

## PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

## Lifelong Learning Committee

28 January 2015

**Review of the Effectiveness of the Revised Attendance Recording,  
Management Guidance and Operational Procedures**

**Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures were approved by the Lifelong Learning Committee (Report 13/386 refers) and issued to schools in August 2013. The revision took account of the principles outlined in the national report *Included, Engaged and Involved* and also the changes that were required in order to further clarify the required actions that schools should take to ensure a more robust and consistent approach to attendance issues. In line with the 'Getting It Right for Every Child' approach the intention is to support schools with early identification and effective intervention where attendance at school is noted as a concern.

This report is intended to update colleagues regarding the effectiveness of these procedures within schools following evidence gathered from a range of sources including Perth and Kinross Council Internal Audit Committee.

All schools are required to closely monitor the attendance of all children and young people who are enrolled on the school register. Further to school based monitoring the statistics are monitored quarterly by Early Years and Primary and the Secondary and Inclusion management teams with attendance for Looked After Children being reviewed monthly.

Over the last academic session attendance in both primary and secondary schools has improved.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 'Included Engaged and Involved' Part 1: Attendance in Scottish Schools (The Scottish Government, 2007) provided guidance about what schools and local authorities can do to promote attendance and manage absence. Ultimately the aim is to ensure that pupils are included, engaged and involved in their education, wherever that education may be provided. The guidance goes further than the recording of attendance and absence and explores many of the circumstances which may lead to young people becoming disengaged from learning. Further, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and the implementation of key aspects of Getting it Right for Every Child, aims to ensure that all children get timely help and support and the targeted interventions for vulnerable children and young people support them to make informed choices, leading to better outcomes.

- 1.2 A revised policy for Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures was approved by Lifelong Learning Committee in June 2013 (Report 13/386 refers). Perth & Kinross Council is committed to working in partnership with parents, children and other stakeholders to ensure that, wherever possible, all children enrolled in our schools receive an education that offers the opportunity for children to maximise their potential. In working towards this, Perth & Kinross Council Education & Children's Services' expects all schools to closely monitor the attendance of all children and young people. It is the responsibility of all staff in schools, and our support services, to work with pupils and their families to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Attendance and absences are recorded per half-day session within primary schools, while secondary schools record attendance by period.
- 1.3 We know that for some young people life presents particular challenges which will distract from learning. Schools are moving towards a more flexible curriculum to meet the needs of all learners and help overcome barriers to their learning. Non-attendance may be an indicator of issues or difficulties a child or young person is experiencing within and outside school. We also know that the impact of non-attendance at school, and non-engagement with learning, significantly increases the likelihood of young people leaving school and not going on to further education, employment or training. Schools take into consideration the individual circumstances for each child and/or family, and look for ways to overcome or lessen the challenges thus always aiming to 'Get It Right for Every Child'. Where there are genuine reasons for absence, the Authority works with partners through a multi agency approach to ensure that the child or young person's education is provided by means other than attendance at school (eg in the case of children whose health prevents them from leaving their home/attending regularly).
- 1.4 Attendance at school is clearly linked to schools' overall approaches to promoting positive behaviour and to providing guidance and pastoral care. Both are underpinned by the development of positive relationships and resilience in whole school communities.
- 1.5 Since the revised policy was launched in session 2012–13, it has been promoted at key events such as Headteacher development days, Depute Headteacher/Principal Teacher days, Headteacher Executive Group meetings and a number of associated training events.
- 1.6 The BMIP target for attendance in schools is currently 91% in secondary schools and 96% in primary schools. Perth and Kinross schools consistently meet and exceed this target in secondary schools, and is improving in primary schools. Appendix 1 shows that from session 2012-13 to 2013-14, primary schools have increased attendance from 95.3% to 95.7% and secondary schools have increased attendance from 92.4% to 92.5%.
- 1.7 To ensure that the procedures in place are adequate to monitor and manage school attendance, internal auditors visited 5 schools: Kinross High School; Perth Academy; Oakbank Primary School; Portmoak Primary School; and Blackford Primary School in June 2014. Appendix 2 shows the detailed results of this audit.

1.8 In addition, 4 schools were selected for detailed discussion regarding their use of the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures. They were Breadalbane Academy (All through), Baigowrie High School, Perth High School and St John's Academy (All through). One Primary School (Pitcairn) provided additional information.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

2.1 In order to assess the effectiveness of the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures evidence was gathered in a number of different ways:

- Statistical analysis – as indicated above and referenced in Appendix 1;
- Findings from the Internal audit carried out in June 2014 (Appendix 2);
- Evaluations of training sessions;
- Feedback from Headteacher development days;
- Discussions with DHT (Support) Secondary;
- Electronic survey issued to all schools;
- In-depth discussion with two secondary and two 'all through' schools.

