Report of the Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel

What are the potential links between crime and disorder and absence from school?

June 2009

Panel Membership

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SOUTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL

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Chair's Foreword

An average of 1,960 pupils are absent from Southampton's schools each day. Southampton has the highest absence rate for schools in the South East of England. The city has high rates of youth offending and reoffending compared to our statistical neighbours. In light of these facts, the Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel was asked to conduct an inquiry to investigate whether there is a potential link between crime and disorder and school absence.

The link between truancy and crime and disorder has been well researched, nationally 41% of young offenders were regular truants. Prisoners are ten times more likely to have been persistent truants. However, locally there has been no clear evidence that pupils who are absent from school are committing crimes within school hours. A sample of 243 children, all with attendance of below 80%, found that only 67 (27.5%) were arrested for committing offences during term time. In fact only 13 (5%) of the 243 young people surveyed were arrested for offences committed during school hours. It is clear that while there is a link nationally between school absence and crime and disorder, locally, the number of young people committing offences while absent from school is lower than imagined.

The broad nature of the terms of reference for the Panel meant that there were areas the panel did not investigate further, for example a link between absence from school and children in care. The Panel feel though that the attached report provides a snapshot of school absence within Southampton and believes that by implementing a few simple recommendations it will help to raise school attendance within the city. It is clear that through raising attendance, attainment can also be raised; national statistics show that a reduction of 2% in attendance can lead to a drop of 1 grade at GCSE.

Key recommendations from the Panel are that we need to strengthen multi agency co-operation and the sharing of information from various stakeholders. The Panel recognise that the situation in Southampton is improving and that there are several schemes currently being funded that cannot be fully assessed at this stage. Educational Welfare Officers, School Nurses, Youth Offending and the Police all have their role to play and the panel feel that by working closely together, and in clusters (around a secondary school with feeder primary schools) that real results can be achieved.

I would like to thank council officers, the Wessex Youth Offending Team, Hampshire Constabulary, schools and our regional advisor, Colin Logan for their evidence and assistance. I would also like to thank my fellow Panel members for their insights and commitment. The Panel would also like to place on record their deep thanks to Kerry Randle, Lead Officer for Inclusion for her commitment and invaluable knowledge and support.

Councillor Neil Fitzgerald
Chair, Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel

Executive Summary

1. Absence from school is a major issue for Southampton. On average 1,960 pupils were absent from school every day in Southampton in 2007/08 and Southampton had an overall absence rate for primary and local authority maintained secondary schools of 7.41% in 2007/08, this is the highest in the south east of England against a national average of 6.22%. Due to having an average persistent absence level above 7% within local authority maintained secondary schools, Southampton is identified as being a persistent absence authority and has been placed in intensive support, the highest of 3 levels of support designated by the Government.

2. Southampton also has high rates of youth offending with the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and re-offending rates high in comparison to statistically comparable cities in England. In recognition of this, Southampton is one of 60 cities targeted for the Government's Youth Crime Action Plan initiative and related funding.

3. In recognition of the issues identified above, at its meeting on 4th December 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee agreed the terms of reference for a scrutiny inquiry to investigate the potential links between crime and disorder and absence from school, and requested that the Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel conduct the inquiry and report back their findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. The full terms of reference for the inquiry, approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, are shown in Appendix 1.

4. The approved objectives of the inquiry are:

    - To identify the trends of absence and exclusion from Southampton City Council schools
    - To identify the causes / reasons for absence and exclusion
    - To identify if a link exists between school absenteeism and levels of crime and disorder
    - To identify the impact of any crime and disorder incidents committed by children who are excluded or are truant from school
    - To identify whether there is a link between children excluded from school, entry into the criminal justice system, and their longer-term economic and social well-being.
    - To identify the action being taken to reduce levels of school absenteeism within Southampton and the effectiveness of these methods
    - To compare Southampton City Council's performance on absence and operation practices with other local authorities
    - To highlight examples of good practice

5. To ensure that the Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel could meet the set objectives five evidence gathering meetings were arranged. The outline project plan shown in Appendix 2 identifies the structure of each of the evidence gathering sessions.

Consultation

6.   The Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel received evidence from a wide variety of organisations across the five evidence gathering meetings. This included Hampshire Constabulary, local schools, and the Department for Children's Schools and Families (DCSF). In addition members of the Scrutiny Panel spoke with a number of young people to develop their understanding of the issues. Evidence received was both oral and written. A list of witnesses that provided evidence to the inquiry is detailed in Appendix 3.

Acknowledgements

7.   Members of the Safer Communities Scrutiny Panel would like to thank all those who have assisted with the development of this review. In particular Kerry Randle, Southampton City Council's Operational Lead Officer for Inclusion, Children Services and Learning Directorate, who has been an invaluable source of information and knowledge throughout the inquiry.

Findings – Links between crime and disorder and absence from school

8.   The analysis undertaken for the scrutiny inquiry assumes that the information base used by the Panel is representative of the population of young people who are persistently absent from school in Southampton. This enabled a number of general conclusions regarding the links between crime and disorder and absence from school:

- Nationally there is a clear link between absence from school and crime and disorder, but locally there has been no clear evidence that pupils who are absent from school are committing crimes within school hours.

- While in Southampton a number of offences are being committed by young people of school age, during school hours, the majority of young people who are persistently absent from school do not offend. However young people who are persistently absent from school are more likely to be arrested for committing offences than the general 10-17 year old cohort. Significantly, most of the offences are committed outside of school hours.

- Persistent absence from school is a risk factor that is linked to a greater tendency to commit crime. There are however, many other factors may also be linked to the tendency to commit crime for example 65% of children with parents in prison go on to offend.[1]

Findings – Links between absence from school and other outcomes for young people

9.   Information presented to the Scrutiny Panel enabled the following conclusions to be reached:

- Absence from school is associated with poorer outcomes for young people. Nationally, statistics identify that a reduction of only 2% in students'

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[1] Reaching Out: Progress on Social Exclusion, Cabinet Office, Feb 2007

attendance can lead to a drop of 1 grade in GCSE.

- By reducing school absence, it follows that Southampton will be in a stronger position to make progress in a range of outcomes for children and young people.

Findings – Reducing absence from school

10. The Scrutiny Panel have arrived at the following findings regarding the issue of absence from schools in Southampton:

- Southampton's schools, with the support of Southampton City Council and partners, are making good progress in tackling levels of absence at primary and secondary schools and those responsible for the improvements should be congratulated on their excellent work. Absence levels are however, still too high.

- Schools within Southampton have demonstrated that through good leadership and management, high quality teaching and a flexible curriculum, schools can significantly improve attendance levels.

- All schools in Southampton are actively engaged in the drive to improve school attendance levels. Identified best practice in reducing school absence is being applied across Southampton and there are numerous innovative approaches being developed and applied to improve school attendance levels.

- The importance of providing holistic support to pupils through the role of the Education Welfare Officers during school hours and other support outside the school highlighted throughout the inquiry. The need to join up different types of support was also emphasised.

- Southampton's school attendance data is considered robust by the DCSF and experience from other local authorities has identified that there is often a lag between initiatives being implemented within schools and a reduction in levels of school absence.

- If best practice is applied **consistently** across Southampton's schools, focus on attendance is maintained, and the **culture** of supporting school attendance is further developed across the city then the Scrutiny Panel believe that absence levels will continue to decrease bringing attendance levels in line with, and potentially beyond, Southampton's statistical neighbours by 2011.

Recommendations

11. **To improve the consistency of practice in reducing school absence across Southampton it is recommended that**:–

1. Budgets and priorities be reviewed to seek to develop the support available from Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) to schools within

Southampton. This review should investigate potential funding streams from schools, partner agencies and voluntary organisations to develop EWO support with the aim of ensuring that there is a full time equivalent EWO to support each school cluster group.

2. Southampton's Children and Young People's Trust prioritises the commissioning of long term, city-wide support and resources for initiatives currently funded through the 5-13 Years Strategy Group Plan that can demonstrate to have improved school attendance through promoting school enjoyment. The schemes particularly focus on primary to secondary transition and activity over their 'transition' summer holiday.

3. Southampton City Council promotes good practice, such as 'hook days' at the start of term, within all schools, and encourages the development of common attendance policies and practices within geographical school cluster groups

4. Education Welfare Officers, school nurses and, where applicable, the police officers that are being deployed through the developing Safer School Partnerships work closely within the cluster groups to promote a joined up approach.

5. Southampton City Council promotes ways of aiding the transition from primary school to secondary school, especially for vulnerable children from families with complex needs. For example, introducing a primary school structure at Year 7, with the pupils staying with the same teacher at the secondary school in Year 7.

6. Southampton City Council works in partnership with Oasis Academy Mayfield and Oasis Academy Lord's Hill to share attendance data and good practice relating to reducing absence from school, and provides the Academies with a Toolkit to tackle this issue.

7. The Scrutiny Panel would welcome Hampshire Constabulary and the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team developing the analysis on offences committed during school hours further to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the number of young people of school age committing offences during school hours, and their situation regarding educational provision.

12. **To develop the culture of supporting school attendance across Southampton it is recommended that:-**

8. Southampton City Council leads a publicity campaign to change public attitudes to school non-attendance and that the campaign concludes in a City Council ceremony rewarding school attendance. This should include working with all communities to strongly discourage holidays during term time.

9. Southampton City Council works with retailers in Southampton to encourage shopping centre staff to question young people who are shopping during school hours and promote the displaying of 'truancy

aware' stickers in shops.

10. Hampshire Constabulary make combating absence from school a higher priority within Southampton and demonstrates this commitment by supporting education led truancy sweeps in conjunction with other service providers.

Findings – Addressing the causes of absence

13. The Scrutiny Panel have arrived at the following findings with regards to the issue of addressing the causes of school absence:

- The Scrutiny Panel understands that school absence is often an outcome derived from other factors impacting on a young person. The Scrutiny Panel recognise that by developing and applying fundamental elements of school attendance management such as establishing an attendance leader in each school, recording and monitoring data accurately, applying a consistent approach to the use of legal sanctions and developing a culture that reinforces the message that attending school is not optional will significantly reduce levels of absence in schools. However, progress in tackling some absence, particularly persistent absence, often requires a greater focus on supporting the individual, and family, by identifying the reasons behind their absence from school and identifying mechanisms to address them.

- The inquiry has been informed of good practice in Southampton where the school culture focuses on student wellbeing, building a relationship with individual pupils and parents, reducing bullying, monitoring the young persons development and intervening, where necessary, to offer appropriate and timely support, often through external providers. This intervention may be triggered off by absence from school or issues such as behavioural problems within the school. **Good practice must be shared with all schools in the city**.

- Within Southampton there exist numerous initiatives that seek to address the identified needs of young people and where necessary their families. These initiatives include parenting support and diversionary activities for young people. The inquiry has highlighted the importance of multi-agency working, working with parents as well as young people, and identified the issue of **co-ordinating** services effectively as being an area where improvements need to be made.

- National studies have identified that patterns of absence can be formed early in a pupils education and absence tends to increase over time if the causes are not resolved. The Scrutiny Panel identified that the **earlier support and intervention** is provided to the young person the greater the likelihood that the issue will not escalate.

- The Scrutiny Panel were informed of the developments being introduced within Southampton to help improve the co-ordination of services to support young people and their families, and to help ensure that best practice is shared across schools in Southampton. It is anticipated that if the creation

of Integrated Children and Youth Support Services, multi-agency locality teams, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Safer Schools Partnerships, and the Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships are employed effectively, targeting high risk groups such as persistent absentees, then it will have a positive impact on the city and Southampton will be in a strong position to make progress in a range of outcomes for children and young people.

Recommendations

14. **To assist the early intervention and co-ordination of support for children and young people who need additional assistance to fulfil their potential it is recommended that:-**

11. Good practice for identifying and supporting children and young people with additional needs, who are often known to other agencies, at an early stage is shared with all schools in Southampton to help schools meet **their** pupils' additional needs. This includes good practice relating to:-
    a. Limiting the effect of a large school on vulnerable students
    b. Developing supportive relationships with parents, especially those from vulnerable families
    c. Providing proactive support and pastoral care for children under stress following bereavement or family breakdown. There are voluntary organisations working within some schools in the city currently delivering this support.
    d. Early multi-agency working.

12. The Children Services and Learning Directorate continues to work with schools to ensure that anti-bullying strategies are being effectively implemented within schools in Southampton, as detailed in the Children's and Young People's Action Plan, and that outcomes are measured.

13. The timely sharing of data between schools, the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team, Safer Communities Team and Hampshire Constabulary is improved to help target intervention more effectively.

14. The practice of working with the parents of pupils who are persistently absent from school is embedded, and that initiatives that are being delivered to support parenting and families are co-ordinated with adult services, such as debt advice and drug and alcohol support services, to ensure that issues affecting parents' ability to support their children are addressed alongside the needs of the young person.

15. Information on supporting parenting forms part of Southampton City Council's Attendance Strategy.

16. The impact of the following initiatives be monitored to ensure that best practice is being applied and outcomes are improved in the city:-
    - Integrated Children and Youth Support Services
    - Developing multi-agency locality teams
    - Common Assessment Framework
    - Developing Safer Schools Partnerships
    - Emerging Behaviour and Attendance Partnership's

Full Report

Introduction

15.   Absence from school is a major issue for Southampton. On average 1,960 pupils were absent from school every day in Southampton in 2007/08 and Southampton had an overall absence rate for primary and local authority maintained secondary schools of 7.41% in 2007/08, this is the highest in the south east of England, compared to the national average of 6.22%.

16.   Southampton also has high rates of youth offending with the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and re-offending rates are high in comparison to statistically comparable cities in England. In recognition of this, Southampton is one of 60 cities targeted for the Government's Youth Crime Action Plan initiative and related funding.

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Background to School Attendance – National

Legal Requirement

22.   All children of compulsory school age should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents/guardians/carers have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

23.   Schools have a duty to promote regular attendance but responsibility for monitoring this and any enforcement action in response to unauthorised absence from school lies with the local authority.

Absence levels and categorising absence

24.   In 2007/08 the overall level of absence for primary and local authority maintained secondary schools in England was 6.22%, this equates to an average of nearly 12 days off school a year, per pupil. Overall absence was higher at secondary schools (7.34%) than primary schools (5.26%).[2] In addition, and on a positive note, overall school attendance for primary schools is currently at its highest recorded level.

25.   Overall absence includes both authorised and unauthorised absence. Authorised absence is absence that is authorised by the school. Illness is generally the largest cause of authorised absence and absence through fixed term exclusion is included in this category.

26.   Unauthorised absence is absence without the school's permission. This category includes truancy, late arrival at school after the registers have closed, no reason provided by the parent and taking an unauthorised family holiday.

