



Report to the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Title:	Elective Home Education and Rates of Absenteeism in Buckinghamshire Schools.
Committee date:	22 nd April 2014
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Report signed off by Cabinet Member:	Mike Appleyard – Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Electoral divisions affected:	All

Purpose of Agenda Item

This report is to give an overview and review of elective home school education in Buckinghamshire, and of the rates of absenteeism in Buckinghamshire schools, identified groups of high absenteeism, identified schools with high rates of absenteeism, and the strategies in place to support schools in reducing absenteeism.

Summary

This report is compiled of two parts – Elective Home Education (EHE) and school absenteeism.

Elective Home Education

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used by the Department of Education to describe parents' decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of



sending them to school. This is different to home tuition provided by a local authority or education provided by a local authority other than at school. It should be noted that parents do not have to register or seek approval from the LA to educate their child at home and we have no powers to enter a home to monitor the education they are delivering. However the LA is tasked with intervening if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education.

The BCC EHE Service supports EHE families and other professionals in the following manner

- Maintain a register and data base of all EHE children and young people registered with Buckinghamshire, where known. (There are approximately 300+ children and young people registered as Electively Home Educated in Bucks, March 2014).
- Provide EHE guidance and advice to all stake holders via telephone consultations, meetings and website. The website sets out the legal position, roles and responsibilities of both the LA and parents.
- BCC offers a home visit to assess planning and offer advice and guidance to every family that we are aware of. Review meetings are then scheduled according to need.
- Signpost parents to resources which might support their duties to provide education for their children, for example, websites, exam centres, and extra-curricular programmes.
- Request that Parents/Carers who refuse a visit to provide a report and work samples. (However they may refuse to do that too. Existing Section 437 powers to issue a school attendance order may be used if it has not been possible to collect suitable evidence and there are concerns the family are not providing an efficient education).
- BCC have not issued a school attendance order and prefer to work inclusively and transparently with parents / carers / services to seek the best outcomes for the child. We still retain the right to issue a school attendance order if all other avenues have failed.
- Where there are welfare, education or safeguarding concerns use the consultant's report to inform/involve other services as appropriate. Colleagues with specialist knowledge may be asked to assist the EHE consultant in the assessment process.
- Contribute to procedures when a family with a child who has a statement of special educational needs expresses a desire to go EHE.
- Work closely with FE Colleges to ensure guidance is followed and EHE Learners have access to college courses.
- Contribute to the national debate on all matters concerning EHE. We recently attended an All Party working group looking at establishing a national body of EHE Officers.
- Support families in finding a school place where they have expressed a desire to return to mainstream education.

School absenteeism

Monitoring school attendance and reducing absence is increasingly the responsibility of schools following revised guidance issued by the Department for Education in March 2013, reinforced by the Ofsted inspection framework.

The Local authority takes action when schools alert the Education Welfare Service that attendance has fallen for specific children. This action takes the form of support and challenge and may culminate in prosecution of the parents.

The current volume of prosecutions has been significantly reduced by the new way of working through Family Resilience and the Families First Approach. In the academic year 2011-12 there were 55 prosecutions and in 2012-13 there were 56. In the current unfinished academic year there have been 11 prosecutions to date, all but one of which predated the launch of the Family Resilience Service in April 2013.

Additionally, the Local Authority provides a Traded Education Welfare Service which delivers attendance support to academies and other schools up to the point of statutory intervention.

From 1 April 2014 Penalty notices can be issued by the Local Authority to parents where there has been persistent absence and 32 of these have been requested by schools as at the end of the spring term.

Department for Education statistics show that Buckinghamshire schools attendance has been:

2011/2012

Primary 96.0%

Secondary 93.9%

2012/2013

Primary 95.7%

Secondary 94.1%

Data is not currently available for 2013/2014.

Resource implications

The delivery described in this paper is currently resourced through existing budgets.

Next steps

Both services will be continually monitored to ensure the LA is meeting its' statutory responsibilities.