

## **BRIEFING REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES - SCHOOL SUPPORT**

**Report By: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

### **Wards Affected**

Countywide.

### **Purpose**

1. To brief scrutiny members on a number of areas of work within Children's Services and to invite questions and debate around these key areas which are attendance, attainment, behaviour, exclusions and drugs education.

### **Financial Implications**

2. None.

### **Report**

#### **Attendance**

3. The Education Welfare Service has continued to work closely with the county's schools to reduce truancy. Absence rates during the Autumn and Spring terms of 2004 / 05 fell and continue to be below the national average.
4. During the last academic year the Education Welfare Service embraced the government's 'Penalty Notice' initiative as an alternative to prosecuting parents / carers through the traditional route to magistrates court. Herefordshire is one of the leading group of authorities using Penalty Notices.
5. Over the year the service issued a total of 204 Penalty Notice Warnings of which 43 progressed to full Penalty Notices. The service had an above average payment rate which reduced the number of court appearances made by Educational Welfare Officers during the year. (See appendix 1).
6. The service continues to carry out 'Truancy Sweeps' in line with government recommendations; however, the majority of young people stopped had legitimate reasons for being out of school. Our findings are in line with recent national research on truancy sweeps.
7. One of the focuses for this academic year is to discuss the issue of 'Authorised Absence' with primary school head teachers and to offer the strategies, currently operating with high schools, to try to reduce absence amongst Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils.

## Attainment

8. The start of the September 2005 term sees a number of challenges facing the school system in Herefordshire, including the analysis and interpretation of the data emerging from the summer 2005 examination and testing programme, and the introduction of a new Ofsted inspection system for schools.

### 2005 SCHOOL RESULTS

9. The provisional 2005 results for Herefordshire are listed in the table below, with the audited 2004 figures in brackets. Every year schools submit papers for re-marking and past experience would suggest that the 2005 figures maybe revised upwards by between 1% and 2% when the final figures are published.

<b>Key Stage 2</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Science</b>
	Level 4	81% (81%)	75%(76%)	88% (88%)
	Level 5	28% (29%)	33% (32%)	48% (47%)
<b>Key Stage 3</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Maths</b>	<b>Science</b>
	Level 5	79% (76%)	78% (79%)	74% (72%)
	Level 6	41% (35%)	58% (59%)	41% (39%)
<b>GCSE</b>		<b>5A*C</b>	<b>5A*-G</b>	<b>1A*-G</b>
		57% (58%)	93% (91%)	98% (97%)

10. In general, it looks like a 'steady' performance rather than one marked by very significant gains. The English performance at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is good but it is disappointing that the mathematics results at level 4 at Key Stage 2 have not improved. In addition, the 5A\*-C figure at GCSE has apparently plateaued for a second year, although some individual schools have done well.

### The New Ofsted Inspection system for Schools

11. From this September a new school inspection system is being introduced whereby every school will be inspected every three years and:
- Schools will be notified no more than a week before the inspectors arrive on site, normally Thursday for a Monday morning start;
  - The inspectors will be fewer in number and be in school for no-more than 2 days;
  - Every school must have a self-evaluation form complete and up-to-date which will, along with a raft of school and pupils performance data, be the basis from which inspectors draw their conclusions and make their judgements.

12. A common grading scale will be used to make judgements about the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the school, and about the five Children's Services outcomes of keeping safe, keeping healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.

Grade 1          Outstanding

Grade 2          Good

Grade 3          Satisfactory

Grade 4          Inadequate

13. Schools that are graded 4, inadequate, will be either judged to require a 'notice to improve' or be placed in 'special measures! The distinction between the two categories is that although both indicate a school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, 'special measures' indicates that the school does not have the capacity to improve. In addition, a school in 'special measures' may have only a year in which to improve before it is considered for closure.

14. Previous experience suggests that when a new inspection regime is introduced the local and national outcomes are to an extent, unpredictable. It is, for instance, possible that a significant proportion of schools nationally maybe issued with "notices to improve".

15. Herefordshire has high expectations that no school should be graded 4 (inadequate). However it will be a challenging academic year and that expectation cannot be a guaranteed outcome.

