

Education Welfare Service

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EWS/EWO/PW

Wednesday, 08 July 2015

Dear Parents/Carers

Changes to the government criteria for identifying Persistent Absence

In line with the views of the majority of parents, the Department for Education acknowledges that high levels of school attendance are essential in ensuring that pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education. The clear focus on reducing absence from schools has now resulted in the highest levels of school attendance since 2006/07 with the national percentage absence rate reducing by approximately one third over this time-frame.

Overall attendance in Devon averaged 95.7% last year, which was an all-time high for Devon's schools and which was above both the South West and National averages. However a small but significant group of pupils still account for a disproportionate number of absences (approximately 3.6% of all pupils still account for nearly 20% of all absences).

Department for Education research has identified a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Of pupils who miss more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent manage to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including Maths and English, whereas 73 per cent of pupils who have over 95 per cent attendance achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C.

In order to improve the focus on children with the lowest attendance rates, the Department of Education has informed us that as from September 2015, schools and local authorities must consider pupils to be "Persistently Absent" if their attendance drops below 90%. Parents of children who are, or are likely to become Persistently Absent, with some of the absences recorded as unauthorised should expect to be challenged by the school and/or by the Education Welfare Service. In such cases, there is a very real risk of formal parental responsibility measures being instigated by the Local Authority.

It is hoped that by bringing this change to the attention of parents/carers now, formal actions as mentioned above may be avoided.

Yours faithfully



Peter Walker

Professional Lead for School Attendance