2.2 In the period since August 2013, all 4 Headteachers who were selected for detailed discussions had been regularly involved in the close monitoring of the accuracy of class registrations and had identified a number of improvement areas including:

- The potential complication of registration in PE;
- Small groups brought together by Guidance/Support/Youth workers;
- Music Instructors who see pupils for short periods of time;
- Registration by supply teachers;
- Concerns over the impact of a referral to the Attendance Sub Committee with regard to future attendance, compared to the risk of damaging a hard-won relationship with the family.

2.3 The detailed discussions with the 4 schools resulted in the following information:

- 3 of the schools had reviewed their own policies in the light of the updated guidance and re-launched them;
- 2 of the schools had produced executive summaries of the document;
- All 4 schools reported a 'tightening' of procedures. Attendance discrepancies were viewed regularly, in some instances daily, by SMT and teachers who had not registered classes were contacted; and
- A significant amount of In-Service training had been committed to the understanding and use of the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures.

2.4 The Internal Auditors report is summarised in Appendix 2. It shows :

- approved and up to date procedures reflecting the current requirements and practices for the effective monitoring and management of school attendance were adhered to by the schools visited;
- schools were actively encouraging good attendance;
- unexplained absences and continued non-attendance was dealt with in accordance with approved procedures;
- a greater emphasis being placed on the cause of absences;
- there was evidence to demonstrate that parents are provided with comprehensive up to date guidance and information with regards to their responsibility to inform schools of absenteeism; and
- management information produced regarding the monitoring of school attendance was adequate, made available to the relevant staff/committee and subsequently acted on accordingly.

2.5 The revised policy required relevant training for staff. Two training sessions were offered during session 2013 -14 when a total of 64 staff attended. This included representatives from 17 Primary schools, all secondary schools and both specialist provisions (Allstars and Navigate).

2.6 The evaluations from this training indicate that staff:

- felt that their roles and responsibilities with regard to recording of attendance had been clarified;
- now feel more confident about recording attendance and absence;
- are more confident in the use of part time timetables as an intervention aimed at supporting school attendance (although previously monitored by schools independently developments in SEEMIS have allowed greater scrutiny and central monitoring);
- will review some of their internal procedures; and
- are aware of the need to act early to try to prevent long term attendance issues.

2.7 Further feedback from Headteachers and Depute Headteachers indicates an in-depth knowledge and application of the procedures. Notes regarding potential improvements, both in the writing of and interpretation of the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures, are indicated in the Proposals section which follows.

2.8 Schools indicate they are content with the flow chart explaining which route to follow, and those who responded to a recent survey indicate that they have referred more children to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration last session than to the Attendance Sub Committee.

### **3. PROPOSALS**

3.1 The main proposals for further improvement in levels of attendance across all schools are as follows:

- Reproduce the operational procedures with additional flow charts and sector specific guidance;
- Further consideration to the registration of irregular groups such as those brought together by the Support faculty, Music Instructors within SEEMIS;
- Consistent practice to be established across schools with regard to follow up calls when absence is noted (Groupcall);
- Advice to be sought through the Curriculum Improvement Network (CIN) for Physical Education to ensure a consistent approach to recording attendance when in Physical Education classes across all secondary schools is established;
- Training in the use of the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures to be part of Headteacher Induction Programme within Perth and Kinross Council; and
- Continued monitoring of attendance across all schools with appropriate, timely actions being taken where issues are noted.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Overall, the evidence gathered during the compilation of this report would indicate that schools are aware of the importance of having robust procedures in place with regard to monitoring attendance and absence from school, and suggest that the revised Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures document is being implemented effectively, but requires some further minor modification and improvement
- 4.2 All schools in Perth and Kinross Council monitor the attendance of children and young people within their establishments, and almost all have effective systems in place for following up non-attendance.
- 4.3 The consistent use of these procedures and robust monitoring processes in place will assist the Authority in its Getting it Right approach and can lead to the early identification of vulnerability and children, young people and families who need prompt support, advice and guidance. The current review of the impact of Integrated Teams in schools, along with the increasing emphasis on Getting it Right For Every Child will provide further frameworks in which to monitor and impact on attendance of children and young people in education.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Notes the review and subsequent updating of update of Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures;
- (ii) Approves the proposals identified in section 3; and
- (iii) Instructs the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to provide a further report on the effectiveness of the Guidance by no later than February 2016.