## **Behaviour Support**

16. All schools have to deal with children who present unacceptable behaviour from time to time.

17. Frequently such behaviour is related to difficulties in learning, particularly poor levels of literacy. Children's Services is able to support schools and parents in a range of ways eg Herefordshire Learning Support Service works with schools to improve children's learning by providing strategies and resources.

18. Additionally, there is increasing awareness of the need to establish and maintain firm rules and boundaries and to promote respectful behaviour. Some schools have wholeheartedly adopted schemes such as Values Education or Emotional Literacy to emphasise the importance of responsible and respectful behaviour in the school community.

Initiatives include:-

- each school having a clear behaviour policy regularly updated in accordance with advice from DFES and Local Authority documents. Policies are made available to all parents, who are encouraged to support the school in maintaining the expected standard of behaviour.
- most secondary schools having systems for helping children whose behaviour is disruptive for other pupils and is not conducive to their own learning. These often take the form of a small group where individual attention, help with schoolwork, and counselling are available.
- peer support systems and school councils, established with training, advice and monitoring by Healthy Schools and CLD Youth Counselling Trust.
- secondary and primary schools, and pre-school settings benefitting from a wide variety of training courses offered by support services within Children's Services (e.g. Medical and Behavioural Support Services, Herefordshire Psychology Service, School Improvement Service), and experts from outside the authority.
- training being available for newly qualified teachers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and GNVQ students working in pre-school settings. Training addresses understanding and managing behaviour, and increases awareness of behaviour relating to low incidence disorders (ADHD, Autism etc) and the particular strategies which are helpful for those children.
- use of The Pupil Attitudes to Self and School Survey are used in some high schools. They are used to pinpoint areas of difficulty (e.g. a particular year group, ability set, subject area, attendance, whole school information), to enable the school to focus effort and resources effectively.
- written advice to schools. The following Booklets are available in every school. They include information about, and management of:-
  - ◇ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
  - ◇ Depression
  - ◇ Anxiety
  - ◇ Asperger Syndrome
  - ◇ Traumatic Events/Critical Incident Support
  - ◇ Literacy Difficulties
  - ◇ Assertive Discipline
  - ◇ (BESD) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – Changing Concepts
  - ◇ Developing Your School's Anti-Bullying Policy

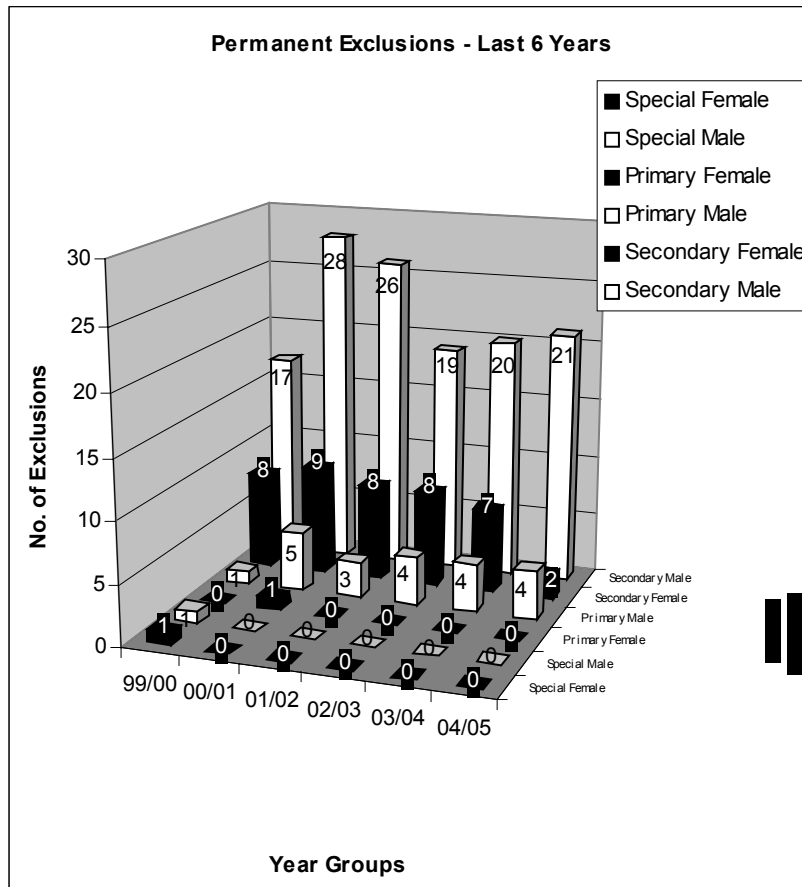
19. Children's Services maintain good links with other agencies including the Police, Social Care, CLD Youth Counselling Trust, Youth Offending Teams, and the Education Welfare Service. This is outlined in the current Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) which is regularly monitored by the Behaviour Forum. The BSP details the work of all agencies, and schools, in dealing with inappropriate behaviour.
20. Evidence of improvement in behaviour in schools generally is reflected in the gradual but steady decrease in permanent exclusions from 35 in the academic year 01-02, to 29 in 04-05
21. The Cooperation between schools and the Key Stage 3 Pupil Referral unit in maintaining Personal Support Plans has facilitated a successful return to school for many pupils and has been a major factor in achieving a reduction in exclusions.

