

Executive Response to the Secondary School Attendance Scrutiny Task Group

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Executive Response	Comments
1	<i>That posters are displayed in doctors' and dentists' surgeries asking parents to make routine medical appointments outside of school hours.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>A borough-wide poster competition for schools, highlighting the importance of good attendance has successfully taken place. The winning posters will be displayed in public places across the authority including GP/dental practices. Note that Medical/dental appointments accounted for 0.8% of authorised absence in the autumn term alone for secondary schools. The need to make routine appointments outside school hours will also be reinforced by EWOs when visiting schools.</i>
2	<i>That an article on the importance of school attendance is placed in Arcadia.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Arcadia is a Richmond publication and would therefore not reach the parents/carers resident outside of the authority. A solution would be to write to each parent and attach a copy of any published article.</i>
3	<i>That where not already done, schools use their newsletters to highlight the importance of attendance on a regular basis.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Schools do use newsletters to raise issues on attendance and remind parents/carers of their responsibility to call the school on the first day of absence.</i>

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			<i>However, this is not consistent among schools. The EWS will continue to promote the use of school publications to stress the importance of good attendance.</i>
4	<i>That a protocol for cross-Borough attendance working, in the same format as the pan-London agreement, be negotiated with Hammersmith and Fulham and progress be reported back to the Education and Children's Services Committee by its meeting on 20 November 2007.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Historically, liaising with services across authorities has proved to be problematic. This has been due in part, to the different roles and responsibilities of the neighbouring education welfare services. The protocol for working with Wandsworth Authority could be used as a model of good practice to facilitate improved pupil attendance and working partnerships. Negotiations with Hammersmith and Fulham have been started by the Assistant Director; progress will be reported as required in November 2007.</i>
5	<i>That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education write to London Councils, local MPs, the Assembly Member for South West London and the DfCFS to highlight the inequity of current arrangements for educational grant funding for deprivation.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	
6	<i>That the EWS is consulted before any changes are made to schools' attendance policies and</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>Schools' attendance policies should include: individual</i>

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	<i>that their comments are reported to governors.</i>		<i>attendance targets, school systems and procedures for following up attendance and the expected input of support services. Consequently, schools and the EWS must work in partnership to develop attendance policies.</i>
7	<i>That the EWS contact Orleans Park to ascertain what further attendance best practice information they require.</i>	<i>Partially Accepted</i>	<i>The allocated EWO has regularly visited and offered advice to the school. Governors of Orleans Park have not taken up the opportunity of training.</i> <i>The EWO meets weekly with relevant school staff to discuss both individual and whole-school attendance issues, including implementing systems and procedures in line with local and national best practice. Feedback has been given through written reports. The Principal EWO will contact the school in the Autumn Term to ascertain if further examples of good practice can be provided.</i>
8	<i>That all Governors be encouraged to take up attendance training offered by the EWS.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>The EWS works with the Governor Support Unit to offer training on a bi annual basis. This is an ongoing</i>

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			<i>provision. At the request of the EWS, a named governor for attendance has been identified for over half of the borough schools. It is the aim of the EWS, as a matter of good practice, to have a named governor for attendance for each of the borough schools.</i>
9	<i>That a termly newsletter is produced by EWS outlining successful initiatives for attendance and is sent to schools and governors.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	
10	<i>That termly meetings, arranged by EWS, are held between secondary staff with responsibility for attendance and EWS to share best practice information.</i>	<i>Rejected</i>	<i>The EWS previously offered termly meetings/training opportunities for Attendance Officers from secondary schools. However, these were poorly attended for a variety of reasons limiting their impact. The EWS will prioritise disseminating best practice through a variety of channels.</i>
11	<i>That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education report back to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee by its meeting on 20 November 2007, with clear Borough Attendance Guidance, including a strategy for increasing consistency across secondary schools in authorising term time holidays.</i>	<i>Accepted</i>	<i>The EWS acknowledges the need to update and review the current Borough Attendance Policy, reflecting both DfCSF guidance and legislation for Maintaining Pupil Registers 2006 and Pupil Registration Regulations 2006. This would give clear guidance to schools in respect of holidays</i>

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			<i>in term time and what may be considered as exceptional requests. This guidance would ensure greater consistency among schools, whilst acknowledging the discretionary authority of the head teacher and governing body.</i>
12	<i>That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education issue clear guidance to schools stating that study leave should only be granted for GCSE examinations in the summer term and not for mock examinations.</i>	Accepted	<i>DfCSF guidance outlines that study leave should be restricted to YR 11 GCSE's timetable for a maximum period of 15 days. This 15 day period in one school year would represent 7.89% absence for an individual pupil. There has been a significant shift towards not issuing study leave for mock exams among secondary schools with many using their timetables effectively to support students in school. Further guidance for study leave should be outlined in the Borough Attendance Policy.</i>