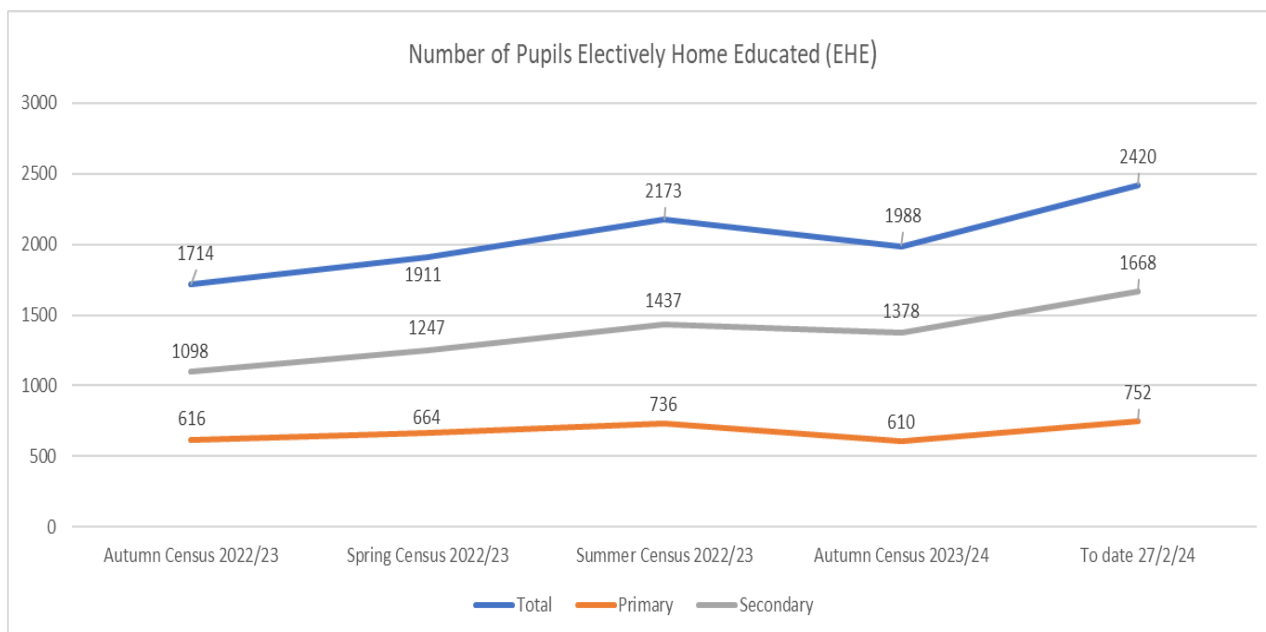
* Data Source (Devon County Council Local Data supplied from Devon Schools), numbers as distinct students



Elective Home Education (EHE)

- In 2022/23, 2,951 children were registered as home educated at some point during the year, equating to 3.1% of the population¹ (compared to 2.7% for 2021/22). This is an increase of 449 children (nearly 18%) and is the highest on record for Devon County Council.
- Local data shows as of 27/2/2024 there are 2420 children registered as EHE.
- During the last 5 years the number of EHE children have risen each year, except during 2019-20 as schools were closed due to COVID 19.
- The number of primary age children being home educated rose by 1.4% last year whilst secondary age children increased by 29.5%.
- Historically the main reason cited for deciding to home educate was lifestyle and philosophical, however mental health issues are now the main reason reported for home education.
- Of the 1,223 children who started their EHE in 2022/23, nearly 43% were previously in LA maintained schools and 44% were previously in Academies and Free Schools². 3% were in

independent schools before starting EHE and less than 1% were in special schools.



	Autumn Census 2022/23	Spring Census 2022/23	Summer Census 2022/23	Autumn Census 2023/24	To date 27/2/24
Total	1714	1911	2173	1988	2420
Primary	616	664	736	610	752
Secondary	1098	1247	1437	1378	1668
SEN (E+ K Combined)	571	656	778	680	861
SEN Support (K)	443	508	606	516	666
SEN (E)	128	148	172	164	195
CIN	12	7	17	14	7
CP	6	11	11	3	5
LAC	1	0	0	0	0
Male	58	997	1123	1037	1152
Female	38	914	1050	951	1268

Children Missing Education (CME)

	Autumn Census 2022/23	Spring Census 2022/23	Summer Census 2022/23	Autumn Census 2023/24	To date 27/2/24
Total	96	120	101	146	168
Primary	26	41	29	40	67
Secondary	70	79	72	146	101
SEN (E+ K Combined)	52	58	52	66	74
SEN Support (K)	24	28	29	41	41
SEN (E)	28	30	23	25	33
CIN	3	3	8	8	3
CP	5	9	6	4	2
LAC	5	10	4	7	4
Male	58	73	54	86	95
Female	38	47	47	60	73