27.   Historically, the easiest way for a school to reduce its level of unauthorised absence was to authorise it. To address this, and in recognition of the fact that in 2007 just 7% of pupils in maintained secondary schools accounted for 32% of all absence and 62% of unauthorised absence in those schools[3], the Government introduced an additional category for monitoring school attendance, Persistent Absence (PA).

28.   Pupils are defined as being persistently absent (PA) if they are absent from school, either authorised or unauthorised, for more than 20% of the school year, this equates to more than 38 days off school over a full school year. The average percentage of persistent absentees in 2007/08 for local authority maintained secondary schools in England was 5.6%.

National targets

29.   In recognition that school attendance is linked to the five key outcomes under Every Child Matters (Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution, Achieving Economic Well-being) the

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[2] National Attendance Statistics data obtained through the DCSF
[3] The Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures, DCSF, 2007, p107

Government has set targets for schools and local authorities to increase school attendance and to reduce the level of persistent absence.

30.   The Children's and Young People's Plan 2009/12 states that:

'*Our aim is to reduce the level of persistent absence by at least a third from 2005/06 levels, so that by 2011 no local authority will have more than five per cent of its secondary pupils as persistent absentees.*'[4]

31.   To help achieve reductions in school absence levels the Government requires all maintained schools to set an annual target to improve overall attendance and priority schools, where persistent absence levels are currently (2007/08 figures) above 7% of the pupil population, continue to be identified and supported.

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[4] The Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures, DCSF, 2007, p107

Background to School Attendance – Southampton

32. In 2007/08 the overall level of absence for primary and local authority maintained secondary schools in Southampton was 7.41%, this equates to an average of over 14 days off school per year, per pupil. The overall level of absence for local authority maintained secondary schools was 9.23% in Southampton, for primary schools it was 6.02% and the percentage of persistent absentees (PA) in local authority maintained secondary schools was 8.43% against a national figure of 5.6%. Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, on pages 15 to 17 show how Southampton compares with statistical and regional neighbours.

33. Due to having an average persistent absence level above 7% within local authority maintained secondary schools Southampton is identified as being a persistent absence authority and has been placed in intensive support, the highest of 3 levels of support designated by the Government. Currently 38 local authorities are in this category in England.

34. Overall attendance is improving within Southampton and primary school attendance levels are at there highest level since data collecting began. However, 9 out of the 10 local authority maintained secondary schools in the city are currently classified as being PA schools and this number is set to rise as the Government reduces the threshold for PA schools from 7% to 6% in 2009/10. Figure 6 shows the levels of absence at each of the local authority maintained secondary schools in Southampton. The figures show that in 2007/08 every local authority maintained secondary school in Southampton had overall absence levels higher than the average across England.

35. Attendance data for the two academies in Southampton, Oasis Academy Mayfield and Oasis Academy Lord's Hill, will not be included in the local authority data and the academies are not required to report their data to Southampton City Council. Academies attendance data is reported directly to the DCSF.

Ofsted Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Southampton City Council (APA)

36. The 2008 Children's APA identified high rates of absences from primary and secondary schools as being an area of weakness in need of improvement.[5]

Strategies and Targets

37. Southampton City Council recognises the need to improve school attendance levels and has made improving attendance at school a priority. The Children and Young People's Plan 2009 -2012 recognises that:

'*Progress on attendance at school is generally positive but mixed. There has been an improvement in children's attendance at primary schools and overall attendance of children at secondary school has improved, but there is still a long way to go to meet national averages. Across the city levels of persistent absence remain high.*'[6]

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[5] Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people in Southampton City Council 2008, Ofsted, December 2008, p5
[6] Southampton Children and Young People's Plan – 2009 -2012, p28

38. The Children and Young People's Plan also includes the following statement relating to what the Children and Young People's Trust want to achieve:

- '*Markedly improved attendance and active engagement of children and young people in their learning*'.[7]

39. **Figure 1 – Total School Absence**

Local Authority, Region and England	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Southampton	7.45	7.75	7.69	8.09	7.41
South East	-	-	6.48	6.29	6.14
Statistical Neighbours	7.35	7.21	7.34	7.01	6.69
England	6.68	6.53	6.76	6.43	6.22

Total School Absence – authorised and unauthorised
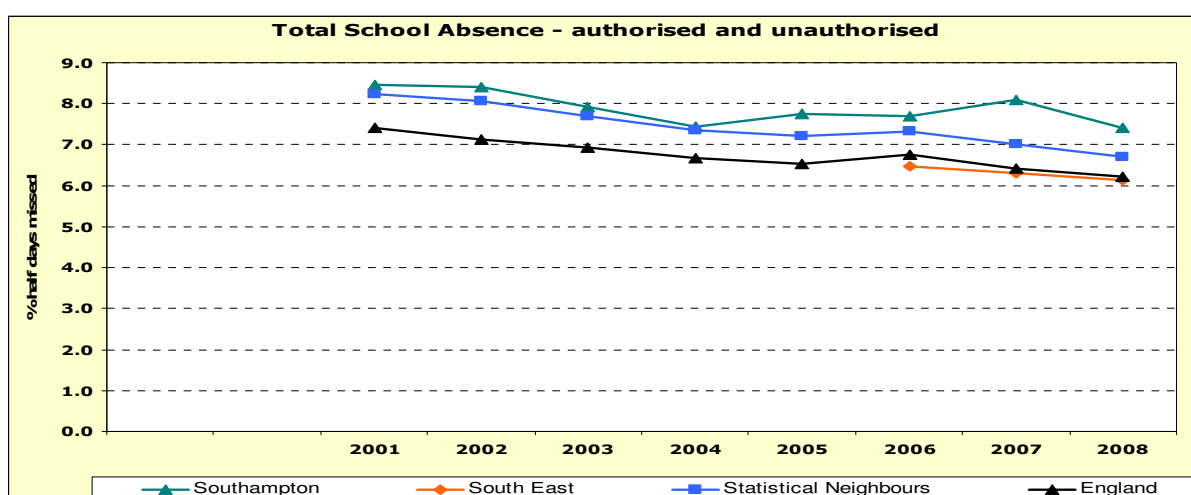
40. **Figure 2 – Total Absence for Local Authority Maintained Secondary Schools**

Local Authority, Region and England	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Southampton	8.86	9.24	8.96	10.30	9.23
South East	7.79	7.64	7.72	7.82	7.43
Statistical Neighbours	9.26	9.02	8.84	8.77	8.05
England	8.06	7.81	7.92	7.86	7.34

Total absence from Secondary Schools – authorised and unauthorised

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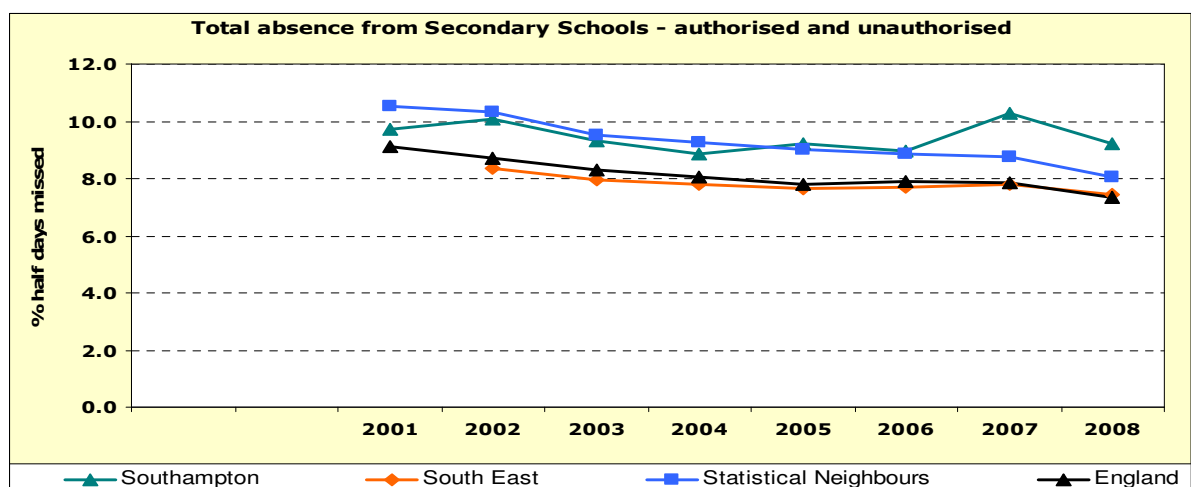
[7] Southampton Children and Young People's Plan – 2009 -2012, p29

41. **Figure 3 – Total Absence for Primary Schools**

Local Authority, Region and England	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Southampton	6.24	6.48	6.63	6.26	6.02
South East	5.17	5.24	5.42	4.97	5.05
Statistical Neighbours	5.83	5.74	6.11	5.58	5.63
England	5.49	5.43	5.76	5.18	5.26
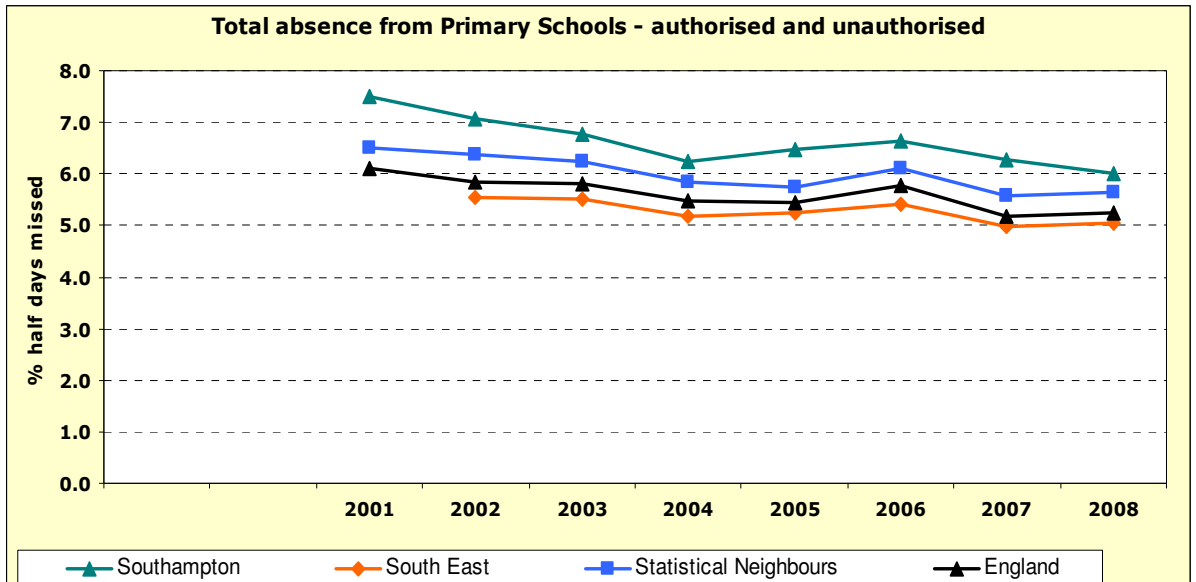
42. **Figure 4 – Secondary Schools Persistent Absence Rates**

Local Authority, Region and England	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Southampton	9.80	11.70	8.43
South East	6.70	6.40	5.60
Statistical Neighbours	9.78	8.38	6.71
England	7.10	6.70	5.58

17
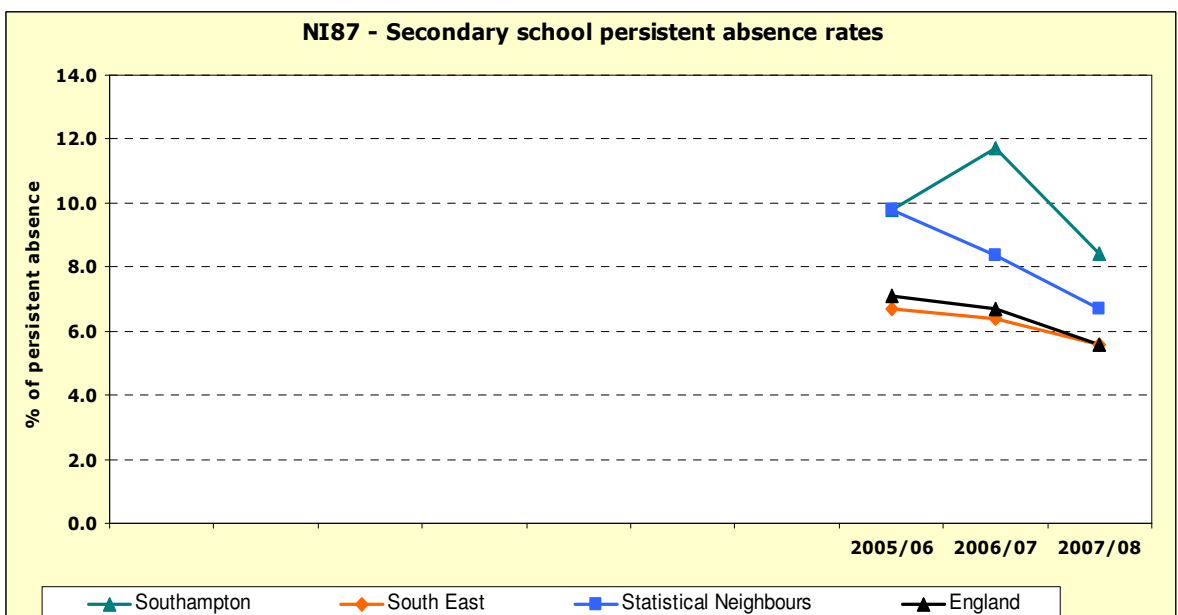
43. **Figure 5 – Overall Absence and PA Rates for Statistical neighbours 2007/08**

	Primary Schools		LA Maintained Secondary Schools		Primary and LA Maintained Secondary Schools	
	Overall absence	Percentage of Persistent Absentees	Overall absence	Percentage of Persistent Absentees	Overall absence	Percentage of Persistent Absentees
ENGLAND	**5.26**	**1.7**	**7.34**	**5.6**	**6.22**	**3.5**
Salford	5.70	2.0	7.96	5.6	6.65	3.5
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	6.08	2.4	10.28	11.3	8.03	6.6
Sheffield	5.59	2.4	7.78	6.8	6.56	4.3
Derby	5.36	1.9	7.30	6.2	6.23	3.8
Coventry	5.63	2.0	7.63	6.2	6.53	3.9
Telford & Wrekin	4.98	1.4	7.69	5.6	6.19	3.3
Peterborough	5.28	1.6	6.98	4.8	5.97	2.9
Portsmouth	5.98	2.8	9.00	8.6	7.34	5.4
Bristol, City of	6.21	2.4	8.65	7.1	7.06	4.1
Plymouth	5.50	1.4	7.26	4.9	6.37	3.1
Southampton	**6.02**	**2.6**	**9.23**	**8.4**	**7.41**	**5.2**

44. **Figure 6 – Absence at LA Maintained Secondary Schools in Southampton**

School	04/05 Total Absence	05/06 Total Absence	06/07 Total Absence	07/08 Total Absence	07/08 Persistent Absence
Bitterne Park School	7.60%	8.00%	7.80%	7.20%	7.00%
Cantell School	14.30%	12.30%	14.00%	12.30%	15.90%
Chamberlayne Park School	7.90%	8.20%	14.40%	10.00%	14.10%
Redbridge Community School	7.70%	9.70%	9.30%	8.70%	7.30%
Regents Park Community College	9.40%	9.10%	9.60%	7.80%	7.20%
St Anne's Catholic School	5.60%	6.40%	6.80%	7.40%	6.80%
St George Catholic College	8.50%	7.70%	9.70%	9.80%	10.00%
The Sholing Technology College	9.70%	8.40%	8.70%	7.70%	7.50%
Upper Shirley High School	9.50%	7.90%	10.00%	9.30%	9.10%
Woodlands Community College	8.30%	8.80%	9.20%	12.10%	16.60%

Background to Youth Offending – National

45. Each year around 100,000 young people aged 10-17 enter the criminal justice system for the first time in England[8]. This includes young people who have received a police reprimand, final warning or a conviction.

