

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: PUPIL ATTENDANCE IN FALKIRK COUNCIL SCHOOLS
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 8 SEPTEMBER 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It was agreed at Education Executive on 28 April 2015 when considering the report "The Future Role, Purpose and Sustainability of the Attendance Panel" that a further report be submitted to a future meeting on the pattern of attendance following the removal of the Attendance Panels.

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on attendance rates and patterns in primary and secondary schools in Falkirk to provide a reference point for future reports on attendance.

- 1.2 The report details overall attendance rates and attendance trends over the last ten years across the primary and secondary sectors compared with national averages where these are available. It also provides information on the numbers and percentages of children whose attendance rates fall within the following four bands:

- Over 90% attendance;
- Attendance between 71% and 90%;
- Attendance between 51% and 70%; and
- Attendance of 50% or less

- 1.3 The report also provides some analysis of the age groups (school stages) where attendance at school is lower than 70% and lower than 50% and cross-references (within Appendix 1) this information with available Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data, Looked After Status and Additional Support Needs (ASN) status.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Pupil Attendance – Authority Average and National Comparison

Over the last 10 years, the attendance of pupils in Falkirk Council schools has been marginally higher than the Scottish average (where known), as shown in the table below. Comparisons are not available for 2011/12 and 2013/14 as the Scottish Government have recently reduced the collection of attendance data from local authorities to every 2 years. National figures for 2014/15 will be available in December 2015.

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Falkirk Council	92.4	92.2	93.1	93.4	93.9	93.6	93.4	93.6	93.8	94.0
Scotland	93.0	93.1	93.3	93.2	93.3	93.2	93.1		93.6	

2.2 Average Pupil Attendance by Sector

Pupil attendance in Falkirk Council primary schools has been relatively consistent over the past 10 years. Secondary schools have seen a slight improvement in recent years, as shown in the table below.

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Primary	95.2	94.9	95.6	95.4	95.6	95.4	95.2	95.3	95.2	95.5
Secondary	88.2	88.3	89.9	90.8	91.7	91.3	91.1	91.4	91.9	91.8

2.3 Attendance Rates – Pupil Level

The table below sets out the attendance rates of Falkirk Council's pupils over the last school session (August 2014 – June 2015).

Attendance Rate	More than 90%	71 – 90%	51-70%	Less than 50%
% of Pupils	81	17	1.5	0.8
No. of Pupils	17,392	3,666	334	174

The majority of pupils had attendance rates in excess of 90%. However it is worth noting that some 19% of pupils had lower attendance rates with a significant number of pupils (174) attending school for less than 50% of the time.

2.4 Pupils with Low Attendance (70% or Less) – By Year Stage

The table below shows the year stage of those 508 pupils with attendance of 70% or less. The majority of these pupils are in the secondary sector (75%, 382 in number). The table shows that the number of pupils with attendance below 70% increases from S1 to S2; significantly from S2 to S3; and further in S5, falling sharply in S6.

Year Stage	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
No of Pupils	14	15	12	12	15	17	15	28	42	93	94	106	45

Pupils with low attendance in the current session may have had good attendance previously but may have experienced, for example, ill health in the current session. 86% of pupils with low attendance in session 2014/15 had a higher rate of attendance in session 2013/14.

2.5 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less)

A subset of the pupils detailed above have very low attendance. 174 pupils have attendance rates of 50% or less, and the majority of them (72%) are in secondary schools, as shown below.

Sector	number of pupils with 50% attendance or less – by sector	
Primary	21	(19%)
Secondary	136	(72%)
Special	17	(9%)
TOTAL	174	(100%)

2.6 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – By Year Stage

The table below shows the year stage of those 174 pupils with attendance of 50% or less. Again, the majority of these pupils are in the secondary sector (88%, 153 in number). The table shows that very low attendance is most prominent in S3, S4 and S5.

Year Stage	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
No of Pupils	2	3	3	1	2	3	7	5	7	35	41	48	17

2.7 Appendix 1 to this report contains further analysis of pupil attendance rates in relation to:

- Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation (SIMD) data;
- Pupil Looked After status;
- Pupil ASN status; and
- Pupil involvement with children and Families Social Work Services.

2.8 It is worth noting the following information from the analysis contained in Appendix 1:

- Just under half of all pupils with low attendance (45%) live in SIMD deciles 1-3 (i.e. the 305 most deprived areas in Scotland);
- The average attendance rate of children looked after at home is significantly lower (75.8%) than for children looked after away from home (92%) or for children who are not looked after (93.7%);
- More than a third of pupils with low attendance have Additional Support Needs;
- The vast majority of pupils with **very** low attendance are known to Children and Families Social Work Services.

2.9 It can be concluded from the information detailed in paragraphs 2.4 – 2.9 above and contained in Appendix 1 that pupil non-attendance is significantly higher at the S2, S3, S4 and S5 stages and that attendance can be affected by:

- Where a child lives in terms of SIMD datazone;
- A child's 'Looked After' status, particularly where the child is Looked After at home; and
- Whether a child has Additional Support Needs.

