

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 22 June 2010

SUBJECT: Response to Scrutiny – Attendance Strategy

<p>Electoral Wards Affected:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px; margin-right: 10px;" type="checkbox"/> <p>Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)</p> </div>	<p>Specific Implications For:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Equality & Diversity</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Community Cohesion</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Narrowing the Gap</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><input checked="" style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Equality & Diversity	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	Community Cohesion	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>	Narrowing the Gap	<input checked="" style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>
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<p>Eligible for Call-in <input style="width: 50px; height: 25px; margin-left: 10px;" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Not Eligible for Call-in (Details contained in the Report) <input style="width: 50px; height: 25px; margin-left: 10px;" type="checkbox"/></p>						

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 The final statement of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Board's inquiry on Attendance was agreed by the Scrutiny Board on 25 March 2010. This report outlines the proposed responses to the recommendations required for approval by the Executive Board. The report asks the Board to approve the proposed responses.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Children’s Services Scrutiny Board originally identified school attendance as a key area at the start of the 2008/9 municipal year. As a result the Scrutiny Board appointed a small working group to consider current performance and strategies in relation to school attendance.

2.2 The working group met in April 2009 and subsequently reported back to the full Scrutiny Board, where it was agreed to receive a further report on the progress of the Attendance Strategy and development of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships by the end of the calendar year. This further meeting took place in November 2009 and the full Scrutiny Statement on Attendance is attached as Appendix 1. The Statement makes five recommendations for the Chief Executive of

Education Leeds.

3.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

3.1 Below are listed the five recommendations with a response from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds.

3.2 **Recommendation 1 – That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds works with Area Inclusion Partnerships to ensure that attendance and behaviour targets are embedded in all area plans.**

3.2.1 The Attendance Strategy Team have realigned resources to enable the appointment of an Attendance Data Management Officer to enable regular monitoring/ analysis/reporting on persistent absence and attendance by wedge/ cluster/ school.

3.2.2 All high schools, the Area Inclusion Partnerships and all children's services share the responsibility for achieving the DCSF goal of no more than 5% persistent absence across the authority by the end of 2011. In order to support progress to this goal, all high schools and wedge areas have been provided with individual targets for persistent absence to enable Leeds to achieve this goal.

3.2.3 Education Leeds officers have been working with Area Inclusion Partnerships to secure an appropriate framework for targets for improving attendance, and reducing persistent absence and exclusions. The Area Inclusion Partnerships carry out the statutory functions of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership and are an integral part of the local Children's Trust Board. Data will be provided for each partnership to secure an adequate baseline and set appropriate targets for September 2010. Once agreed, progress towards these targets will be monitored on a regular basis.

3.2.4 Good progress will be identified and successful intervention will be shared with other areas. Where progress is less than satisfactory, partnerships will be expected to review their strategic approaches and see how their local plans can be adapted to bring about more rapid improvements.

3.3 **Recommendation 2 – That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds ensures that parents, schools and governors continue to be reminded that term time holidays are discouraged.**

3.3.1 Following the lead taken by the North West area which reduced the overall number of days lost to holidays, more clusters and families of schools are adopting consistent holiday in term time policies across primary and high schools.

3.3.2 The Attendance Strategy Team support schools by using penalty notices in instances of excessive, unauthorised holidays in term time. Analysis on the impact of holidays in term time is shared with schools and area partnerships.

3.3.3 The policy on extended leave is being reviewed and updated. Once this has been completed, information will be sent out to all schools and key partners reminding them of the importance of regular school attendance and the impact holidays in school time has on learning.

3.3.4 The Attendance Strategy Team utilises a variety of media to communicate with schools, parents and governing bodies e.g. press, radio, campaigns, newsletter, bulletin etc.

3.5 Recommendation 3 - That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds reports back to us on the range of mechanisms used to ensure that local and national good practice in tackling persistent absence is systematically disseminated and replicated across the authority.

3.5.1 The Attendance Strategy Team and National Strategies facilitate termly network events for all secondary Attendance Leaders which share key messages from national and local perspectives as well as offering schools making good progress the opportunity to share their expertise.

3.5.2 The head of service also attends regional National Strategies events and disseminates key developments across the Attendance Strategy Team, Education Leeds and schools via network events, whole school attendance reviews. and through internal strategy meetings with National Strategy advisors

3.5.3 Of the current twenty two persistent absence target schools, fifteen have made positive progress within the last school year. In the remaining schools, whole school attendance reviews will continue to support schools to improve.

3.5.4 The head of the Attendance Strategy team is arranging to conduct an attendance review in one of Leeds' highest performing schools to identify models of best practice to share with all other schools.

3.5.5 The head of the Attendance Strategy team meets regularly with the Regional National Strategies Behaviour and Attendance Adviser to review Leeds' progress and to make use of learning from other authorities.

3.5.6 The Attendance Strategy Team Attendance Advisers review action plans in all target high schools on a half termly basis. Action plans are also embedded at primary level, according to need i.e. numbers of persistent absentees.

3.5.7 The head of the Attendance Strategy Team regularly meets with School Improvement Partners and Advisers to enable adequate support and challenge to schools.

3.5.8 The Attendance Strategy Team and National Strategies are currently running a pilot across 15 targeted primary schools to enhance Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) to impact specifically on attendance and persistent absence. This work is supported by regional and national Behaviour and Attendance and SEAL Advisers.

3.5.9 Leeds has secured arrangements with Prospectus and has provided a menu of support for April 2011 when National Strategies cease to exist.

3.6 Recommendation 4 – That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds ensures that all governors are reminded of the importance of focusing on attendance.

3.6.1 The Attendance Strategy Team delivers training for governors twice yearly and reports on key issues using the governor's bulletin.

3.6.2 Education Leeds will ensure that all schools have a named governor for attendance. The role of the governor will be to monitor school based initiatives such as fast tracking and school advisory panels.

3.6.3 Key messages about the revised children's services and safeguarding have been disseminated through area governing body meetings. Regular updates will continue to ensure that attendance remains a high priority for all governors.

3.7 Recommendation 5 – That the Scrutiny Board's statement is circulated to all councillors who are school governors to encourage them to look at their own schools' approach to attendance management.

3.7.1 Education Leeds agrees that the Scrutiny Board statement is to be circulated to all Councillors who are school governors. Following the Scrutiny Board meeting the Attendance Strategy Team made arrangements for a Councillor to attend a whole school attendance review at their school. Given the positive feedback from the Councillor about their participation in the process and the insight they were able to obtain into the school's approaches for managing absence, the Attendance Strategy Team welcome further opportunities for other councillor-governors to attend reviews in the future.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

4.0.1 There are no anticipated implications for council policy and governance as a result of this report.

5.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.0.1 There are no legal or resource implications as a result of this report.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Board are asked to approve the proposed responses to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board.

Background Papers

Scrutiny Board (Children's Service) – Scrutiny Statement Attendance – March 2010 (Appendix 1)