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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the areas for work under my Children's Services Portfolio :-
  - (a) **Attendance Policy and Strategy** – Approval has been given to a new Attendance Policy, Strategy and Guidelines which includes a response to the new powers available to local authorities to issue penalty notices to parents for the non-attendance of children at school.
  - (b) **Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy** – Consideration has also been given to the adoption of a new restrictive physical intervention policy, and a recommendation to Council has been made which will be considered later on this Agenda.
  - (c) **Big Lottery Fund – New Opportunities for PE and Sport Programme** – It is pleasing to report that the formal release has been given to a capital grant of £1,027,356 to build and improve sports facilities across 10 schemes which will enable schools to promote sport in the community.
  - (d) **School Performance in 2004: Schools Inspected by OFSTED between 1st September, 2003 and 31st July, 2004** – I am also pleased to report some positive inspection outcomes for those schools inspected during the last academic year, and the authority looks forward to supporting all schools in addressing areas for improvement.
  - (e) **School Performance in 2004: National Tests/Exams** – Analysis of pupil performance in Darlington across the Key Stages has been considered in comparison to that of national, regional and statistical neighbours. Gains have been made this year in the performance of pupils at Key Stage 2 and 3, while performance has dipped in Key Stage 1 and 4.
  - (f) **4 School Street** – Approval has been given to the disposal of number 4, School Street, which is a property that has become vacant and is no longer required by the Education Department.
  - (g) I attended the Giving Tree Concert on 16th December 2004. This is an annual charity event to raise monies for the Giving Tree appeal which helps the needy in the Borough at Christmas time.
  
2. I continue to meet regularly with the Directors of Education and Social Services to familiarise myself with children's services issues. In addition, I have attended a meeting of the Social Services Department's Children's Services Management Team, have visited the Sure Start offices at McNay Street to meet with staff and families, and have visited

residential children's homes in the Borough. A full and detailed programme has been arranged for the coming weeks when I will meet with a wider group of managers, staff, and service users.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Cabinet Member with Children's Services Portfolio**