

Attendance Strategy

2007- 2009

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Newcastle is committed to enabling all children and young people of school age to benefit from the educational opportunities available to them so that they can achieve their full potential irrespective of gender, race, creed or religion.

1. Introduction

Newcastle is committed to enabling all children and young people of school age to benefit from the educational opportunities available to them so that they can achieve their full potential irrespective of gender, race, creed or religion. This commitment has been enshrined in law – the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it **a duty for a local authority (LA) to promote high standards and the fulfilment of every child’s educational potential**. Newcastle believes that sustained improvements in attainment and achievement will only be possible with high levels of attendance. Improving and maintaining attendance must be acknowledged as a key task and requires a committed partnership involving parents¹ and children², schools, Children’s Services and other agencies.

The majority of pupils in Newcastle schools attend regularly; considerable numbers achieve 100% attendance every term and many maintain this high level for at least one year. However, there is a significant minority whose attendance is not only a cause for concern on an individual basis but also, when aggregated, has a detrimental effect on the attendance levels that are achieved by schools and the LA.

Improving attendance is a government priority in both the Raising Standards and the Every Child Matters agendas:
“Young people’s achievements and realisation of potential can only be improved if they have access to school and learning. Improving school attendance and reducing absence levels are key elements of our attainment agenda and are critical to reducing crime levels in the longer term.” DfES³ 2002.

“There is a moral imperative to the focus on persistent absentees⁴, because this is a group of young people which is unlikely to attain well at school, unlikely to stay on in education after the age of 16, and significantly more likely to engage in self-harming activities and anti-social behaviour. I am convinced that, by focusing on this particularly high risk group of young people, Local Authorities will make a significant impact across the range of Every Child Matters outcomes for which they are held accountable,

¹ Throughout this document the terms ‘parent’ or ‘parents’ refer to one parent, both parents or the child’s carer.

² Throughout this document the terms ‘child’ or ‘children’ refer to those of compulsory school age.

³ Department for Education and Skills.

⁴ A persistent absentee has an absence rate of at least 20%, which means missing on average, at least one day of school every week.

including those relating to school standards and narrowing attainment gaps.” Jim Knight MP, Minister of State for Schools and 14-19 Learners - extract from a letter sent to all LAs in November 2006.

Nationally, levels of absence from school are recognised as the measure for attendance. Absence is either authorised⁵ or unauthorised⁶ (often referred to as ‘truancy’). Both categories of absence are performance indicators at school, LA and national levels.

⁵ **Authorised** absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. Definition from Ensuring Regular School Attendance (DfES 2003).

⁶ All other absences must be treated as **unauthorised**. Definition from Ensuring Regular School Attendance (DfES 2003).

2. Legislative framework

The legal framework governing school attendance and the responsibilities of parents⁷, schools and the LA is set out in a succession of acts, regulations and other guidance.

Education Act 1996

Under Section 7 of the Act:

- the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have:
 - this can be by regular attendance at school,
 - or otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child themselves).

If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

- then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend the school regularly

- the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

In addition, if it can be proved that a parent knew of the child's non-attendance and failed to act, then they may be found guilty under Section 444(1A) as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This offence (known as the higher or aggravated offence) can lead to a warrant being issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction may result in a higher level of fine or a custodial sentence.

⁷Throughout this document 'parent' refers to one parent, both parents or the child's carer.

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Act added two new sections (444A and 444B) to the Education Act.

It introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444; the issuing of penalty notices is governed by:

- the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004;
- the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2004; and,
- the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005.

It introduced parenting contracts as another tool to be considered by LAs and schools for improving attendance.

Guidance on these regulations was published by the DfES in 2004 and revised in 2005:

- Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices.

Children Act 1989

Under Section 36 of the Act the LA must consider whether to apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting a parent:

- an ESO will make “the LA responsible for advising, supporting and giving ‘directions’ to the supervised child and his/her parents in such a way as to ensure that the child is properly educated.