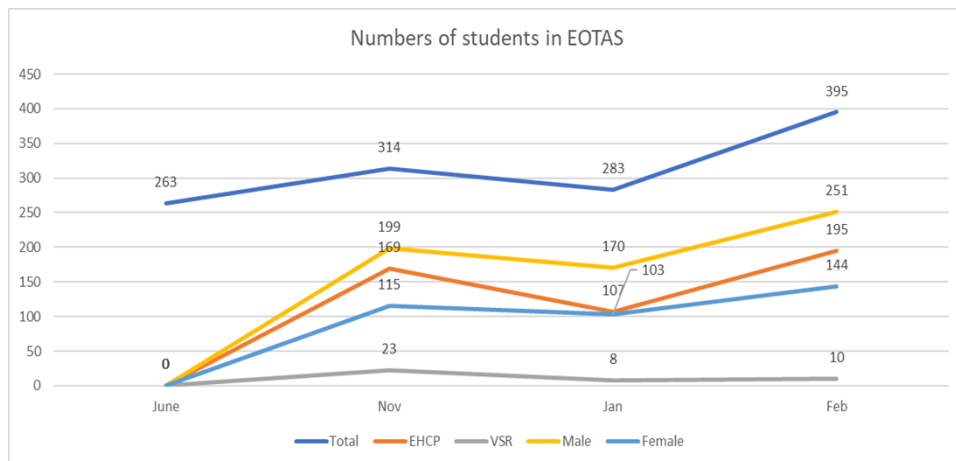
Children receiving EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) packages (Statutory School Age)

Figures correct as 01/03/2024.

	Total	EHCP	VSR	Male	Female
Number of Pupils	395	195	10	251	144

Number of pupils receiving EOTAS by year group			
Year 11	92	Year 6	19
Year 10	97	Year 5	6
Year 9	78	Year 4	14

Year 8	56	Year 3	8
Year 7	17	Year 2	3
		Year 1	5
		Year R	0



5.Ofsted

Ofsted inspect individual schools and do not yet inspect Multi Academy Trusts. They have occasionally inspected MATs on a thematic approach (by collating the reports for individual schools within a MAT. This methodology is imperfect as it relies on schools being inspected when their window is open and as a result the sample within any MAT is not always representative.

