

YEAR 7 CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. To provide the Scrutiny Committee with information relating to the number of Year 7 children who did not attend school at the start of the autumn term in September 2003, as requested by Tanis Kent.

2. Summary

- 2.1 New arrangements to track Year 7 children to ensure that they start school at the beginning of the autumn term were introduced for September 2001.
- 2.2 There has been a significant reduction in the number of Year 7 children who did not attend their allocated school at the start of the school year in September 2003 compared with September 2000. This indicates that the measures agreed by the Education Committee in July 2000 and the further refinement to the measures in 2002 have helped to reduce the number of Year 7 non-attenders.

3. Conclusion

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information in the report.

1. Background information

- 1.1. At the start of the Autumn Term, every school in Hertfordshire will have a list of the Year 7 children who are expected to start at that school. Every child in Hertfordshire, whose parents have not indicated that they will be sending their child to a non-state school or a school outside Hertfordshire, will be on the list of one of the maintained schools.
- 1.2. On the first day of term, a number of children do not arrive at the school to which they have been allocated a place. Other than illness and holidays, there will be three main reasons for this:
 - a) The parents have decided to send their children to another school, often in the private sector, and have not informed the admissions team or the school. Occasionally the other school might be a foundation or voluntary aided school and the admissions team has not been informed.
 - b) The parents have decided that they will not send their child to the school where they have been offered a place because they have not been offered the school that they want. The County Council, in order to meet its legal obligations, must ensure that a school place is available for their child.
 - c) The parents have decided to educate their children otherwise than at school i.e. through home education.
- 1.3. A brief summary of the procedures used this year for tracking Year 7 children to find out whether or not they are attending school and, if they do not attend on the first day, to follow up their circumstances is as follows:
 - March 4th 2003 - allocation letters sent out to parents. The letters advised that if parents did not accept a place within 15 days, then the place may be withdrawn.
 - April 2003 – Schools sent letter to parents who had not returned their response form, asking them to do so.
 - June 2003 - Quadrant admission teams wrote to parents of children who had not accepted their allocated school nor indicated what alternative education was planned, warning that the place could be withdrawn if no reply had been received within 14 days.
 - July 2003 - If no reply had been received from parents within 14 days, the Quadrant teams wrote again asking for information. The place was withdrawn if any other pupils were on the continuing interest list. A place at an alternative school was allocated in these cases.

- July 2003 - The teams also contacted primary schools in order that the schools could help in the process of finding out the destination of pupils or other planned education provision.
- July 2003 - Secondary schools were contacted after the day visit of Year 7s, to determine whether they had been visited by any of those pupils whose parents had not responded. In addition, an attempt was made to contact parents by telephone.
- September 2003 - If no response had been received from parents then Quadrant admission teams made enquires of the allocated secondary school to find out whether the child has attended on the first day.
- September 2003 - If there was still no information about the educational provision for a pupil, then Quadrant admission teams wrote again to parents advising that in 15 days of the date of the letter, a formal letter warning them of impending notice of Section 437 would be sent.
- 15 days after the date of the letter if no reply had been received a School Attendance Order was sent.

2. Outcomes of the notification and follow up process

2.1 The numbers of children not attending school on the first day of term over a 3 year period are as follows :-

YEAR	EAST	NORTH	WEST	SOUTH	TOTAL
September 2000 (as at Oct 2000)	26	12	17	131	186
September 2001 (as at Oct 2001)	6	16	3	19	44
September 2002 (as at Oct 2002)	5	3	14	64	86
September 2003 (as at Sep 2003)	10	14	3	33	60

2.2 The procedures applied prior to the start of the school year have reduced the numbers not attending from 186 in 2000 to 60 in 2003. As indicated above, the admissions teams follow every case to ensure the LEA is fulfilling its duty to ensure that all children of statutory school age are in education. There will be a small number of cases where the LEA must prosecute for non-attendance, but the procedures ensure that the names of all of these children are known and that appropriate action is taken.

3 Financial Implications

None

4 Rural Implications

None

If you require further information about the issues referred to in this report
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