If a parent persistently fails to comply with directions given by the supervisor they may be guilty of an offence.

If a child persistently fails to comply the supervisor is obliged to refer the matter to social services who have a duty to investigate under the Children Act and could commence care proceedings.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 16 of the Act gave police officers in England the power to take registered pupils back to school or to another designated place.

It was amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to allow a police officer to remove an excluded pupil to designated premises.

Education and Inspections Act 2006

This Act amends the Education Act 1996.

It makes it a duty for the LA:

- to promote high standards;
- ensure fair access to educational opportunity; and,
- to promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential.

It makes it a duty to make arrangements to identify children not receiving suitable education.

Section 103(2) of the Act

It makes it a duty for the parent of an excluded pupil to ensure that the pupil is not present in a public place during school hours on any of the first 5 days of the exclusion.

If the excluded pupil is present in a public place during school hours on the specified days:

- the parent commits an offence under Section 103(3) and the parent may be given a penalty notice or prosecuted in respect of this offence.

Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1751 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

This governs the registration of pupils in conjunction with guidance issued by the DfES:

- Keeping Pupil Registers, DfES 2006;
- Absence and Attendance Codes, DfES 2006.

It makes it a duty for schools to report irregular attendance to the LA:

- the LA will investigate absence.

Statutory Instrument 2005 No. 58 The Education (School Attendance Targets)(England) Regulations 2005

It makes it a duty for all maintained schools to set an annual target for reducing the number of absences from school. It will be reviewed and replaced in September 2007:

- it is proposed that the schools will have to set an overall absence target and in certain cases;
- a focused absence target – to reduce the numbers and/or the percentages of pupils whose individual absence rate is above a nationally determined level (e.g. 20% or more);
- DfES will identify those schools which have to set a focused absence target; and,
- it is also proposed that DfES will be able to focus LA support on identified schools.

Statutory Instrument 2005 No. 2450 The Education (Local Authority Performance Targets)(England) Regulations 2005

It makes it a duty for each local authority to set targets for total absences expected from primary, secondary and special maintained schools.

Guidance

The DfES provides a comprehensive range of guidance on promoting good behaviour and regular attendance in schools:

- Ensuring Regular School Attendance - Guidance on the Legal Measures available to Secure Regular School Attendance. DfES 2003.
- Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices, DfES 2005.
- Truancy Sweep Effective Practice and Advice – Advice to local authorities and others involved in the preparation and conduct of truancy sweeps. DfES, 2007.

Circulars 10/99 (The Secretary of State's Guidance on pupil behaviour and attendance) and 11/99 (Social Inclusion: the LEA role in pupil support) have been withdrawn and have been replaced by a series of documents available at

www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance/ :

- Locating advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance;
- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: groups of pupils at particular risk;
- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: responsibility for educating pupils out of school and re-integrating them into school;

- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on managing pupil attendance;
- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Attendance and Behaviour: responsibility for educating pupils out of school and re-integrating them into school;
- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: the legal framework for school discipline; and,
- Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: making reports to the courts.

3. National Context

Local authorities have a duty to promote high standards and the fulfilment of every child's potential. LAs also have the statutory duties of investigating absence from school and enforcing parental responsibility for attendance. The attendance service (Education Welfare Service in Newcastle) carries out these duties on behalf of the LA.

National Strategies

The Primary and Secondary National Strategies for school improvement are part of the Government's major reform programme for transforming education to enable children and young people to attend and enjoy school, achieve personal and social development and raise educational standards in line with the Every Child Matters agenda.

The behaviour and attendance programme aims to improve behaviour and attendance in schools through:

- increasing staff expertise, skills and confidence;
- developing pupil and staff social and emotional skills;
- creating a supportive climate for learning and teaching; and,
- working with colleagues in other agencies and related settings to ensure that children and young people's life chances are maximised in the spirit of Every Child Matters.

