

Progress Report on the Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the ‘Scrutiny Review of Attendance in Schools – June 2005

Recommendation (in italics) and Proposed Action	Progress
<p><i>R.1 The Education Welfare Service should develop the model used by the Attendance Support Team</i></p> <p>Analyse attendance data to identify trends in attendance and plan remedial action. Target support to schools based on analysis of attendance data reports</p>	<p>The Attendance Support Team, funded through Public Service Agreement pump priming funds worked during the 2003-4 academic year with identified schools for one term to implement a programme of support designed to reduce unauthorised absences. The team developed a range of innovative strategies which are now embedded in the procedures employed by the team of Education Welfare Officers. The annual attendance action plan prepared and agreed with schools includes a range of strategies which were used and developed by the Attendance Support Team.</p> <p>A short term team of four Attendance Support Assistants are currently (until March 2005) working in targeted schools with the school’s allocated Education Welfare Officer, specifically to tackle unexplained and unauthorised absences in schools, using systems introduced by the Attendance Support Team. Their work and progress is overseen by a member of the original Attendance Support Team. Evaluation reports are now being reviewed.</p> <p>The formula for allocation of Education Welfare Officer time to schools is being reviewed to ensure that analysis of attendance through action plans informs that process more closely from September 2005.</p>
<p><i>R2 Attendance Panels should continue to be the main focus of the work of the Education Welfare Officers and should operate in all schools.</i></p> <p>Remedial action for schools which is identified through analysis of attendance data will include a programme of Attendance Panels</p>	<p>Attendance Panels are now operating in a majority of our secondary schools. Schools where attendance levels are high and unauthorised absences are minimal do not need this level of intervention. Recently revised procedures for Education Welfare Officers include a review of school attendance data each half term. This data informs how many Attendance Panels should be scheduled over the forthcoming school term. New procedures have also been introduced for tracking the outcomes of Attendance Panels, the proportion of students whose attendance targets have been achieved and sustained and the proportion of parents against whom legal action (for their failure to ensure regular attendance at school) is being consider or progressed. This data also enables a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the Attendance Panel process to be</p>

	<p>undertaken.</p> <p>The EWS database is currently being updated to monitor this information more closely and during the academic year 2004-5 the Education Welfare Service will work closely with primary schools to extend the use of Attendance Panels in the primary sector.</p>
<p>R.3 The Education Welfare Service should establish firmer links with magistrates to ensure legal procedures are used effectively and truancy sweeps should be planned around Youth Court days.</p> <p>Progress communication with magistrates by attendance at local Magistrates meetings and Court User group meetings. In collaboration with Sussex Police maintain programme of truancy sweeps to include days of Youth Courts</p>	<p>Two presentations have been made to well attended meetings of local Magistrates where the work of the Education Welfare Service was outlined and the introduction of the fast track system for prosecutions was explained. The presentation appeared well received and the comments and decisions by magistrates have illustrated their increased awareness of the implications of non school attendance.</p> <p>Truancy sweep schedules for this academic year are including the dates scheduled for the Youth Courts, and officers target the area of Youth Court during those sweeps. Education Welfare Service representatives attend the area meetings of the Court User group and take the opportunity to raise issues relating to non school attendance pertinent to the legal process at those meetings.</p> <p>Regular access to Magistrates meetings is inhibited by their limited meetings and the limited presentation opportunities but further opportunities are regularly being sought to maintain this important relationship and shared knowledge.</p> <p>The Education Welfare Service Prosecuting Officer set up and manned an exhibition stand at an open day in the Eastbourne magistrates' court on Saturday 12 March. Presence at this event demonstrated a clear partnership link between Her Majesty's courts and the Education Welfare Service.</p> <p>Youth Court days continue to be targeted for Truancy Sweeps as part of the planned programme.</p>
<p>R4 Secondary Schools should have a senior manager responsible for attendance.</p> <p>Develop joint approaches with CfBT/SIS and KS3 Consultants to ensure school attendance concerns are addressed. This will include a review of how the school</p>	<p>Education Welfare representatives contribute to regular meetings with colleagues of the School Improvement Service where concerns relating to the management of attendance in schools are discussed and solutions sought. In cases where schools have not placed responsibility for the management of attendance with a member of the Senior Management Team and where attendance levels are unsatisfactory this issue will be raised initially through the Education Welfare Service and where</p>

<p>SLT manage attendance.</p>	<p>requested, supported by a colleague from the School Improvement Team.</p> <p>Recent joint initiatives for training and reviewing attendance management in schools requiring support have been undertaken by the Key Stage 3 Behaviour and Attendance Consultant and members of the Education Welfare Service Management Team.</p> <p>In May 2005 the KS3 Behaviour and Attendance Team hosted a conference for senior managers from schools and the Education Welfare Service made a major contribution. The outcome of this has been a higher than usual number of request for the EWS Training Officer to visit schools.</p> <p>EWS Action Plans with schools to be adapted to include Senior Manager responsible for attendance.</p>
<p>R5 Attendance Support Teams should support secondary schools in making the best use of attendance data from feeder primary schools to establish good attendance patterns in students from year 7.</p> <p>Support access by secondary schools of robust attendance data for new intake.</p>	<p>Systems employed by the Attendance Support Team which included the analysis of attendance of pupils from feeder primary schools are now embedded in the practices of Education Welfare Officers (see R1 progress).</p> <p>The EWS has identified an area of good practice and this will be included in a good practice manual for schools currently under development.</p> <p>A newly developed training programme for schools provides school staff with cost free training on attendance recording and analysis. The training is targeted at both primary and secondary schools identified by their allocated Education Welfare Officer, and the attendance reports which schools are encouraged to produce provides another mechanism for targeting resources where the need is identified.(See progress R4)</p>
<p>R6 The Education Welfare Service should establish a common easily accessible shared bank of attendance data.</p> <p>This has been identified as a priority area of development for the Service during 2004-05, and a database specification has been prepared</p>	<p>A new database is currently being trialled within the Education Welfare Service, funded as a small project through Corporate Resources Directorate, ICT team. It is anticipated that this database will link with other service databases, enabling a secure and efficient sharing of information, including LEA and individual school attendance targets, attendance data relating to vulnerable groups, and comparative data on attendance by financial and school year, against statistical neighbours and the national trend.</p> <p>Work on the new database is in progress with plans for expansion over several years.</p>

