

Children's Services

Attendance Strategy 2007-2012

Draft June 2007

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SUNDERLAND ATTENDANCE STRATEGY 2007-2012 DRAFT

1. Summary

This strategy recognises that attendance at school is a priority within the Children and Young Peoples Plan, is key to the City's drive to raise attainment and is a National priority for the Government. It establishes the framework to meet the Children's Services and Government's expectations on improved attendance.

The link between attainment and attendance is evidenced in a recent Government study which showed that only 31.3% of pupils with over 20 days absence achieved 5 or more GCSEs (grade A*-C). Such statistics underline the Government's new priority on targeting persistent absentees (those pupils who have missed 20% or more of the school year).

The Strategy presents Sunderland's response to Government's expectations and is based on a strong commitment by Children's Services, schools and other partners to work collectively to improve attendance and raise attainment. The current attendance figures across all settings suggest that attendance has 'plateaued' Sunderland remains in the lower quartile nationally. Sunderland has now been designated as a Persistence Absence Authority by the DfES because of having six secondary schools with 20% of their pupils with persistent absence in 2005-2006.

Sunderland Children Services has good working partnerships established with its schools with intervention strategies in place with support from Every School Day Counts, the Attendance Team, the Behaviour and Attendance National Strategy Consultants and the BEST Team. This Strategy seeks to develop a new approach for Sunderland which enables increased development support to schools in managing attendance, improved use of ICT and attendance data and a strong emphasis on enforcement to manage persistent absence (i.e. more than 20% of the school year).

The vision of the Attendance Strategy is to improve school attendance across all phases, to prioritise early intervention, to put in place targeted support where it is most needed, to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential and to ensure that no schools are in a persistent absence category.

The Strategy establishes a number of priorities for action which will form the basis of the Action Plan on attendance. The Strategy and Action Plan will be subject to regular review and will be monitored through the Children's Services Review Committee.

2. Introduction

In Sunderland the level of school attendance has improved in line with the National trend over the past five years, however, Sunderland remains in the bottom 25% of Local Authorities nationally for primary and secondary school attendance. Promoting school attendance is considered a high priority in the City's drive to raise attainment and the Local Authority has been proactive in managing pupil attendance. There are many examples of good practice in Sunderland including working with individual schools, the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP), the National Strategy and the Every Schoolday Counts Project. In 2006 926 primary aged pupils achieved 100% attendance, almost a 10% increase since 2002.

Sunderland City Council aspires to achieve higher educational standards and it is equally ambitious in its drive to improve attendance levels in schools. It is recognised that for the City to achieve this, it will need to be more focused, require a higher level of partnership working with schools and be even more innovative in its collective approach to attendance management.

The link between attainment and attendance is very clear and can be seen in a recent Government study whereby only 31.3% of those pupils with over 20 days absence achieve 5 or more GCSEs (Grade A*-C). The Government has a new policy for improving school attendance by targeting persistent absentees, those pupils who have missed 20% or more of the school year. To meet the Government's expectations and to achieve the Sunderland Schools' and Children's Services aspirations on improved attendance, this Attendance Strategy will need to be targeted at key issues and have clear priorities for those areas which have greatest impact. It will also, however, need to be flexible in order to respond to changes in policy and local needs.

This Attendance Strategy is targeted at a wide audience including parents, pupils, schools and other professionals working with young people. It has been produced within the framework of Sunderland's Children and Young Peoples Plan, in which it features as a key priority and is closely referenced within The Standards Service Plan. It also contributes to the City's Respect Action Plan. The Strategy is a result of a collaboration of key stakeholders, including schools that came together in the Attendance Strategy Development Group. This Group will continue to oversee the implementation, impact and review of the Strategy.

3. Vision

Sunderland has a very positive approach to meeting its statutory responsibility to ensure that children attend school. It recognises the need for a renewed strategic approach to enable further progress. This strategic approach is founded on the belief that every child and young person in Sunderland should understand the importance of school attendance and take that understanding with them as they become the parents of the future. This emphasis on early intervention and the innovation and creativity in Sunderland's approach to promote the benefits of

regular attendance through Every Schoolday Counts, targeted support to schools and strong partnership working, is recognised nationally. This Attendance Strategy represents the strong commitment of Sunderland Children's Services, schools and other partners to work collectively to improve attendance and thereby raise attainment.