The objectives of the programme are:

- to promote positive behaviour and reduce disruption to teaching and learning across the whole school;
- to reduce persistent absence and, within that, truancy and levels of absence overall, encouraging good attendance and facilitating exchange of good practice;
- to support schools in developing the social and emotional skills of pupils and staff, within a positive climate for learning using appropriate learning and teaching strategies, tools and materials;
- to provide support and challenge to schools with a poor record on bullying;
- to promote parental responsibility for behaviour and attendance, encouraging the use of specific local measures that support this and disseminating the Department's communications messages arising from Every Lesson Counts and other parenting improvement strategies; and,

- to encourage the development of school partnerships to support the prioritisation of behaviour and attendance and the sharing of provision, effective practice and professional development.

All schools have access to the behaviour and attendance training materials and local behaviour and attendance leaders' meetings; they will be encouraged to work in partnership with other schools to improve behaviour and attendance, including securing appropriate provision for hard-to-place pupils. Subject to local capacity and priorities, behaviour and attendance consultants will continue to work with and support individual schools.

Audit Commission

In 2002, the Audit Commission produced the guidance 'Improving School Attendance and Behaviour' that encourages schools and LAs to challenge absence as opposed to just seeking reasons to authorise absence:

“Parents do not authorise their children’s absence by offering an explanation – the school authorises the absence by accepting it. But accepting inadequate explanations can be as damaging to a child’s education as unauthorised absence. Schools must make a judgement as to whether continued absence is justifiable and should be authorised.”

“Many schools consider parentally condoned absence...as a more widespread problem than truancy...Parentally condoned absence should be challenged by schools. Challenge may be sufficient in itself to change parents’ attitudes...LEAs need to support schools in challenging parentally condoned absence...Recording absences as unauthorised is also important as a basis for legal action.”

The National Audit Office published a report, 'Improving School Attendance – a summary for schools', in 2005, which states:

“Children who do not attend school regularly are much more likely to leave school with few or no qualifications, and they are more likely to be drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour.”

The report recommended that:

“The Department⁸, local authorities and schools:

- must sustain the current momentum and emphasis on improving attendance, as we found that efforts to reduce absence must be maintained over a long period in order to achieve a substantial and long lasting effect; and,
- need to work together to develop strategies for changing negative parental attitudes to education”.

(See Figure 1 - attendance and attainment at Key Stage 2 and Figure 2 - attendance and attainment at Key Stage 4)

⁸ Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Every Child Matters (Children's Act 2004)

In Newcastle, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has developed its vision in the [Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People](#) (April 2006 – April 2009) incorporating the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes.

Children and Young People should:

- **Be Healthy**
Enjoy the best physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health and development, so that they feel good about themselves and their lives.
- **Be Safe**
Be safe and protected from harm within their families, communities and the City as a whole.
- **Enjoy and Achieve**
Realise their ambitions, enjoying and achieving in all areas of life.
- **Make a Positive Contribution**
Take an active part in positive opportunities presented in all areas and stages of their life and the life of the community, and be valued for their contributions.
- **Achieve Economic Well-being**
Be actively protected from discrimination in order to live free from poverty and hardship.

Nationally, improvements in attendance are measured and judged under the outcome 'Enjoy and Achieve'. The aim is for children and young people to attend and enjoy school.

The DfES has set a priority national target for reducing the number of half days missed through absence.

The Joint Area Review inspection of children's services uses the key judgement:

- "Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and achieve highly."

