

Report title	School attendance matters: Staffordshire's Education Welfare Worker Team
Audience	Schools Forum
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1. Introduction

The local authority (LA) considers that school attendance and its improvement, is an integral part of our raising achievement agenda. The LA is committed to providing an ongoing programme of support aimed at working in partnership with schools, children, young people, parents and a wide range of partner agencies to achieve improved attendance levels across the County, therefore enabling children and young people to have the best chance to fulfil their potential, irrespective of gender, race, creed or religion.

Through school attendance, we can track the progress of all children, including vulnerable groups, such as children in care and those subject to a Child Protection Plan and children missing education, as well as other groups at significant risk of slipping through the net. Children not attending school regularly can also be an indicator that there are concerns at home.

We believe that in order to bring about significant educational improvement, good habits need to be formed at an early age. Robust arrangements should be in place to support children and young people at all transitional stages. Parents and carers, whose own experience of school may have been less than positive, must be encouraged to actively engage in ensuring their child attends school on a regular basis. We are committed to enabling all children and young people of school age to enjoy and benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

2. Staffordshire's Education Welfare Worker Team

Education Welfare Workers (EWWs) currently fulfil both statutory and non-statutory functions in relation to compulsory school aged children and young people, addressing issues related to:

- attendance registration
- school attendance and absence
- elective home education (EHE)
- children missing from education (CME)
- child employment
- child entertainment
- issuing licenses for chaperones

The team provides a specialist group of staff who are qualified and experienced in working with schools to develop systems, procedures and interventions, and work in

partnership with organisations to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. The team advises schools and academies, alternative education providers, as well as parents/carers, other professionals and employers regarding legislation in these areas and supports them in fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

3. Attendance: Responsibilities of schools and academies

- Implement effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigate the underlying causes of poor attendance; these should be clearly specified within the school/academy Attendance Policy.
- Ensure there is a clear escalation of staged interventions within the school/academy, which are clearly understood by all teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents.
- Set annual attendance targets.
- Identify a senior appropriate member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance within the school/academy: attendance leader.
- Comply with statutory regulations regarding admissions and attendance registration, and relevant legislation, including the need to maintain accurate attendance and admission registers in accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2006.
- Complete and send request for support to LST's in relation to every pupil who has '20+ sessions continuous unauthorised and unexplained absence'
- Pupils missing out on education data collection. (Pupils who are on a school roll who are on a reduced provision). All schools and academies must complete the pupils missing out half termly returns. This is an Ofsted requirement (report published November 2013) this should include all children who are on any form of reduced timetable.
- Complete and return attendance information to the Virtual School for looked after children.
- Devise a system for relevant staff to identify, share information, and address attendance concerns at individual pupil level.
- Undertake regular analysis of attendance patterns (individual, year group and whole school) to identify potential persistent absentees.
- To follow the local authority's Children Missing from Education Policy and complete and return CME forms to the CME officer immediately on awareness of a pupil leaving the school/academy, area, county or country, having obtained detailed information about their destination and address from the parent or carer.

- Undertake a written agreement with other schools/academies and alternative education providers specifying clear roles and responsibilities regarding registration, sharing attendance and absence information and following up absence for Dual Registration.
- To follow the local authority's policy regarding elective home education, provide immediate information to the local authority EHE officer regarding parental or carers' intention to electively home educate.
- Liaise with and respond to the designated EWW regarding information about child employment and children in entertainment.

4. Attendance: Statutory role of the council

The Staffordshire Education Welfare Worker (EWW) Team provides a statutory service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996. The statutory service (otherwise known as the core offer) will be provided to local schools for a dedicated funding allocation of £480k for the 2018/19 academic year period.

- Through the work of schools and education providers to ensure that children of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance or otherwise.
- To enforce school attendance under Sections 444, 444A and 444ZA of the Education Act 1996.
- To undertake enforcement proceedings under Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- To consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before commencing legal proceedings against parents and/or carers and delivering directions.
- To undertake the council's statutory duty under the Education Act 1996, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 in relation to school attendance, children missing from education and elective home education.
- To fulfil the local authority's statutory duties in relation to child employment under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (as amended), the Children (Protection at Work) Regulations 2000, Staffordshire County Council Employment Of Children Byelaws and Children in Entertainment and Licensing of Chaperones under relevant legislation.
- To ensure schools/academies are compliant with the Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2006 and Section 434 and 551 of the Education Act 1996.

- To assist in fulfilling the obligations placed on the local authority under the Children Act 1989 in relation to Child Protection, the Children in Need Assessment Framework, Education Supervision Orders and looked after children.
- To ensure that vulnerable children and young people, identified by schools/ academies, parents or carers, self, or other agencies are supported to access their education where there are issues relating to attendance.
- To ensure that schools and academies comply with section 157/175 of the Education Act 2002 regarding their safeguarding responsibilities.