The vision of this Attendance Strategy is to improve school attendance across all phases, to prioritise early intervention, to put in place targeted support where it is most needed, to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential and to ensure that no schools are in a persistent absence category.

To achieve this vision, the Children's Services will work in partnership with schools, partner agencies, parents/carers and pupils. Schools play a key role in ensuring that all pupils attend. There is a strong link between the climate for learning within a school and rates of attendance and achievement. When the learning experience is engaging, enjoyable, appropriately challenging and supportive, when it takes place within a calm and safe environment, then pupils are more likely to achieve through higher levels of attendance. A school with a positive climate for learning will have a direct impact on the standards of attainment and achievement where behaviours are conducive to effective teaching and learning. Clearly then, the life chances of all pupils will be affected by their levels of attendance and by the behaviours that take place in the classroom.

To secure a positive climate for learning, the Children's Services will support schools in promoting behaviours that will impact upon attendance. Utilising the resources from the Behaviour and Attendance strand of the Secondary National Strategy, it will work with schools in the following way:

- Support school leaders to establish consistent and effective policy and practice
- Provide guidance, training and support to increase schools' confidence in the management of behaviour and attendance
- Offer appropriate support to schools to help pupils learn positive behaviours and the habits of regular attendance
- Promote planning, teaching and school routines and procedures that support good learning, constructive behaviour and regular attendance
- Ensure all pupils are motivated to attend school, and are supported to fully engage in their learning
- Encourage the sharing of good practice across schools to promote effective strategies to improve behaviour and attendance for learning
- Facilitate half termly Lead Behaviour Professionals Network meetings
- Support schools in identifying vulnerable groups at risk of failing to achieve because of poor attendance
- Raise whole school awareness of attendance by promoting the following activities: attendance conferences, assemblies, letters for pupils and parents/carers, classroom display materials, use of rewards

- Develop strategies using Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) materials to support a healthy emotional climate for learning and KS2/3 transition
- Support schools with the completion of the Secondary National Strategy school reporting framework and the development of attendance action plans

The Secondary National Strategy consultant for Behaviour and Attendance, together with support from the Regional Advisor will play a key role in the above in order to promote positive behaviour and regular attendance through improvements in teaching and learning. Initially this will take place with senior leadership teams in schools, who will be trained to lead developments with the whole-school staff.

However, whilst the Children's Services will always endeavour to support schools, parents and pupils and to work in partnership, where progress is not being made, it will use its legal powers to carry out its statutory responsibility.

4. Current Position

“Regular attendance and punctuality are key building blocks to maximising achievement and developing opportunities in adulthood” (DfES). A simple message but one that needs reinforcing, especially to parents and carers. The rate of overall absence from schools is falling nationally but unauthorised absence is not. Every day around 450,000 pupils in state maintained schools in England miss school. The National Audit Office calculates that the waste in resources of overall absence nationally is £1.6 billion per year. Further, the Audit Commission estimates that at least 10% of these absent pupils (approximately 45,000 a day) are truanting or being kept off school by their parents without schools' authorisation. The national picture is reflected in Sunderland.

The attendance rates in Sunderland have decreased from 93.09% in 2004/05 to 92.77% in 2005/06 for combined primary, secondary and special school attendance. This represents a 0.32% point decrease in attendance.

% Attendance								Direction of travel (2005 to 2006 trend)	Rate of improvement 2000 - 2006
All schools	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006		
Sunderland	92.60	92.20	92.20	92.59	92.84	93.09	92.77	▼	+0.17
National	93.15	92.73	92.98	93.17	93.43	93.56	93.32	▼	+0.17
Difference	-0.55	-0.53	-0.78	-0.58	-0.59	-0.47	-0.55		+0.00

Source: DfES SRF 35/2006 Pupil Absence in Schools in England 2005/06 (provisional)

- Nationally, attendance has decreased from 93.56% in 2004/05 to 93.32% in 2005/06
- However school attendance in Sunderland has increased by 0.17% points during the period of 1999/2000 to 2005/06 and is in line with the national rate of improvement during the same period

The general picture in 2005/06 is that primary school attendance in Sunderland has decreased from 94.61% to 93.93% and secondary school attendance has

increased from 91.56% to 91.57%. Authorised absence in primary schools has increased to 5.78% in 2005/06 and in secondary schools it has increased to 7.45%. **(See Appendix 1 for 2005/6 school attendance figures)** For unauthorised absence it has increased to 0.29% in primary schools, and it has decreased to 0.98% in secondary schools during 2005/06. This Attendance Strategy is designed to improve on this position.