Attainment

Attendance is a vital part of school improvement and all aspects of school life and can have a significant impact on pupils' achievement. Research has identified a strong correlation between attendance and attainment as illustrated by the following two charts:

Figure 1 - attendance and attainment at Key Stage 2

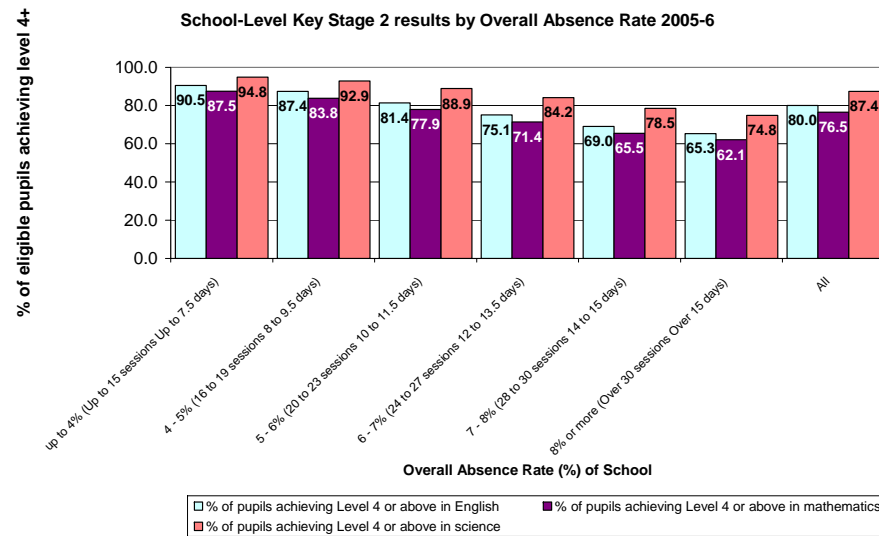
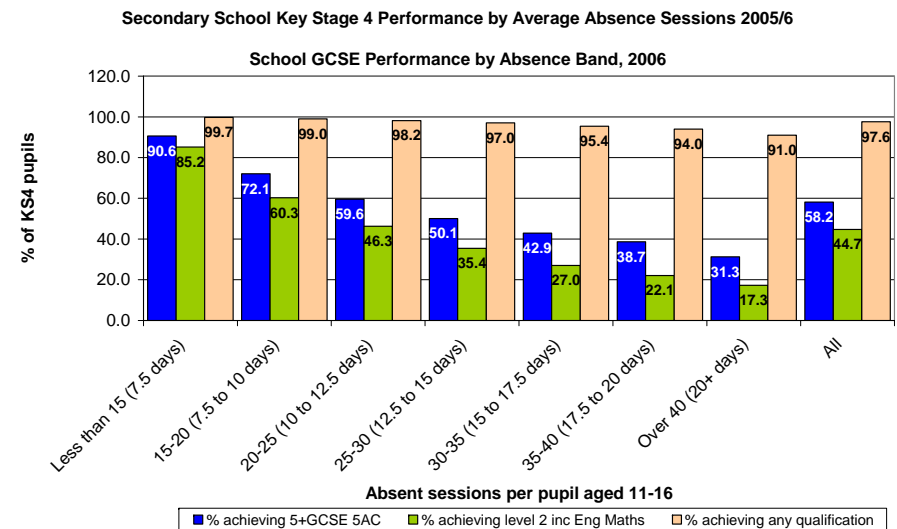


Figure 2 - attendance and attainment at Key Stage 4



Source: 'School attendance can affect pupils' attainment', (DfES presentation).

4. Local Context

Newcastle:

- serves as the regional capital for a population of over two million people across North East England;
- is a LA serving 276,000 people directly, with a approximately 64,400 young people in the 0-19 age range;
- is ranked 20th out of 354 on the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- 5.6% of the working-age population was unemployed in March 2007 (average was 3.0% in the UK). This figure varies from more than 15% in some wards to around 1% in others;
- 30% of the population live in areas that are within the 10% most deprived areas in the country;
- minority ethnic communities make up 6.9% of the population and about 10% of the school population;
- has 98 (including 4 special) schools;
- had 36,780 pupils on roll in January 2006 with a further 4,800 attending 9 independent schools;
- has high pupil mobility;
- has a school rebuilding programme which will ensure all children are educated in high quality school buildings.

The 2001 Census for Newcastle showed that:

- 26.9% of households contain dependent children;
- 28.9% of dependent children live in lone parent families – higher than the national average of 22.8%;
- 28% of dependent children aged under 16 years live in households with no employed adult.