## **Social Inclusion**

### **Exclusion from School**

22. In most cases exclusion will be the last resort after a range of measures have been tried to improve the pupil's behaviour. Head teachers may exclude a pupil for a fixed term or permanently. Permanent exclusion is a very serious step to take and one which most Headteachers do not take lightly.
23. The regulations allow head teachers to exclude pupils for one or more fixed periods up to a maximum of 45 days within a school year. Ofsted inspection evidence suggests that 1-3 days is often long enough to allow successful reintegration. In cases where pupils are excluded for more than 15 days a meeting of the governors disciplinary committee must be called to consider the exclusion(s).
24. For those pupils who have 15 days or more fixed term exclusion, and are therefore considered to be at risk of permanent exclusion, a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP.) is drawn up by the school. A PSP is a plan of support agreed with the school, other agencies and in particular, the parents and the pupil.
25. Permanently excluded secondary pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 attend the reintegration base (based at Aconbury) and from there are supported in their return to mainstream school. These pupils are reintegrated through the 'cluster' system to a new school. Primary pupils are supported by the Medical and Behavioural Support Service whilst a fresh school is found for them.
26. Permanently excluded pupils in Years 10 and 11 go straight into a KS4 PRU.
27. The Social Inclusion Officer attends the Governing Body Meeting convened where exclusions are reviewed and makes a statement in general terms about how other schools may have responded to similar incidents or behaviours. Advice is offered where necessary on Government Guidelines for exclusion from school. In cases where the parents wish to appeal against a permanent exclusion the inclusion officer advises and attends the appeal meeting. Appeal meetings are arranged by legal services and are independent of Children's Services and the school.

Graph showing last six years permanent exclusions.



### Drug Education in Schools

- 28. In line with the latest research and thinking around drug education, Herefordshire's Children's Services Directorate takes the approach of harm reduction rather than the less effective, 'Just Say No' style campaigns. In schools we encourage lessons which are teacher led and focus on making decisions about personal risk and whether or not the student understands all the consequences of taking/not taking a particular substance.
- 29. Herefordshire has demonstrated its commitment to this important area of work in local schools by appointing a specialist Drugs Education Development Officer (DEDO), who offers advice, guidance and support to schools, works with various agencies and has been the key officer for developing local resources for schools. This officer is part of the Healthy Schools team.