There has been a change in Government Policy in relation to monitoring attendance and there is now a greater focus on persistent absence. The pupil level absence data from the autumn and spring terms 2005/06 showed that nationally 7.8% of secondary pupils missed 20% or more of the school year. These pupils accounted for nearly one-third of absence and nearly two-thirds of unauthorised absence in secondary schools. 20% absence is a widely held threshold for action, recognising that such poor attendance has a huge impact on young people's attainment.

Sunderland has therefore been identified as a target authority, having six schools with both significant numbers and proportions of 'Persistent Absentees' - those pupils with 20% or more absence. This Attendance Strategy aims to work to remove the Local Authority and its schools from this category and to review its policies and practices to support this new approach to improve attendance in schools.

The work of the Attendance Strategy Development Group has identified a number of key issues, which will also be addressed through this Attendance Strategy. These include:

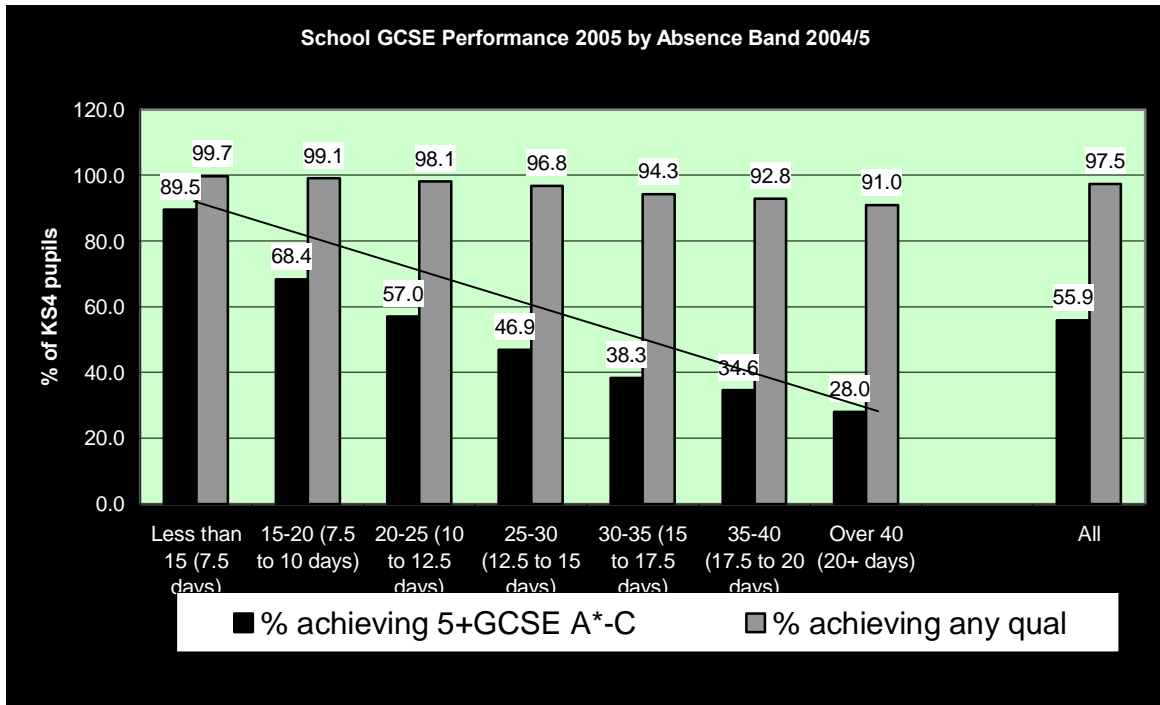
- Policies in relation to term time holidays
- Practice in relation to study leave (Please see **appendix 2** for guidance on Study Leave)
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Effective and efficient use of attendance data
- Guidance on DfES codes and clear interpretation
- The development and implementation of attendance policies
- Effective use of enforcement sanctions

5. Why Attendance Matters

The needs of individual pupils are central to this Attendance Strategy. This approach is consistent with Sunderland's Children and Young Peoples Plan and the importance of school attendance relates to each of the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes.