Attainment

There have been significant improvements in attainment in Newcastle, particularly at ages 11 and 16, narrowing the gap with national figures but it is not consistent across age groups (see Appendix 1).

A. Attendance Targets

All schools (except hospital schools) and the LA have a duty to set annual targets for reducing the number of absences from school. (See **The Education (School Attendance Targets)(England) Regulations 2005**).

2003-04

- DfES set a national Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target to reduce overall absence (OA) by 8% by 2008;
- 56 LAs, including Newcastle, were identified as priority authorities for reducing absence;
- 5 secondary schools and 15 primary schools in Newcastle were targeted to reduce OA to the 2003 median for their benchmark group by 2008;
- DfES set the LA a minimum indicative target for reducing OA in all schools (primary and secondary) to 7.17% by 2008 as part of the national PSA target.

Following assessment by the DfES consultant, the priority status was removed from the LA, although the progress of the secondary schools continued to be monitored.

2005

- DfES changed its focus to unauthorised absence (UA);
- DfES initially identified 147 secondary schools nationally as having significant numbers of 'persistent truants'⁹;
- DfES subsequently increased the number of targeted¹⁰ schools to 198 from 60 LAs;
- 2 secondary schools in Newcastle were categorised as persistent truant schools;
- DfES regional attendance adviser monitored attendance and reviewed policy and practice in both of these schools as well as the other 3 previously targeted for overall absence.

⁹ A persistent truant is a pupil who recorded 40 or more sessions of UA in the school year 2004/05.

¹⁰ Schools identified were

- in the top 10% of schools with the most school days lost to UA in both 2002/03 and 2003/04;
- had pupils with at least one UA who each, on average, missed more than 7½ days (the national average) due to UA in both years; and,
- for 2004/05, at least one of the above criteria also held (i.e. large number of UA days or high average UA per pupil).

2006

Following a substantial rise in OA in 2005/06 after four successive years of reductions, the DfES:

- reverted to OA as the main performance indicator for attendance;
- decided to refocus work on pupil-level interventions for all pupils with very high levels of OA, not just high levels of UA;
- created a definition of a 'persistent absentee'¹¹ (PA);
- analysed data collected by school census for the first two terms in 2005-06:
 - 7.8% of secondary school pupils (225,000) had absence rates of 20% or more
 - persistent absentees accounted for nearly a third of all absence and nearly two thirds of all UA in secondary schools
- 436 secondary schools from 54 LAs nationally were identified as priority¹² schools for persistent absence;
- Newcastle was made a priority authority for persistent absence;
- 8 secondary schools have been targeted for having significant numbers of PAs;
- DfES regional adviser for behaviour and attendance is responsible for monitoring and providing support and advice to help reduce the level of PA.

¹¹ A persistent absentee is a pupil whose absence rate is 20% or more.

¹² Schools identified had at least 10% of pupils (minimum of 80) whose absence rates were 20% in the autumn and spring terms (2005-06)

B. Practice in Newcastle 2003-06

- attendance falls within the remit of the Inclusion division of Children's Services;
- the close working relationship between the Inclusion and School Improvement divisions ensures that the link between attendance and attainment is given a high priority within the LA and schools;
- the work of the behaviour and attendance consultant focuses on improving the climate for learning in schools focuses on the development on the classroom climate for learning, embedding SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning) and the positive management of behaviour which is delivered through a consultancy model via the teaching staff of the Behaviour Support Service;
- Newcastle LA and schools have always prioritised reducing OA (improving attendance) over just reducing UA;
- the DfES move towards a focus on reducing OA in 2004 was welcomed as it recognised this position, which also was the general consensus among LAs nationally;
- the change in DfES focus in 2005, back to reducing UA, was believed to be detrimental:
 - the basis on which schools were targeted was challenged as being weighted against large schools;
 - the LA and schools supplied the additional data requested and worked with the DfES regional adviser to reduce persistent truancy.
- refocus in 2006 to reducing persistent absence is seen as a positive step:
 - the threshold for monitoring and intervention (20% absence) is less rigorous than that used in Newcastle (10%);
 - Newcastle schools, supported by the LA, challenged the DfES in relation to their requirements for the half-termly supply of extra data;
 - the targeted schools subsequently agreed to supply data;
 - the targeted schools and the LA continue to work with the regional adviser.

