

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

KILMARNOCK CENTRAL LOCAL COMMITTEE – 9 MAY 2005

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS AND TRUANCY

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise members of the levels of exclusion from schools within the Kilmarnock Central area, the action being undertaken to manage exclusions and the anti-truancy initiatives.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The legal responsibility for securing children's attendance at school rests with the parents under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended.
- 2.2 There has been an anti-truancy initiative funded by the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund (BNSF) until 31 March 2006. This involved children thought to be potential truants being identified, questioned and returned to schools by police officers as appropriate. This initiative has been operating in the Kilmarnock area for two years.

Leisure Development has also operated a 10 week pilot project based on the Galleon Centre designed to combat truancy. This involved approximately 20 pupils for a 2 hour period once a week that had been identified as persistent truants and alternative activities being provided through the Galleon Centre.

- 2.3 The educational service is particularly concerned to ensure that school exclusion is only used as a sanction of last resort, while at the same time ensuring that learning can take place in a suitably ordered atmosphere. Reports on this matter have been regularly considered by the education committee. A clear and approved strategy exists under the "Pathways to Inclusion", which is supported by procedural guidelines within standard circulars to schools.

3 ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The BNSF Anti-Truancy initiative operated by the Police has been successful in identifying truants and returning these pupils to school. When a truant is returned to the school, the school will retain the pupil and either return him/her to normal classes or to specialist support as appropriate.

The anti-truancy project based on the Galleon Centre has been very successful in dealing with those pupils identified as persistent truants. This has allowed these pupils to undertake significant achievements and to be prepared for re-integration into school.

- 3.3** The parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring that their child attends school. When a child does not attend school, the parent/guardian is required to provide a reason for non-attendance. Failure to do so can result in this being recorded as an unauthorised absence. Given the recent incidents concerning the abuse of children, the Education Committee agreed a paper on Pupil Registration in all establishments at its meeting on 08 November 2005. Subsequently, new procedures have been instigated within all educational establishments for the registration of pupils and dealing with non-attendance. A letter was issued to each parent/guardian reminding them of their responsibilities and the need to contact the school when their child is absent.
- 3.4** The Education Committee received reports on 22 March 2005 and 13 September 2005 regarding exclusions in 2003/04 and 2004/05 respectively. These papers outlined the exclusion statistics and the action being undertaken to manage exclusions.

The majority of the increase in exclusions in 2003/04 had occurred in the secondary sector. An action is in place to assist with the management of this matter.

No consolidated figures are yet available for 2005/06.

However the numbers of openings lost in 2004/05 has been significantly reduced by 22% compared to 2003/04, which indicates that pupils are not being excluded for lengthy periods of time but only as a matter of necessity. There is also a 14% reduction on the exclusion rate.

The statistics continue to be monitored on a monthly basis by the Head Teachers and senior officers of this department

4 ACTION UNDERTAKEN

- 4.1** All Head Teachers have been reminded of the need to ensure full attendance by pupils and of the need to deal with truancy. The anti-truancy initiatives have contributed to action in this matter. All schools in the Kilmarnock area are aware of, and participate in, these initiatives.

- 4.2** All secondary schools have been asked to report on the reasons for the rise in exclusions. Following these reports, each secondary school submitted an action plan to deal with issues related to exclusion. These plans were monitored by the Pathways to Inclusion group and suggestions for action provided to each school.

Each secondary school was asked to update their action plan for 2005/06. These plans were considered by the Pathways to Inclusion group and are being monitored throughout this session.

- 4.3** Monitoring of exclusions from each school took place on a monthly basis in 2004/05 and this has continued into this session.
- 4.4** The seminar for staff in educational and social services and partner organisations on Effective Support Strategies (including dealing with behaviour and exclusions) took place in February 2006. This was part of the ongoing support strategy for schools on these matters.
- 4.5** Support for young people is provided via Learning Partnership. The Learning Partnership draws upon services provided by Education, Social Work, Community Learning and Development, Leisure Development etc. Pupils who are truanting should be referred through the Learning Partnership to the school assessment team, community assessment team, etc system. Thus, targeted support should be provided where required.

5 POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Nil.

6 COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Activity in this area contributes significantly to promoting Community Safety.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** Nil.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members :

- (i) note the initiatives dealing with anti-truancy;
- (ii) note the action undertaken in dealing with exclusions; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

GRAHAM R SHORT
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
JMcC/MG
02 May 2006

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support, (01563-576126) or Sgt Donald McIntosh, Police Liaison Officer, (01563-576512).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Education Committee Paper – Guidelines for Pupil Registration in Schools and Children attending Nursery – 08 November 2005
2. Education Committee Paper – Exclusions 2003/04 – 22 March 2005
3. Education Committee Paper – Exclusions 2004/05 – 13 September 2005

Implementation Officers: John McCarney & Donald McIntosh