	<p>The database was implemented in April 2005 and constant reviews are taking place to enable further development and updates to ensure the system meets the needs of both EWS and other partners.</p> <p>All attendance data is now accessible by all members of the service and currently the service is working on a facility to feedback analysis of data in the form of 'local league tables' to schools and governors and to Local Partnership's for Children.</p>
<p>R7 The Education Welfare Service should work with all partner agencies to ensure LEA attendance targets are known and each identifies resources to support raising attendance</p> <p>Ensure effective systems agreed between schools and key agencies to share attendance data at LEA/School and individual pupil level. Attendance targets for the academic years to 2006/7 will be sent to all agencies interviewed as part of the Best Value Review process</p>	<p>The Education Welfare Service has disseminated attendance targets to key partner agencies including the Connexions Service, the Education Action Zone in Hastings and School Improvement Service. Agreements are in place with the Connexions Service to support the achievement of those targets through joint information sharing processes, with EAZ schools through joint initiatives to reward attendance improvements and through regular reviews with colleagues in School Improvement Service who support the achievement of those targets through the inclusion of an attendance review as part of the school self review process.</p> <p>Systems for the effective sharing of attendance targets with other key partners, including Police and Health Service colleagues will continue to be developed within the range of activities outlined in the Education Welfare Service Business Plan. The development of the new EWS database will improve information flow between EWS and IRT and the potential for information on targets set for pupils and schools.</p> <p>Attendance targets included in the Council Plan and as part of the LPSA are also currently accessible via the internet and intranet.</p> <p>Recent guidance from the DfES and new legislation for school governing bodies has impacted on the targets previously agreed and new targets have recently been submitted to SMT. Once agreed these targets will be shared with other partners through Local Partnership's for Children in order that resources can be identified, particularly in areas where current attendance rates show a high level of need for support in order to meet those targets.</p>
<p>R8 The Education Welfare Service should work closely with schools to make the best use of the 14-19 curriculum and modified timetables to support attendance strategies.</p>	<p>Access to an alternative curriculum for pupils from age 14 is an integral part of the joint work between Education Welfare Officers and Schools but is dependent upon the links developed between schools, employers and further education establishments. Education Welfare Officers work with disaffected young pupils, who may be identified</p>

<p>Develop links with 14-19 curriculum work in secondary schools to enhance equality of access to flexible learning for pupils at risk of disaffection.</p>	<p>through the process of Attendance Panels or through direct referral from a parent, who may be at risk of 'falling through the net'. The Education Welfare Service will ask the School to consider an alternative curriculum and will encourage and support schools to make such provision in appropriate cases.</p> <p>The Education Welfare Service is developing links with services which can offer support to schools and individual pupils to ensure that the alternative curriculum offered is both accessible and appropriate e.g. Worklink. The Education Welfare Service continues to seek alternative funding streams for specific programmes to support disaffected pupils.</p>
<p>R9 <i>The Education Welfare Service should work to devise policy frameworks supporting medical appointments for students outside school hours.</i></p> <p>Extend and develop joint protocol with school nurses to reduce time without educational provision of children out of school with school related anxieties and awaiting assessment by CAMHS. Develop publicity campaign to extend to Health centre and GP surgeries to reduce days of education lost to routine medical appointments.</p>	<p>Joint protocols with Health Service colleagues have been agreed which include an initiative between school nurses and Education Welfare Officers to validate school absences for health reasons where schools are not satisfied about the explanation given. Further initiatives with Health colleagues have been developed to reduce the time out of school and waiting lists for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, for pupils experiencing school related anxiety or suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.</p> <p>Agreement has been given by Health Service colleagues to present a range of materials to local meetings of GP's, for display in Health Centres and GP surgeries, designed to discourage parents from taking children out of school for routine medical appointments. This work is still in progress.</p> <p>A draft poster to be displayed in medical practices and clinics throughout the country supporting school attendance is in development and will be issued through health colleagues in Spring term 2005.</p>
<p>R 10 <i>The LEA should continue to develop the attendance section of the County Council website.</i></p> <p>Develop EWS area of East Sussex CC website and extend information about EWS on e-zone to reflect developments in EWS strategy</p>	<p>There is a regular review of the material relating to school attendance which is placed on the website. This important role has become the responsibility of one designated member of the Education Welfare Service who is based at County Hall and who is also placing examples of best practice of Education Welfare Service systems in East Sussex on the website of the DfES.</p> <p>An identified member of staff within the Education Welfare Service monitors information monthly to ensure that information is updated regularly. Liaison with the corporate web team is taking place to further extend the information currently available.</p>