46. The Government has identified persistent offenders as being a problem nationally and it estimates that 5% of young people are responsible for over half of all youth crime[9].

47. The Government is committed to reducing youth crime and its stated aims include:

    - Cutting the number of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time by preventing youth offending;
    - Reducing re-offending by young people.[10]

48. To enable the Government to be held accountable by the public the Youth Crime Action Plan contains a target to reduce the number of first time entrants aged 10-17 entering the criminal justice system by one fifth by 2020.

    Statutory Responsibilities

49. Children and Young People's Trusts within each local authority area are responsible for the delivery of all the key priorities related to young people and offending.

50. Within each local authority area a Youth Offending Team has specific statutory duties to reduce offending and re-offending by children and young people within the geographical area.

51. Youth Offending Teams are multi-agency partnerships that include representatives from the police, probation, children's services (education and social services) and health. This partnership delivers statutory youth justice services and is monitored by the Youth Justice Board.

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[8] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p14
[9] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p4
[10] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p9

Background to Youth Offending – Southampton

52.   In 2007/08 there were 527 recorded first time entrants to the youth justice system in Southampton. This equates to a figure of 2,720 per 100,000 of the population aged between 10 and 17 in the city.

53.   The figures for re-offending by young people in Southampton show that in 2007/08 the number of offences per 100 young offenders over the year was 164.

Comparative Data

54.   Comparing Southampton's 2007/08 youth offending data with comparable cities in England reveals that both the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system and the re-offending rates in Southampton are high. This is shown in the table below.

55.

First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (per 100,000 of 10-17 population) in 2007/08[11]	Number of offences per 100 young offenders over the year in 2007/08
Southampton 2720 Bristol 2150 Plymouth 2390 Peterborough 1780 Sheffield 2170 Derby 2300 Nottingham 2810	Southampton 164 Bristol 197 Plymouth 118 Peterborough 151 Sheffield 109 Derby 89 Nottingham 164

Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment for Southampton in 2008

56.   The 2008 Children's APA states that:

'*first time entrants to the youth justice system has increased to a level higher than average*' and identified it as a weakness in need of improvement .'[12]

57.   Information presented to the Scrutiny Panel in February 2009 revealed that progress was being made in reducing the rate of first time offending in Southampton. Figures available for the first 3 quarters of 2008/09 indicated that the figure for Southampton in 2008/09 would be in the region of 1,680 per 100,000 of the 10-17 population. This represents a significant improvement on 2007/08 figures. Emerging data on re-offending for the first 3 quarters of 2008/09 showed that this figure is remaining static.

Strategies and Targets

58.   Reducing offending by children and young people is a priority for Southampton. Reducing first time entrants to the youth justice system (NI 111), and reducing re-offending (NI 19) are designated targets for the city contained within the Local Area Agreement.

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[11] Information presented by Steve Crocker, former Head of Wessex Youth Offending Service, to the Scrutiny Panel on 27 February 2008
[12] Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Southampton City Council 2008, Ofsted, December 2008

59.   The priorities in Southampton's Children and Young People's Plan 2009/12 includes:

'*many more of our children and young people will engage in positive activities and far fewer of them will be involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.*'[13]

60.   The Children and Young People's Trust Board and the Safe City Partnership have joint objectives and actions for reducing crime and disorder relating to children and young people that are included within the Children and Young People's Plan as well as the Safe City Partnership Plan. The actions will be jointly delivered by the 2 partnerships, led by the Children and Young People's Trust Board.

61.   In Southampton the Wessex Youth Offending Service, a partnership across 4 local authorities, delivers youth justice services within Southampton. The Wessex Youth Offending Service was judged to be performing excellently recently by a multi-agency inspection team led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

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[13] Southampton Children and Young People's Plan – 2009 -2012

What are the Links Between Crime and Disorder and Absence from School?

62.   Recognising that within Southampton there exist high levels of absence from school and youth offending, an objective for the scrutiny inquiry was to identify if a link exists between school absenteeism and levels of crime and disorder.

National Evidence

63.   A review of national research identifies that young people who are absent from school are more likely to be drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour.

64.   The 2003 Youth Survey, commissioned by the Youth Justice Board, revealed that nationally:
- 41% of young offenders were regular truants
- 27% of young offenders had previous permanent exclusions
- 60% of excluded children admitted to having carried out an offence, compared with 26% of the general 11-16 population.

65.   Research by the Social Exclusion Unit identified a longer term link between absence from school and crime and disorder:

- Prisoners are 10 times more likely to have been persistent truants
- 49% of males and 33% of females sentenced to prison had been excluded from school, compared to 2% of the general population.[14]

66.   In his 1999 book, 'Truancy and Schools', Professor Ken Reid put this link into context when he concluded that:

'The consequences of truancy are enormous. Consider a few simple facts. Forty per cent of all street problems in London, and a third of car thefts, 25 per cent of burglaries and 20 per cent of criminal damage were committed by 10-16 year olds in 1997 and were blamed on truants. Two thirds of young offenders begin their criminal activities whilst truanting.'[15]

67.   The Audit Commission's review of the Reformed Youth Justice System in 2004 included evidence that young people not attending school are also more likely to be victims of crime.[16]

Southampton

68.   The 2008 Strategic Assessment by the Southampton Safe City Partnership includes the following relevant information:

'Lack of commitment to school, including truancy, is linked to criminality and anti-social behaviour. Unauthorised absence is more likely to involve the student involved spending time unsupervised and with limited constructive activity which, it is inferred, can result in anti-social behaviour.'[17]

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[14] Reducing re-Offending by ex-prisoners, Social Exclusion Unit, July 2002
[15] Truancy and Schools, Professor Ken Reid, 1999
[16] Youth Justice 2004, A Review of the Reformed Youth Justice System, Audit Commission, Jan 2004
[17] Strategic Assessment 2008, Safer City Partnership, November 2008, p57

69.   The report then provides the following information expanding on the link:

'*Assessment of needs for offenders working with the Probation service in Southampton shows that 53% report difficulties with school attendance. This includes cases where the offender left school before the leaving age, truanted, failed to attend, was expelled, suspended or excluded.*'[18]

70.   Interestingly however, the Strategic Assessment concluded that:

'*There is currently no clear picture which shows any links between those young people who are engaged with various agencies for school absenteeism, truancy, exclusion and NEETs and offending behaviour. This relationship is not currently empirically shown in Southampton, despite large amounts of resources and young people being identified as a key issue underlying a significant proportion of crime and disorder in the city.*'[19]

71.   To help clarify the picture the Scrutiny Panel requested information from Wessex Youth Offending Service, Southampton City Council Safer Communities Team and Hampshire Constabulary. The following evidence was presented to the Scrutiny Panel in March 2009.

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)

72.   31 young people in Southampton who were at school in the city in March 2009 were on ABCs. 20 out of the 31(65%) had school attendance levels that classified them as being persistent absentees with school attendance levels below 80%.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)

73.   As at March 2009 there were 16 open juvenile ASBOs in Southampton. 10 of the 16 were above the age for compulsory education (16-18), and one was abroad. Therefore, 5 young people in Southampton who were at school in the city in March 2009 were on ASBOs. Two were persistent absentees while the others had attendance rates that were very close to the threshold of 80%. Their school attendance records were as follows: 43%, 79%, 79%, 81%, 0%.

Arrests during school hours

74.   In the first 3 weeks of March 2009, 28 young people of school age were arrested during school hours. If this is representative of a normal 3 week term time period it would equate to 355 young people of school age being arrested during school hours when extrapolated over an academic year. This is based on young people being required to attend school for 38 weeks over an academic year. The Scrutiny Panel would welcome Hampshire Constabulary and the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team developing this analysis further to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the number of young people of school age committing offences during school hours, and their situation regarding educational provision.

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[18] Strategic Assessment 2008, Safer City Partnership, November 2008, p58
[19] Strategic Assessment 2008, Safer City Partnership, November 2008, p61

Commissioned Analysis

75. The Scrutiny Panel commissioned additional analysis from Hampshire Constabulary and Southampton City Council's School Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST), to determine the link between **persistent absence** and crime and disorder in Southampton.

76. Analysis of the arrest records of a sample of 243 young people who were active referrals to SAST due to their poor attendance levels at school, below 80% threshold, revealed that:

   - 67 (27.5%) of the 243 young people were **arrested** for committing offences during term time during the 2007/08 academic year. This compares to an average arrest rate for the general 10-17 year old population of around 5% over a 12 month period.[20] However, 176 (72.5%) of the 243 young people were not committing offences.

   but only

   - 13 (5%) of the 243 young people were arrested for offences committed during school hours.

   The full Truancy vs Crime report is attached at in Appendix 4.

Findings

77. The analysis undertaken for the Scrutiny Inquiry assumes that the information base used by the Panel is representative of the population of young people who are persistently absent from school in Southampton. This enabled a number of general conclusions regarding the links between crime and disorder and absence from school:

   - Nationally, there is a clear link between absence from school and crime and disorder. But locally, there is no clear evidence that pupils who are absent from school are committing crimes during school hours.

   - While in Southampton a number of offences are being committed by young people of school age, during school hours, the majority of young people who are persistently absent from school do not offend. However young people who are persistently absent from school are more likely to be arrested for committing offences than the general 10-17 year old cohort. Significantly, most of the offences are committed outside of school hours.

   - Persistent absence from school is a risk factor that is linked to a greater tendency to commit crime. There are however, many other factors may also be linked to the tendency to commit crime for example 65% of children with parents in prison go on to offend.[21]

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[20] Crime in England and Wales 2002/03, Home Office Statistics, July 2003 – reported in Youth Justice 2004, A Review of the Reformed Youth Justice System, Audit Commission, Jan 2004
[21] Reaching Out: Progress on Social Exclusion, Cabinet Office, Feb 2007

What are the Links Between Absence from School and Other Outcomes for Young People?

Academic Attainment

78.   An established link has been identified between absence from school and attainment. Pupils who regularly fail to attend school reduce their chances of fulfilling their academic potential, and research has demonstrated that high rates of absence are associated with low academic achievement.

79.   National research and analysis has identified that on average for every 1% increase in absence over the key stage the pupil suffers a penalty of 3 GCSE points. In GCSE subjects 6 points are equal to one GCSE grade.[22] The correlation between attendance and attainment is clearly shown in figure 8 below.

80.   **Figure 8 – Absence and Achievement**

**% of pupils in each absence band who achieved Level 5+ KS3 2007**
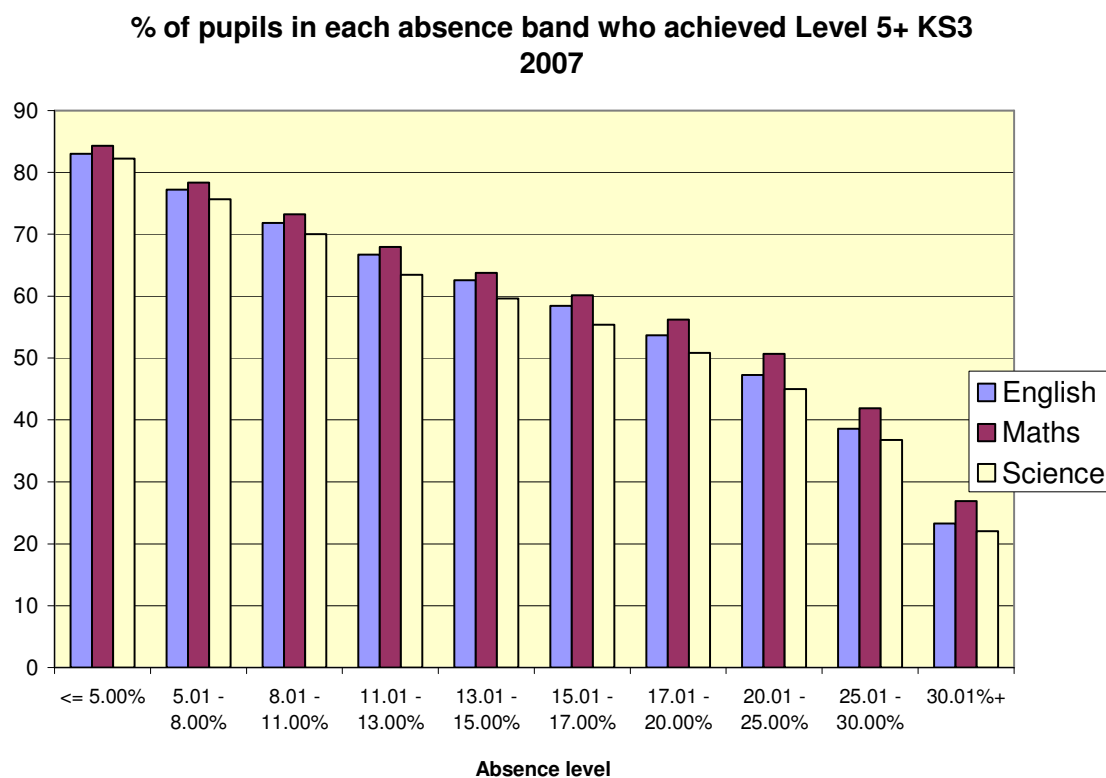
Southampton

81.   The attached chart, Figure 9, identifies attendance and attainment levels for local authority areas in the south east of England. Southampton's school attendance levels are the lowest in the south east of England, and the number of young people achieving 5 A-C GCSE grades, including English and Maths is in the bottom quartile.