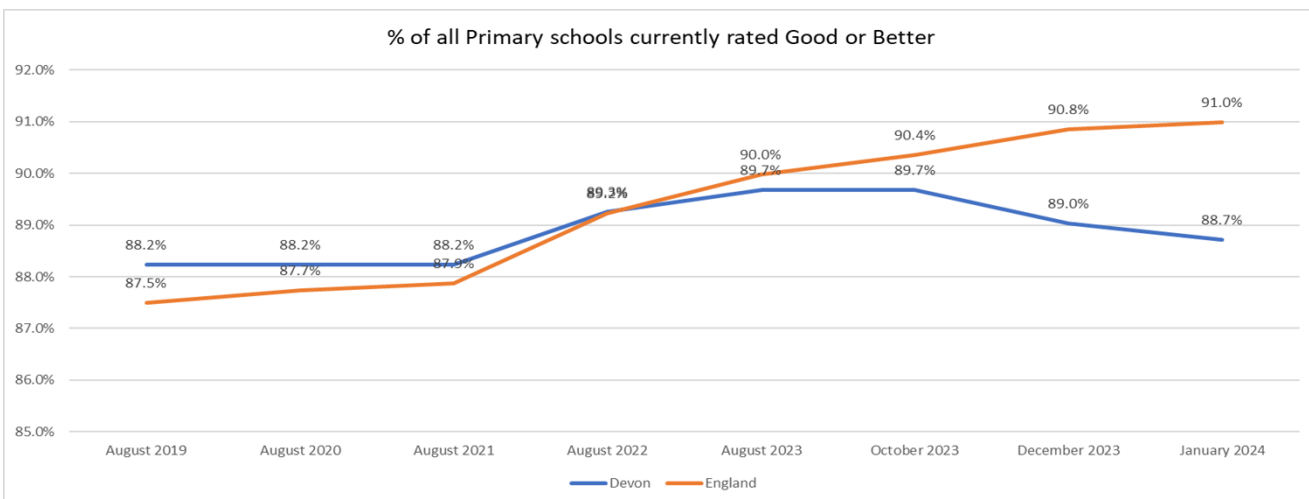
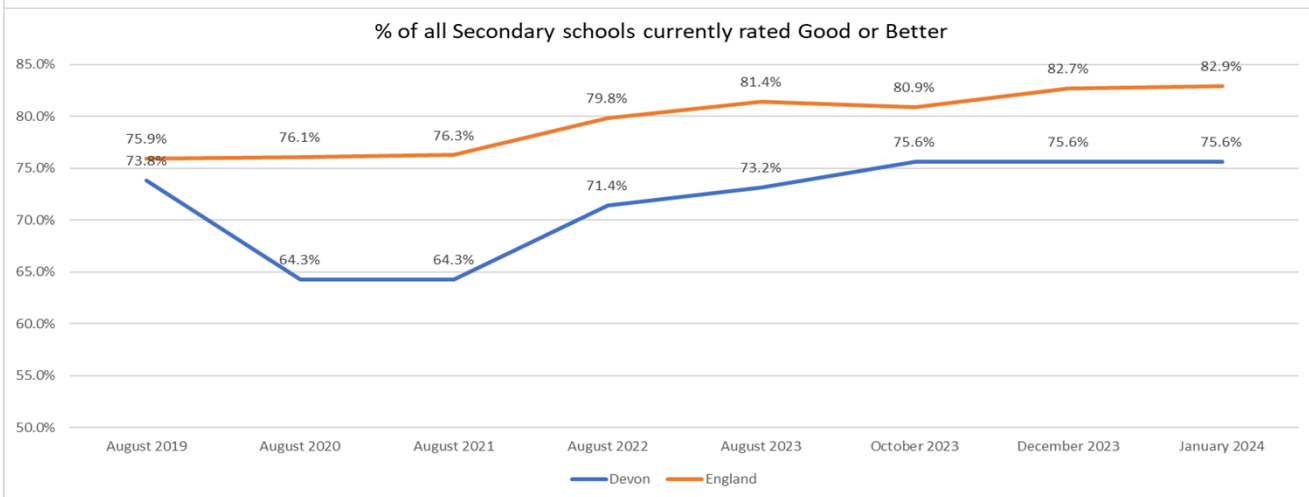
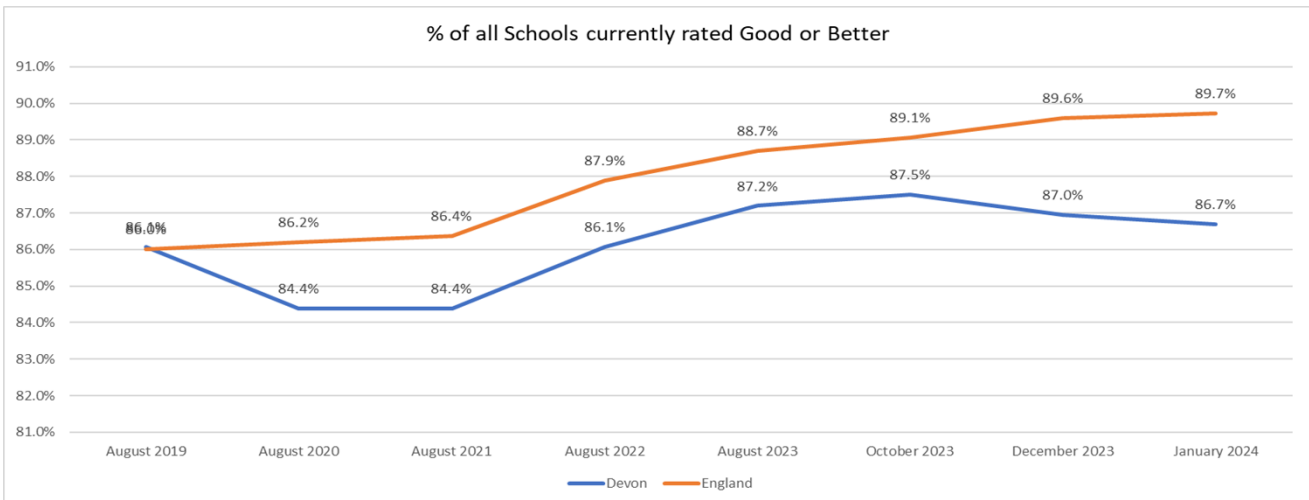
Since January 2024 Ofsted has announced several mini changes to inspection methodology also. Each school will now be asked about patterns of attendance and exclusions as part of the national drive to improve attendance. Similarly, there is also a focus on the well-being and mental health of students where inspectors think it necessary.

A new Chief Inspector started on January 01st 2024 and has indicated a new framework will be introduced in the coming years. Completely new frameworks usually take up to three years to research, write, test, publish and implement so the changes above are in the form of guidance to inspectors rather than a new framework. In recent years a new framework has been implemented much more rapidly, however we wait to see. The data shown below changes weekly as inspections take place.

The Local Authority still sees a large increase in complaints to Ofsted about schools (180 in 2022-23). These are all individually investigated by DCC. The large uplift in complaints to Ofsted is seen nationally.

- As of (31/1/24) 86.7% of all Devon schools have an Ofsted rating of good or better. This is lower than National which is 89.7%
- 88.7% of Devon Primaries are rated good or better, compared with 91.0% Nationally.
- 75.6% of Devon Secondaries are rated good or better, compared with 82.9% Nationally.

- 90% of Devon Special schools are rated as good or better. This compares with 89.6% Nationally.



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