**Author(s)**

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**Approved**

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John Fyffe	Executive Director	12 January 2015

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	None
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	Yes
External	None
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	Yes

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The proposals relate to Perth and Kinross Community plan by contributing to the creation of safe, healthy and inclusive communities. We will target resources to promote social inclusion, improving the quality of life for our most disadvantaged areas and closing the gap between the most affluent and most disadvantaged. The emphasis remains on improving attendance at school.

#### Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan 2013-2018 set out five strategic objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens.

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Inclusion and Equality

## 2. Resource Implications

### Financial

2.1 There are no expected financial implications arising from this report.

### Workforce

2.2 There are no expected work force implications arising from this report.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no expected asset management implications arising from this report.

There are no expected information technology implications arising from this report.

## 3. Assessments

### Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

The matters presented in this report were considered and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

### Risk

- 3.3 The key risks associated with the proposals in this report are to young people and families not engaging with education and educational services.

### Legal and Governance

- 3.4 Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures fully comply with the requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

- 4.1 In reviewing and updating the effectiveness of the Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures June staff from primary and secondary schools have been consulted together with the Service Manager Business Services and the teachers side of the JNCT.

### External

- 4.2 Consultation has not extended outwith the Council in the development of the proposals and the preparation of the report.

## **5. Communication**

- 5.1 In order to implement the proposals, information will be shared with schools with Head Teachers, Depute Head Teachers and Principal Teachers through development days and awareness raising sessions. The further revised guidance will also be published electronically on the Council website.

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix 1 School attendance

Appendix 2 Improvement actions

## Appendix 1

The table below indicates the number of schools reporting increased, equal or decreased attendance during the equivalent monitoring periods in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014

	<b>Number of schools reporting increased attendance</b>	<b>Number of schools reporting equal attendance</b>	<b>Number of schools reporting decreased attendance</b>	<b>Change from beginning of period to end (%)</b>
<b>Primary Schools</b>				
Term 1	27	2	44	96.6 → 96.3
Term 1 and 2	35	5	33	95.9 → 95.9
Term 1, 2 and 3	49	1	23	95.2 → 95.7
Full year	55	1	17	<b>95.3 → 95.7</b>
<b>Secondary schools</b>				
Term 1	5	0	5	93.4 → 93.3
Term 1 and 2	4	0	6	92.5 → 92.7
Term 1, 2 and 3	5	1	4	92.0 → 92.6
Full year	5	0	5	<b>92.4 → 92.5</b>

Source: SEEMIS, September 2014

## Appendix 2

Improvement actions identified during the internal audit and progress to date are detailed below:

	<b>Improvement Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1	Improve the adequacy of arrangements for recording period by period attendance in secondary schools	All schools were reminded of the need for this to happen. Each school is responsible for ensuring adequacy of the arrangements. In some schools where registration is not completed by a staff member they are invited to attend for a meeting with the Headteacher.
2	Improving the reliability of the SEEMIS attendance recording system	<p>The SEEMIS organisation has undergone a major organisational change over the last 12-18 months and a number of projects are being progressed which will improve the resilience and availability of the SEEMIS service which is now in use in all of Scotland's local authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of the SEEMIS infrastructure has been replaced.</li> <li>• There is an on-going project to improve disaster recovery and resilience.</li> <li>• The timing of the deployment of major system changes to schools has been reviewed and revised. Major system changes are now being deployed on a Friday after the end of the school day with SEEMIS staff available over the weekend to address any immediate issues and carry out local authority level testing. This will significantly reduce the likelihood that the SEEMIS service is impacted by the deployment of system changes.</li> </ul>

3	Audit testing revealed that SEEMIS is subject to intermittent failures and there is no uniform alternative process in place	Most schools operate a paper based system when SEEMIS is not available. SEEMIS is then updated at the earliest opportunity.
4	There is scope to improve the adequacy of arrangements in place for recording the attendance of children and young people attending pupil support and physical education in secondary schools.	Schools have developed their own methods of recording young people's attendance when not in a class based activity. Advice will be sought through the Curriculum Improvement Network (CIN) for Physical Education to ascertain if a consistent approach across all secondary schools can be established.
5	There is scope for improving some areas of the guidance; e.g. the logical flow of the documented process to be followed in the event of pupil non-attendance.	The document will be re-worked taking into account different sector priorities.