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[22] Standard and Delivery Analysis Unit, Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008

82. **Figure 9 – South East Attendance and Attainment 2008**

South East, attendance and attainment 2007-08
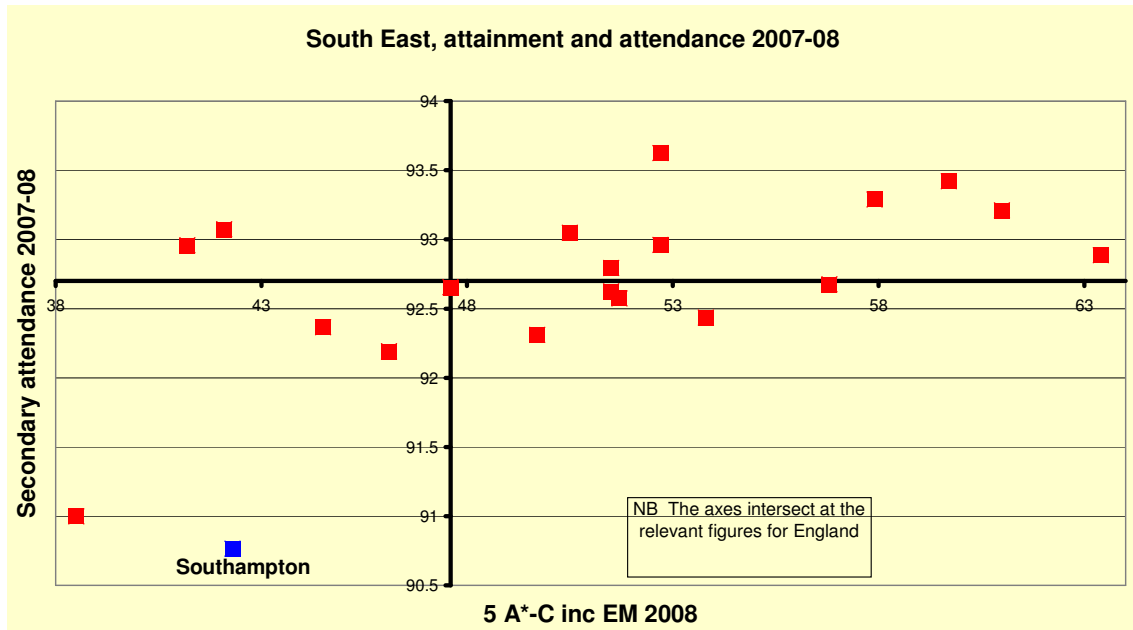
83. However, when Southampton is compared to its statistical neighbours, identified in Figure 5, the correlation is not so evident. Figure 10 identifies that young people in Southampton are achieving higher GCSE grades than would generally be associated with the levels of school attendance within the city. It poses the question what level of attainment could be achieved by young people in Southampton if attendance levels increased?

84. **Figure 10 – Statistical Neighbours Attendance and Attainment 2008**

5 A*-C inc EM 2008
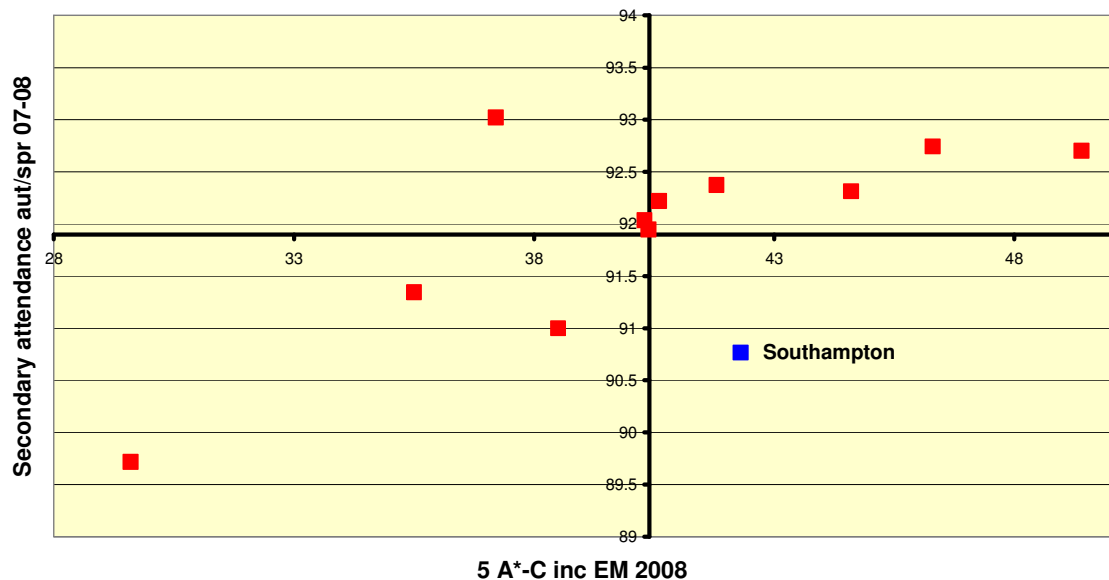
NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

85. Analysis has identified that nationally persistent absentees are nearly ten times more likely to be NEET at 16 and four times more likely to be NEET at 18.[23] Being NEET is closely associated with the following outcomes:[24]

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[23] Background Analysis to Youth Matters, Jan 2006

- **Teenage Pregnancy** – 71% of young women who are NEET for more than 6 months between 16-18 years of age are parents by 21.

- **Substance Misuse** – NEETS are disproportionately likely to misuse drugs and alcohol.

Other Outcomes

86. A report by the Social Exclusion Unit highlighted that children who are regularly absent from school are not only more easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour, and more likely to leave school with few or no qualifications, they are also more likely to be out of work after leaving school, and are more likely to become homeless. The report also notes that high rates of absence from school can also disrupt the education of other children because teachers have to find time to help poor attendees catch up with missed work.[25]

Findings

87. Information presented to the Scrutiny Panel enable the following conclusions to be reached:

- Absence from school is associated with poorer outcomes for young people. Nationally, statistics identify that a reduction of only 2% in students attendance can lead to a drop of 1 grade in GCSE.

- By reducing school absence, it follows that Southampton will be in a stronger position to make progress in a range of outcomes for children and young people.

[24] Background Analysis to Youth Matters, Jan 2006
[25] Truancy and School Exclusion, Social Exclusion Unit, 1998

Reducing Absence from School – National Best Practice

88. This inquiry, and national reports, have identified that absence from school, particularly persistent absence, is associated with poorer outcomes for young people. Reducing school absence has therefore been the subject of numerous studies that have identified elements of best practice.

89. The Department for Education and Skills, now the DCSF, produced 'Effective Attendance Practice in Schools – An Overview' in June 2005, and Effective Attendance Practice at the Local Authority Level.'

90. The documents identify that schools, local authority children's services departments, parents and the wider community all have a role to play in improving attendance and they identify a number of useful approaches for schools and local authorities.

Effective Attendance Practice in Schools and Local Authorities

91. Useful approaches are to:

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos;
- Have a clear policy on absence;
- Use effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance;
- Use data and other information to improve school and pupil performance;
- Promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils, their parents and the wider community;
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance;
- Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern;
- Have support systems in place for vulnerable pupils;
- Make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with greatest need (multi-agency working).[26]

92. Appendix 5 provides a more detailed overview of the approaches identified, including specific tools and techniques.

93. A survey of attendance conducted by Ofsted in 2006 identified additional approaches that were effective in preventing and reducing attendance problems in secondary schools. The report by Ofsted, 'Attendance in Secondary Schools', identified, amongst others, the importance of interesting lessons and the transition from primary to secondary school.[27]

Interesting Lessons

94. Students interviewed as part of Ofsted's survey, regardless of their rate of attendance, were consistent in saying that boring lessons influenced their level of attendance and that more active, interesting and fun lessons would encourage their attendance.

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[26] Effective Attendance Practice in Schools – An Overview, Department for Education and Skills, June 2005
[27] Attendance in Secondary Schools, Ofsted, September 2007

Transition from Primary to Secondary School

95. The survey identified that preventative strategies at transfer from primary to secondary education were effective in many schools at reducing the levels of absence that can occur when a pupils moves from a primary to a secondary school.

Ofsted survey: Key influences on attendance levels

96. The Ofsted report concluded that two factors were particularly important in ensuring that schools were in a good position to improve attendance levels:

- Effective data collection and analysis
- The role and influence of the Education Welfare Officer

97. Within Southampton City Council, Education Welfare Officers are employed within the Schools Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST) in the Directorate of Children's Services and Learning. The role of an Education Welfare Officer can include the following functions:

- To fulfill the statutory requirements on the local authority to monitor school attendance
- To provide a link between school, parents/carers and pupils where necessary
- To develop supportive relationships with parents/carers, schools and pupils
- To offer advice on various issues ie disengagement
- To consult and work with other agencies to support parents/carers and pupils where expertise in a given area of need is necessary
- To take legal action against parents if their child is not accessing an education.

Examples of good practice: Salford City Council

98. Salford City Council is an example of a local authority that has a good record of reducing overall and persistent absence over a relatively short period of time.

99. **Salford's Performance Information:**

Secondary School Persistent Absence %	2005	2006	2007	2008
Salford	-	10.10	8.40	5.56
Southampton	-	9.80	11.70	8.43
National Average - England	-	7.10	6.70	5.58
Total Secondary School Absence %	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Salford	10.75	9.21	8.93	7.96
Southampton	9.24	8.96	10.30	9.23
National Average - England	7.81	7.92	7.86	7.34

Background

100.   Salford City Council serves a population of approximately 220,000 and was ranked as the 15th most deprived local authority area in England following the 2007 Indices of Local Deprivation study. Southampton was 91st.

How has Salford achieved the improvement in attendance levels?

101.   The Scrutiny Co-ordinator spoke to the lead officer for attendance at Salford City Council. The following practices were identified as key ingredients for Salford's annual reduction in school absence:

- Consistency of practice across all schools that is owned by the schools and supported by the local authority. This includes when intervention is escalated.

- Introduction of an Education Management System across all schools. This enables data to be accessed relating to attendance. Schools and the local authority can monitor attendance levels and intervene if attendance levels slip. The data is robust.

- Support from full time Educational Welfare Officers (EWO) for all priority schools paid for by the local authority.

- Partnership working – Salford has a strong attendance strategy that is owned by partners including all City Council departments, not just Children's Services.

- Multi-disciplinary locality teams operating across the city. Four locality teams provide community led services. Team members include EWOs, social care staff, children and families officers. The teams are set to expand to include Youth Offending Team and Crime Prevention Officers.

- The multi-disciplinary locality teams work closely with an integrated youth service to support the needs of young people.

102.   Despite the numerous strategies and initiatives employed by Salford City Council the lead officer for attendance explained that it took time for the strategies to bed in and for attendance figures to improve.

Reducing Absence from School – Southampton

Context

103.   Figures outlined previously within this report show that school absence levels decreased across Southampton in 2007/08. The figures for 2007/08 reveal that for primary schools attendance Southampton bucked the national trend of increasing absence levels and actually continued to reduce levels of absence.

104.   In 2007/08 Southampton achieved one of the highest reductions recorded nationally in levels of persistent absence in local authority maintained secondary schools (over 3%).

105.   Emerging data for 2008/09 indicates that this downward trend in school absence levels is continuing and the gap between Southampton and the national and statistical neighbour average is decreasing.

106.   Colin Logan, Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance for National Strategies, on behalf of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), informed the Scrutiny Panel that significant good practice exists within Southampton relating to tackling absence in schools. Indeed, it was explained that other local authorities are being directed to Southampton, and the Schools Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST), to identify how attendance levels can improve within their authority.

107.   Progress in tackling absence, particularly persistent absence within secondary schools, was attributed to the hard work and determination of schools in Southampton who are all actively engaged in the drive to improve attendance levels, and the support provided by Children's Services and Learning and local partners.

Attendance Practice in Southampton's Schools

108.   The link between attendance and attainment evidenced within this report emphasises the importance that schools should place on reducing levels of absence.

109.   The Scrutiny Panel were informed of good practice being delivered across schools in Southampton relating to attendance management, much of which has been identified within the previous section as being national best practice.

110.   Good practice regarding attendance management, that is widely used across schools in Southampton, includes, amongst many things:

- Attendance leader within each school
- Attendance targets set within each school
- Use of an Electronic Management Systems to enable accurate monitoring and analysis of attendance data. This use of this system was recognised as a contributory factor to the identification of data as being 'robust' in Southampton by the Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance. The introduction of consistent practices for recording absence also helps

to explain the big increase in absence, particularly persistent absence, recorded within Southampton schools in 2006/07

- Contacting home on the first day of absence
- Use of rewards as an incentive to encourage attendance
- Behaviour and Attendance policies within schools
- Nurture schemes to support vulnerable students
- Close working relationship between local authority maintained schools and EWOs / Schools Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST)
- Utilising the expertise and advice available from the Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance. All secondary schools in Southampton, including academies, are working with the Regional Adviser.

111. To inform the Scrutiny Panel of the innovative approaches that are being practiced within schools in Southampton, two schools, recommended by the City Council's Operational Lead Officer for Inclusion, presented their approaches to the Scrutiny Panel.

Cantell Maths and Computing College

112. Harry Kutty, Assistant Head Teacher, presented information on Cantell Maths and Computing College's approach to tackling absenteeism at the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel on 13th March 2009.

113. Cantell Maths and Computing College is a local authority maintained secondary school in Southampton with 1,030 pupils. As of March 2009, 432 pupils (45%) have special educational needs and there is a 20% take up of free school meals. However, eligibility is much higher than this and compares to a national average eligibility for free school meals of 12.8%.

114. The approach adopted by Cantell to reduce absence levels focuses on student well being. The school believes that if a school pupil is happy and comfortable at school then they will attend and achieve.

115. The Scrutiny Panel were informed of Cantell's approach to addressing the causes of school absence and how this underpins the practical measures employed by the school to increase attendance levels. The approaches employed by the school to address the causes of absence will be explored later within this report (para 173).

