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**Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council**

**Select Committee on Children's Services – 12 November 2009**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Behaviour and Attendance**

**Data, trends and developments relating to attendance and exclusions in Dudley schools for the 2008-9 academic year.**

**Purpose**

1. To provide an overview of local authority support for behaviour improvement and attendance in Dudley schools.
2. To provide information and data relating to attendance and exclusions in Dudley schools for the 2008-09 academic year.

**Exclusions**

3. Headline analysis of the 2008/09 data shows a downward trend in permanent exclusions over the last six years
4. The majority of exclusions took place in the secondary sector and has fallen to 57; this is a 10.5% reduction on last year. Primary school exclusions have fallen from 6 to 3 a 50% reduction. Permanent exclusions from special schools have fallen by 33% and exclusions of children in public care fell by 50% from last year's figure.
5. The main reason cited for permanent exclusions was for persistent disruptive behaviour
6. Analysis by ethnic origin showed that 'Pakistani (4) and black Caribbean (1) pupils were over-represented in the exclusion statistics in relation to their proportion of the school population as a whole; the sample size is however, too small to draw a meaningful statistical conclusion from this data.

7. Fixed term exclusions decreased by 1.63% in 2008/09, accounting for a loss of 6,765 school days (-5.7%). As with permanent exclusions, the main reason given was for persistent disruptive behaviour

### **Attendance**

8. Attendance in both secondary and primary schools showed a marked improvement on previous years reaching a 10 year high in 2007-2008, and preliminary data for 2008-2009 indicates a further improvement in overall absence.

	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-9</b>
PRIMARY	6.35	5.83	5.59	6.1	5.42	5.55	5.76
SECONDARY	8.24	8.09	7.74	7.74	8.05	7.4	7.49
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>6.86</b>	<b>6.59</b>	<b>6.92</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.64</b>	<b>6.58</b>

9. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) has continued to re-focus its support to schools each year by supporting schools in setting their own absence targets and in achieving them. EWS support to schools is delivered in direct proportion to need, i.e. those schools with absence rates higher than the median for all Dudley schools have received high level support and those that have performed well in terms of absence have received minimal support.
10. In 2005-6 the DCSF introduced the new category of "Persistent Absence" (PA) with a target to reduce PA to 5% across all secondary schools in each local authority by 2011. This year Dudley has been identified as one of the three Black Country LAs requiring 'intensive support' from the National Strategies Team. The LA has only marginally fallen into this category by 0.2% as the DCSF for 2008-9 identified Persistent Absence Schools and Local Authorities as having more than 6.1% PA. However, the LA target of 6.5% was improved upon by 0.3%. Confirmation from the National Strategies indicates that we are still on trajectory to meet the 2011 target.
11. To further support schools achieve their targets a full range of sanctions to improve pupil attendance have been introduced, e.g. fixed penalty notices for non-attendance, exclusions, prosecutions, parenting orders/contracts and regular truancy sweeps and are appropriately applied.
12. Education Welfare Officers have been re-trained to implement the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and further legislation to improve the professionalism of criminal investigations they undertake. This has proven benefits which have produced improved court disposals because of the quality of officer's

evidence and improvements in attendance and outcomes for children and young people.

13. Officers have also fully integrated the Common Framework Assessment into their casework.
14. From the inception of truancy sweeps in 2000 numerous sweeps have been carried out across the five townships and targeted designated hotspots. However, truancy sweeps are now targeted through the 'Safe and Sound Group' and 'Community Renewal' which is proving a more effective intelligence led approach, supporting wider multi agency community needs. Individual schools still benefit from individual targeted truancy sweeps.
15. The DCS has a Local Public Service Agreement target to reduce levels of absence of children looked after by the local authority. In order to address this, an educational welfare and liaison officer was seconded to the Education Support Service for Children in Care during last academic year. This has resulted in more rigorous monitoring of children's attendance, with schools now required to submit weekly reports of the attendance of children in care.

#### **Reducing exclusions and improving attendance**

16. The above data provides evidence of continuing and sustainable improvement in both attendance and reduced exclusions across Dudley schools. These improvements are due in the main to the ongoing DCS 'Behaviour and Attendance Strategy' which encompasses the following initiatives: -
  - The introduction of township Fair Access Panels, consisting of secondary headteachers, aimed at ensuring that all children without a school place are admitted equitably and quickly across our secondary schools.
  - A secondary Behaviour and Attendance Consultant has been appointed to support schools and co-ordinate the implementation of the key National Strategies behaviour and attendance initiatives, e.g. 'Persistent Absence', anti-bullying, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL).
  - A 'Preventing Exclusions Strategy' has been implemented. This strategy has fundamentally changed the role of the Pupil Referral Units, by enhancing their work from providing solely for excluded pupils to enabling them to work with pupils prior to exclusion.
  - Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance are now embedded.
  - Truancy sweeps are being carried out in targeted areas

- A 'Parenting Contract/Order Policy' is in operation. A number of staff have been trained in a 'solution focussed' therapeutic process to support this work.
- A growing confidence by schools in the robust nature of LA services to schools in respect of attendance and behaviour related issues.

### **Finance**

19. There are no financial implications for this report

### **Law**

20. The following legislation and guidance applies:
- School Admissions Code (2009)
21. The main provisions relating to the contents of the report are contained in the Education and Children Acts and the Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusions from Schools and Pupil Referral Units, DCSF Guidance 0573/2008.

### **Equal Opportunities Policy**

21. The data included within this report takes account of Dudley's Equal Opportunities Policy. Specific work supports the inclusion of this group of vulnerable children and young people and helps to narrow the gap in achievement.

### **Recommendation**

22. That members consider and receive the attached information relating to school exclusions and attendance.



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