

Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 16 June 2005

Report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Developments in Behaviour and Attendance

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on current activity relating to behaviour and attendance. The statistical analysis of attendance and exclusions is reported to Committee annually in September.

Background

2. There are several strands of activity by a variety of officers and agencies which contribute to the overall attendance and exclusion figures in Dudley. This work is complex and of high national and local importance. Schools have responsibility for the monitoring of pupil attendance and should trigger a series of interventions from day one of absence. Schools also have responsibility to provide for their pupils even if they are disruptive prior to permanent exclusion and usually involve parents/carers and other professionals at an early stage where there are concerns. The reasons why children misbehave are many and unrelated to school. For example, sometimes children are struggling with other complex issues in their life which affects their behaviour such as substance misuse or family breakdown. Once a child is permanently excluded the Council, as local education authority, has statutory responsibilities to ensure the child is appropriately and speedily placed in full-time education. The Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning works closely with schools in a number of ways to promote the inclusion of all Dudley children and to identify and intervene early with children who are absent or misbehaving.

The Behaviour and Attendance strategy

3. In January 2005, following extensive consultation, the Directorate published the Behaviour and Attendance Strategy. This document explicitly sought to merge the aims of the government's behaviour and attendance strategy with Dudley's aims for social inclusion.

The Behaviour and Attendance Strategy stated that:

'positive behaviour and good attendance at school are easy to take for granted but they are critically important in promoting social inclusion and high levels of attainment. The negative social impact of poor behaviour and truancy are huge, both in the short and longer terms. For the young people concerned, their educational achievements will be worse, often much worse, than they should be, and this impacts directly on their life chances and employability. There are heavy costs if there is a significant population of young people who are educationally and socially excluded, and these costs are borne both by the young people concerned and by society as a whole. It is therefore incumbent on all education professionals to do everything we can to ensure that every young person achieves their full potential during statutory education. We must all work to create a positive atmosphere in our schools and other provisions where young people can be proud of their learning, feel safe in the knowledge that they are cared for, and can themselves care for the welfare and learning of others.'

4. This Strategy includes a directory of initiatives and activities and practical examples and successful good practice that schools, local communities and other professionals can use to seek support. These initiatives and activities are not theoretical constructs, but have been developed and implemented in Dudley schools.
5. The Strategy was developed in alignment with the SEN Strategy and our strong belief in equal opportunity for all young people, with some young people requiring more input than others to make that equality a reality. The Strategy also builds on the principles set out in our Directorate Strategic Plan, the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' and the DfES / LEA Compact.

Current initiatives

6. In furtherance of the Behaviour and Attendance Strategy a number of initiatives are currently being introduced, or have recently been introduced, across Dudley, including:
 - **A review of the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)** has been carried out. From January 2005 the focus of their work shifted from working only with excluded pupils to include a preventative role of supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. This additional provision has already been introduced at KS1/2 with both an outreach service and short term PRU placements being made available at the Mere PRU. It is intended to roll out a similar 'preventative' model at the KS3 and KS4 PRU during the next 12 months.

- **The Framework for Intervention (FFI)** has been introduced into eleven primary schools by the Pupil Access Team. The FFI is a whole school behaviour management system that has proved successful in hundreds of schools across the country and has been highlighted by the DfES as good practice.
- £750,000 has been channelled into targeted schools through the **Behaviour Improvement Programme**. This programme will see the introduction of a variety of initiatives aimed at improving behaviour and attendance in some of our most challenging schools.
- Dudley is taking part in the DfES **KS2 Behaviour and Attendance pilot**.
- An exclusions protocol was agreed with schools for implementation in September 2004. This will be reviewed in the coming year and be incorporated with the soon-to-be-produced Protocol for 'Hard to Place Children'.
- **Termly reporting to schools** of in year transfers, permanent exclusions and attendance.
- Work is currently taking place in the development of a **Dudley Attendance Strategy**. This strategy will take account of local and national good practice and consider alternative methods of providing support for attendance, such as the devolvement of the Education Welfare Service to schools. Significant initiatives have already been implemented, i.e.
 - a. Attendance targets have been set for all schools,
 - b. The work of the Education Welfare Service has been re-focused to provide support to schools in proportion to need.
 - c. Fixed Penalty Notices have been introduced and 20 have been issued.

Data

7. As we are part way through an academic year it would be unwise to draw much inference from current data as seasonal variations occur in both attendance and exclusions figures.
8. The last complete set available is for the academic year 2003/04 and this was reported to the Committee in November 2004 and February 2005. A further report will be made in November 2005.

Exclusions

9. Headline analysis of the 2003/04 data showed a 49% increase in the number of permanent exclusions compared with the previous year. The majority of exclusions took place in the secondary sector, rising from 50 in 2002-03 to 80 in 2003-04 (+60%). The upward trend in primary school exclusions

continued, with an increase from seven to nine. Fewer statemented pupils were excluded; two compared with four but exclusions for children looked-after increased from four to nine.

- The main reasons cited for permanent exclusions were violence and aggression to staff/pupils (30%).
- Fixed term exclusions increased by 14%, which represented a loss of just over 10,000 school days.

It is expected that these stated initiatives will have a significant positive impact on reducing exclusions.

Attendance

10. Attendance in both secondary and primary schools showed a marked improvement on the previous year, 8.35% and 1.8% respectively. The overall absence figure of 6.9% is however, above both the national mean and that of our statistical neighbours. The table below shows summary data across the three sectors for 2003/04.

DfES Absence Survey 2004

	Pupils on Roll	% Authorised Absence (Sessions)	% Unauthorised Absence (Sessions)	% Absence
PRIMARY	24,867	5.5%	0.3%	5.8%
SECONDARY	20,555	7.1%	1.0%	8.0%
SPECIAL	622	8.4%	2.0%	10.4%
TOTAL	46,044	6.3%	0.6%	6.9%

Finance

11. There are no specific financial costs associated with this report.

Law

12. The main provisions relating to this report are contained in the Education Act 1996, School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and 10/99/11/99 DFES Circulars Social Inclusion: Pupil Support

Equal Opportunities

13. Specific work supports the inclusion of this group of vulnerable children and young people and helps to narrow the gap in achievement.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the Committee considers the report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John Freeman
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Background Papers

None