Pupils who do not attend school regularly, for example are much more likely than their peers to leave school with few or no qualifications. Nationally, only 8% of persistent truants achieve 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, and approximately 33% achieve no passes. Thus, absence has a significant impact on the life chances of those who have lost schooling: in a real sense missing schools is missing out.

Children with frequent absence are therefore not likely to 'enjoy and achieve' at school.



For schools, absence makes it more difficult to achieve their attainment targets and tends to depress overall attainment in the City. Many of those absent from school are not persistent truants but even a short period of absence can disrupt a pupil's learning and puts unnecessary additional pressure on pupils themselves and staff in school.

Parents/carers often do not know about their children's absence or indeed where they are. This may leave children open to being in situations that may put them at risk and children's safety is paramount.

Pupils who do not attend school regularly are more likely to be drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour. Truancy is a serious waste of resources and impacts negatively on the wider community. The Youth Justice Board's research shows that two thirds of truants admit to having committed a crime within the previous 12 months, many whilst truanting. Having children in school and attending regularly contributes to their potential to 'make a positive contribution'.

The profile of attendance is significant within the OFSTED Inspection Framework. The Government is clear through its National Strategy that attendance is a high priority alongside literacy and numeracy. Attendance now features highly in Ofsted school inspections and within the Children's Services Joint Area Review.

Parentally condoned absence is an area that needs to be addressed and the Strategy will raise the profile of the importance of attendance and its link to achievement.

Attendance does matter, because of the impact on the individual pupil's performance at school and life long opportunities, the current ECM policy framework, the role of parents and the performance of the Children's Services and its schools. This Attendance Strategy recognises that to improve on attendance levels in Sunderland it will be necessary to establish a collaborative partnership with a high level of joint working between all partners who clearly understand each others role and are all signed up to the principle of continuous improvement in attendance.

The Sunderland Children and Young Peoples Plan can be found on:
<http://www.sunderlandchildrenstrust.org.uk/content/cypp%20final.pdf>

6. Persistent Absence in Schools

On 2 November 2006 the Minister of State for Schools and 14-19 Learners wrote to the Local Authority highlighting a change of focus for work around attendance for 2006-07 and beyond. That letter refers to the fact that in the first two terms of the last academic year, 7.8% of students nationally (225,000 in total) missed 20% or more of their schooling – and these "persistent absentees" accounted for nearly a third of all absence and nearly two thirds of all unauthorised absence in secondary schools. This new way forward reflects a change from the focus on general unauthorised absence towards this group of pupils with high overall absences, which the Minister of State for Schools considers are: "unlikely to attain well at school, unlikely to stay on in education after the age of 16, and significantly more likely to engage in self-harming activities and anti-social behaviour".

As a result, the schools identified as priority schools for 2006/07 were those secondary schools with the highest numbers of "persistent absentees" in 2005/06 where these also represent a significant proportion of the school population, and targeted authorities are those with five or more such schools. As Sunderland has 6 such schools that fall into the Persistent Absence Category, the DfES is now asking Children's Services to take the lead on helping these schools reduce the number of persistent absentee pupils, and to integrate this work into the wider programme of work on improving outcomes for Children and Young People. Children's Services needs to focus relentlessly on reducing the size of this group as part of the drive to reduce school absence. Some pupils will be absent for genuine reasons such as serious or chronic illness or because they have suffered an injury, which makes regular attendance at school impossible. There is little schools or Children's Services can do about their absence. However, others will be persistent truants and some will be those whose parents condone their absence, or who take regular term time holidays or extended trips abroad, or some combination of all of these. Identified Persistent Absence schools are required to produce half termly data reports for the Local Authority/DfES.