C. Target setting in Newcastle

- LA proposes annual targets (attendance and UA) for each school based on:
 - the target set for the LA by the DfES;
 - the target set for an individual school by the DfES (priority schools only); and,
 - absence rates achieved in previous year.

- following discussion with the School Improvement Partner, targets are agreed;
- LA submits all schools' overall absence (OA) targets to the DfES annually in January:
 - these are the targets set for the next school year;
 - progress towards targets are part of LA support and challenge to schools.
- a 'stretch' local PSA target has been set by the LA:
 - to achieve a level of OA in primary and secondary schools in 2006/07 that is equivalent to the target set by the DfES for the LA in 2007/08.

OA targets	Primary & Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Special	
2006-7	*7.31%	5.50%	9.14%		*LPSA 7.18%
2007-8	7.17%	5.37%	8.95%	11.84%	

Targets for reducing absence (improving attendance) are based on previous absence rates and trajectories towards national norms. Prior performance in terms of attendance is not taken into consideration nor is the social context of schools and the LA. The only exception was in 2003-04, when the PSA targets for priority schools were based on the achievement of their benchmark groups for free school meals. This meant that there was a recognition that income levels can affect attendance rates and that like should be compared with like.

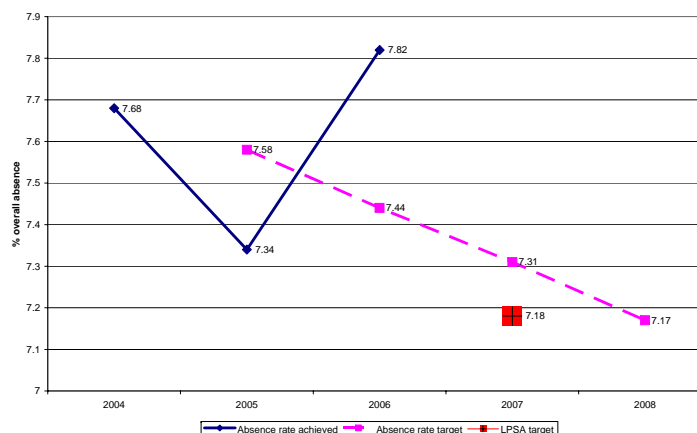
Academic achievement targets are more precise, drawing on Fischer Family Trust data and Raise Online to assist schools and LAs in setting contextualized data for attainment.

Newcastle LA and schools believe strongly in both realistic and challenging targets but what is considered to be appropriate challenge should be derived from intelligent analysis driven by national information. If targets are to be realistic the cohort of pupils, mobility, previous attendance history, social background as well as other factors such as ethnicity must be taken into account.

D. Progress towards targets (see Appendix 2)

- 2005 - OA absence rate was ahead of trajectory by 0.24%;
- 2006 - OA absence rate was behind trajectory by 0.38%;
- an improvement of 8.3% on the 2006 absence rate is required to achieve the 2008 national PSA target;
- this factor has been built in to individual school targets for 2007/08.

Figure 3 – absence rates and targets for primary and secondary schools in Newcastle



[Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People](#)

Enjoy and Achieve

“We want to be sure that children and young people enjoy and achieve in all aspects of their lives and particularly in their learning.”

The key priorities are to:

- raise levels of attendance; and,
- improve levels of attendance and attainment of key groups of children such as looked after children, young offenders and young carers.

Progress towards this outcome will be measured by an improvement in attendance at school at all ages, particularly for the key groups of children identified in the plan.