Practical measures to reduce absence levels employed at Cantell Maths and Computing College

116. A number of strategies and tools are employed by Cantell to reinforce and promote the culture of school attendance. A number were brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Panel. Key measures include:

- A member of the Strategic Leadership Team leads on school attendance but the whole school has a focus on attendance
- An Educational Management System aids the collection of data. The data is focussed and consistent across year groups and is analysed on a weekly basis

- Rewards – A budget of £5,000 supports the purchase of prizes to reward attendance. Prizes are recommended by students
- Cantell works closely with an EWO
- 3 day return to school interviews for pupils who are absent
- Parental interviews triggered by leave of absence during term time
- Referral to the school welfare assistant and medical panel for pupils who are off regularly citing medical reasons
- Automated calling and texts are made to parents/carers on the first day of pupil absence. Parents have to phone the school and talk to the year leaders
- Fast track approach to prosecution and fixed penalties are embedded within the intervention strategies
- Cantell works closely with feeder primary schools to help support them in their efforts to increase attendance and reduce the impact of the transition from primary to secondary school. Working within the cluster of schools, with the EWO, is beneficial as Cantell recognises that bad habits regarding attendance can be learnt at, and before primary school and by working with the primary schools to address problems it can help Cantell's performance in years to come
- To reduce the impact of transition Cantell has introduced a primary school structure at year 7, with the pupils staying with the same teacher for a number of subjects during the week. A survey of attendance conducted by Ofsted identified that a secondary school that had introduced this structure was able to show improved attendance and better progress compared with previous cohorts[28]
- Cantell has amended its curriculum with the emphasis on bringing fun back into learning by making lessons exciting.

Outcomes – Attendance Statistics at Cantell Maths and Computing College

117. Significant progress has been made by Cantell in their efforts to absence levels.

Cantell	Total Absence	Persistent Absence
2006/07	14.00%	-
2007/08	12.30%	15.90%
2008/09 (as at March 2009)	9.80%	9.50%

118. Absence levels remain too high but in addition to the overall downward trend in absence, the attendance levels for younger pupils within the school are much higher than those in Year 11, suggesting a decrease in future absence within Cantell. This reflects the view that it takes time to change the attendance culture within a school, as experienced in Salford, and that it is important to address problems early because often attendance habits can be very difficult to address as the student gets older.

Cantell	Whole School	Year 11
2008/09 overall absence	9.80%	11.60%
2008/09 PA	9.50%	11.90%

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[28] Attendance in Secondary Schools, Ofsted, September 2007

Oakwood Junior School

119. Ian Taylor, Head Teacher at Oakwood Junior School attended the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 13th March 2009 and outlined a number of the reasons behind Oakwood Junior School's consistently high levels of attendance.

120. Oakwood Junior School is a junior school in the west of Southampton with 276 pupils on its roll. Pupils at the school age from 7-11 years.

121. Oakwood Junior School Absence Levels:

	2005/06 Total Absence	2006/07 Total Absence	2007/08 Total Absence	2008/09 Total Absence
Oakwood Junior	5.80%	4.90%	4.50%	4.10%*
Southampton Primary Average	6.63%	6.26%	6.02%	-
England Primary Average	5.76%	5.18%	5.26%	-

*As at March 2009

122. Ian Taylor explained that attendance levels at Oakwood Junior School had improved over the past 3 years and levels of attendance now clearly exceed the national average. He attributed the schools impressive attendance record to the following key elements:

- **The "Oaklands" Attendance Project** – Working together with the local cluster of schools through the Oaklands Attendance Project, now Lord's Hill Attendance Project, Oakwood Junior School and the cluster share consistent policies and practices for attendance. The cluster is co-ordinated by an EWO that is dedicated to the cluster of schools, funded partly by the school cluster.
- **Tackling term time holiday leave** – A common approach to holiday leave across the school cluster has helped to tackle term time leave. The cluster of schools will not authorise more than 5 days term time leave a year and absence will only be authorised if the child's attendance, and siblings attendance, irrespective of what school they attend in the cluster, is above target.
- **Tackling Odd Days Off** – To make school unmissable, Oakwood Junior School uses 'hook days' are used at the start of each term to grab the child's attention, the curriculum has been re-designed, and good attendance is celebrated with certificates for good attendance.
- **EWO / School Nurse** – Schools across the cluster work closely in multiagency meetings with a school nurse and the EWO to analyse reasons for absence and plan intervention (cold calling etc).
- **Clear information to parents** – An attendance report which shows the effect and accumulation of absence is sent to parents on a regular basis and the school takes every opportunity to impress upon parents the importance of school attendance.

Outcomes – Oakwood Junior School

123.   In addition to the impressive attendance record detailed above, Oakwood Junior School has noticed that the culture within the school, and the consistent practices applied have also resulted in fewer requests from parents for term time holiday leave. Ian Taylor did however explain to the Scrutiny Panel that it took 3 years for the culture of school attendance to change across the school and the cluster of schools.

Southampton City Council's School Attendance and Safeguarding Team (SAST) Initiatives

124.   Colin Logan, Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance, attributed progress in tackling absence levels in Southampton to schools and the work of SAST.

125.   SAST is located within the Safeguarding Division within the Children's Services and Learning Directorate and is the team in which the City Council's EWOs work. The City Council's lead officer for attendance is also located within this team.

126.   A number of initiatives have been introduced by SAST that have contributed, and continue to contribute to, the progress in tackling absence levels in Southampton schools.   Examples of local authority initiatives include the following:

   • The introduction of mascots, SAM (School Attendance Matters) and ODO (Odd Days Off), who have attended assemblies in all primary schools to deliver a pupil centred message on the importance of regular school attendance
   • SAM certificates and stickers are provided for schools to give out to pupils who have improved attendance, ODO stickers displaying 'I've had no odd days off' are also given to pupils. An annual SAM calendar is also produced and displayed in school receptions.
   • SAM is used on school gates to encourage punctuality; a gold paw print stamp is awarded to pupils who arrive on time.
   • SAM has also attended school fetes, sports days and other events to raise the profile amongst the pupils and be introduced to parents
   • In secondary schools, EWO's send out postcards to pupils at home, designed especially for pupils of this age group to congratulate them on progress and improvements secured.
   • SAST has established Intensive intervention squads – a team of EWOs facilitate a session in school where every pupil whose attendance is below 80% (unless there is a genuine reason) are interviewed by an EWO to identify reasons and agree targets for improvement
   • Southampton City Council has secured a Holiday Discount Scheme with travel agent Thomas Cook to reduce the financial incentive to parents of taking holidays in term time
   • Education Planning Meetings are held at the local authority – parents are cautioned under PACE (1984) and reasons for the absence are explored and formally recorded. An action plan is agreed with parents, pupils and agencies involved to improve attendance, if no improvement, the case

progresses on to the Legal Panel

- The establishment of a multi-agency legal panel to determine approaches to court action. The panel includes representatives from 10 agencies where every case is discussed before agreement for court action is actioned – this ensures consistency is applied to all cases and the local authority can demonstrate all alternatives have been exhausted
- Southampton City Council employs a consistent approach to the escalation of legal sanctions. This includes the use of the 'Fast Track to prosecution process' – referral to court in 12 weeks to minimise delay
- Governor training has been provided, as has training for magistrates. The Southampton court has arranged a team of magistrates to hear attendance cases on an agreed date every month, to ensure consistency
- Working in partnership with Southampton City PCT to joint fund a school nurse Team Leader to address medical absences
- Attendance conferences are held annually for all schools in Southampton to disseminate national and local strategies and share good practice
- Persistent absence workshops provided for attendance leads in schools
- Attendance stakeholder conference – over 70 stakeholders from across the city attended
- A leaflet for Polish families outlining the expectations on school attendance in England has been published and distributed.
- Clear casework process and legal framework is followed by all EWO's
- Working with GPs and dentists to encourage the reservation of some appointments outside of school hours for young people
- Innovative work with GPs to jointly address absence of pupils due to illness and a pilot scheme within one of the city's GP practices to offer a healthcare appointment to pupils who have been identified as regularly absent from school due to illness but with no known or identified health needs
- A joint PCT and SCC leaflet has been created and distributed entitled 'Does your child really need to stay at home?' which provides a guide for parents on school attendance and minor illness.

5-13 Years Strategy Group Plan 2008-2010 - 'Make school fun and improve attendance'

127. This report has identified that the transition from primary school to secondary school can be a time when young people disengage from school. The Scrutiny Panel were informed of nine projects that have been grant funded by the 5-13 Years Strategy Group, part of Southampton's Children and Young People's Trust, to help improve school attendance through increasing 5-13 year olds enjoyment of school and extended services. Each of the projects have a particular focus on primary to secondary transition and activity over their 'transition' summer holiday.

128. Grant funding was awarded to the projects to deliver activity from 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2010. Appendix 6 provides an outline of the programme and summarises the grant funded projects.

129. Representatives from **Baseline (Catch 22) and Southampton Mencap** addressed the Panel and outlined the nature of their projects and the expected

positive impact on attendance their projects could achieve.

130. The Scrutiny Panel were informed that quantified evidence identifying the impact that each of the grant funded projects has had on attendance was not currently available. The Scrutiny Panel were keen to encourage longer term, city wide funding to be identified by Southampton's Children and Young People's Trust for initiatives that can be evidenced to have improved school attendance significantly.

Will school absence levels continue to fall in Southampton?

131. Based on maintaining the progress that is being made, the initiatives that are being delivered, and the recognised lag between initiatives and improved outcomes, Colin Logan, Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance for National Strategies predicted that by 2011 levels of persistent absence in Southampton's local authority maintained secondary schools will be reduced to about 6.8%, or lower, from the 2007/08 figure of 8.43%. This is in line with our statistical neighbours.

132. This reflects the progress that was made in Salford and the Scrutiny Panel recognised that many of the key elements attributed to the improved performance within Salford are being replicated within Southampton.

Areas for Improvement

133. Members of the Scrutiny Panel were impressed with the progress that is being made, and the innovative initiatives that are being deployed to tackle school absence levels within Southampton. Evidence presented to the Scrutiny Panel however, highlighted a number of areas where improvements can be made that, if addressed, the Panel believe will help contribute to improved school attendance levels.

134. The areas where improvements can be made have been categorised under the following general headings:

- **Consistency**
- **Culture**
- **Addressing the causes of school absence**

Consistency – Sharing Best Practice

135. The Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance identified that good practice exists within Southampton's schools. However, when Colin Logan was asked by the Scrutiny Panel about areas where improvements could be made he identified that there was a need to ensure consistency across schools in the delivery of best practice.

Consistency – Cluster Working

136. Evidence presented to the Scrutiny Panel from Oakwood Junior School identified that by working in school cluster groups, sharing consistent attendance policies and practices within the cluster, and using the support available from EWO's, the

school nurse and other partners to develop a joined up approach, it was mutually beneficial for all schools in their efforts to reduce school absenteeism.

137. The Scrutiny Panel were informed that school clusters are more effective in working collectively to address attendance issues in some parts of Southampton than they are in others.

Consistency – Education Welfare Officers (EWOs)

138. The Ofsted survey on attendance in secondary schools[29] identified the important role played by EWOs in schools that had improved attendance levels. This view was supported by Harry Kutty, Assistant Head Teacher at Cantell Maths and Computing College who said that *"a good EWO was like gold dust".*

139. Mr Kutty informed the Scrutiny Panel that when he was employed at a secondary school in Reading, with lower levels of absence, the school was supported by a full-time EWO and an Education Welfare Assistant funded by the local authority. This, according to Mr Kutty, contributed to the schools lower absence levels.

140. Salford City Council funds a full-time EWO for each school in the authority that has levels of persistent absence that exceed the Government's target. Access, full-time, to a single EWO was identified by Salford City Council as a key ingredient in their success.

141. In Southampton the Scrutiny Panel were informed that unless schools part fund posts many EWOs divide their time between more than one secondary school and their respective feeder primary schools. This impacted upon continuity within the school and raised concerns regarding the lack of access to an EWO.

142. The City Council's Operational Lead Officer for Inclusion explained to the Panel that the maximum number of open cases being dealt with by an EWO at any one time should be about 40. Information presented to the Scrutiny Panel on 21 April 2009 identified that EWOs in Southampton were dealing with an average of 52 open cases, alongside a range of other statutory duties in relation to improving attendance, such as audits of attendance in school.

143. Whilst recognising that each school within Southampton has different needs and priorities, having considered the information presented to them the Scrutiny Panel believe that if more support from EWOs was available to schools it would help to reduce levels of absence in the city.

Culture

144. In his presentation to the Scrutiny Panel Colin Logan, Regional Adviser on Behaviour and Attendance identified as a priority the need to address cultural low expectations and condoned parental absence.

145. For this to be effective there is a need for support from across the city, not just from schools and Southampton City Council's Children's Services and Learning

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[29] Attendance in Secondary Schools, Ofsted, September 2007

Directorate.

146.   The Scrutiny Panel recognise that good work is ongoing to develop ownership and understanding of the issues relating to school attendance amongst agencies and partners across Southampton. The conference organised by SAST that was attended by over 70 stakeholders is an example of this approach.

147.   As this report has identified school absence has an impact on a number of key outcomes for young people and the city. With this in mind the Scrutiny Panel heard evidence during the inquiry that led them to conclude that more can be done to promote the importance of attending school throughout the city.

Hampshire Constabulary

148.   This inquiry has evidenced that a link exists between absence from school and crime and disorder. Hampshire Constabulary have however, not been supportive recently of school attendance and exclusion sweeps in Southampton, as they were not deemed to be a good use of police resources due to a perceived lack of any follow up with the young people.

149.   School attendance and exclusion sweeps aim to tackle non-attendance and enforce parents' responsibility for their children's whereabouts during the first five days of exclusion. The sweeps are carried out during school hours by partnerships of Police Officers and EWOs. The presence of Police Officers is required in this process.

150.   The DCSF expects local authorities to continue to plan and run attendance sweeps throughout the year and they are deemed to be a good way of tackling unnecessary absence from school.[30] The sweeps also help to reinforce the message that attending school is not an option but a legal requirement and that collectively the city is taking absence from school seriously.

151.   From the analysis undertaken for this inquiry it is evident that sometimes, and in a minority of cases, crimes are being committed by young people of school age during school hours in Southampton. School attendance and exclusion sweeps could be a tool used by Hampshire Constabulary, in conjunction with the City Council, to help reduce the number of offences committed by young people in the city.

Retailers

152.   The Scrutiny Panel heard that Marlands Shopping Centre employees are good at questioning young people who are shopping during school hours. The Scrutiny Panel would welcome this approach being applied across shopping centres in the city, as it would help to re-affirm the message that it is not acceptable to miss school. This message may also resonate with parents who condone school absence.

153.   Hampshire Constabulary have recently been contacted by retailers in Southampton complaining about shoplifters wearing school uniforms. This

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[30] School Attendance and Exclusion Sweeps, DCSF, 2006,
www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance/truancy sweeps/index.cfm

provides further motivation for retailers to promote the school attendance message.