Using the data gathered, the DfES has suggested that each school will then be able to take the following action:

- Identify which pupils make up their Persistent Absentees and assess each case, recognising that some pupils may have a chronic or serious illness or injury and take appropriate action
- Identify pupils meeting the Persistent Absentee criteria who have high levels of unauthorised absence or a mixture of unauthorised and authorised absence
- Identify pupils who meet the Persistent Absentee criteria where there is a reason to doubt the justification for their authorised absence
- Establish, with an allocated Attendance Development Officer, a focused case-management process for each of these pupils:
 - Focusing on the type and pattern of absence, and reasons for it
 - Agreeing an action plan to improve attendance with pupils and their parents
 - Identifying appropriate additional resources (e.g. learning mentor, 1:1 catch-up sessions, alternative provision, etc)
 - Regularly monitoring these pupils' attendance and progress against their action plan
- Establish a whole-school action plan for tackling persistent absence that commits all staff, the senior management team and governors to improving the attendance of persistent absentees and to reduce their numbers. This plan should include a growth of school interventions that act as preventative measures and should be agreed and regularly reviewed with School Improvement Partners

Although the DfES focus is on reducing the numbers of pupils who are persistent absentees, or at risk of becoming persistent absentees in the particular targeted schools, the Attendance Team is currently using the Persistent Absence framework with all secondary schools and considering how to identify similar pupils in primary schools in order to ensure that good practice in this area can be more widely implemented. Attendance figures can demonstrate how schools are improving through the number of pupils who are accessing schools more regularly and the subsequent improved attainment at whole school level. This new focus on targeted groups of pupils has presented Children's Services with an opportunity to review and re-focus its Attendance Strategy to meet the challenges of the new Persistent Absence Agenda. Equally, schools can involve their whole school staff and school Governors to work with Children's Services and each other, to look at how preventative work can be used more consistently to reduce pupil absence from school.

7. Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership

This Attendance Strategy has been brought together through the work of the Attendance Strategy Development Group with representatives from the Children's Services, primary and secondary schools, National Strategy Consultants and the

BIP. Whilst Children's Services has a statutory responsibility for attendance, progress on attendance levels cannot be achieved without schools and other partner agencies playing an active role in the delivery of actions towards key priorities. The DfES maintains that attendance is foremost a school based issue. It is self-evident that the major responsibility lies with schools. They have the primary responsibility for improving attendance. However; the support of other agencies and the community is vital if regular school attendance is to be successfully promoted and improved.

In the transition to Children's Services the former Inclusion Team has been re-aligned to the Extended Services and Attendance Group within the Standards Service, to enable integration into multi agency locality based teams. The new Attendance Team has adopted the following mission statement to reflect its new role:

The Attendance Team will work in partnership to ensure a positive and flexible service in order to improve attendance and enable schools to support every child to achieve their maximum potential. The Team will challenge poor attendance and also enforce legal sanctions.

It is important to be clear on the roles and responsibilities of the Children's Services, key partners and schools in managing attendance in Sunderland and these are set out in detail in **Appendix 3**.

In summary, the key roles of the Children's Services and Schools are as follows:

Sunderland Children's Services - Attendance Support

- To have a Sunderland Attendance Strategy approved and monitored by the Children's Services Review Committee
- To have an Attendance Leader to provide strategic direction on attendance to report progress to the Children's Trust, DfES and Children's Services Leadership Team
- To have an Attendance Development Manager to lead a team of professional Attendance Development Officers to advise and support schools, parents and pupils on school attendance. This support will be determined for each school using an agreed formula based on need
- To provide timely, quality data on attendance performance to schools to enable and improve monitoring
- Ensure that attendance is featured in the work of the School Improvement Service in supporting schools
- To integrate the work of the Attendance Team with the priorities of the Primary and Secondary National Strategy
- To have an Attendance Enforcement Manager to lead a team of Attendance Enforcement Officers to carry out statutory responsibilities and to use legal powers to improve attendance

- To have in place clear guidance on non-attendance procedures (**see Appendix 4**)
- To support targeted Persistent Absence (PA) schools and other schools on the development of innovative interventions and to focus support on individual pupils, particularly those from vulnerable groups including, looked after children
- To actively promote the benefits of school attendance, support schools in celebrating success and in sharing good practice