E. Attendance – current situation (Appendix 2)

Attendance in Newcastle showed a steady improvement, with reductions in the overall absence rate in both the primary, secondary and combined sectors in each of the three years from 2003 to 2005. This pattern was in line with the national trend. In 2006, absence rates increased both locally and nationally. The DfES reported that national 2006 figures were significantly affected by unusually high levels of illness.

In March 2007, the DfES reported that the groups in secondary schools most likely to miss a lot of school nationally are:

- Roma/Traveller communities (increasing number in Newcastle schools);
- children on free school meals (over 25% of compulsory school-age pupils are entitled to FSM in Newcastle); and,
- mixed race children.

Data from SFR 11/2007, March 2007.

In Newcastle, there are concerns about:

- the effect of family holidays in term time (particularly if for extended and/or repeated periods);
- the culture and acceptance of non-attendance in certain areas of the city which is manifested in a lack of engagement with, and, negative attitudes to education/school by parents and/or children and young people; and,
- the perceived lack of relevance of the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4, has an effect on attendance.

Attendance rates (local and national) are unlikely to improve in 2006-07, particularly as new absence codes and registration regulations were introduced nationally in September 2006 and these are expected to cause a rise in absence.

F. Inspections and assessments of attendance in Newcastle

Joint Area Review of Children's Services (published in March 2007)

The judgements relating to attendance:

- The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy and achieve is adequate;
- Pupils' attendance at school is satisfactory overall. Effective work is taking place to reduce absence in targeted areas, families and schools. A range of strategies has been developed, including enforcement and prosecution where necessary and high profile

celebration events for good attendees. The work of the education welfare service is effective and highly regarded by schools and some of the more challenging pupils who work closely with them.

Ofsted 2006 - 2007

Some judgements and grades from Ofsted in relation to attendance in 5 Newcastle secondary schools which have been targeted by the DfES because of relatively high overall absence rates (Grade 3 – satisfactory; Grade 4 – inadequate):

- Attendance has improved in recent years, although rates remain below average. Nonetheless, targets have been met ahead of schedule because monitoring is robust and actions are effective. Grade 4.
- Attendance has improved as a result of the rigorous efforts by the school and is now only slightly below average. There is a small group of pupils who persistently do not attend. The school has done everything it can to try and resolve the problem. Grade 3.
- Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection and are now above the local averages, although very slightly below the national average. Grade 3.
- Attendance for the vast majority of students is satisfactory overall and is improving; it is good in the sixth form. There is, however, a small minority of persistent non-attendees that bring the overall attendance rate to well below the national average. This continues to present a major challenge, but a rigorous system of pursuing non-attendees is helping the school to successfully exceed its targets for improvement set by the Department for Education and Skills. Grade 3.
- Attendance overall remains unsatisfactory, despite the college's best efforts. Attendance is unsatisfactory, being still well below the national average, but present figures represent gradual improvement. A small proportion of pupils, mainly in Year 11, are regular non-attenders. Despite the college's continual efforts and its effective liaison with other child support groups, the lack of parental support is an important barrier to improvement. Grade 4.

Audit Commission School Survey 2006

The third highest average rating (out of 76 areas of support) by Newcastle schools was for the effectiveness of the council's support for promoting pupil attendance, which scored 1.79 (1 being highest score). Nationally, LA support for attendance was not one of the top ten areas as rated by schools.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The LA is committed to enabling children of school age to benefit fully from the educational opportunities available to them and will use a wide range of strategies to support attendance. Supportive and positive engagement with families is a key element.

Children's Services

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is the key agency supporting attendance and carries out the statutory functions on behalf of the LA. Integrated working within and across the three localities will ensure that other Children's Services staff will be involved in attendance issues where appropriate, ensuring that schools, parents and children receive the highest quality support. EWOs undertake regular truancy sweeps with the police across the city. The EWS also carries out the statutory duties of the LA in relation to child employment and children in entertainment.