Southampton City Council

154. Although the Children's Services and Learning Directorate can only act in an advisory capacity to schools and encourage them to adopt its policies and procedures, the wider City Council is in a position to exert an influence on the very culture of the city by reinforcing the message at every opportunity that young people should attend school unless they have a legitimate reason not to.

155. A whole city approach, using communications and media to send strong messages on attendance to the wider community, would support the work of schools and SAST in improving levels of school attendance.

156. A number of other local authorities also hold annual award ceremonies that celebrate school attendance. Stockton-on-Tess holds an annual awards ceremony at which awards are presented to individual classes and schools with the best attendance, and most improved attendance. The Scrutiny Panel would welcome such an event being staged in Southampton.

157. Addressing the causes of absence will be addressed in the next section within this report.

Findings

158. **The Scrutiny Panel have arrived at the following findings regarding the issue of absence from schools in Southampton:**

- Southampton's schools, with the support of Southampton City Council and partners, are making good progress in tackling levels of absence at primary and secondary schools and those responsible for the improvements should be congratulated on their excellent work. Absence levels are however, still too high.

- Schools within Southampton have demonstrated that through good leadership and management, high quality teaching and a flexible curriculum, schools can significantly improve attendance levels.

- All schools in Southampton are actively engaged in the drive to improve school attendance levels. Identified best practice in reducing school absence is being applied across Southampton and there are numerous innovative approaches being developed and applied to improve school attendance levels.

- The importance of providing holistic support to pupils through the role of the Education Welfare Officers during school hours and other support outside the school highlighted throughout the inquiry. The need to join up different types of support was also emphasised.

- Southampton's school attendance data is considered robust by the DCSF and experience from other local authorities has identified that there is often a lag between initiatives being implemented within schools and a reduction in levels of school absence.

- If best practice is applied **consistently** across Southampton's schools, focus on attendance is maintained, and the **culture** of supporting school attendance is further developed across the city then the Scrutiny Panel believe that absence levels will continue to decrease bringing attendance levels in line with, and potentially beyond, Southampton's statistical neighbours by 2011.

Recommendations

159. **To improve the consistency of practice in reducing school absence across Southampton it is recommended that**:–

1. Budgets and priorities be reviewed to seek to develop the support available from Educational Welfare Officer's (EWOs) to schools within Southampton. This review should investigate potential funding streams from schools, partner agencies and voluntary organisations to develop EWO support with the aim of ensuring that there is a full time equivalent EWO to support each school cluster group.

2. Southampton's Children and Young People's Trust prioritises the commissioning of long term, city-wide support and resources for initiatives currently funded through the 5-13 Years Strategy Group Plan that can demonstrate to have improved school attendance through promoting school enjoyment. The schemes particularly focus on primary to secondary transition and activity over their 'transition' summer holiday.

3. Southampton City Council promotes good practice, such as 'hook days' at the start of term, within all schools, and encourages the development of common attendance policies and practices within geographical school cluster groups

4. Education Welfare Officers, school nurses and, where applicable, the police officers that are being deployed through the developing Safer School Partnerships work closely within the cluster groups to promote a joined up approach.

5. Southampton City Council promotes ways of aiding the transition from primary school to secondary school, especially for vulnerable children from families with complex needs. For example, introducing a primary school structure at Year 7, with the pupils staying with the same teacher at the secondary school in Year 7.

6. Southampton City Council works in partnership with Oasis Academy Mayfield and Oasis Academy Lord's Hill to share attendance data and good practice relating to reducing absence from school and provides the Academies with a Toolkit to tackle this issue.

7. The Scrutiny Panel would welcome Hampshire Constabulary and the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team developing the analysis on offences committed during school hours further to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the number of young people of school age committing offences during school hours, and their situation regarding educational provision.

160. **To develop the culture of supporting school attendance across Southampton it is recommended that:-**

8. Southampton City Council leads a publicity campaign to change public attitudes to school non-attendance and that the campaign concludes in a City Council ceremony rewarding school attendance. This should include working with all communities to strongly discourage holidays during term time.

9. Southampton City Council works with retailers in Southampton to encourage shopping centre staff to question young people who are shopping during school hours and promote the displaying of 'truancy aware' stickers in shops.

10. Hampshire Constabulary make combating absence from school a higher priority within Southampton and demonstrates this commitment by supporting education led truancy sweeps in conjunction with other service providers.

Addressing the Causes of Absence

Reason for Absence

161. Southampton City Council's Operational Lead Officer for Inclusion outlined to the Scrutiny Panel the most frequently recorded reasons for absence from schools in Southampton.

162. The most common reasons for absence are the following: (in no particular order)
     - Illness
     - Medical appointments
     - Holidays
     - Other authorised circumstances – unavoidable cause
     - Exclusions
     - Enforced closure - snow/heating/industrial action
     - Refusal
     - Parentally condoned
     - Family circumstances

Absence – A symptom of …

163. The Youth Crime Action Plan 2008 identifies that:

     '*Poor attendance and persistent absence can be an indicator of wider issues that a pupil is facing and their need for support.*'[31]

164. Southampton City Council's Operational Lead Officer for Inclusion emphasised this point and informed the Scrutiny Panel that there were many factors that manifest themselves in poor attendance. The Panel were informed that absence was a symptom of, amongst others:

     - Wider safeguarding issues – e.g. domestic violence, hidden harm
     - Parenting
     - Low aspirations
     - Generational trend
     - Economic climate
     - disaffection
     - Habit
     - …because they can

Consultation with young people

165. To develop understanding of these issues the Scrutiny Panel spoke with a number of young people who had experienced attendance problems and were being educated at the Melbourne Street Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Southampton, or in satellite provision at Cantell Maths and Computing College.

166. Feedback from the young people, and discussions with teachers from Cantell, Melbourne Street PRU, Oakwood Junior and the Regional Adviser for Behaviour and Attendance identified the following reasons for poor attendance:

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[31] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p33

- Family breakdown
- Bereavement
- Bullying
- Parenting / other family issues – including generational non-attenders
- Disengagement – Lost in a large school and switched off, felt unsupported by teachers
- Low aspirations
- Exclusion through behavioural problems
- Transition problems from primary to secondary school

Complex needs

167.   This report has identified a number of strategies and techniques that schools and the local authority can employ to improve school attendance. The survey of attendance in secondary schools by Ofsted identified that some tools, such as the use of legal sanctions and telephoning students' homes on the first day of absence, were effective deterrents in the schools surveyed but they had not reached the most disadvantaged groups and were less successful for students with the most challenging attendance problems.[32]

168.   The Scrutiny Panel recognises that different tools and techniques affect individuals differently and some tools will be more effective than others. Consultation undertaken during this inquiry has identified that applying the fundamentals of attendance management will significantly reduce absence levels in schools, and will be particularly effective at reducing absence levels of those who are absent through habit, or because they got away with it.

169.   A number of young people however, whose school attendance is poor, particularly those who are persistently absent, have problems that require significant help and support from within school, and often from different services, agencies and professionals outside of school if they are to reach their potential, and, if possible, develop the habit of regular school attendance.   There is therefore, to coin a phrase, a need to be 'tough on absence from school, and tough on the causes of absence from school' to support school attendance across the city.

170.   The Government has recognised that vulnerable young people who are likely to need help from a range of different agencies benefit from:

'*a timely, co-ordinated, and effective response. Getting this right gives young people the chance to build positive futures and avoid a range of serious potential problems*'.[33]

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[32] Attendance in Secondary Schools, Ofsted, September 2007
[33] Targeted Youth Support – a Guide, DCSF, 2008, p3

A timely, co-ordinated and effective response to address causes of absence in Southampton – Schools

171.   The Government's guide to Targeted Youth Support states that:

   'Schools should be actively identifying, supporting and, where necessary referring on young people with particular needs'[34]

172.   To develop the Scrutiny Panel's understanding a visit was arranged to Cantell Maths and Computing College to see the practices that they are employing to identify and support vulnerable young people who, often amongst other outcomes, are persistently absent from school.

Cantell Maths and Computing College – Addressing the causes of absence

173.   Cantell Maths and Computing College's approach to tackling persistent absence is based on identifying the reasons why a young person is not attending school and seeking to address the reasons using appropriate support.

174.   A number of the many approaches employed by Cantell are shown below. They are crudely categorised using the final three headings from the list of effective attendance practices in schools shown in paragraph 91.

175.   **Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern – At Cantell:**

   - teachers monitor the progress of all students and co-ordinate appropriate interventions;
   - non-teaching Year Leaders employ a traffic light system that is triggered by attendance and other factors. Even if a pupil has good attendance it can trigger action if the Year Leader is concerned;
   - effort is made to develop good relationships with parents and families at an early stage. This can include home visits.

176.   **Have support systems in place for vulnerable pupils – At Cantell:**

   - Year Leaders focus is on the well being of students;
   - Year Leaders develop action plans for persistently absent students and meet them regularly, even if they are not attending school;
   - personalised packages of support are developed to meet needs of pupil;
   - anti-bullying strategies have been developed with the pupils;
   - a mentor system operates where selected Year 11 students offer support to other pupils;
   - mediation and conflict resolution form part of the School's approach to building and managing relations with pupils;
   - an Inclusion Officer and 5 support assistants are employed to support young people with additional needs;
   - two inclusion facilities have been developed to support pupils – Satellite 1 supports children who have behavioural problems, and Satellite 2

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[34] Targeted Youth Support – a Guide, DCSF, 2008, p10

supports children who are vulnerable (Members spoke to young people in this satellite facility who had suffered from bullying, transition problems, and had disengaged due to intimidating 'big school' but had benefitted from satellite 2 provision). The aim of both satellite facilities is to address identified problems and re-integrate into mainstream provision;

- the teaching of SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) has been introduced across the School.

177. **Make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with greatest need – At Cantell:**

- the Inclusion Officer attends the local Community Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (led by the Safer Communities Team) to identify support that is available and to make referrals;
- referrals are made to various partners and projects such as Educational Psychology, Saucepans (for young people with mental health problems), Think Family and Challenge & Support (detailed later in this report);
- there are strong links to providers of support from the voluntary sector.

The impact of Cantell Maths and Computing College's approach

178. Persistent Absence:

Cantell	Persistent Absence
2007/08	15.90%
2008/09 (as at March 2009)	9.50%

The table above shows that Cantell Maths and Computing College's PA level reduced by over 6% in one year. The figure is still high when compared to city and national averages but the figures must be seen within the context that at the beginning of March 2009, 45% of Cantell's pupils had special educational needs and Cantell has a high number of pupils who are vulnerable and need additional support.

Addressing the cause of absence across Southampton

179. The Scrutiny Panel did not have the time to speak with all schools in Southampton to identify their approaches relating to identifying, supporting and where necessary referring on young people with particular needs. The Scrutiny Panel did however hear from witnesses during the inquiry that:

- There is an unequal distribution of the placement of hard to place pupils, this includes excluded pupils, between secondary schools in Southampton;
- There is a need for more transparency and openness relating to pupil movement across the city;
- 5 out of the 10 local authority maintained secondary schools have inclusion facilities;
- Some schools in the city have a stronger emphasis on inclusion than others and support their pupils with additional needs, including

behavioural problems, within the school using the support that is available.

180. The Scrutiny Panel did not have time to develop this further and recognised that, although this area could merit further investigation by the City Council, it could lead to the inquiry examining issues that are beyond the terms of reference of the inquiry. The Scrutiny Panel did question if there was a link between the issues identified above and:

- The high levels of fixed term exclusions in Southampton, particularly for young people with learning and physical disabilities;
- The high levels of persistent absence in some schools who have a high percentage of children with additional needs;
- The high levels of Looked After Children who were persistently absent in Southampton in 2008/09 (17%).

A timely, co-ordinated and effective response to address causes of absence in Southampton – Southampton City Council and Local Strategic Partners

181. Good practice at school level needs to be mirrored by multi-agency approaches to support schools. Advice and guidance to schools and local authorities on managing pupil attendance from the DCSF states:

'*Poor attendance and behaviour in school are likely to be linked to a range of other issues outside school: only a co-ordinated approach is likely to achieve a long term solution'.*[35]

182. The Scrutiny Panel were informed that a multi-agency approach requires intervention and support from numerous agencies and service providers to address the various causes of absence impacting on young people. EWOs, educational psychologists, health workers, social workers, children and adolescent mental health services, youth services and voluntary organisations, to name a few, each make distinct contributions within Southampton that can help schools to support pupils.

183. Due to the focus of this inquiry being on the links between crime and disorder and absence from school the Scrutiny Panel were mainly informed of a number of projects being delivered through the Safe City Partnership to address the causes of offending by young people. This is appropriate to the inquiry because a number of the factors identified as being causes for school absence are identified as factors that manifest themselves in offending behaviour. This is referenced in the Youth Crime Action Plan:

'*At the heart of this action plan is a recognition that the factors which contribute to many other poor outcomes for young people also contribute to offending behaviour.*'[36]

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[35] Advice and guidance to schools and local authorities on managing pupil attendance, DCSF, para 28
[36] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p7 para 14

Tackling Youth Offending

184. Derek Stevens, Southampton City Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Operations Manager, Steve Crocker, Manager of the Wessex Youth Offending Service (at the time of the Scrutiny Panel meeting) and Kieran Gildea, Education Officer at the Wessex Youth Offending Team outlined a number of initiatives that were being delivered and developed in Southampton to help prevent offending and break cycles of offending behaviour. Many of the initiatives are new and require time to become embedded.

185. The initiatives include:

- Challenge and Support
- Family Intervention Project
- Parenting Early Intervention Project
- Parenting Practitioner
- Parenting Expert
- Think Family
- Intensive Intervention Project
- Positive Activities for Young People: Diversionary activities on a Friday and Saturday night
- Baseline (Catch 22) Youth Inclusion Project / Baseline (Catch 22) Junior
- Street Based Outreach Teams

186. Most of these schemes are being funded through the DCSF and many of them focus on supporting parents/carers and families, and early intervention.

Supporting Parents/Carers and Families

187. According to a report by the National Audit Office many head teachers and local authorities consider that negative parental attitudes are the external factor that is most closely associated with high rates of absence.[37]

188. During the Scrutiny Panel's consultation with young people, parenting and family issues, including parentally condoned absence, featured prominently in the reasons for absence from school.

189. The importance that needs to be placed on supporting parents has been highlighted in the Youth Crime Action Plan and it also features strongly in Southampton's Children and Young People's Plan 2009/12 (CYPP) including the statement that:

'*Families, in their many diverse forms are the most important influence on children and young people*'[38]

190. A priority within Southampton's CYPP is to support, challenge and empower parents to give children and young people the best start in life. To support this priority Southampton City Council has produced a Parenting Strategy and a

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[37] Improving School Attendance in England, National Audit Office, 2005
[38] Southampton's Children and Young People Plan 2009/12, p19

number of actions designed to improve support for parents are outlined in the CYPP.