Schools

- To maintain attendance registers as required by law and to use DfES statutory codes (from 1 September 2006), more information can be found on:
 - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation>
 - <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance/uploads/Absence%20Data-Absence%20and%20Attendance%20Codes%20May2007.doc>
 - <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance/uploads/Legislation-Keeping%20Pupil%20Registers%20FEB07.doc>
- To analyse attendance data for patterns and trends and use the information to inform policy, procedures and activity;
- To set and monitor challenging targets, which will ensure that overall attendance is at or before the DfES target median (for their Free School Meal Quintile) by 2008;
- To have a comprehensive Attendance Policy which details attendance procedures and the actions the school will take in the event of a pupil's attendance becoming problematic. The Policy should include details of:
 - When the school will 'authorise' absence
 - The school's attitude towards holidays in term-time
 - The school's policy on attendance and punctuality
 - Rewards for good attendance and sanctions for truancy or unauthorised absence
 - Criteria for referral to the Attendance Team
 - Communications with parents/carers
- To have a Governor with responsibility for attendance matters, a member of the Senior Management Team with responsibility for attendance matters and clearly set out roles and responsibilities of all staff
- To ensure that the school's ethos encourages pupils to want to attend school and achieve. This ethos should be represented within the schools self-evaluation and in departmental development plans. The Attendance Policy should cross-reference to, as a minimum, the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, Race Equality Policy, Curriculum Policy and Behaviour Policy

- To keep up-to-date with the latest evidence on effective practice to support attendance, e.g. the use of first day of absence calling (including automated systems), the use of parenting contracts, etc.
- Report on termly attendance to the Governing body (primary and secondary phase schools only, annual basis for special schools)
- Report on attendance to the DfES as part of the termly census and further reporting required for persistent absence schools (primary and secondary phase schools only, annual basis for special schools)
- Schools play a key role in ensuring that lessons are sufficiently engaging and they have extra activities to challenge, attract and encourage all pupils to attend regularly and on time (**See Appendix 3**)

8. Factors Affecting Attendance

There are many complex factors that influence levels of school attendance. The Attendance Strategy Development Group has identified these factors, which relate to the findings of the National Audit Office.

Home	School	Pupil
Parental attitudes	Relevance of the curriculum	Genuine illness (and medical appointments)
Holidays in term time	Quality of teaching	Behavioural problems
Other leave (e.g. religious observance)	Management of behaviour	Learning difficulties
Family problems	Poor school-parent relationships	Personal problems
Young people with caring responsibilities	Expectations not consistently reinforced	Influence of friends
Difficulties in getting to and from school	Profile of attendance issues	Disaffection
Poor relationships within the home	Poor relationships with staff	Poor relationships with other pupils - Bullying

The actions and priorities in this Attendance Strategy need to address these factors alongside the key issues identified earlier in this document together with the performance expectations of the Government through the Persistent Absence agenda.

9. Actions and Priorities

This Strategy specifies actions to which the Children's Services is committed and which match the aspirations and intentions of its many partners. The annual review

of the Strategy will show how successfully the actions have been and also the impact on the service users.

The key actions, which will feature in the Action Plan that accompanies this strategy, will include:

- Improved support for schools' own management of attendance
- Targeted support for all schools in greatest need
- Earlier intervention
- Full and effective use of legal powers
- Efficient and effective use of data. The City to be equipped to conduct its own study in relation to attendance and attainment and circulate the findings to inform schools and others and also motivate pupils/parents/carers
- Improved communication and Information by enhancing internal and external communications and develop strategic marketing campaigns, especially in the secondary sector
- Sharing Good Practice. Sunderland has so much to celebrate in terms of good practice taking place in schools, funded projects and statutory services

There are a number of priorities that underpin this Strategy. For 2007/2012 they are:

With schools:

- Prioritise support for attendance with those schools that are at risk/or who are identified as a 'persistent absence school'
- Bring Sunderland's attendance figures up to the level of the highest performing statistical neighbours and beyond
- Focus particularly on schools where data shows that attendance falls below trajectory towards the 2008 targets
- Investigate ways to help schools to improve attendance to bring them up to national norms and beyond
- Raise the profile of attendance in schools by joint working between the Attendance Team, Secondary National Strategy, Head Teachers and the School Improvement Service
- Support schools in order to develop a climate for learning that encourages pupils to behave appropriately and attend regularly

With Service development:

- Provide a service framework which ensures continuous improvement in the work of the Attendance Team
- Enable the Attendance Team to centrally analyse attendance data drawn from schools' recording systems (new ICT developments to include the purchase and implementation of B2B, a new data transfer module for EMS) Develop multi-agency working in order to support improvement in attendance across the City

