

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Select Committee on Community Safety – 7 March 2006

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Data, trends and developments relating to attendance and exclusions in respect of Dudley's schools for the 2004-05 academic year

Purpose

1. To provide information and data relating to attendance and exclusions in Dudley schools for the 2004/05 academic year.
2. The content of this report will be presented in identical format to both the Community Safety and the Lifelong Learning Select Committees. In accordance with their respective terms of reference the Community Safety Select Committee will scrutinise the report in relation to the crime and disorder functions of the council and the Lifelong Learning Committee will scrutinise it in respect of the education functions of the Council.

Exclusions

3. The fifth annual exclusion report is included as appendix 1 and contains permanent and fixed term exclusions data for the 2004/05 academic year. Exclusion data is now reported to the DfES on a termly basis.
4. Headline analysis of the 2004-05 data shows that **the upward trend in permanent exclusions over the last five years has now levelled off and could indeed be falling**. Data for the first term of this year (2005/06) indicates that there is a significant reduction (-22%) in permanent exclusions compared with the same period in 2003-04.
5. The majority of exclusions took place in the secondary sector and remained fairly static at 81. The recent upward trend in primary school

exclusions showed a slight reversal, down from nine to eight. Permanent exclusions from special schools remained static at two and exclusions of children in public care fell by over 40% from last year's figure.

6. Almost half of the reasons cited for permanent exclusions were for verbal abuse, threatening behaviour or physical assault.
7. Analysis by ethnic origin showed that 'black-African' and 'mixed race' pupils were over-represented in the exclusion statistics in relation to their proportion of the school population as a whole, 'Pakistani' pupils were significantly under-represented in respect of permanent exclusions.
8. Fixed term exclusions increased by 10.8% in 2004/05, accounting for a loss of 10,341 school days (+2.3%). As with permanent exclusions, around a half of the reasons cited for fixed term exclusions were also for verbal abuse, threatening behaviour or physical assault.

Attendance

9. Attendance in both secondary and primary schools showed a **marked improvement** on the previous year; 4.3% and 4.1% respectively. The overall absence figure for Dudley schools of 6.59% exceeds the 2004/05 target and indicates that the local authority is **on course to meet its trajectory by 2008**. The table below shows summary data 2004/05.

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
PRIMARY	6.35	5.83	5.59			
SECONDARY	8.24	8.09	7.74			
OVERALL	7.2	6.86	6.59			
TRAJECTORY	7.2	6.86	6.77	6.69	6.6	6.51

10. Recent DfES research has confirmed that a strong correlation exists between deprivation, absence and attainment. Based on this research a national Public Service Agreement (PSA) target was established to reduce the 2003 national level of absence (6.83%) by 8% by 2008. Dudley's trajectory for achieving this target is shown in the table above.
11. In order to meet the 2008 target the work of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has been re-focussed to support schools in setting their

own absence targets and to support them in achieving them. Since January 2005 the EWS support to schools has been 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.

12. 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, parenting orders/contracts (draft) and regular truancy sweeps.
13. Between 17 November and 7 December 2005, seven truancy sweeps were carried out. These sweeps covered Dudley, Brierley Hill, Halesowen, Stourbridge and designated 'hotspots' i.e. housing estates, local shops and around schools. In total sixty seven children were stopped; 58% were male and 42% female. In total 70% of children were accompanied by an adult.
14. When asked why they were not in school the most common reason (31%) given was 'illness' and the second highest reason (23%) was given as 'medical appointment'. 7% of children that were not accompanied had been excluded and mainly found in the Brierley Hill area around the housing estates.
15. The highest number of children who were identified on the sweep were from Pensnett School of Technology (13%), with Castle High School being the second highest (9%). In total 33 (49%) pupils were from secondary schools, 28 (42%) were from primary schools and 6 (9%) were other provisions. All but two children stopped in the sweeps were from Dudley schools.
16. 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 appointed 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

17. **The 2004-05 data provides optimistic signs of improving trends in both attendance and exclusions.** These improvements are due in the main to the prevailing DCS 'Behaviour and Attendance Strategy (2005)', which encompasses the following initiatives:

- A successful 'Exclusions Protocol', agreed with secondary schools in September 2004, has formed the basis for a draft Hard to Place Protocol (currently out to consultation).
- A KS3 Behaviour and Attendance Consultant is supporting secondary schools with behaviour and attendance issues.
- Dudley has opted to take part in the primary national behaviour and attendance strategy pilot. Twelve schools are currently engaged in the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' programme.
- A 'Preventing Exclusions Strategy' is currently being implemented. This strategy fundamentally changes 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. This preventative role has commenced initially in the primary phase and is now being introduced into the secondary sector.
- A nationally tried and tested systemic behaviour management process, the 'Framework for Intervention', is being promoted for use in primary schools. 14 schools are engaged in the initial round of implementation and it is intended to introduce it into other selected primary schools over the next 2/3 years.
- The 'Excellence Cluster' has recently been allocated £750,000 to implement a Behaviour Improvement Programme, with the primary aim of reducing exclusions and improving attendance within the cluster.
- In close association with the Assistant Regional Director for Attendance (DfES), a new 'Attendance Strategy' has been developed and is currently being consulted on.
- Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance have been introduced.

- Truancy sweeps are being carried out monthly, rather than twice per year as the DfES recommend.
- A 'Parenting Contract/Order Policy' is currently being consulted on. 18 staff have been trained in a 'solution focussed' therapeutic process to support this work.
- A new post of 'Children Missing from Education' has been created and recently appointed to.

Finance

18. There are no financial implications for this report

Law

19. The statutory provisions relating to exclusions are contained in Section 52 of the Education Act 2002 and the Education (Pupil Exclusion and Appeals) (Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2002.
20. The following legislation and guidance applies:
- DfES Circulars 10/99 and 11/99 – 'Social Inclusion; Pupil Support'
 - School Admissions Code of Practice (2003)
 - 'Education Protects' – guidance on the education of children and young people in public care (2000)

Equalities

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.

Children

22. To date, children and young people have not been directly engaged in policy development or recommendations in this area of work. This will be included in the work programme for 2006/07.

Recommendation

23. It is recommended that the Committee considers the attached information relating to school exclusions and attendance.



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Background documents

See above at paragraph 20