Early Intervention

191. The Scrutiny Panel were informed by the Council's ASB Operations Manager that a number of the initiatives being delivered in Southampton to help break cycles of offending behaviour were accessible to young people/families who may not meet the traditional thresholds for statutory or specialist services, but who, without help, are at risk of further problems. This is designed to help young people/families to address their difficulties as soon as possible and prevent their problems escalating.

192. Evidence from an inquiry by the National Audit Office identified the relevance of early intervention in reducing absence from school. The report states that:

'*Pupils tend to fall into a pattern of absence that tends to increase over time if the causes are not resolved.*'[39]

Areas for Improvement

193. The Scrutiny Panel were reassured to be informed about the numerous initiatives, and providers of support available to help address the underlying causes of absence experienced by many young people in Southampton. However, despite the narrow focus taken by the inquiry, and recognising that analysis of this complex area has been limited, the evidence presented to the Scrutiny Panel identified a number of areas where improvements can be made.

194. The areas where improvements can be made have been categorised under the following general headings:

- **Data sharing**
- **Co-ordination**

Data Sharing

195. Chief Inspector Scipio from Hampshire Constabulary informed the inquiry that there was a need to improve the legal sharing of information between SAST, schools and Hampshire Constabulary so that the police are more aware of the young people who are regularly out of school.

196. Chief Inspector Scipio believed that having access to this information would help target police resources more effectively and enable vulnerable young people to be 'on the police radar' before issues potentially escalate.

Co-ordination

197. To help co-ordinate and target services to those young people in need of support various multi-discipline panels operate within Southampton. These include the following panels:

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[39] Improving School Attendance in England, National Audit Office, 2005, p7

- **Community Tasking and Co-ordinating Groups** (CTCGs) – These panels work to co-ordinate joint action to deal with anti-social behaviour. They include representatives from various partners including schools and EWOs and they share information about individuals and areas where problems relating to anti-social behaviour are occurring.

- **Legal Panel** – This is a multi-agency panel with representatives from 10 agencies who discuss attendance cases before agreement for court action is actioned.

198. Feedback to the Scrutiny Panel about these panels was positive. However, throughout the inquiry the Scrutiny Panel were consistently informed by witnesses that there were numerous good initiatives operating in Southampton to address problems young people were experiencing that was impacting on their school attendance, but the co-ordination between the projects needed to improve in order to raise awareness of certain projects, avoid duplication, and help target services more effectively within an appropriate location and neighbourhood.

199. These views was expressed by witnesses who gave evidence to the Scrutiny Panel or members of the Scrutiny Panel:

- Kieran Gildea, Education Officer at Wessex Youth Offending Team who, in a written submission to the Panel, when writing about improving outcomes for young people in Southampton he noted that:

  '*there has to be a greater recognition of the requirement and continued need for a collaborative approach*'.

- Tracey Kerr, Inclusion Officer at Cantell Maths and Computing College, identified that numerous initiatives to support young people were available in Southampton but provision across the city needs co-ordinating and to be delivered within neighbourhoods.

- Chief Inspector Scipio identified that there were areas where co-ordination was good but it could be improved to ensure that services are targeted more effectively at the young people and their families who are having the most impact on the city and service providers.

200. Much of this may be due to the fact that, as the guide to Targeted Youth Support states:

'During the last decade a growing number of government, community and voluntary sector initiatives have targeted vulnerable young people. Operating under different funding regimes, incentive structures and delivery chains, these initiatives have often developed independently, sometimes targeting the same populations of young people without full co-ordination, and sometimes lacking a remit for prevention or without strong links to universal services such as schools or health'.[40]

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[40] Targeted Youth Support – a Guide, DCSF, 2008, p7

201. The above point was made by Southampton City Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Operations Manager and the Manager of the Wessex Youth Offending Service in relation to the various intervention projects funded by the DCSF. Each of the projects have their own targets and timescales. The challenge is to get greater control of the targets and to co-ordinate the initiatives to ensure that resources are directed at the areas where they are most needed within Southampton.

Co-ordination – Parenting initiatives and adult services

202. The co-ordination between the various parenting and family support initiatives and adult services was highlighted as an area where improvements can be made by Southampton City Council's Senior Parenting Practitioner.

203. The Scrutiny Panel were informed by Isla Downey that when parenting practitioners identified issues such as substance misuse, domestic violence or debt problems being an issue that needed to be addressed to support parents ability to support their children, there needed to be closer collaboration with adult services to ensure that the necessary support for the parent or family was forthcoming.

Co-ordination – Parenting and attendance

204. The Scrutiny Panel were also informed that whilst school attendance is identified within Southampton's Parenting Strategy, parenting does not feature within the City Council's Attendance Strategy. Members identified this as an area that needs to be addressed to help improve co-ordination and consistency.

Co-ordination Summary

205. The evidence presented to the Scrutiny Panel reflects the comments made by the Regional Adviser for Behaviour and Attendance who, when asked by the Scrutiny Panel about areas where improvements could be made that would help to increase attendance at schools in Southampton, he identified that multi-agency working must be effective to ensure that no one slips through the net.

206. This appears to have happened with a number of the 13 young people who in the truancy vs crime analysis were identified as having committed offences on a school day, during school hours. Further analysis by SAST has identified that a number of the young people were offered minimal provision and had complex social issues. This is being investigated further by SAST.

Findings

207. **The Scrutiny Panel have arrived at the following findings with regards to the issue of addressing the causes of school absence:**

- The Scrutiny Panel understands that school absence is often an outcome derived from other factors impacting on a young person. The Scrutiny Panel recognise that by developing and applying fundamental elements of school attendance management such as establishing an attendance leader in each school, recording and monitoring data accurately, applying

a consistent approach to the use of legal sanctions and developing a culture that reinforces the message that attending school is not optional will significantly reduce levels of absence in schools. However, progress in tackling some absence, particularly persistent absence, often requires a greater focus on supporting the individual, and family, by identifying the reasons behind their absence from school and identifying mechanisms to address them.

- The inquiry has been informed of good practice in Southampton where the school culture focuses on student wellbeing, building a relationship with individual pupils and parents, reducing bullying, monitoring the young persons development and intervening, where necessary, to offer appropriate and timely support, often through external providers. This intervention may be triggered off by absence from school or issues such as behavioural problems within the school. **Good practice must be shared with all schools in the city**.

- Within Southampton there exist numerous initiatives that seek to address the identified needs of young people and where necessary their families. These initiatives include parenting support and diversionary activities for young people. The inquiry has highlighted the importance of multi-agency working, working with parents as well as young people, and identified the issue of **co-ordinating** services effectively as being an area where improvements need to be made.

- National studies have identified that patterns of absence can be formed early in a pupils education and absence tends to increase over time if the causes are not resolved. The Scrutiny Panel identified that the **earlier support and intervention** is provided to the young person the greater the likelihood that the issue will not escalate.

Recommendations

208. **To assist the early intervention and co-ordination of support for children and young people who need additional assistance to fulfil their potential it is recommended that:-**

1. Good practice for identifying and supporting children and young people with additional needs, who are often known to other agencies, at an early stage is shared with all schools in Southampton to help schools meet **their** pupils' additional needs. This includes good practice relating to:-
   a. Limiting the effect of a large school on vulnerable students
   b. Developing supportive relationships with parents, especially those from vulnerable families
   c. Providing proactive support and pastoral care for children under stress following bereavement or family breakdown. There are voluntary organisations working within some schools in the city currently delivering this support.
   d. Early multi-agency working.

2. The Children Services and Learning Directorate continues to work with schools to ensure that anti-bullying strategies are being effectively implemented within schools in Southampton, as detailed in the Children's and Young People's Action Plan, and that outcomes are measured.

3. The timely sharing of data between schools, the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team, Safer Communities Team and Hampshire Constabulary is improved to help target intervention more effectively.

4. The practice of working with the parents of pupils who are persistently absent from school is embedded, and that initiatives that are being delivered to support parenting and families are co-ordinated with adult services, such as debt advice and drug and alcohol support services, to ensure that issues affecting parents' ability to support their children are addressed alongside the needs of the young person.

5. Information on supporting parenting forms part of Southampton City Council's Attendance Strategy.

National Developments

209. The issues identified as areas in need of improvement within the previous section of this report are clearly not unique to Southampton. The Government has recognised that early intervention and the co-ordination of services are in need of development to help support vulnerable young people achieve the five key outcomes under Every Child Matters.

210. A plethora of initiatives have been proposed or have been introduced by the Government to encourage, through co-ordination by the local Children and Young People's Trusts, closer working between children's services providers to improve quality and consistency. The aim is to ensure that, through effective collaborative working, children's needs are identified and addressed early so that nothing holds children and young people back from realising their potential.

211. The Scrutiny Panel were informed of a number of these developments and they are listed below. The Scrutiny Panel recognise that the list does not include all of the initiatives, and that this over simplifies the connections that exist between the various initiatives and the objectives outlined in Every Child Matters and the Government's Children's Plan.

212. The list does not include initiatives such as Extended Schools, and information within the 21st Century Schools paper that focus on early intervention to meet children's additional needs.

Key initiatives introduced to the Scrutiny Panel

a) Targeted Youth Support

213. The provision of early joined-up support to vulnerable young people by schools and other agencies working together is the key goal of the Government's targeted youth support reforms. Targeted youth support is about supporting vulnerable young people by local agencies working together, focusing on early

intervention and prevention. It helps schools access the right support at the right time and provides a clear route of referral to specialist services. It is expected that all local areas will have full delivery by the end of 2009.

214.   Targeted youth support comprises seven key elements:

- early identification of young people who are at risk;
- consistent assessment of young people's needs;
- use of universal settings to deliver support services;
- identification of a lead professional to co-ordinate support;
- delivery of accessible and relevant services;
- helping young people to make successful transitions;
- listening to feedback to improve services.[41]

215.   The guide to targeted youth support identifies that the successful implementation and operation of targeted youth support needs to be underpinned by multi-agency structures and workforce developments that support early interventions and collaborative working.

216.   Common multi-agency structures in the pathfinder areas included the development of multi-agency teams that were front line, locality based targeted youth support teams. These teams were usually based in community settings and schools.[42]

b) Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

217.   The CAF is a generic assessment for children with additional needs, which can be used by practitioners across all children's services in all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need, promote co-ordinated services provision and reduce the number of assessments that young people go through.

c) Safer Schools Partnerships

218.   Safer School Partnerships, launched in 2002, represent a new approach to police involvement in schools. The focus of Safer Schools Partnerships is early intervention and prevention. The schemes encourage the police, children and young people to build good relationships, trust and mutual respect.[43]

219.   The Youth Crime Action Plan mentions that the Safer Schools Partnerships have significant benefits, improving relationships between young people and the police, promoting school safety and reducing risks of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Youth Crime Action Plan strongly encourages the foundation of more Safer Schools Partnerships so that more young people can benefit, and that every school should have a named police contact.[44]

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[41] Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learner, Sir Alan Steer, April 2009 – info from Appendix G, Early intervention and support for children 'at risk' or with behavioural difficulties produced by DCSF, p184
[42] Targeted Youth Support – a Guide, DCSF, 2008, p23
[43] http://www.walsall.gov.uk/index/linx2schools-safer_schools.htm
[44] Youth Crime Action Plan 2008, HM Government, July 2008, p34

d) Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships

220. These partnerships are a mechanism by which secondary schools can work together to improve behaviour, support attendance and reduce exclusions. The Government has encouraged secondary schools, academies and pupil referral units to collaborate in this way.

221. A recommendation within Sir Alan Steer's review of behaviour, standards and practices in our schools was that behaviour and attendance partnerships should have:

    'Clear protocols for pupil managed moves and for the placement of hard to place pupils. These protocols to be operated by all members of the partnership.'[45]

222. The Government has subsequently committed itself to taking forward Sir Alan Steer's recommendations.

Developments within Southampton

223. During the inquiry information was presented to the Scrutiny Panel relating to how Southampton City Council and partners are working towards implementing the Government initiatives identified above.

a) Integrated Children and Youth Support Services

224. The Young People and Community Support Division was established in April 2008, within Southampton City Council's Children's Services and Learning Directorate. The work of the Division over the last year has been focused upon creating a new structure which brings together discreet services which include the Connexions Service, Youth Services, Extended Schools, Play Services and volunteering into three integrated locality based teams.

225. The new service is developing targeted services to support children and young people to achieve their very best in life. This holistic approach acknowledges the role and importance of the family and parenting in supporting children and young people.

226. The Ofsted APA identified that the recent organisation restructure has led to greater integration across services and a renewed focus on early intervention and youth support services.

b) Multi-Agency Locality Teams

227. Locality based teams are now being proposed for other divisions of Children's Services and Learning Directorate to enhance approaches to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are supported to achieve their full potential.

c) Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

228. The Scrutiny Panel were informed that the implementation of the CAF had been slow to take off in Southampton but that it is gathering momentum. In

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[45] Learning Behaviour: Lessons Learner, Sir Alan Steer, April 2009 p56

September 2008 there were only 14 CAFs, by March 2009 the number of CAFs was 129.

229.   The CYPP contains an action to fully implement the CAF to ensure early identification of need by April 2010.   Targets in the CYPP include 300 CAFs submitted by a variety of agencies by July 2009.

d) Safer Schools Partnerships

230.   The CYPP has an action to develop Safe Schools Partnerships in partnership with the Police.   Implementation of the programme is happening within schools in Southampton and negotiations are ongoing to increase the number of schools implementing the programme during 2010/11.

231.   Funding has been identified for 3 Police Officers to support the Safer Schools Partnerships, one for each district in the city.

e) Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships

232.   The Scrutiny Panel were informed that by September 2009 Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships will be in place in Southampton.

Findings

233.   • The Scrutiny Panel were informed of the developments being introduced within Southampton to help improve the co-ordination of services to support young people and their families, and to help ensure that best practice is shared across schools in Southampton. It is anticipated that if the creation of Integrated Children and Youth Support Services, multi-agency locality teams, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Safer Schools Partnerships, and the Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships are employed effectively, targeting high risk groups such as persistent absentees, then it will have a positive impact on the city and Southampton will be in a strong position to make progress in a range of outcomes for children and young people.

