
SCHOOL ABSENCE FIGURES 2008-2009

SUMMARY REPORT**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update committee members on the levels of school absence and to inform them of the actions that we as an authority are undertaking to improve the situation.

Summary

2. Absence rates have stalled in the period to September to Easter, with performance dipping slightly overall, although the number of persistent absentees continues to decrease in both secondary and primary phase.
3. The Local Authority only has one National Performance Indicator around attendance and that is NI87 Secondary School persistent absence rate with a target of 5% by 2011.
4. Local Authority Officers continue to work with schools through the Secondary and Primary Behaviour and Attendance Networks to share good practice and update them on new initiatives.

Recommendation(s)

5. It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of this report.

Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

School Census Data 2007/8 and 2008/9

DCSF official first statistical release figures for the 07/08 academic year and the Autumn and Spring Terms 08/09

Anita Hamer: Extension 2891

S17 Crime and Disorder	Reduction in school absence could have an impact on the reduction of crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	All children and young people would benefit from regularly attending school and participating in an active and challenging school curriculum including the advice and guidance around PSCHE
Sustainability	There are no direct implications arising from this report
Diversity	All children and young people from all groups are affected
Wards Affected	All Wards
Groups Affected	All children and young people
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no budget or policy implications
Efficiency	There are no direct implications arising from this report
Key Decision	No key decisions are required
Urgent Decision	No urgent decisions are required
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report contributes to Aspiring Darlington

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. Performance:

The information in this report is based on the school census information that schools have submitted to the DCSF up to Easter 2009 including St Aiden's C of E Academy who share their attendance information with the local authority.

7. Also included is the information supplied by the DCSF in their statistical releases that ranks Darlington's performance alongside other authorities.
8. The national performance figures were published in March of this year for the academic year 2007/8 and shows our performance compared to regional and national figures. The table below illustrates Darlington's position:

	Darlington	North East	National	Ranking
Primary absence	5.2%	5.26%	5.26%	65
Primary Persistent Absentees	1.8%	1.58%	1.66%	100
Secondary Absence	6.48%	7.30%	7.34%	9
Secondary Persistent Absentees	4.50%	5.71%	5.58%	32
All PAs including the academy and special schools	3.55%	3.76%	3.6%	86
Darlington including the academy and special school	6.07%	6.35%	6.29%	56

This shows that Darlington has continued to build on the progress made in 2006/7 both with overall absence and with the reduction in the number of persistent absentees.

9. The figures for this academic year has shown as slight dip in the progress in overall absence, which we knew would be likely to happen as it is increasingly difficult to maintain the rate of progress that the authority has shown over the last two years. However the number of persistent absentees has continued fall.

Absence

	2007/8 Annual	Ranking	Autumn 2008/9	Ranking	Spring 2008/9	Ranking	2008/9 to Easter
Primary	5.2	65	5.7%	92	4.9%	31	5.3%
Secondary	6.48	9	7.1%	55	6.5%	22	6.8%
Darlington*	6.07	56	6.3%	88	5.7%	28	6.1%

*Includes St Aiden's C of E Academy

Number of Persistent Absentees

	2007/08	Percentage	2008/09	Percentage
Primary	161	2.3%	136	1.9%
Secondary	271	5.1%	259	4.9%
Secondary inc St Aiden's	368	6.2%	313	5.4%
Darlington	432	3.5%	395	3.2%
Darlington inc St Aiden's	529	4.1%	449	3.5%

Darlington is on track to meet the government target of 5% secondary PA by 2011

Darlington's performance in comparison to North East and National Averages

	Autumn			Spring		
	Primary	Secondary	All*	Primary	Secondary	All*
Darlington	5.7%	7.1%	6.5%	4.9%	6.5%	5.7%
North East	5.7%	7.6%	6.7%	5.0%	7.1%	6.1%
National	5.6%	7.3%	6.4%	5.3%	7.2%	6.2%

* Includes St Aiden's C of E Academy

10. In order to meet the Persistent Absentee target of 5% by 2011 the DCSF have for the past three years identified schools in need of targeted support. These schools have been identified by the percentage of persistent absentees within the school population, and this target percentage has been reducing over the last three years. This year the percentage is 6.1% and Darlington has four schools that are identified as requiring this support.

11. Sanctions:

The local authority continues to use all the sanctions available to it in pursuing school attendance, these sanctions consist of Penalty Notices, for both holidays in term time and unauthorised absence, as well as prosecution through the courts.

Over the last academic year the Authority undertaken the following sanctions:

Penalty notices for holiday	Penalty Notice warning letters	Penalty notices for unauthorised absence	Fast Track Prosecution	Cases in court
69	206	28	97	15

Penalty Notice warning letters are by far the most effective sanction in improving school attendance as can be seen by the number of warning letters that resulted in a Penalty Notice. However the fast track process is also very supportive in helping parents to improve their child's attendance at school; of the 97 families that were supported only 14 of them ended in court, one family appearing twice for the same child. Unfortunately, following court, only one family has shown a marked improvement in attendance; this has been the pattern over the last few years.

12. Education Welfare Officers:

Education Welfare Officers continue to work in localities and support schools in a number of ways, 1:1 work with pupils in school, group work with pupils, assemblies for class year groups and schools. They run competitions in the primary schools and they support school staff in implementing the actions that schools should be taking as early intervention work.

13. Looked After Children

The local authority monitors on a daily basis the attendance of looked after children through Welfare Call. Performance over the last few years is shown in the table below, it is important to remember that in some cases the numbers are very small so the impact of one child on the percentages can be significant.

	In Authority		Out of Authority	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
05/06	95.3%	83.9%	95.3%	86.5%
06/07	95.2%	91%	97%	95%

07/08	97.8%	91.7%	96.3%	89.2%
08/09	97.9%	83.9%	94.7%	83.9%

Outcome of Consultation

No consultation took place in the compiling of this report