- Establish a quality framework to ensure that the Attendance Team respond quicker to its users' needs in respect of attendance
- Enhance ICT systems to allow the data analysis to take place
- Assist schools in the analysis of results and dissemination of this data citywide for parents/governors as well as user-friendly versions for children
- Ensure attendance records are marked consistently across all schools and quality assurance checks take place
- Develop a Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Develop a Press Strategy
- Develop a Sponsorship Strategy
- Establish an attendance toolbox of good practice to include case studies and model policies

10. Sunderland Targets for Attendance

Under regulations that came into force in 2005, schools and their governors are required to agree school annual attendance targets. These are agreed by the Children's Services and reported to DfES. These requirements have been introduced as a result of the DfES central government PSA (Public Service Agreement) targets for school attendance: "To reduce the 2002/03 level of school absence by 8% by 2007/08". Sunderland is on course to meet the PSA target.

The Attendance Team uses the annual attendance returns from the DfES to allocate its staffing resources to schools, by prioritising time to those schools whose progress towards meeting their targets suggests that they have greatest need of support. The quintile framework therefore acts as the basis for Attendance Team resource allocations. Inevitably this can mean that resources are shifted from one school to another. As far as possible efforts are made to minimise the transfer of Attendance staff between schools, but some movement is inevitable.

Following the submission of pupil-level data in the autumn and spring terms 2005/06, the focus for the Government initiative changed as the data showed that nationally 7.8% of secondary pupils missed 20% or more of the school year. These pupils accounted for nearly 33% of absence and nearly 66% of unauthorised absence in secondary schools. 20% absence is a widely-held threshold for action, recognising that such poor attendance has a huge impact on young people's attainment as fore mentioned. Primary schools were not required to submit pupil level data until this current academic year therefore there are no figures available.

As a result of school census data from the autumn and spring terms 2005/06, Sunderland was identified as a target authority, having six schools with both significant numbers and proportions of 'persistent absentees' - those pupils with 20% or more absence. This reflects a change from the focus on unauthorised absence towards this group of pupils with Persistent Absence that are "unlikely to attain well at school, unlikely to stay on in education after the age of 16, and significantly more likely to engage in self-harming activities and anti-social behaviour."

The new standardised codes for schools on attendance came into force in September 2006 and will allow more consistent categorisation of reasons for absence, but will also allow attendance data to be collected at pupil level and by code. As this data becomes available, pupil level data will be used to review whether support is being allocated appropriately to those pupils with the greatest need. Research undertaken in some authorities has indicated that there is a likely reduction in attendance levels consequential to the change to the new codes. Research will be undertaken to determine which schools will be at greatest risk in this respect so greater support can be provided.

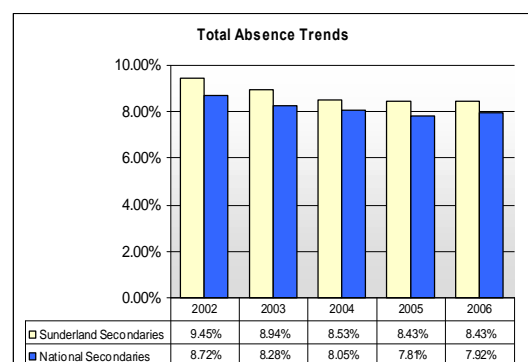
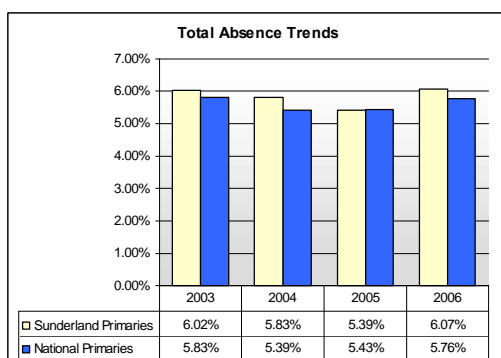
In addition the new Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations also came into force in September 2006, which govern the admissions and attendance registers that all schools must keep. Once again, it is anticipated that there will be impact of future attendance statistics.

Guidance has been issued to all schools in relation to the new standardised codes and registration regulations and the Attendance Team will continue to work with schools and attendance leaders to embed these new procedures.

