
Report To:	Education & Lifelong Learning Committee	Date:	12 May 2009
Report By:	Corporate Director Education and Social Care	Report No:	EDUC/41/09/CL
Contact Officer:	Colin Laird	Contact No:	01475 712824
Subject:	Strategies to Improve Attendance in Inverclyde Schools		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with information on the strategies which will be used in Inverclyde schools to build on attendance figures in sessions ahead.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Education and Social Care's Standards and Quality Report for 2007/08 quotes attendance percentages for that session: the primary figure was 95.1% (slightly down on the previous session) and 90.7% for secondary schools. The latter figure had remained static.
- 2.2 Education Services is ambitious to increase the attendance figures for both sectors. A range of strategies to be used is outlined in this report. These include: the use of local attendance councils, greater use of electronic systems, greater use of onward referrals and the possible use of reward systems.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that members approve the range of strategies to be deployed to improve attendance figures in the sessions ahead.

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Corporate Director : Education and Social Care

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The consultative document 'Engaged and Involved: Attendance in Scottish Schools' was published by the Scottish Executive in December 2006 and was reported to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee on 6 March 2007. There has been no published material on that consultation since then.

4.2 Section 5 of Engaged and Involved highlighted a number of significant areas in improving attendance. These included:

- Setting targets for attendance, including vulnerable groups, such as looked after children
- The development of good practice across all schools.
- Raising the profile of attendance and the benefits of full attendance
- Conveying positive messages about communities through full attendance
- Working with community partners to secure full attendance

4.3 High attendance figures assist in securing high attainment.

4.4 In session 2009-10 schools will not have access to attendance officers. It is, therefore, essential that a range of alternative strategies be used in an attempt to improve attendance figures.

4.5 These strategies include:

- Early intervention by schools of problematic attendance schools
- The use of home-link officers as the initial point of contact with problematic families
- The reinstatement of Local Attendance Councils for session 2009-10. Eight volunteer members have been identified and training will be offered in May 2009.
- The reworking of guidelines and procedures on attendance, children missing from education and children who fail to arrive at school to take account of the new situation
- The piloting of an electronic attendance system, such as Truancy Call, across a small number of primary schools. Secondary schools already use these systems. A briefing for Members has been arranged.
- Greater use of the Authority Reporter in the consideration of problematic cases and possible referral for prosecution in extreme cases.
- The widening of the roles of Joint Assessment Teams and the INFORM placement group to consider concerning attendance issues

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial:

The costs of piloting Truancy Call in primary schools and expenses related to Local Attendance Councils can be met from existing budgets. Truancy Call costs £1,000 per year's rental or £2,500 per purchase. The limit of possible expenditure would be under £10,000.

5.2 Legal:

Legal Services has provided advice relating to the reintroduction of Attendance Councils

and will advise also on possible referrals for prosecution.

6.0 PROPOSAL

6.1 It is proposed that the above range of strategies be implemented from session 2009-10.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation will be carried out with head teachers and with Parent Councils over the choice of pilot schools and the other measures proposed.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 It is hoped that the appropriate deployment of the above range of individual strategies will result in increased attendance in Inverclyde Schools.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Engaged and Involved
Standards and Quality Report for 2007-08

Scottish Executive 2006
Education Services 2009