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**TASK AND FINISH GROUP –  
YEAR ONE AND RECEPTION ATTENDANCE - ACTIONS**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide details of key actions planned to address the Reception and Year One low attendance issue.

**Summary**

2. Following the Children and Young People Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, looking at primary and reception attendance, actions were recommended.
3. This report outlines the issues and current situation, together with actions and progress, to date.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) Children and Young People Scrutiny note the action that has taken place.
  - (b) Receive a further report following the review the 2012-2013 Reception and Year One attendance data in autumn 2013 in order to measure impact of the actions to address attendance.

**Murray Rose, Director of People**

**Background Papers**

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	School attendance has positive impact on health and well-being
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Diversity	The report covers all groups.
Wards Affected	All.
Groups Affected	Children and their families.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not a key decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Relevant to the Educated and Skilled outcomes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	There are no specific efficiency issues contained within this report

## MAIN REPORT

### Background

- The attendance of year one pupils is consistently lower than the overall primary attendance in Darlington. Children enter full time education age four in the reception year, which is the year in which they become five. Children transfer to year one in the September after they become five. At this stage attendance data is recorded and submitted at national level. Reception attendance data is not collected in Darlington. It is therefore, difficult to judge statistically if Year One attendance is lower than Reception attendance. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence, provided by schools, illustrates there is a similarity in Reception and Year One attendance with an improvement in attendance by Year Two.
- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education. Compulsory school age is from age 5 onwards. Thus, the Year One attendance data is the first record of attendance submitted to DfE by the data team.
- Overall primary school attendance has been similar to the national average for the past four years. However, Year One attendance data illustrates a decline in attendance.

	Year One Darlington	Primary Darlington	England
2007/2008	94.2%	94.8%	94.8%
2008/2009	94.2%	94.7%	94.7%
2009/2010	94.0%	94.5%	94.6%
2010/2011	93.9%	94.8%	95.0%

- Non-attendance at school for any reason is an important issue that must be treated promptly. It is the responsibility of the school to apply intervention strategies in order to bring about an improvement in school attendance.

## **Current Situation**

9. Schools are legally required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Darlington schools apply this process to reception age children but there is currently no legal requirement to submit the data to DfE. In 2012-2013 the requirement will be extended to reception age pupils.

## **Information and Analysis**

10. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that there is a 'casual attitude' to attendance at maintained nursery provision and this attendance attitude continues into reception and year one of primary school. There are some schools where attendance in year one falls well below the Darlington year one average, however, it should be noted that a number of schools submit year one attendance data which is consistently higher than other schools. Due to the lack of pattern it is not possible to define from the data the underlying causes. Conversations with schools point towards four key issues – early years staff that believe attendance is not statutory and therefore do not challenge casual/poor attendance, parental attitude, the timing of medical/dentist appointments and childhood illness.
11. All Tees Valley LAs were contacted with regard to reception and year one attendance. Of those that responded no authority identified attendance as an issue and two indicated that they collect attendance data for every year of education including nursery via the SIMMS system.
12. Poor attendance is at the heart of the standards agenda. It impacts on the pupil's attitude towards learning and attainment. All schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance, which should be set out in an attendance policy.

## **Actions to Address Attendance**

13. The report from the Task and Finish Group recommended:
  - (a) Letter be distributed prior to the Early Years Transition meeting to the providers from all schools and settings. The letter raises awareness of the facts and seeks support for a focus towards improving attendance. Providers are asked to alert schools to poor nursery attendance in order that the school has a raised awareness as the child commences school. (See **Appendix 1**.)
  - (b) To discuss with DBC Communications an appropriate method of disseminating the 'attendance is important' message to parents and carers.
14. As the legal requirement to submit attendance data to DfE in 2012-2013 is extended to reception age pupils to write to schools with a trend of poor Year One attendance in order to raise awareness and suggest the school apply intervention strategies by working with locality early intervention teams.

## **Conclusions**

15. The importance of attendance in Reception and Year One, needs to be widely understood by parents, carers and professionals. The attendance data for 2012/13 will provide evidence of the impact of the awareness raising and communications with these groups.



## CHILDREN, FAMILIES &amp; LEARNING

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**For the attention of –  
 Managers, Headteachers, Lower EYFS  
 staff and EYFS Reception Teachers**

Date : 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012  
 Please ask for : Chris Archer  
 Direct Line : 01325 406001  
 Email : [Chris.archer@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.archer@darlington.gov.uk)  
 Your Reference : Attendance in EYFS and Year One

Dear Colleague,

### **IMPORTANT – Attendance in EYFS and Year One**

I would like to draw your attention to work that the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Task and Finish group have been undertaking regarding the attendance of EYFS Reception and Year One children. They have raised a concern that Year One attendance is declining.

The attendance of Year One pupils is consistently lower than the overall primary attendance in Darlington. Reception attendance data is currently not collected in Darlington. It is therefore, difficult to judge statistically if Year One attendance is lower than Reception attendance. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence provided by schools, illustrates there is a similarity in Reception and Year One attendance with an improvement in attendance by Year Two. In 2012-2013 the requirement to report attendance to DfE will be extended to EYFS Reception age pupils. At this point we will have accurate comparable data.

Overall, primary attendance has been similar to the national average for the past 4 years. However, as the table below illustrates, Year One attendance is declining year on year -

	Year One Darlington	Primary Darlington	England
2007/2008	94.2%	94.8%	94.8%
2008/2009	94.2%	94.7%	94.7%
2009/2010	94.0%	94.5%	94.6%
2010/2011	93.9%	94.8%	95.0%

Poor attendance impacts on the child's attitude towards learning and attainment. Conversations with schools point towards four key issues –

- early years staff that believe attendance is not statutory and therefore do not challenge casual/poor attendance in the early years with the result that bad habits emerge,
- parental attitude,
- the timing of medical/dentist appointments, and
- childhood illness.

In order to begin to address the attendance issue I would like to encourage lower EYFS/nursery staff attending the **EYFS Transition meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012** to alert EYFS Reception

colleagues to any casual/poor attendance issues of the lower EYFS/nursery children transferring to school. This information will enable schools to be immediately aware of potential attendance issues. It also enables schools to discuss the benefits of good attendance with parents.

As noted above, some primary colleagues perceive that the poor attendance habits often commence in lower EYFS/nursery. Please can we remind managers and headteachers that the children are eligible to 15 hours free entitlement and that punctuality and attendance are important in order to gain maximum benefit from the free entitlement?

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

*Chris Archer*

Chris Archer  
Early Years Manager - Lead Officer  
Children, Families and Learning  
Darlington Borough Council