Recommendations

234.   1. The impact of the following initiatives be monitored to ensure that best practice is being applied and outcomes are improved in the city:-
    • Integrated Children and Youth Support Services
    • Developing multi-agency locality teams
    • Common Assessment Framework
    • Developing Safer Schools Partnerships
    • Emerging Behaviour and Attendance Partnership's

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Outline Project Plan

Appendix 3 – Consultation

Appendix 4 – Truancy vs Crime Analysis

Appendix 5 – Effective Attendance Practices

Appendix 6 – Make School Fun and Improve Attendance Grant Funded Projects

Appendix 1   OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DRAFT INQUIRY PLAN

INQUIRY INTO THE POTENTIAL LINKS BETWEEN CRIME AND DISORDER AND ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Project Brief

1.   Purpose of the Inquiry

To contribute to the corporate priorities of promoting lifelong learning for all people, improving community safety and crime and disorder, and economic well-being by:

- Assessing the impact that children absent from school either through exclusion or truancy have on levels of crime and disorder in the city
- Examining the long-term effect of absence on individuals to assess whether there are impacts on individuals' economic and social well-being
- Reviewing the methods employed by Southampton City Council and partners to reduce levels of absenteeism in schools and most importantly to identify further actions needed in all relevant areas
- Identifying the reasons why children are not attending school

2.   Objectives of the Inquiry

- To identify the trends of absence and exclusion from Southampton City Council schools
- To identify the causes / reasons for absence and exclusion
- To identify if a link exists between school absenteeism and levels of crime and disorder
- To identify the impact of any crime and disorder incidents committed by children who are excluded or are truant from school
- To identify whether there is a link between children excluded from school, entry into the criminal justice system, and their longer-term economic and social well-being.
- To identify the action being taken to reduce levels of school absenteeism within Southampton and the effectiveness of these methods
- To compare Southampton City Council's performance on absence and operation practices with other local authorities
- To highlight examples of good practice

3.   Inquiry Methodology

Extensive consultation will be undertaken with a variety of key stakeholders. Consultees may include:

- Children's Services and Learning Directorate
- Communities, Health and Care Directorate
- Officers in other directorates (e.g. those responsible for leisure facilities, parks and open spaces)
- Schools

- Hampshire Constabulary
- Youth Offending Team
- Youth Parliament
- Parents and children
- The voluntary sector
  - No Limits
  - Fair Bridge
- Other local authorities
- Academic experts

4. Outline Consultation Plan

- Prepare a plan including a balance of written and oral views of those groups and individuals outlined above
- Develop further understanding by members of the Scrutiny Panel through a series of interviews with expert witnesses

5. Outline Project Plan

Meeting 1:
- Background and introduction to the issues from:

  - Academic expert

- Explanation and overview of current policies and practices

  - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
  - Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning
  - Cabinet Member for Young People and Skills
  - Executive Director of Communities, Health and Care

Meeting 2:
- Levels of absence / causes of truancy

  - Children's Services and Learning Directorate
  - Schools
  - Information from the Youth Parliament
  - Youth Offending Team
  - No limits
  - Chairs of exclusion panels

Meeting 3:
- Crime and disorder and school absenteeism

  - Communities, Health and Care Directorate
  - Children's Services and Learning Directorate
  - Hampshire Constabulary
  - Youth Offending Team

Meeting 4:
- Site meeting to assess the views of:
  - Young people who have been absent from school
  - Parents of children who have been absent from school

Meeting 5:
- Tackling absenteeism

  - Children's Services and Learning
  - Hampshire County Council (if children involved in crime and disorder in the city are resident or educated outside of Southampton)
  - Site visit to or a presentation from another local authority

Informal meeting to discuss the draft report and recommendations

Meeting 6: Overview
- Agree recommendations

Appendix 2 – Outline Project Plan

DATE	MEETING THEME	INDICATIVE TOPIC DETAIL	EVIDENCE TO BE PROVIDED BY
27/02/09	**Introduction to inquiry**	Background to absence from school and youth offending through housing	Executive Director for Children's Services and Learning Head Of Safeguarding Head of Young People and Community Support Head of Wessex YOT
13/03/09	**Absence from school – National and Local Perspective**	National best practice on absence from school and information on practice within schools in Southampton	Regional Adviser, DCSF Schools in Southampton
25/03/09	**Youth offending and school absence**	Identify the link between crime and disorder and absence from school	Wessex YOT Southampton City Council Hampshire Constabulary
01/04/09	**The views of young people**	To identify the reasons why young people are not attending school from a young persons' perspective	Young People
21/04/09	**Tackling absence**	Inform Panel of activities being delivered in Southampton to reduce absence levels	Southampton City Council Voluntary organisations
08/06/09	**Agree final report**	Approve report for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee	

Appendix 3 – Consultation

The following people gave evidence to the inquiry at meetings of the Scrutiny Panel:

- Clive Webster – Executive Director, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Ruth Chiva – Head of Safeguarding, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Alison Alexander – Head of Young People and Community Support, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Steve Crocker – Head of Wessex Youth Offending Service (As at March 2009)
- Kerry Randle – Operation Lead Officer for Inclusion, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Colin Logan – Regional Adviser, Behaviour and Attendance, National Strategies
- Harry Kutty – Assistant Head Teacher, Cantell Maths and Computing College, Southampton
- Ian Taylor – Head Teacher, Oakwood Junior School, Southampton
- Alex Iles / Sarah Fawcett – Southampton Mencap
- Chief Inspector Scipio – Hampshire Constabulary
- Derek Stevens – Anti-Social Behaviour Operations Manager, Southampton City Council
- Kieran Gildea – Education Officer, Wessex Youth Offending Service
- Sean Holehouse – Team Manager West, Young People and Community Support, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Peter Atkinson – Education Welfare Officer, Children's Services and Learning, Southampton City Council
- Gabe Boland / Hannah Morgan – Baseline (Catch 22)
- Isla Downey – Senior Parenting Practitioner, Southampton City Council

Members of the Scrutiny Panel also consulted with the following during off-site visits:

Cantell Maths and Computing College – 25/03/09:

- Sheena Ryder – Deputy Head Teacher
- Harry Kutty – Assistant Head Teacher
- Tracey Kerr – Inclusions Officer
- Lena Beattie – Satellite 1 Manager
- Pupils studying in Satellite 1 and Satellite 2 provision at Cantell

Melbourne Street Pupil Referral Unit – 31/03/09

- Gary Gwinnell-Smith –Head Teacher
- Pupils studying at Melbourne PRU

Written evidence was presented to the Scrutiny Panel by Oasis Mayfield Academy.

Appendix 4 – Truancy v Crime Analysis

Produced by: CDRP Analyst, Angela Croxson, 12374
Date: 08/05/09
Produced for: Chief Inspector Karen Scipio and Kerry Randle

Truancy vs Crime Report

Overview

The analysis was commissioned in order to determine the percentage of juveniles who commit crime whilst truanting from school.

The data analysed included active referrals to the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team during the academic year of 2007/2008. From this data a pool of 7 schools were extracted in order to give a representative sample across Shirley, Central and Bitterne District. This extraction gave a sample of 243 juveniles.

The RMS arrest records of these juveniles were examined in order to determine the number of subjects arrested for committing an offence whilst truanting from school during the academic year 2007/2008. Out of school hours, term breaks and weekends were taken into account and offences were disregarded if committed during these periods.

Analysis

Of the sample of 243 juveniles, a total of 67, (27.5%), were committing offences during term time, however only **13, (5.3%)** of these offended during school hours. Of these 13 offenders, 3 were female with the remaining 10 males. 6 were in Year 11 at school, 4 in year 10 and 3 in year 9.

Figure 1: Offences committed by district

District	No. of Offences
Shirley	5
Central	3
Bitterne	4
Out of Southampton City	1

- Within the Shirley district offences were committed on Sedbergh Road, Warren Avenue, Sycamore Road, Vine Road and Millbrook Road West.
- Within the Central district offences occurred on High Road, Harefield Road and Osbourne Road North.
- Offences took place within Bitterne district on: Parry Road, Witts Hill, Kingsclere Avenue and Deacon Road.
- No repeat locations were present

Figure 2: Type of Offences committed during school hours

Offence Type	Number committed
Theft	3
Criminal Damage	3

Assault	2
Resisted arrest	1
Trespass	1
TFMV	1
Tampering with motor vehicle	1
Breach ASBO	1

- Theft and criminal damage were the most highly committed offences.

Of the 13 young offenders, 9 of these had committed a number of offences with 2 offenders being a Persistent Young Offender. A further 2 of the 9 offenders were arrested on two separate occasions for committing an offence during school hours.

Figure 3: Disposals of offences committed during school hours

Disposal	No.
No Further Action	6
Charged	5
Cautioned	1
Final Warning	1

5 of these offenders were managed with Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and a further offender is currently on an ASBO.

Temporal analysis

Figure 4: Breakdown of offences committed during school hours by day of the week

Day of the Week	No. Offences Committed
Monday	4
Tuesday	3
Wednesday	2
Thursday	3
Friday	1

Offences were consistently committed throughout the week (Monday – Friday), with Monday seeing a slight peak with 4 offences being committed on this day. A peak time in offending was between 12:00 and 14:30. There were no monthly peaks for offending with offences being committed throughout the year.

Conclusion

The above analysis can conclude that of the sample of 243 juveniles, a small percentage of these, 5.3%, committed an offence whilst playing truant from school. Peak times for these offences to be committed were between 12:00 and 14:30.

The analysis further determined that 54 juveniles, (22.2%), were committing offences however these were not committed during school hours. Therefore 176 juveniles (72.5%), who were referred to the School Attendance and Safeguarding Team for attendance issues, were not committing offences.

Appendix 5 – Effective Attendance Practice – Schools and Local Authorities[46]

Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos by having: (amongst others)

- a whole school approach which reinforces good attendance, teaching and learning to encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve;
- an attendance and behaviour policy which is easily understood by all, regularly updated, consulted on and disseminated widely;
- appropriate school attendance targets (eg by pupil or year group) which are understood by staff, parents and pupils;
- a senior manager to lead on attendance and all staff seeing attendance as a shared responsibility;
- an established attendance lead in each local authority;
- attendance as a high priority for the local authority.

Have a clear policy on absence which ensures: (amongst others)

- pupils and parents understand the circumstances in which schools will or will not authorise absence;
- requests for holidays in term time are discouraged and where made are handled consistently at a senior level;
- lateness and post-registration absence procedures are understood by all;
- longer term medical absences (consistent or intermittent) are discussed with medical personnel;
- the local authority provides consistent guidance on attendance issues.

Use effective, non-bureaucratic systems for monitoring attendance which have: (amongst others)

- clear procedures for staff, parents/carers and pupils for accurate recording and reporting;
- appropriate training and support for staff using the system;
- consistent use by staff of the absence codes for recording absence;
- monitoring of the quality of data recorded by staff and procedures to deal with any concerns.

Use data and other information to improve school and pupil performance by: (amongst others)

- benchmarking school absence against year groups or other schools in similar circumstances;
- regularly monitoring progress towards attendance targets in school;
- collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence;
- ensuring good data flows from schools to the local authority informing work of education welfare officers and School Improvement Services.

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[46] Information summarised from 'Effective Attendance Practice in Schools – An Overview', Department for Education and Skills, June 2005, and, 'Education Attendance Practice at the Local Authority level', Department for Education and Skills.

Promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils, their parents and the wider community by: (amongst others)

- using school promotional material, parent evenings, pupil reviews and home/school agreements to engage parents/carers;
- communicating clearly with pupils and parents about the consequences of truancy and parentally condoned absence;
- reminding parents of their responsibility for ensuring the children's regular attendance, including their punctual arrival at school;
- reminding parents of the potential sanctions for failure to meet their responsibilities;
- explaining the link between poor attendance and reduced attainment;
- providing information about the range of support services that parents can access;
- the local authority giving strong, consistent and timely support to schools by the appropriate use of sanctions such as penalty notices and prosecution;
- the local authority having escalation processes that are fair, consistent and rigorously applied;
- the local authority using communications and media to send strong messages on attendance to the wider community.

Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance through: (amongst others)

- a range of reward systems which are appropriate for pupils with high levels of attendance and those who are improving;
- use of attendance "mascots", certificates etc to celebrate pupils' or classes' good or improved attendance;
- the inclusion of parents, learning mentors and partner schools in celebrations where relevant.

Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern by: (amongst others)

- making first day/first instance contact with parent/carer for all pupils absent without known reason (telephone, e-mail, text);
- analysing individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence which cause concern;
- setting clear trigger points for higher levels of intervention which are consistently applied;
- seeking advice and follow-up from the Education Welfare Service.

Have support systems in place for vulnerable groups and make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with greatest need by having: (amongst others)

- pastoral support plans for pupils with long term attendance difficulties;
- a process to enable returning pupils to catch up on learning and re-integrate within the school;
- signposting and access to external support for parents and pupils;
- alternative/flexible curriculum provision for pupils who are disaffected and may benefit from such help;
- a clear system for reporting concerns about non-attendance to the local authority;
- In school multi-agency support meeting to agree action.

Appendix 6 - Make School Fun and Improve Attendance Grant Funded Projects

Name of Agency	Project Summary	Locality	Total Costs
Weston Church Youth Project	Addressing poor attendance in the Weston area with a focus on Weston Park Junior School through the employment of a Youth and Community Worker	Weston	£46,550
Southampton Mencap	The Young People's Opening Doors Service supports children/young people (5-19) with disabilities and/or additional needs to access a variety of extended/out of school activities during term-time and holidays.	City wide	£71,376
The Sholing Technology College	Improving attendance through enjoyment of school-organised activities including a summer school to aid transition	Locality cluster	£75,800
Hampshire and IOW Youth Options	A full programme of support for transition from beginning of Yr6 to the end of Autumn term of Yr7 pupils & their families at 3 primary schools.	Bassett, St Mary's & Weston areas	£78,358
Upper Shirley High School	Creation of a University of the First Age for the Upper Shirley Learning Community to provide a range of challenging & exciting university style activities for 5-13 yr olds.	North Shirley	£75,000
Southampton Children's Play Association	The running of a free open-access term time Junior Club at Mansbridge Primary School (for 5-12yr olds). Targeted work with pupils who have low attendance.	Mansbridge	£18,230
Baseline	Baseline work very closely with local Primary schools & their relevant cluster of Secondary Schools in an effort to minimise exclusions & raise school attendance among the most at risk 8 to 13 young people.	Bargate & Bevois.	£40,920
Northam 521 Project and City Reach Youth Project	Joint delivery of a range of junior provision (e.g. Junior Youth Clubs, Junior IT & Homework Club) across the neighbourhoods serviced by each project.	Inner central	£52,040
School attendance and safeguarding	Appointment of a Project Manager responsible for implementation and delivery of the Catalyst Project, including transition activities, Professional drama company will be commissioned to carry out workshops (yr 7 & 8) focussing on issues that can lead to non-attendance.	Locality Cluster	£65,475