

Derbyshire County Council - Education Welfare Service

Attendance Policy

This policy sets out the principles and practice of the Education Welfare Service in discharging the legal responsibility, on behalf of the County Council to enforce regular school attendance and monitor the employment and licensing of children and young people engaged in performance and entertainment. This is underpinned by the County Council's vision of an educational community as set out in the Inclusion Statement:

"Inclusive educational communities are those which take account of the needs of individuals and where individuals are valued, feel secure and have a sense of belonging. These learning communities work actively to promote this process and reduce exclusive practices. They also reduce barriers to learning and participation to ensure that all learners experience learning environments in which they can strive for and attain their highest levels of achievement."

Mission Statement

We believe that to be successful, all learners require the highest level of access, attendance and engagement with inclusive, high quality educational settings. We will work with all partners in support of this to achieve our aims and objectives.

Statutory Duties:

Section of the Education Act 1996 requires that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable: to his age, ability and aptitude; and b) to any special educational needs he may have; either by regular attendance at school of otherwise.'

And that:

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.'

Under the 1996 Education Act (s437, 444(1) and (1a)) the LEA has powers, including prosecution against parents, issuing School Attendance Orders and under s36(1) of the Children Act, Education Supervision Orders to ensure regular school attendance. The authority can have recourse to both the Magistrates Court and the Family Court to take steps to effect regular attendance.

The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) section 36 can require parents/ guardians to attend counselling or guidance courses, facilitated by the LEA. Truancy sweeps are carried out with the Police under section 16 of the 1998 Act, which empowers the police to remove child or young person "absent from school without good cause" to a school or safe place.

The Education Act 1996 s444A as amended by the Anti-social Behaviour Act (2002), empowers the LEA, Head Teachers and Police to issue Penalty Notices and places specific responsibility on the LEA for developing the general protocol within which all partners will operate. The Act also gives the LEA powers to enter into parenting contracts in the case of non-attendance.

Aims:

- To improve the educational achievement of all children and young people in Derbyshire by fulfilling the duty of the LEA to enforce school attendance and, where necessary, to institute legal proceedings
- To work with schools and other agencies to protect identified vulnerable children and young people from the negative impact of poor school attendance
- To ensure equality of access to educational services and assist in addressing disadvantages that may limit students' ability to develop to their full potential
- To co-operate with schools and agencies in addressing barriers to access which may affect children and young persons' attendance e.g. crime, drugs, alcohol, gambling
- To prevent the exploitation of children in employment and in entertainment.

Objectives:

The Service will:

- Support schools and settings in improving pupil attendance
- Maintain a consistent and equitable service to all schools and settings in Derbyshire as determined by Service Level Agreements
- Work in partnership with all statutory, non-statutory agencies and communities in promoting regular pupil attendance
- Contribute to the Community Safety Strategy, Council Plan, Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and other relevant strategies as appropriate.

Responsibilities:

- Agree an Service Level Agreement with all Derbyshire maintained schools
- Monitor Service allocation as determined by formula and based on a needs analysis in inverse proportion to success
- Draw up an Annual School Attendance Plan with senior school staff outlining respective roles and responsibilities
- Undertake all legal proceedings on behalf of the authority in respect of ensuring regular school attendance
- Monitor, report and analyse school attendance data
- Monitor child employment and entertainment licenses
- Prioritise the support for improving the attendance of Children Looked After, Travellers and other identified vulnerable groups.

Procedures

Derbyshire Education Welfare Service accepts referrals from schools, parents/carers and other agencies working with families where pupil attendance affects their ability to access education or achieve to their potential. Criteria for referral by schools are outlined in the Good Practice Guide for school/pupil attendance.

Education Social Workers are seconded to the Youth Offending Service as part of an agreed protocol. They aim to support the Youth Justice Board target of 90% of all young offenders engaging in education, employment or training and the protocol for those young offenders placed on the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP).

Connexions Derbyshire have agreed a protocol with the Service for working with young people aged 13 to 16 years where attendance is an identified problem.

In all cases, protocols are reviewed and revised annually.

Prioritisation of Referrals

In addition to the referral criteria detailed above, the Service will prioritise certain categories or circumstances:

- Where there is evidence that the referral relates to concerns which may place the child at risk of harm/or significant risk as defined in “Framework for Assessment of Children and Families in Need” (DoH).
- Where the pupil is a Child in Public Care, Traveller, at risk of exclusion or has been out of school for a significant period.
- Ofsted have identified attendance as an issue contributing to the school being categorised as being in serious weakness and/or placed in special concerns.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Service will monitor its own performance by seeking the views of service users, including pupils and their families. It will carry out an annual consultation with all schools and educational settings. Throughout the year, schools and EWOs will evaluate respective performance and effectiveness during School Attendance Plan review meetings.

Parents/carers and pupils will be consulted to determine their views of the Service. However, some families may not have a positive view of the service because of the nature of the actions taken, particularly when legal proceedings have been instituted.

Attendance rates are the key performance indicator to determine progress against targets. The Service will monitor attendance data effectively and efficiently to support schools in assessing their own performance against national, regional and local comparisons and report to Members.

Public Service Agreement

The County Council has agreed a stretch target, to be achieved by 2007 in respect of improving pupil attendance in Derbyshire schools. The target is a shared target aimed at improving achievement and reducing crime and disorder.

Performance	NMES	2005	2006	2007	
without PSA Stretch	Secondary	7%	6.9%	6.8%	Total absence
	Primary	5%	4.9%	4.8%	Total absence
Performance with PSA Stretch	Secondary	A further 0.2% reduction in total absence to 6.6% by 2007			
	Primary	A further 0.2% reduction in total absence to 4.6% by 2007			

This will include collecting, monitoring and analysing attendance data on a half-termly basis.

Complaints

The Service complies with the County Council customer service charter in putting people first and setting standards expected in service delivery. Any concerns or complaints about the Service will be dealt with in accordance with Derbyshire County Council Complaints procedures.