2.10 It is proposed that Children's Services undertake the following actions to monitor and improve the attendance rates of Falkirk Council pupils:

- Develop a system that allows senior managers to regularly review rates of low attendance by sector and by individual school that enables scrutiny of attendance rates for Looked After Children and children with Additional Support Needs;
- Extend rigorous discussion on attendance rates and trends during School Improvement support and challenge meetings to include consideration of attendance in SIMD deciles; by Looked After status and by ASN status; and
- Revise guidance within Service Circular 29 for schools on strategies to challenge low attendance and to support parents to ensure that their children attend school.

3. FINANCIAL

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Executive agrees that:

- 4.1 the Director of Children's Services be requested to report annually on attendance rates across the four bands detailed in paragraph 1.2 above and the information contained in this report be used as a benchmark for future reports on attendance**
- 4.2 the actions identified in paragraph 2.10 be implemented; and**
- 4.3 a further report be presented to the Education Executive detailing the revised guidance issued to schools to improve attendance rates prior to the end of 2015.**

Director of Children's Services

Date: 10 August 2015

Contact Officer: Name: Carol Milford

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Appendix 1

1.1 Pupils with Low Attendance (70% or Less) – By SIMD Decile

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way. All areas of Scotland are ranked and divided into 10 ‘deciles’ ranging from 1 (most deprived) to 10 (least deprived).

Pupil postcode details can then be used to calculate in which SIMD decile a pupil is living. The table below shows those pupils with attendance rates of 70% or less, where SIMD data is available. More than a quarter of pupils with low attendance (29%, 148 in number) live in an area of deprivation (defined as the 20% most deprived in Scotland). Just under half of all pupils with low attendance (45%, 227 in number) live in SIMD deciles 1-3 (ie. the 30% most deprived areas in Scotland).

Area Rankings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No of Pupils	57	91	79	78	41	51	27	40	30	13

1.2 Pupils with Low Attendance (70% OR LESS) – By Looked After Status

Although the number of Looked After Children with low attendance (70% or less) is very small (25 Looked After at Home, and 14 Looked after Away from Home), the proportion of the cohort of Looked After Children with low attendance is significantly higher than for the group of children who are not Looked After.

The table below shows that 28% of those children that are Looked After at Home, have low attendance, compared with 7% of children that are Looked After Away from Home and only 2% of children that are not Looked After.

Looked After Status	Looked After At Home	Looked Away from Home	Not Looked After
% Low Attendance	28	7	2

The average attendance rate of all children that are Looked After At Home is significantly lower than for children who are not Looked After, as shown in the table below. The attendance rate of all children who are Looked After Away From Home is only slightly lower than for children who are not Looked After.

Looked After Status	Looked After At Home	Looked Away from Home	Not Looked After
Average % Attendance Rate	75.8	92	93.7

1.3 Pupils With Low Attendance (70% or Less) – By ASN Status

The table below shows that more than a third of pupils with low attendance (36%, 185 in number) have additional support needs. There is a wide variety of reasons for requiring additional support, which include learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties, health problems and family issues. Some of these issues may contribute to poor attendance.

	Pupils with No Additional Support Needs	Pupils with Additional Support Needs
Attendance	64%	36%

1.4 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less)

A subset of the pupils detailed above have very low attendance. 174 pupils have attendance rates of 50% or less, and the majority of them (72%) are in secondary schools, as shown below.

Sector	number of pupils with 50% attendance or less – by sector	
Primary	21	(19%)
Secondary	136	(72%)
Special	17	(9%)
TOTAL	174	(100%)

1.5 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – By Year Stage

The table below shows the year stage of those 174 pupils with attendance of 50% or less. Again, the majority of these pupils are in the secondary sector (88%, 153 in number). The table shows that very low attendance is most prominent in S3, S4 and S5.

Year Stage	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
No of Pupils	2	3	3	1	2	3	7	5	7	35	41	48	17

1.6 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – BY SIMD Decile

More than a quarter of pupils with very low attendance (28%, 48 in number) live in an area of deprivation (defined as the 20% most deprived in Scotland). Just under half of all pupils with low attendance (43%, 75 in number) live in SIMD decile 1-3 (the 30% most deprived areas in Scotland).

Area Rankings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No of Pupils	18	30	27	28	17	19	4	13	13	4

1.7 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – By Looked After Status

Although the number of Looked After Children with very low attendance (50% or less) is very small (15 Looked After at Home, and 4 Looked after Away from Home), the proportion of the cohort of Looked After Children with very low attendance is significantly higher than for the group of children who are not Looked After.

The table below shows that 17% of those children that are Looked After at Home, have very low attendance, compared with 2% of children that are Looked After Away from Home and only 0.7% of children that are not Looked After.

Looked After Status	Looked After At Home	Looked Away from Home	Not Looked After
% Attendance	28%	7%	2%

1.8 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – Additional Support Needs

Just over one third (39%) of pupils with attendance rates of 50% or less have Additional Support Needs (ASN), as shown below. There is a wide variety of reasons for requiring additional support, which include learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties, health problems and family issues.

	Pupils with No Additional Support Needs	Pupils with Additional Support Needs
Attendance	61%	39%

1.9 Pupils with Very Low Attendance (50% or Less) – Social Work Involvement

82% of those pupils with very low attendance (50% or less) are known to Social Work Services. Of the 31 pupils not known to Social Work services, more than half left school during the session, due to either having reached school leaving age or because the family moved out of the Falkirk Council area.

Social Work Status	Known to Social Work	Not Known to Social Work	Pending Social Work involvement
No or Pupils	142	31	1