Absence Targets				
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Primary Schools	5.39	5.36	5.33	5.30
Secondary Schools	8.43	8.40	8.37	8.34
Special Schools	10.07	9.29	9.22	9.15

Trajectory to meet the new Government PSA Target to reduce total absences by 8% on those achieved in 2002/3:				
	Actual 2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
	6.88	6.95	6.89	6.80
This is a combination of both Primary and Secondary Schools Total Absences				

Sunderland has set challenging absence targets for 2006/07 and 2007/08 in primary, secondary and special schools.



- Primary phase absence in Sunderland has increased from 5.39% in 2005 to 6.07% in 2006; there have been some good news stories in schools involved in the Every School Day Counts programme (Appendix 1 – Section 5 Intervention Programmes)
- 27 of the 84 primary phase schools (32%) met their school target in 2006
- Secondary school absence in Sunderland has remained at 8.43% and is above the national average of 7.92%
- 6 of the 18 secondary schools (33%) met their school target in 2006
- 3 of the 7 special schools (43%) met their school target in 2006

11. National study and recommendations for attendance improvement

Quality Control

The Audit Commission, which reported on attendance in 2004 after a national study, made recommendations aimed at attendance improvement. The Audit Commission's report featured a number of recommendations, which would support Local Authorities' ability to evaluate their provision of support on attendance.

The following recommendations are as follows:

- There is a clear strategy to improve attendance
- Good use is made of data
- The Local Authority helps effectively to develop schools' capacity to manage attendance
- There are well-managed support services
- The Local Authority works effectively with other services and agencies to improve attendance
- The Attendance Team has appropriate and defined roles and resources
- There is a good understanding of school attendance among all stakeholders
- The Local Authority uses the above framework as the basis of Quality Control processes to evaluate its performance in supporting attendance

Within the Local Authority, responsibility for reviewing and amending the annual Attendance Strategy document is delegated to the Lead Officer: Attendance.

Reporting Mechanism

The Children's Services Leadership Team will receive 6 monthly progress reports on trends and the Children's Services Review Committee will receive an annual report on the extent to which the actions outlined in this Strategy have been carried out and evidence its impact.

12. New ICT Developments to support Strategy 2007-2012

As part of Children's Services strategy for system and data integration it is essential that further ICT system development is undertaken. One of the key areas identified is the collection, tracking, analysing and reporting of pupil and school attendance.

As part of the approach towards system and data integration within attendance management it will be necessary to purchase the Business to Business software (B2B) student software interface, web server and the implementation of the Attendance EMS module. This will enable Children's Services staff to collect, track and monitor individual pupil level attendance data; to identify attendance patterns; to identify child at risk who are not attending school; to support the promoting school attendance strategy (**see Appendix 5**).

Benefits will include:

- Pupil level attendance information will be made available on a daily/weekly basis
- Ability to see day-by-day attendance by pupil over time (without attendance staff having to visit schools)
- Attendance Officers will be able to report on attendance across a family regardless of the schools attended
- Attendance Officers will be able to report on length, frequency and type of absence by pupil, school and Children's Services
- Appropriate alerts could be set up to highlight when a pupil's absence reaches a particular level so pupils at risk of persistent non-attendance can be identified earlier
- Enables attendance information to be reported with reference to attainment, exclusion, SEN status at school and pupil level
- Allows the attendance of looked after children to be available daily/weekly to the Children's Services without contacting schools
- Appropriate alerts could be set up to highlight the absence of a looked after child
- To support the Children's Services and schools targeted by the DfES as a school with Persistent Absence
- It will enable the Children's Services to identify those schools at risk of becoming Persistent Absence schools before they are placed within the Persistence Absence category
- To support the Every School Day Counts initiative in being able to track individual pupil attendance more effectively

13. Attendance Strategy Action Plan

- An Attendance Strategy Action Plan is currently being developed to support this Attendance Strategy. The Action Plan will be based upon a "needs assessment" with key actions / activities and milestones focussing on

improving attendance and impact. It is envisaged that the draft Action Plan be made available to all key stakeholders in Autumn 2007

- The Attendance Strategy will be an integral part of the CYPP, Standards Service plan as well as the Attendance Team plan
- The main priorities within the Attendance Strategy are set out in an Action Plan (**please see Appendix 6**).