Education Welfare Service

The LA core budget for 2007-08 funds a core staff of:

- 9 full-time equivalent (FTE) Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) to support schools and families across the city and carry out the statutory duties of the LA including:
 - 2 EWOs responsible for the use of legal sanctions as part of the duty for the enforcement of parental responsibility for attendance; and,
 - 0.5 FTE EWO responsible for child employment and children in entertainment.

This means that the ratio of pupils to EWOs is approximately 3,600:1; the average ratio for 8 comparable authorities in 2006-07 was approximately 2,600:1.

Schools are allocated EWO time annually according to a formula weighted for:

- size of school (50%);
- Index of Multiple Deprivation rating (25%); and,
- absence rate in the previous year (25%).

The average allocated time per week for 2007-08 is:

- all schools - 4.3 hours;
- primary/special – 2.8 hours;
- secondary – 15.2 hours.

- 59 primary/special schools are allocated between 1 and 3 hours per week;
- 11 secondary schools are allocated between 9 and 22 hours per week.

- schools have the option to buy in additional EWO support
 - all secondary schools increased attendance support to at least 1 FTE EWO in the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Intervention strategies

The EWS will use a wide range of strategies to support attendance. Supportive and positive engagement with families is a key element; the EWS will also ensure that the LA's statutory responsibilities in relation to attendance are carried out.

Legal sanctions to enforce parental responsibility for attendance

The EWS, on behalf of the LA, will apply legal sanctions for non-attendance that is caused by unauthorised absence.

The fast-track to prosecution model has been adopted across the city. This procedure is intended to use legal sanctions as an intervention strategy at an earlier stage before attendance problems become entrenched, to try to improve attendance. Parents are warned and given the opportunity to show an improvement in their child's attendance before the decision to use legal sanctions is made (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). In appropriate cases that show no improvement following an initial conviction and subsequent warning, the LA may refer for a second prosecution which may be for the higher offence (see Appendix 5).

The EWS issues penalty notices for unauthorised absence as part of the fast-track procedure in accordance with the local code of conduct (see Appendix 6).

Links to other strategies in Children's Services

The attendance strategy will have links with the following strategies:

- Anti-bullying
- Anti-social behaviour
- Behaviour
- Children Missing Education
- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Inclusion
- Integrated Youth
- Parenting Support
- Safeguarding

6. Review and monitoring arrangements

Local authority

External monitoring and review by DfES using:

- Red Amber Green framework for Children's Services; and
- Attendance Improvement Plan.

Internal monitoring against:

- Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People;
- Outcome Improvement Plans relating to attendance;
- EWS service plan.

Review effectiveness of sanctions – at local level as well as contributing to national analysis.

School

- DfES school reporting framework;
- School improvement plan.

7. Action Plan 2007-08

Action/Activity	By When?	By who?	Performance Measures/Targets	Key risks & risk controls	Resources
Implement Attendance Strategy	December 2007	EWS: Attendance leader Fran Dow Schools Partner agencies	Co-ordinated and consistent approach to attendance across LA. Confirmation of roles and responsibilities (Appendix 7).	Budget cuts that could impact on level of service provided by EWS including statutory duties. Children's Services priorities.	Within existing resources
Targeted attendance team within EWS	December 2007	Head of EWS: Ian Clennell	Improvement in attendance of cohort	Budget cuts. Reduction in level of family support available.	Reprioritisation of existing resources – reduction in family support / casework / complex cases
Roll out of Secondary SEAL post September 2007. Phase 1. DfES have identified three phases which run to 2011.	July 2008	NS B&A consultant Karl Harms	10% of LA secondary school to be delivering SEAL (DfES target)	Schools do not identify the need to participate in non statutory activities.	BA Consultancy funded through the National Strategies.
Work with DfES regional adviser to reduce persistent absence in priority schools	July 2008	EWS NS B&A consultant Schools	Reduction in level of persistent absence (thresholds determined by DfES)	Budget cuts may reduce level of EWS support to schools.	Within existing resources.