5. Staffordshire's Education Welfare Worker Offer 2018/19

1. Statutory Services (the core offer)
2. Core Offer Plus – Option 1 current service
3. Core Offer Plus – Option 2
4. Core Offer Plus – Option 3
5. No Core Offer Plus – Schools/ School Led consortia commission and provide all non- statutory/ core offer related EWW activity

1. Statutory Services (£480k core offer)

The Core EWW offer will be an entitlement to all local schools in response to a clearly defined need. Education Welfare Workers (EWWs) are responsible for delivering the statutory requirements of the Local Authority for attendance, these include:

- Reviewing and processing cases for prosecution for irregular attendance under section 444 (1) and (1A)
- Issuing Penalty Notices for:
 - Unauthorised leave in term time
 - Persistent absence and lateness
 - Being in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion.
- Undertaking police and criminal evidence interviews for S444(1A) prosecutions
- Initiating and processing School Attendance Orders for pupils not on a school roll
- Undertaking Parenting Orders and assessments requested by magistrates
- Preparing papers to put before Family Court for an Education Supervision Order and to then manage the order.
- Casework for children identified as Children Missing Education (CME)
- Annual Register inspections (maintained schools only)
- Child Employment and Licensing which involves:
 - Administration and issuing of work permits and visits to workplaces
 - Administration and issuing of licenses for children to participate in entertainment performances

- Administration and issuing of Licensing chaperones for children in entertainment
- Undertaking venue checks for children in entertainment

Core Offer Plus: Option 1 (£890k additional funding)

For an additional funding allocation of £890k for the 2018/19 academic year, the service will seek to provide local schools with a range of additional services that go beyond the core/ statutory offer.

Based on assessed needs, schools will proportionate to investment be able to access a range of bespoke interventions from the EWW. Should this option be commissioned, each locality will be provided an allocation of time proportionate to the investment made in the service from the locality and this information and progress on school utilisation of the allocation in each locality will be reported to the respective DIP. In the event that the demand for the school in respective locality has the potential to exceed funded capacity, then the DIP will determine priorities for any remaining EWW resource to enable the allocation of EWW resource around locality priorities.

It is imperative that the locality EWW resource in response to school bespoke needs will be allocated with an approach that will be seen as fair, equitable, transparent and evidence based. Whilst all schools will be able to draw down on elements of the proposed offer below in response to needs, this will need to be proportionate to ensure all schools have equitable access to EWW resource in respective localities, whilst operating within agreed financial parameters.

- Access to a trained officer with knowledge of local schools, community, services and professional networks to support schools case work.
- Investigating reasons for absence and undertaking an agreed action plan with school
- Information, advice and guidance on the use of register codes to remain compliant with legislation
- Support and advice in relation to school strategies to address specific periods or types of absence
- Attending professionals meetings (including child protection conferences) as and when required on behalf of the school
- Chairing parent attendance clinics for students with irregular attendance
- Participation at whole school assemblies and parents' evenings
- Late gate' checks to address punctuality problems
- Enforcement: undertaking casework and managing cases that have been referred for prosecution under section 444 (1) and (1A)
- Enforcement: undertaking casework and processing of all fixed penalty notices for persistent absence and lateness.
- Link meetings

Core Offer Plus: Option 2. Provide a scaled down offer of option 1 across the county for pre court case activity (£695K additional funding)

Based on assessed needs, schools will be able to access a range of bespoke interventions proportionate to investment from the EWW, following the schools undertaking tier two interventions with the pupil and family.

- Access to a trained officer with knowledge of local schools, community, services and professional networks to undertake enforcement case work.
- Chairing parent attendance clinics for students with irregular attendance. Offering a one day clinic or two half days to each school.
- Enforcement: undertaking casework and managing cases that have been referred for prosecution under section 444 (1) and (1A)
- Enforcement: undertaking casework and processing of all fixed penalty notices for persistent absence and lateness.

Core Offer Plus: Option 3 Provide school attendance clinics across the county (£200K additional funding)

Parental Attendance/ lateness Clinics for pupils with irregular attendance.

The EWW will meet with the parent(s) in a formal setting within the school, to undertake a structured conversation in which the parent(s) will be challenged to explain their child's absence and supported to agree a plan to bring about immediate change. This will require the school to undertake the administration of the clinic, using the letter template provided by the EWW and to provide a suitable room.

The school will support the process by sending a list of students whose parents have been invited one week in advance of the attendance clinic, so back ground checks can be completed by the EWW.

Clinics can last for half a day or be over a full day.

Each school will be able to book in advance 2 full days or equivalent half days over the academic year. This will have to be managed on a demand basis and planned across the whole year, with schools being prioritised on need and first response basis.

Option 4. No non- core offer service provision from SCC

Schools to provide all case work and support to parents who have not ensured their children regularly attend school

Schools or school led consortia to lead on providing and/ or commissioning directly any required education welfare activity not provided by the core offer from the service in discharging all statutory and special duties.

The LA Education welfare offer will be the core offer option in table 1.