30. Below are the resources that the DEDO has developed for use in Herefordshire schools and Pupil Referral Units.

Key Stage 1	<b>Just One Spoonful</b>	A big book approach to whole class teaching and learning, this pack concentrates on the issue – <b>all medicines are drugs, but not all drugs are medicines</b> . This pack deals with literacy and health education in one go. Seen as a gentle introduction, it is not very explicit due to the age of the students - talking mostly about medicines. This pack is in the process of being replaced by a CD-Rom resource called Special Me.
Key Stage 2	<b>Taking Drugs Literally</b>	A big book/interactive whiteboard approach to whole class teaching and learning, <b>Taking Drugs Literally</b> , satisfies the Literacy Strategy, whilst delivering key health education messages. The pack is versatile and enables teachers to develop themes flexibly – ranging from brushing on the topics, yet satisfying the national curriculum, or going more deeply into the issues surrounding substance use. Again - age specific - this pack concentrates mostly on legal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, but also mentions cannabis.
Key Stage 3	<b>Eastcorrie Neighbours</b>	A harm reduction, drama approach to teaching and learning, this pack will be launched in November/December. Harm reduction has abstinence at its core, but is pragmatic about the whole drug/drug use situation. This pack concentrates on alcohol, but brings in smoking, teenage pregnancy, legal issues and touches on domestic violence and family issues.
Key Stage 4	<b>Balance</b>	A video-based approach to teaching and learning, this is the ' <b>Rachel's Story</b> ' pack. Breaking the video down into 3 lessons, <b>Balance</b> looks at stereotyping, managing risk and support networks. It has been in schools for nearly 2 years and is continually well received.
Pupil Referral Units	<b>STONED</b>	<b>Straight Talking On Nearly Every Drug</b> is a harm reduction/personal game approach to teaching and learning, focussing on those students most at risk from drugs, notably those in Pupil Referral Units. It is a one to one approach and encourages young people to take a good look at their own drug use through a third party.

31. In addition to these packs of work, support is given to students, teachers and parents through a locally developed internet website: [www.drugsfags.org](http://www.drugsfags.org). This is designed to be attractive to young people while offering a comprehensive range of information. It also allows young people to ask questions which are answered and lets them read

previous questions and answers. It is anonymous and well used. The site is maintained and updated regularly.

32. There is also some free training available to schools through MerciaNet South, a training organisation set up in conjunction with Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership and Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team. This training is available to any professional in Herefordshire who may come into contact with substances and their use.

## **Recommendation**

**THAT Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the issues in the briefing report..**

## **Background Papers**

- None identified.



## Appendix 1

School	PNW's	PN's	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Q. E.	8(1 / 2)	0	1g		2g, 2b	2b, 1g	
Bishop's	1(5 / 3)	1 (0 / 0 ) g,10				1g,	
Aylestone	12 (5 / 4)	0(0 / 1)	2b, 1g	1b	1b	4b,3g	
Haywood	9(13 / 30)	4(0 / 6) g,9. 2xb,9. g,8		2g	2g, 3b	1g, 1b	
St. Mary's	0 (0 / 0)	0					
Whitecross	5(4 / 5)	2(1 / 1) b,10. g,9			1g, 1b	1g, 2b	
Kingstone	3(1 / 3)	0(1 / 1)	1b	1b		1b	
L. H. H. S.	0(0 / 1)	0					
J.M.H.S.	5(4 / 2)	2(2 / 0) g,10. b, 10.			1b, 1g	1b, 1g	1b
Minster C.	14(10 / 8)	2(3 / 2) b,10	1b,2g	1b, 1g		4g,1b	3g, 1b
Fairfield	0 (0 / 0)	0					
J.K.H.S.	8(3 / 6)	3 ( 2 / 1) b,11. g,11.g,9		1b	2g, 1b	2g	1g, 1b
Weobley	2(8 / 8)	0(1 / 0)				1g	1g
Wigmore	0(1 / 0)	0					

Figure in brackets in PNW / PN column shows Autumn / Spring Terms totals. For PN column, figure following the g or b shows year group.

\* - Penalty Notice withdrawn

T = Traveller

School	PNW's	PN's	Yr 7	YR 8	YR 9	YR 10	Yr 11
Primaries	4 (0 / 4) 3b, 1g	1 ( 0 /0 ) b,1	X	X	X	X	X
Brookfield	1 (0 / 1)	1( 0/0 ) b,9			1b		
Aconbury	0	0(1)					
Priory	0	0(1)	X	X	X		
St David's	0	0	X	X	X		

Figure in brackets in Penalty Notice Warning (PNW) / PN column shows Autumn Term total.  
For PN column, figure following g or b shows year group.

### SUMMER TERM 2005

Totals for 2004 / 05 academic year; PNW's = 204 ( 10 – Prim' 194 – Sec )

PN's = 43 ( inc. 2 x withdrawn )